

# Another mainstream article claiming ataraxia is the goal

Post by “Kalosyni” of September 22, 2022 at 4:05 PM

Yet another Epicurean article claiming that *ataraxia* is the goal:

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## [The Epicurean guide to digital life](#)

It's an Ancient Greek philosophy known for its lessons on material existence and pleasure-seeking. So what might Epicureanism say about living well on social...

## [BBC - Homepage](#)

An excerpt from the article:

### Quote

Despite how that sounds, the Epicureans did not feel that this consisted in a life of sex, drugs and dithyrambic poetry (Dionysiac party songs). Rather, they felt, the pursuit of pleasure would be best effectuated by a simple life – and Epicurus himself, and his followers, were known for a moderately ascetic lifestyle, eschewing the excesses of sensual gratification. (This makes it especially ironic that in modern English idiom "epicurean" often refers to foodie culture, a legacy of later misinterpretations and critics of the doctrine.)

For pleasure, as they conceived it, is not something you add up, cumulatively – rather, it is defined negatively, as the absence of pain. The term for this freedom from pain was *ataraxia* – literally, a state of not-being-shaken-up, a freedom from turbulence.

Preserving your *ataraxia* was a matter of balance. Should you drink some wine? Sure! – a little. Should you have sex? Yes! – some. If resisting these urges disturbs your mind, then satisfy them with moderation – there's no moral superstructure barring you from doing so. But don't overdo it, for it will shake you up, disrupting your *ataraxia*.

In certain ways Epicureanism is strikingly congenial to modern thought – it seems to foreshadow the physicalism that underlies modern science, and the pragmatic hedonism that characterises secular society. In my academic life, whenever I've asked

students to choose the school of philosophy they'd join, a majority of them have declared, "the pleasure one!"

If "freedom from pain" is the goal, then there are lots of things we will never do, and some people may end up choosing suicide since this is the ultimate freedom from pain.

Would it be better not drive your car anywhere because you don't want to experience some "turbulence" (mental pain)? But the truth is that the small amount of mental disturbance we feel during driving leads to greater pleasure later when you arrive at your destination. Drivers in the city that I now live are much more reckless than in the town I used to live in, and I have narrowly escaped car accidents at least 3 times in the last 4 months.

I've been think that Epicurus must have provided therapeutic teachings (but they were lost???) because when you are alive you will encounter pain and "turbulence". We choose to navigate through life by seeking out pleasure and enjoyment, and also by effectively (and rationally) dealing with mental pain which arises.

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## **Post by "Cassius" of September 22, 2022 at 4:55 PM**

That article certainly fits the classic pattern:

1 - Epicurus held pleasure to be the goal.

2 - But when he said "pleasure" he really meant "absence of pain."

3 - That means we should above all our single-minded goal should be to minimize pain - come hell or high water, we should make all our decisions on avoiding the slighted pain or disturbance whatsoever!

4 - We now see that Epicurus was an ascetic and really didn't mean anything about pleasure at all.

5 - We can't achieve that goal of being painless, so we can't be good Epicureans, but the nearest way we can simulate the goal is to live an absolutely minimalist lifestyle.

6 - And in doing so we'll find a way to mention how much we like Martha Nussbaum's pro-Stoic book "Therapy of Desire."

That item six is especially key! 😊

I think in implying that we might have lost the "therapeutic" portions of the Epicurean texts you're connecting to what these mainstream articles imply. In contrast to focusing on pain, I would say to them that the entire philosophy IS therapeutic if you rightly consider that the goal is NOT "absence of pain" but is instead a life that is as fully pleasurable as possible (which means one that is undiluted by any more pain than is necessary). And that means - as Epicurus explicitly said - that we will sometimes choose pain when it makes more pleasure possible, or avoids more pain. Once that is recognized there's no way to come to the conclusion that "avoiding pain" is a complete statement of the goal.

I doubt very many ancient Greeks or Romans really had a hard time understanding this, and it really takes an attitude of playing games with words to make the issue sound difficult. Cicero and his lawyerly arguing set the pattern of taking the issue out of context, but if you keep in mind that the goal of therapy would not be to "minimize pain" but instead "to bring the person back to health" and you understand also (as you stated) that every human life involves some degree of pain just to survive, then I think the issues clarify pretty readily.

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## Post by "Cassius" of September 23, 2022 at 6:29 AM

Here is an example we have discussed before that illustrates the same thing. I have underlined two sentences to stress what I see as the important off-key statements that lead to problems:

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[Achieving Tranquility: Epicurus on Living without Fear](#) Tim O'Keefe, Georgia State University

[Penultimate draft. Final version is forthcoming in The Oxford Handbook of Hellenistic Philosophy, eds. Jacob

Klein and Nathan Powers, Oxford University Press. Please cite that version once it is published.]

