

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

Post by "wbernys" of May 3, 2026 at 6:16 AM

[Quote from Matteng](#)

What is the difference between mental aponia and ataraxia ?

I don't think there really is distinction, I suspect they are just synonyms without definition. Like Joy and Delight. I suspect when Epicurus used these words they were basically stand ins for what we today call Serenity and Tranquility.

A basic translation to catch the idea from the fragment in Diogenes is "Aponia (Serenity) and Ataraxia (tranquility) are pleasures characterized by a state of rest, whereas Chara (Joy) and Euprosune (Delight) are pleasures characterized by Motion or activity". Two synonyms for each thing used commonly.

As i've looked more into this i think i've agreed more with [Cassius](#) that Kinetic and Katastematic distinction has been heavily overlapped by modern commentators.

Important note I recently looked into which I think some people may not know, Epicurus thinks pleasure is a complete perfected unity, which is always in it's perfect state and never mixes with pain to form like "80 percent pleasure, 20 percent pain", as Usener 421 explicitly says "since Epicurus does not believe that pain is mixed with pleasure, nor indeed the bad with the good"

Furthermore, PD3 is explicit that "whenever pleasure is present, as long as it is uninterrupted, there is neither pain in body or mind, or both together". In PD4 as well he doesn't comfort us against disease by saying pleasure can mix with the disease, but that disease allows more periods of pleasure (a perfect complete feeling) than pain (an alien bad feeling)

Serenity, Tranquility, Joy, and Delight, are thereby equal variations of pleasure, but not increases, which just take different shapes and I think [Kalosyni](#) idea that Joy should be seen as the goal, not pleasure, is misleading for this reason, for this would suggest we should prioritize moments of joy even if they lead to losses of tranquility in more moments. Since it wrongly thinks Joy is an increase and not merely a variation of the same perfect unity of pleasure.