

# Welcome Max Duboff

Post by "Max DuBoff" of July 7, 2026 at 3:55 PM

## [Quote from Cassius](#)

As to what that would mean, Epicurus wrote on his last day, in real physical agony, that the joy of memory and friendship that day outweighed (or arrayed against in the military metaphor) the pain in his body. This is a direct claim that a great pleasure was worth to him a very great pain, in full net balance. Regardless about what we think of whether he changed his calculation as the pain got worse (which would be entirely reasonable to do), Epicurus did not avoid or forfeit those pleasures in advance just because great pain was involved.

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Second thing, maybe even more important. You've now stated at least twice that you don't know why Epicurus would be committed to the claim that a blessed life has to be complete or perfect in the Platonic sense. Everything you're saying after that , that additive pleasures can't confer blessedness, friendship is instrumental rather than itself a pleasure/good , seems built entirely on that starting point. If you can't explain that reasoning, why would we find it persuasive to overturn all the many statements commending Pleasure as the goal?

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I don't think "tranquility as prime directive" survives contact with either the deathbed letter or [PD27](#). I'd like to hear you take those two head-on., because that's what is of most benefit to the forum - providing understandable answers that are of practical use to the kind of normal people to whom Epicurus appealed in the ancient world. It can't have required a degree in philosophy to understand Epicurus in the ancient world, and it can't require that now.

[helpful material about Cassius Longinus and Cicero]

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Yes, I've been really struggling with the deathbed letter recently (as I think I said upthread). But my basic response will be: it's because the pain doesn't get in the way of blessedness. The question is always whether pain interferes with blessedness, not simply whether pain is present. (I develop this sort of approach in my paper on self-sacrifice as well.) Thanks for the opportunity to clarify my approach to pain in the example I offered; I wasn't careful enough to indicate the question of whether foreseen pain is likely to interfere with blessedness. In cases

where pain won't interfere with blessedness, I don't think the two decision standards are different. Epicurus *does* claim to have tranquility in the deathbed letter, so this isn't a case of tranquility conflicting with other goods (although it might still be hard to explain how he's able to maintain tranquility).

I think the evidence that Epicurus believed a complete life can't get any better is clear; I don't know how else to interpret KD 3, 18, and 20-21, and Men. 128 and 131. And again, we don't need to overturn any statements saying that pleasure is the good or the goal, because katastematic pleasure *is* a pleasure. Saying that pleasure is the good/goal doesn't give us any guidance, in itself, on *which* pleasures to pursue. And Epicurus certainly doesn't want us to pursue all pleasures equally (a Cyrenaic-style position). He thinks we should be discriminating when it comes to pleasures.

My short answer to the material about Cassius Longinus and Cicero is that tranquility *is* a pleasure, so it's always proper when someone speaks of pleasure as the good. We rank goods, but what's the most important good is one of the goods.

So, to sum up, the "tranquility as prime directive" view is only a view about which pleasures to pursue; it's not to deny that Epicurus is a hedonist.

(Separately, I think Epicurus should've embraced value dualism rather than hedonism, arguing that the absence of pain and pleasure are both intrinsic goods; but my interpretation above stands even without this point.)