1. Introduction: the place of eliminating fear in Epicurean ethics and physics

Eliminating fear is at the center of Epicurean ethics, because of their idiosyncratic doctrines regarding pleasure. The Epicureans are hedonists, maintaining that only pleasure is intrinsically good and only pain intrinsically bad. (Cicero Fin. 1.29). They distinguish between bodily and mental pleasures and pains. Bodily pleasures and pains—such as the feelings of eating a bacon cheeseburger, suffering from hunger, or being punched in the face—concern the present state of one's body. But mental pleasures and pains—such as a thrill of excitement, or a

pang of regret—encompass the past and future too. For this reason, the Epicureans think that mental pleasures and pains are greater than bodily ones. (Cicero Fin. 1.55-57) When people

initially think of pleasure, they often have in mind some process of active titillation of the senses or of the mind, such as a yummy sensation of eating a bacon cheeseburger or a thrill of excitement—which the Epicureans call “kinetic” pleasures. But the absence of pain, such as being free of hunger after having eaten the cheeseburger, is not merely a neutral state

between pleasure and pain. Instead, it is itself a kind of pleasure—a “static” pleasure, as opposed to the kinetic pleasures. (Cicero Fin. 1.37-38) Indeed, the Epicureans proclaim that the absence of pain marks the limit of pleasure, and that once this limit is reached, the pleasure one experiences cannot be increased. (KD 3, KD 18) 1

Given this pair of distinctions, the Epicureans maintain that the main constituent of the pleasant life, and hence, of the happy life, is the static mental pleasure of ataraxia, or tranquility—the state of being free from mental disturbance. So while it is accurate to call the Epicureans hedonists, it might be less misleading to say that they are “tranquillists.” Fear is the primary obstacle to achieving tranquility, and so Epicurean ethics centers on eliminating fear. (It also concerns itself with eliminating other sources of mental disturbance, such as regret and envy.) In fact, it might rightly be said that all of Epicurean philosophy centers on eliminating fear. That is because Epicureanism is ruthlessly consistent in its hedonism, holding that everything we do—including philosophizing—is justified only to the extent that it contributes to a pleasant life.

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My comment:

The thrust of the Okeefe argument is the first underlined sentence: “Eliminating fear is at the center of Epicurean ethics, because of their idiosyncratic doctrines regarding pleasure.” I believe this is wrong because I do not believe that Epicurus held “idiosyncratic doctrines regarding pleasure.”

Quote from Merriam Webster

Note: “idiosyncratic” at [Merriam Webster](#):

Definition of idiosyncrasy

1a: a peculiarity of constitution or temperament : an individualizing characteristic or quality

b: individual hypersensitiveness (as to a drug or food)

2: characteristic peculiarity (as of temperament)

broadly : ECCENTRICITY

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In this case I believe the meaning of idiosyncratic intended by OKeefe is "Eccentric" for the purpose of conveying that Epicurus did not hold a normal view of pleasure at all, but defined pleasure in an unconventional way that leads to unconventional results. The eccentric and unconventional result allegedly identified by Okeefe is in the second sentence that I underlined:

"Given this pair of distinctions, the Epicureans maintain that the main constituent of the pleasant life, and hence, of the happy life, is the static mental pleasure of ataraxia, or tranquility—the state of being free from mental disturbance."

Okeefe and other similar writers would have us believe that Epicurus held "the main constituent of the pleasant life to be "the state of being free from mental disturbance."

The heart of their argument to that effect are references to the limit of pleasure in the letter to Menoecus and in PD3 and [PD18](#), plus reference to statements such as in Torquatus to the effect that:

Quote from Cicero's Torquatus

*"For the pleasure which we pursue is not that alone which excites the natural constitution itself by a kind of sweetness, and of which the sensual enjoyment is attended by a kind of agreeableness, but we look upon the greatest pleasure as that which is enjoyed when all pain is removed."*

and

*[38] Therefore Epicurus refused to allow that there is any middle term between pain and pleasure; what was thought by some to be a middle term, the absence of all pain, was not only itself pleasure, but the highest pleasure possible. Surely any one who is conscious of his own condition must needs be either in a state of pleasure or in a state of pain. Epicurus thinks that the highest degree of pleasure is defined by the removal of all pain, so that pleasure may afterwards exhibit diversities and differences but is incapable of increase or extension.*

Are these views "eccentric" or "unconventional"? If so what is eccentric and unconventional about them?

My belief is that - rightly understood - there is nothing eccentric or unconventional about these statements at all, and the way to reconcile the terminology to our own conventional understanding is right there in the texts, in statements such as:

*"Surely any one who is conscious of his own condition must needs be either in a state of pleasure or in a state of pain."*

Epicurus has defined clearly (and this is stated in Diogenes Laertius as well) that there are only two feelings: (1) pleasure and (2) pain. Every one of the myriad experiences that we feel going on in our bodies in our minds from moment to moment and throughout our lives is therefore categorizable as either a pleasurable or a painful experience.

