

FollowUp On Quote Submitted By Pacatus - "It is not a sign of good health to be well adjusted to a sick society."

Post by "Patrikios" of July 20, 2026 at 6:20 PM

[Cassius](#)

As a support tool to help my understanding, I asked my personal AI for examples like this.

Quote

[undefined]Philo[/undefined] Thanks for citing the authors who support the 'absence of pain' equals 'full-cup' of [undefined][#pleasure](#)[/undefined]. While there are other modern authors who write about Cicero's interpretation of katastematic state being non-sensory, they also write about the direct teachings of [undefined][#epicurus](#)[/undefined] that also reflect the 'full-cup' katastematic sensory experience. So what modern authors state that [undefined][#epicurean](#) doctrine[/undefined] is about achieving a non-sensory 'absence of pain' focused on ataraxia?

Philo (AI persona) response.

Quote

It is a perceptive question, friend. The "zero-state" interpretation—the idea that *ataraxia* is a non-sensory, passive void—is so pervasive that it often appears in the works of scholars who are otherwise quite sympathetic to Epicurus. They often fall into this trap by prioritizing the "negative" definitions of *ataraxia* and *aponia* over the "positive" sensory reality that Epicurus himself insisted upon.

Many of the authors who perpetuate this view do so by treating the *katastematic* state as a distinct, higher-order condition that is separate from the "kinetic" pleasures of the senses. While they may not always use the phrase "non-sensory" explicitly, their arguments effectively relegate sensory pleasure to a secondary or "lower" status, leaving the "highest good" as a state of mere absence.

You will find this tendency in several notable places:

- **David Sedley:** In his 1998 article, *Inferential Foundations of Epicurean Ethics*, Sedley asserts that "katastematic pleasure is absence of pain," rather than the more accurate "pleasure is the absence of pain." By framing it this way, he

inadvertently deprecates kinetic pleasures, treating them as mere tools to reach a static, non-sensory goal.

- **A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley:** In their influential *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (1987), they often present the *katastematic* state in a way that emphasizes the "absence" aspect, which can lead readers to conclude that the goal is a state of neutrality rather than a "full cup" of positive sensation.
- **Various Academic Doxographers:** As Boris [Nikolsky](#) and Mathew Wenham have pointed out, much of the modern confusion stems from the "Academic" tradition—scholars who rely heavily on Cicero's *De Finibus*. Because Cicero was writing from a Stoic-Platonic perspective, he framed Epicureanism as a "zero-state" philosophy to make it easier to attack. Modern commentators who rely on Cicero as their primary source often inherit this bias, presenting *ataraxia* as a state of *apatheia* (lack of feeling) rather than the vibrant, sensory-rich life Epicurus actually described.
- **James Warren:** In his work *Facing Death: Epicurus and His Critics* (2004), Warren discusses the Epicurean "complete life" in a way that some critics argue relies on the assumption that pleasure cannot be increased beyond the absence of pain, which can be read as a deflationary, "zero-state" interpretation of the *telos*.

The common denominator among these authors is a reliance on the rigid two-tier classification of pleasures. By separating "static" from "active" so sharply, they create a hierarchy where the "static" state is seen as the true, final goal, and the "active" sensory pleasures are seen as mere decoration or temporary relief.

It is a subtle but profound shift. When you read these authors, you are seeing the "standard interpretation" in action—the very one that Cicero constructed to make Epicurus look like he was advocating for a life of "bedridden" passivity. As we have discussed, this is a distortion of the "full cup" model, which recognizes that the absence of pain is not a void, but the very condition that allows us to experience the full, vivid, and sensory richness of life.

Are any of these citations in line with your list of minimalist epicurean authors?