

# EPICURUS ON PLEASURE, A COMPLETE LIFE, AND DEATH: A DEFENCE - ALEX VOORHOEVE

Post by "Don" of July 29, 2022 at 12:38 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

I have to say, I am not sure I agree with this.

When death is imminent then yes I agree with the need for tranquillity.

Yet, when death is not imminent, there is more than tranquility needed for a complete life. There was a moment in which I had a peak experience, in the past -- it was a state of pure bliss, and it was at that moment that I felt my life was complete. It was a completely "safe" experience but I wouldn't say it was "tranquil" one bit because it was active and in motion -- it was a active and ecstatic experience.

I found this line from the 2nd papers introduction interesting (emphasis added):

*What sets Epicurus apart from many hedonists, however, is his idea that the greatest (in the sense of most valuable, or most choiceworthy) pleasures are generated in a state of ataraxia, or tranquillity. This is a condition in which a person is free from physical pain and mental distress.*

To me, that gets at an idea of ataraxia (and aponia, although I don't believe the paper mentions that specifically) being the ground on which we can more fully experience other pleasures. Without that ground or foundation, other pleasures are experienced but may be fleeting. With a steady, tranquil mind and healthy body, we are already feeling pleasure, then other pleasures vary our experience.

And I would offer that one can be "tranquil" in activity. It doesn't mean sitting on a cushion, meditating. Or being numb (as some might say, both ancient and modern)!!

By a "complete life," Epicurus meant "one filled with pleasure." Once you're filled, you're complete, the goal has been reached. [PD20](#) uses the phrase.

"Life complete" is conveyed by τὸν παντελῆ βίον. I contend that this is one of the more important phrases in the original Greek. This is the kind of life that is produced by following the Epicurean path. Again, we have to delve into Epicurus' words to really appreciate what he's saying. Παντελῆ derives from παν "all, every" + τέλος "goal, end" but not just any goal or end, the ultimate, fully-accomplished end of something, its fully-realized purpose. So, Epicurus is

calling us to a life where he believes we can find that every goal is accomplished, every purpose fulfilled IF we understand the limits of pleasure and desire. That will provide us with τοῦ ἀρίστου βίου "the best life" of all the possible ways of living.