The analysis which is compelled by categorizing every experience as either pleasure or pain is that we can and should evaluate our experiences, both at each moment and throughout our lifetimes, as a "sum" in which we individually assess the "balance" of pleasures offset against pains. Just as we conceptually choose to divide all experiences into either pleasure or pain, we conceptually view our total experience (by which we judge whether we are happy or unhappy) as an individual feeling of assessment about the totality of all our experiences. We offset the pains of life against the pleasures and we ask ourselves "Were the pleasures we obtained worth the pain that it cost us?"

The part of the analysis where Cicero and others exploit the potential confusion is that we may not normally viewing our happiness as a mathematical sum of pleasures offset with pains. However it makes perfect sense to do so because in the Epicurean worldview we understand that there is no absolute definition of happiness and no supernatural god blessing our lives as happy or unhappy. Just as we are bodily the sum of our atoms and void, we are mentally the sum of our experiences (all of which we have chosen to categorize as either pleasurable or painful) and it makes perfect sense for us to add them all up so we can both feel and think about "Was it worth it?"

And because it makes perfect sense to evaluate our lives (remembering that we have defined the pursuit of pleasure to be the goal) we want to add up our experiences and evaluate them as whole to see how much (if at all) the pleasures of life have predominated over the pains. In doing so, we have to remember the subjectivity of pleasures and pains, which makes it impossible for us to use a Benthamite approach and somehow assign particular units of pleasure and pain to each experience. Everyone evaluates sex vs food vs material luxuries differently, and even in their own single lives evaluates them differently at different periods of time. So we can't suggest a "perfect mix" of experiences as the 'best' pleasures or combinations of pleasures or pains to pursue.

But what we can do is to observe that the "best" way of life would be - conceptually and in general - the life in which pleasures most predominate over pains. And a perfectly reasonable way of expressing that goal conceptually is "a life free from pain" ---- because we know that that means in our analysis framework a life full of pleasures!

Viewed in this way there is nothing idiosyncratic or eccentric or unusual in Epicurus' approach whatsoever. The philosopher who advocates the pursuit of pleasure is saying nothing more than that the best life is that in which pleasures so predominate over pain that pains are

reduced to zero. There is no need to infer that the philosophy who valued clarity and stripping away error would have us invert the normal definition of pleasure and accept a paradoxical definition that implies to us the absence of pleasure.

The "main constituent" of the pleasant life is not found in "tranquility" or "freedom from disturbance" but exactly where Epicurus clearly placed it, in the same place that the young of all living things place it before they have been perverted by error - in Pleasure. There are no absolute measurements of which pleasures are greater or lesser than others, and which pains are so great that they outweigh many pleasures. It is up to us to subjectively judge in our own circumstances what combination of mental and bodily feelings provide to us the happiest mix that is available to us. Given this viewpoint you would not expect to find an elaborate description of "absence of pain" or "tranquility" as if it were some exquisite jewel to be savored in some special way. What you would expect to find instead would be an elaborate description of the practical way to offset pains against pleasures with a goal of elevating the pleasures in our subjective analysis to as close to 100% as possible (which means getting pains as close to 0% as possible). And that is exactly what you find in both the letter to Menoeceus and, more expansively, in Torquatus:

Quote from Cicero's Torquatus

But I must explain to you how all this mistaken idea of reprobating pleasure and extolling pain arose. To do so, I will give you a complete account of the system, and expound the actual teachings of the great explorer of the truth, the master-builder of human happiness. No one rejects, dislikes or avoids pleasure itself, because it is pleasure, but because those who do not know how to pursue pleasure rationally encounter consequences that are extremely painful. Nor again is there anyone who loves or pursues or desires to obtain pain of itself, because it is pain, but because occasionally circumstances occur in which toil and pain can procure him some great pleasure. To take a trivial example, which of us ever undertakes laborious physical exercise, except to obtain some advantage from it? But who has any right to find fault with a man who chooses to enjoy a pleasure that has no annoying consequences, or one who avoids a pain that produces no resultant pleasure?

On the other hand, we denounce with righteous indignation and dislike men who are so beguiled and demoralized by the charms of the pleasure of the moment, so blinded by desire, that they cannot foresee the pain and trouble that are bound to ensue; and equal blame belongs to those who fail in their duty through weakness of will, which is the same as saying through shrinking from toil and pain. These cases are perfectly simple and easy to distinguish. In a free hour, when our power of choice is untrammelled and when nothing prevents our being able to do what we like best, every pleasure is to be welcomed and every pain avoided.

