

Another mainstream article claiming ataraxia is the goal

Post by “Kalosyni” of September 22, 2022 at 4:05 PM

Yet another Epicurean article claiming that *ataraxia* is the goal:

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2677-another-mainstream-article-claiming-ataraxia-is-the-goal/?key=74988531148a1097d07c0f8686609b4375cb2c951d3d33cb4366fcd0ffe34c1f-aHR0cHM6Ly95Y2hIZi5m>

[The Epicurean guide to digital life](#)

It's an Ancient Greek philosophy known for its lessons on material existence and pleasure-seeking. So what might Epicureanism say about living well on social...

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An excerpt from the article:

Quote

Despite how that sounds, the Epicureans did not feel that this consisted in a life of sex, drugs and dithyrambic poetry (Dionysiac party songs). Rather, they felt, the pursuit of pleasure would be best effectuated by a simple life – and Epicurus himself, and his followers, were known for a moderately ascetic lifestyle, eschewing the excesses of sensual gratification. (This makes it especially ironic that in modern English idiom "epicurean" often refers to foodie culture, a legacy of later misinterpretations and critics of the doctrine.)

For pleasure, as they conceived it, is not something you add up, cumulatively – rather, it is defined negatively, as the absence of pain. The term for this freedom from pain was *ataraxia* – literally, a state of not-being-shaken-up, a freedom from turbulence.

Preserving your *ataraxia* was a matter of balance. Should you drink some wine? Sure! – a little. Should you have sex? Yes! – some. If resisting these urges disturbs your mind, then satisfy them with moderation – there's no moral superstructure barring you from doing so. But don't overdo it, for it will shake you up, disrupting your *ataraxia*.

In certain ways Epicureanism is strikingly congenial to modern thought – it seems to foreshadow the physicalism that underlies modern science, and the pragmatic hedonism that characterises secular society. In my academic life, whenever I've asked students to choose the school of philosophy they'd join, a majority of them have

declared, "the pleasure one!"

If "freedom from pain" is the goal, then there are lots of things we will never do, and some people may end up choosing suicide since this is the ultimate freedom from pain.

Would it be better not drive your car anywhere because you don't want to experience some "turbulence" (mental pain)? But the truth is that the small amount of mental disturbance we feel during driving leads to greater pleasure later when you arrive at your destination. Drivers in the city that I now live are much more reckless than in the town I used to live in, and I have narrowly escaped car accidents at least 3 times in the last 4 months.

I've been think that Epicurus must have provided therapeutic teachings (but they were lost???) because when you are alive you will encounter pain and "turbulence". We choose to navigate through life by seeking out pleasure and enjoyment, and also by effectively (and rationally) dealing with mental pain which arises.