

# Horace - Buying Pleasure With Pain is Harmful (????)

Post by “Patrikios” of August 27, 2025 at 12:43 PM

## [Quote from Don](#)

I don't have time right now, but it might be instructive to read the first few letters in Book 1:

The Project Gutenberg eBook of THE WORKS OF HORACE, by C. Smart, A.M..

to see what Epicurean themes - if any - jump out and whether Horace is providing his own take on the philosophy (whether or not he's a pig in the herd) or not.

## [Don](#)

Thanks for the link to the Works of [#Horace](#).

In the 2nd Epistle, **To Lollius**, I interpret that statement as the need to apply prudence. Epicurus taught that wisdom lies in choosing pleasures that maintain long-term well-being rather than short-term gratification, and that may incur some short-term pain.

I found some other interesting Epicurean references in the Letters.

In Epistle 4 **To Albius Tibullus**, it appears that Horace is practicing the Epicurean tradition of **suaveness** in praising the good features of his critic. Then Horace uses **frank speech** to encourage Albius to reconsider the life Horace is living as “**a hog of Epicurus' herd**” as not such a bad life.

## Quote

*Albius, thou candid critic of my discourses, what shall I say you are now doing in the country about Pedum? Writing what may excel the works of Cassius Parmensis; or sauntering silently among the healthful groves, concerning yourself about every thing worthy a wise and good man? You were not a body without a mind. The gods have given you a beautiful form, the gods [have given] you wealth, and the faculty of enjoying it.*

...

*When you have a mind to laugh, you shall see me fat and sleek with good keeping, a **hog of Epicurus' herd.***

Also, in Epistle 18 To Lollius, Horace appears to be explaining how to achieve ataraxia and a life of wellbeing.

Quote

*In every thing you must read and consult the learned, by what means you may be enabled to pass your life in an agreeable manner: that insatiable desire may not agitate and torment you, nor the fear and hope of things that are but of little account: whether learning acquires virtue, or nature bestows it? What lessens cares, what may endear you to yourself? What perfectly renders the temper calm; honor or enticing lucre, or a secret passage and the path of an unnoticed life?*

I find this question about what "**renders the temper calm**" aligns with

**Vatican Saying 79:** *"The man who is serene causes no disturbance to himself or to another."*

This connects to Epicurus' fundamental teaching about ataraxia (tranquility of mind).