

Ongoing Discussion of Jack Gedney's "Untroubled" Substack Blog

Post by "Cassius" of May 15, 2026 at 8:37 AM

This is not meant to be nearly as negative as it is going to sound. Be sure to read to the last line of my post.

But - here's a quote from the article:

Quote

O'Keefe's latest piece on Epicurean ethics is another work of helpful synthesis. While many correctly note that Epicurean "hedonism" is primarily about the reduction of pain, that bald summary can overlook the next layer of analysis: Epicurus believes that avoiding bodily pain is pretty simple, and that therefore most of our therapeutic attention should go to avoiding *mental* pain. The largest component of mental pain is fear. (Epicurus does also discuss other disturbing emotions such as regret and envy.)

**"Correctly note that Epicurean "hedonism" is primarily about the reduction of pain!"
????**

As a technical statement this means nothing different from saying "primarily about *pleasure*" because absence of pain and pleasure are the same thing.

As a choice of wording in presenting the philosophy it is disastrous. And the elaboration that follows it just digs the hole deeper. The whole line of thinking is not only inaccurate, but it encourages the worst tendencies of seeing the world as mostly suffering, as if through a Buddhist or Stoic prism.

I've read enough of OKeefe over the years to think that this problem isn't attributable to Jack Gedney, but rather it's the sense I've gotten from reading O'Keefe directly. This is exactly why I take O'Keefe very cautiously and do not prefer to cite his articles, even though they often contain very good research and information.

I don't think this is the way Emily Austin conveys Epicurus ("Living for *Pleasure*") and I would consider her work head and shoulders better than OKeefe's.

Other than that I applaud Jack Gedney (I don't know who he is either) for his activity!