

# Preuss - "Epicurean Ethics - Katastematic Hedonism"

Post by "Cassius" of July 13, 2025 at 6:56 AM

I see that the next paragraph in Tusculan Disputations (which we by coincidence were planning to discuss today in our podcast recording) makes the issue even more clear: When you focus on "tranquility" or "absence of disturbance" as one's ultimate goal, you are impelled to the conclusion that all strong emotions -- including joy -- are "perturbations" or "disorders" of the mind.

To what conclusion does this lead? That we should "exert our utmost efforts to oppose these perturbations—which are, as it were, so many furies let loose upon us, and urged on by folly—if we are desirous to pass this share of life that is allotted to us with ease and satisfaction."

## [Quote from Tusculan Disputations Part 3 Section XI](#)

The whole cause, then, is in opinion; and this observation applies not to this grief alone, but to every other disorder of the mind, which are of four sorts, but consisting of many parts. For as every disorder or perturbation is a motion of the mind, either devoid of reason, or in despite of reason, or in disobedience to reason, and as that motion is excited by an opinion of either good or evil; these four perturbations are divided equally into two parts: for two of them proceed from an opinion of good, one of which is an exulting pleasure, that is to say, a joy elated beyond measure, arising from an opinion of some present great good; the other is a desire which may fairly be called even a lust, and is an immoderate inclination after some conceived great good, without any obedience to reason. Therefore these two kinds, the exulting pleasure, and the lust, have their rise from an opinion of good, as the other two, fear and grief, have from an opinion of evil. For fear is an opinion of some great evil impending over us, and grief is an opinion of some great evil present; and, indeed, it is a freshly conceived opinion of an evil so great, that to grieve at it seems right: it is of that kind, that he who is uneasy at it thinks he has good reason to be so. Now we should exert our utmost efforts to oppose these perturbations—which are, as it were, so many furies let loose upon us, and urged on by folly—if we are desirous to pass this share of life that is allotted to us with ease and satisfaction. But of the other feelings I shall speak elsewhere; our business at present is to drive away grief if we can, for that shall be the object of our present discussion, since you have said that it was your opinion that a wise man might be subject to grief, which I can by no means allow of; for it is a frightful, miserable, and detestable thing, which we should fly from with our utmost efforts—with all our sails and oars, as I may say.

I would argue that if that sort of conclusion had been what Epicurus taught his philosophy would never have become popular in the Roman world at all, and likewise it is deadly to Epicurean philosophy today. And that attitude is especially deadly to Epicurean Philosophy being embraced by younger people, who I believe are instinctively able to see the dangers involved.

I'm no longer young myself and so I am more tolerant of those who do begin to elevate "tranquility" in order of importance as they age and the pains of life increase, but I think we owe it to ourselves, to others, and to Epicurus not to allow our own personal problems to overshadow a very different perspective that it seems to me clearly entails a much more active and positive assessment of life.