

Tips On Offsetting Pleasures Against Pains

Post by "Don" of November 28, 2023 at 3:04 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

If the foreign word has a clear equivalent that might or might not resolve all the questions.

Ah! There's the rub. There can be more or less precise "equivalents" from one language to the other. Yes, a rose is a ῥόδον is a rosa... but even there, A ῥόδον usually referred to a [Rosa gallica](#) whereas when I think of a "rose" (in English) I'm most likely thinking [a red hybrid tea rose](#). Same with imagining "a cat in a hat." I'm going to imagine a much different image than if I read "a catus in a pileus." So, of course, translation is possible. One just has to be wary.

But I digress, as I *think* I see more clearly where you're going now. That last post of yours helps a lot! Thanks!

[Quote from Cassius](#)

"Are there degrees of ataraxia and aponia?"

I would have to say, "Yes." If we look at Epicurus's definition of stable and active pleasures, he sort of implies that, from my perspective:

Epicurus in his work *On Choice* : "Ataraxia (Peace of mind) and aponia (freedom from effort or struggle in the our physical body) are pleasures are stable pleasures; khara (joy) and euphrosyne (delight) are seen to consist in motion by means of activity."

ὁ δ' Ἐπίκουρος ἐν τῷ *Περὶ αἰρέσεων*: "ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀταραξία καὶ ἀπονία καταστηματικά εἰσι ἡδοναί: ἡ δὲ χαρὰ καὶ ἡ εὐφροσύνη κατὰ κίνησιν ἐνεργεῖα βλέπονται."

We are not constantly in a state of joy and delight. Those come and go through means of our own activities.

Ataraxia and aponia are more "stable" by definition (per Epicurus and the Epicureans) but they can obviously ebb and flow. Epicurus could in no way be described as being in a state of aponia during his final illness. He could barely move from the pain. Maybe when he was younger, he felt that state of aponia where his body worked effortlessly. He was "in the zone." Our bodies can be more or less prone to effortless movement and struggle. When we're not thinking about our bodies' and their pains and aches, then, I think, we can be said to be in a state described as aponia. That's going to come and go.

With ataraxia, I'm more inclined to say that that state of "peace of mind" is more long-lasting, maybe throughout one's life, once the anxiety and fears of gods, death, etc. are eradicated through reasoning through the physics and understanding the "way things are". I do think Epicurus can be said to have had a state of ataraxia, "peace of mind," during his final illness... and, in fact, this is exactly allowed what him to concentrate on his "active" pleasures of recalling pleasurable memories of time spent with his friends.

This may not be the mainstream academic opinion, but that's where I'm coming down... as of 3:03 pm on a Tuesday afternoon.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Is ataraxia and aponia and "highest good" something that is attainable in reality for any length of time?

Yes, to answer your question. For the reasons I shared above.