

# Neither "ataraxia" nor "not ataraxia", but "Joy as the goal"

Post by "Kalosyni" of February 25, 2026 at 10:08 AM

There is no mandate by gods that Epicurean philosophical thought should be promoted for the sake of progeny or for the future benefit of humanity (unlike various world religions) and there is no mandate to convert people to Epicureanism. Given that this is so, what likelihood is there on the continuation on into the future? Shall we then just relax and "enjoy the ride"? Or for any of us, is our main driving force for promotion so that we have "like-minded friends" to discuss Epicurean philosophy?

There is no judge in the afterlife to declare that an Epicurean did not do what they were required to do. And indeed there are no requirements for doing things.

As Epicureans, we do seem to fall into two "philosophical camps"...those that hold to the importance of ataraxia and aponia (free from physical and mental pain) and those that hold to the importance of a life filled up with prudent pleasures (both active and static, and more pleasures than pains).

I would like to argue that we should not fall into either of these two camps, but first here is a comparison of this either/or dichotomy (fyi...made exclusively by me, and not AI):

## **Ataraxia as the Goal**

Seeking out the painful aspects of your life and removing what you can

Being content with what you already have

Motivated by the desire to remove pain

Potential consequences: over-emphasis on relaxation and non-activity / non-effort. Frustration if you are not able to remove pains in your life.

## **Pleasure as the Goal**

Seeking out the pleasurable aspects of your life and adding in what you can

Looking for more than what you already have

Motivated by the desire to add pleasure

Potential consequences: over-emphasis on sensory pleasures. Feelings of dissatisfaction when you aren't able to experience what you want to experience (both physical and mental).

I would like to propose a third way..."Joy as the goal" as I think that this puts a better spin on what is meant by "pleasure" in Epicurean philosophy...and I think it also leads to greater motivation to "get off one's bum" and make effort toward a good life. I do seem to remember

that there is at least one reference to joy in the extant texts, but will need to track that down.

I welcome any thoughts 😊