

# Is pleasure as the natural goal of life falsifiable?

Post by “waterholic” of February 9, 2023 at 1:33 AM

## [Quote from Don](#)

I don't agree at all that "we should feel psychological unrest if we run into obstacles to pleasure that we can do something about." Yes, we can identify obstacles that we can do something about, but we need not feel "psychological unrest." I would much rather meet obstacles clear-eyed with a calm mind and assess the evidence before me that way than to feel "unrest."

[Don](#) raised a major question in my untrained mind. The understanding of ataraxia in Epicurean sense in my view is different in nuance to stoics and other schools. Facing a major challenge or a headwind causes us to have a natural reaction: adrenaline, fight/flight instinct etc. In extreme, we do feel perturbed, sad, unsettled or concerned. A stoic take on this would be: "use your jedi mind trick to calm down, none of this matters, because your virtue is not under threat".

The Epicurean approach (and here I have to stress that I am basing this on the spirit of the philosophy as I understand, rather than any particular passage) here is to accept that we are human and prone to natural reactions; a god-like posture cannot be achieved. Instead, ataraxia is to be achieved by trying not to put yourself in situations that could cause mental pain for the sake of unnatural and unnecessary desires: e.g. politics, power, excessive wealth.

The difference is that some pain is unavoidable: an Epicurean would suffer greatly at a loss of a child or a friend and ataraxia is not a goal in this case. A stoic would have to control the suffering by reminding self that virtue is all that matters.