

# Discussion of Article: "On Pleasure, Pain and Happiness"

Post by "Elayne" of July 20, 2019 at 6:13 PM

Ok, I have inserted a section on Aponia and Ataraxia. I had actually already referenced PD 3 just prior to where I inserted the new section, so I have removed that reference to consolidate things and replaced it with PD 3 in the new section. Happily for me, this meant I didn't have to re-order my end notes!

This results in hitting on the "only two" aspect several times in different sections, but I think this is such a critical point that it is better to repeat it in different ways.

So you don't have to go back and hunt for that section, here it is below. Elli, what do you think?

## Ataraxia and Aponia

I have mentioned ataraxia as a word commonly misunderstood by neo-Epicureans. Some neo-Epicureans make the mistake of thinking ataraxia is a "fancy pleasure", and they put this new interpretation of Epicurus' words as their goal instead of the real life pleasure he recommended. Because Buddhism has become a fad for many Westerners, I have seen some conflate detachment – part of the way Buddhists see tranquility—with ataraxia. This leads neo-Epicureans to think that they should not seek pleasure but just take a detached perspective on life and not get ruffled. They may think this is "fancy pleasure". It is not pleasure—it is a disconnection from reality which leads to pain.

So what is ataraxia? What are those neo-Epicureans missing? Ataraxia is the Greek word for "without agitation", and agitation is pain of the mind. Ataraxia is paired with aponia, "without pain" of the body. If you apply these descriptions, without pain of body and mind, to your cup of feelings, it should be clear by now that you will be left with only pleasure of body and mind, not some alternative to pleasure or pain. Remember, there are only two options, pleasure and pain-- not three options, pleasure, absence of pain, and pain.

A person with ataraxia and aponia is enjoying the full wellbeing of pleasure, the most pleasure humanly possible, in their entire body and mind! And this wonderful feeling is available to us during the course of many ordinary days in an ordinary human life, if we plan wisely.

From now on, when you read commentary saying Epicurus wasn't advising actual pleasure but just to be untroubled, as if there is even the possibility of freedom from pain and agitation which is not wholly pleasurable, you will know that writer has completely and thoroughly

misunderstood Epicurus.

When you read PD 3 in this light, you will have an accurate understanding: "The limit of quantity in pleasures is the removal of all that is painful. Wherever pleasure is present, as long as it is there, there is neither pain of body nor of mind, nor of both at once"(6).