

Experiential Avoidance of Pain / Aversion to Pain

Post by "Cassius" of July 12, 2026 at 8:05 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

Jack Gedney has struck a blow for Epicurus in two comments to that Robertson article! Huzzah!

Am I reading this below correctly? Donald Robertson asserts directly to Jack Gedney that the supreme goal of Epicureanism is freedom from physical and mental pain and Jack does not respond by disagreeing with him and correcting him to say that the Supreme Goal is pleasure??? And Jack responds without even *mentioning* the word pleasure?

Quote

[Donald J. Robertson](#)

The supreme goal of Epicureanism is freedom from both physical and mental pain (ataraxia and aponia) so I would say that goes quite far beyond what you describe here. It's certainly true that the Epicureans avoided unnecessary pain but that alone is potentially a very extensive definition.

[Jack GedneyUntroubled7h](#)

I'm happy to admit that avoiding pain encompasses a great deal of therapeutic territory in Epicureanism. All the things I mentioned can be placed under that broad umbrella: eliminating unwarranted fears (about death and the gods, for instance), practical prudence (frugal living, cultivating friendship), training of one's habits (by temporary dietary restriction, for instance), and avoiding unfulfillable desires (as for wealth and fame) are all ways of reducing pain.

I don't see how any of that qualifies as the kind of "experiential avoidance" that modern psychotherapists would warn against, however. If someone has a fear of driving or crowds, then avoiding driving and crowds for the rest of your life is certainly a poor way of developing emotional resilience. I think Epicureans and Stoics would be in perfect agreement about that. But no one goes to a therapist to be cured of their measured decision not to pursue great wealth and political power, so Epicurean "avoidance" does not seem parallel to this kind of psychological tendency to me. Since the only direct

textual evidence the article supplies for Epicurean "unfeelingness" is the mistranslated passage from Seneca, I'm unclear where you're deriving that impression from.

Maybe I'm missing something! Bonus admoneri gaudet, as Seneca says.

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