

Episode 294 - TD24 - Distinguishing Dogs From Wolves And Pleasure From Absence of Pain

Post by "Patrikios" of August 15, 2025 at 3:25 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

One of the questions from Cicero that we address specifically is this one:

Quote

Grant that to be in pain is the greatest evil; whosoever, then, has proceeded so far as not to be in pain, is he, therefore, in immediate possession of the greatest good?

From the context I think it is pretty clear that what Cicero is saying is something like "OK I will spot you that being in pain is the greatest evil, but I still challenge you on this -- just because I remove that evil, that does mean that i am in immediate possession of the greatest good (pleasure)?"

So that challenge demands an answer, and I think the most persuasive answer has to include another visual analogy rather than just the assertion that "absence of pain is the greatest pleasure" or "when one has no pain one has no further need for pleasure."

[Cassius](#)

from reading Christos Yapijakaris I find this.

Quote

*"The Epicureans called εὐστάθεια (**eustatheia**, "stability") the psychosomatic balance (τὸ τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ ψυχῆς εὐσταθὲς κατάστημα), which today we call **homeostasis** (ὁμοιόστασις), and considered it the basis of true happiness. They recognized empirically the stress that disturbed psychosomatic homeostasis as an agitation of the psyche or a painful feeling of the body and used a number of mental and affective techniques (including the tetrapharmakos) to manage stress at its onset, so that it does not evolve into the particularly troublesome conditions of anxiety and/or depression, which may become chronic psychosomatic disorders with significant social*

consequences."

[Epicurean Stability (eustatheia): A Philosophical Approach of Stress Management, C. Yapijakis & G. P. Chrousos]

From my other reading on homeostasis, I summarize these findings thusly.

When we achieve ataraxia (mental tranquility), we prevent the release of:

- Cortisol (stress hormone)
- Excessive adrenaline and noradrenaline
- Pro-inflammatory cytokines
- Excess glutamate (which can cause neurotoxicity)

Similarly, when we maintain aponia (absence of physical pain), we reduce:

- Substance P (pain neurotransmitter)
- Inflammatory prostaglandins
- Stress-induced histamine release
- Excessive oxidative compounds

Yapijakis demonstrates that these biochemical reductions through ataraxia and aponia lead to:

1. Better immune system function
2. Reduced cellular aging
3. Improved cardiovascular health
4. Enhanced neuroplasticity

The modern medical evidence strongly supports Epicurus' ancient insight that katastemic pleasure (stable well-being) represents our optimal biological state.

So another visual (instead of a jar) could be a flowing stream. Nature gives us pleasure to guide our optimal, healthy flow; and pain appears when we are flowing past our natural boundaries. This is not a perfect analogy, but a different way of guiding our thoughts and actions.

Thanks for the insight from the LT team!☐☐