

My personal, cursory interpretation of Epicurus. Please feel free to correct me.

Post by "Cassius" of December 22, 2025 at 3:50 PM

Wow that is very detailed and well thought out. Thanks for posting. I have just a couple of initial comments on first reading:

1. You appear to me the type of person to whom the DeWitt book would appeal and be very valuable. If you don't have it I hope you will get it.

[Quote from Daniel188](#)

16. Epicurus places pleasure as the goal of the good life. Pleasure characterized by ataraxia, or freedom from pain

The sentence or phrase "pleasure characterized by ataraxia or freedom from pain" I would say will need lots of elaboration because I would argue that all pleasure "is" absence of pain and placing "ataraxia" in a central role without elaboration can lead to very dangerous tangents. Nature gives us only pleasure and pain, not ataraxia.

[Quote from Daniel188](#)

18. Some might argue that pleasure cannot be a goal and might set as a goal something abstract, such as virtue or some ideal unsupported by pleasure

Yes. I have personally modified my terminology over time to place less negative connotation on "abstractions" but I do think it is valuable to think about in terms of what is "real".

[Quote from Daniel188](#)

21. By focusing on abstractions, we become bogged down in logical and dialectical considerations, never achieving certainty. This is evident in how people can argue passionately about whether someone is "good" or "bad." Two different people can have two different perspectives on what is "virtuous," and if we ourselves strive for virtue, we must take these considerations into account since we treat virtue as an absolute. Ultimately, we will have trouble determining what to do

Same comment as above. Abstractions formed properly are very important and even necessary. Epicurean philosophy itself is an abstraction. It's probably more a question of how the abstractions is formed than the fact of being an abstraction.

[Quote from Daniel188](#)

25. The doctrine of ataraxia is also useful in thinking about pleasure. Ataraxia is a state of undisturbed well-being, free from physical and mental pain. It is useful because it allows us to examine our state and shows the limits of pleasure. It allows us to examine our state by directing us to reflect on what causes us pain. If we know which desires cause us pain (that is, interfere with our ataraxia), we can satisfy or suppress them depending on the circumstances and the nature of the desire

As indicated above I would now say that the better term for the goal is happiness or eudaemonia or Felicity and not ataraxia or even aponia. One of the most clear examples to use to consider that is that Epicurus said his last days were among his happiest but he was not without pain or disturbance. And if he has held "absence of disturbance" to be his primary directive he would have stayed home and tended a fig garden instead of leading a revolutionary philosophical movement that challenged every power structure of his day.

Thanks for posting!