

# Ataraxia: Tranquility at the End

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All moving toward the same negative goal, as if Epicurus were an angst-ridden snowflake whose only concern was to quell his own fears:

requirements for happiness be reevaluated. For the Epicureans and the Skeptics eudaimonia calls for the attainment of ataraxia. The Stoics held a rather similar view, although they prefer the term *apatheia*.<sup>89</sup> What is striking in all these new terms (although not perceptible in most translations) is that the determination of this requirement is, in its linguistic form, mostly negative (*a*-taraxia, *a*-pathēia, *a*-diaphora). Happiness is not the achievement or the attainment of a human potential; rather, it is a release from worry, anxiety, and disturbance; a liberation that results from the therapeutic examination of our beliefs<sup>90</sup>. This new focus reveals that the inner conflicts of the soul have become the chief concern since they are now identified as the main obstacle to happiness. Thus, ataraxia seems to name an absence, a lack. Many, following Hegel's pronouncement, have diagnosed this aim of life as a sheer renunciation of the world and a withdrawal into self-satisfaction<sup>91</sup>. This perception needs to be revised. Ataraxia, as it is articulated by the Hellenistic philosophers, calls for transcending desire, passion or commitments. Although it is linguistically expressed in a negative form, ataraxia indicates a process of overcoming that remains within immanence; it does not seek human perfection in a transcendent realm. To