But in certain emergencies and owing to the claims of duty or the obligations of business it will frequently occur that pleasures have to be repudiated and annoyances accepted. The wise man therefore always holds in these matters to this principle of selection: he rejects pleasures to secure other greater pleasures, or else he endures pains to avoid worse pains.

In short, once it is seen that there is nothing eccentric whatsoever about Epicurus' reasoning, it becomes easy to see that the weirdness and the error that disconcerts our intuitive understanding of pleasure is not in Epicurus. The error was planted in the twisted interpretations of Cicero and those who follow him who wish to tame and neuter the true thrust of Epicurean philosophy: Pleasure - as the term is normally understood and subjectively evaluated sum of all mental and bodily experiences.

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## **Post by “Don” of September 23, 2022 at 8:02 AM**

First thoughts:

It may be admissible to describe Epicurus's description of the highest pleasure being the absence of pain as "idiosyncratic" simply because he shifts focus. It would be like describing a full glass of water as the absence of air in the glass. But the \*real\* import of saying there's not air in the glass is an "idiosyncratic" way of emphasized the point that the glass is completely filled to the rim with water. Your glass is completely filled with no room for any more water. Same with pleasure and pain. You wouldn't order a glass of water by saying "I'd like a glass completely devoid of air" unless you were trying to make some point. I think that's what Epicurus was doing with his absence of pain terminology. A life filled to the rim with pleasure \*can be\* thought of as a life lived in the absence of pain. It's not some arcane thing like some authors and academics try to make it out to be.

Another first thought:

So many authors and academics completely skip over this line that's right there:

Quote from Cicero's Torquatus

*"For the pleasure which we pursue is \*\*\*not that alone\*\*\* which excites the natural constitution itself by a kind of sweetness, and of which the sensual enjoyment is attended by a kind of agreeableness, but we look upon the greatest pleasure as that which is enjoyed when all pain is removed."*

Not that alone! So "we pursue" that which excites the natural constitution itself by a kind of sweetness, and of which the sensual enjoyment is attended by a kind of agreeableness, but just not only that. We pursue both x and y.

I maintain that cultivating tranquility is an important component of an Epicurean life, an Epicurean practice, but that is not at the expense of that "which the sensual enjoyment is attended by a kind of agreeableness." It's both.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of September 23, 2022 at 8:18 AM**

Was Cicero capable of and familiar with the tactic of taking words out of context and giving them meanings not originally intended or understood when it is to his advantage?

Consider this from *De Officiis* (Marcus Tullius Cicero. *De Officiis*. Translated by Walter Miller. Loeb Edition. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913.)

33 Injustice often arises also through chicanery, that is, through an over-subtle and even fraudulent construction of the law. This it is that gave rise to the now familiar saw, "More law, less justice." Through such interpretation also a great deal of wrong is committed in transactions between state and state; thus, when a truce had been made with the enemy for thirty days, a famous general went to ravaging their fields by night, because, he said, the truce stipulated "days," not nights. Not even our own countryman's action is to be commended, if what is told of Quintus Fabius Labeo is true - or whoever it was (for I have no authority but hearsay): appointed by the Senate to arbitrate a boundary dispute between Nola and Naples, he took up the case and interviewed both parties separately, asking them not to proceed in a covetous or grasping spirit, but to make some concession rather than claim some accession. When each party had agreed to this, there was a considerable strip of territory left between them. And so he set the boundary of each city as each had severally agreed; and the tract in between he awarded to the Roman People. Now that is swindling, not arbitration. And therefore such sharp practice is under all circumstances to be avoided.

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### **Post by “reneliza” of September 23, 2022 at 8:19 AM**

[Quote from Don](#)

First thoughts:

It may be admissible to describe Epicurus's description of the highest pleasure being the absence of pain as "idiosyncratic" simply because he shifts focus. It would be like describing a full glass of water as the absence of air in the glass. But the \*real\* import of saying there's not air in the glass is an "idiosyncratic" way of emphasized the point that the glass is completely filled to the rim with water. Your glass is completely filled with no room for any more water. Same with pleasure and pain. You wouldn't order a glass of water by saying "I'd like a glass completely devoid of air" unless you were trying to make some point. I think that's what Epicurus was doing with his absence of pain terminology. A life filled to the rim with pleasure \*can be\* thought of as a life lived in the absence of pain. It's not some arcane thing like some authors and academics try to make it out to be.

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Yep, all this.

I think the author does make one good point here, that pleasure isn't something that you add up by stacking pleasures atop one another cumulatively - that was the actual point that Epicurus was making with his limit of pleasure. Yes, THAT view of pleasure would be unlimited as you could keep stacking until you die, and how pleasurable your life is would only depend on how long it is.

I really don't think this one seems all that bad. Mostly I see people speak of the virtue of "moderation" or "temperance" to mean "none ever under any circumstances or you'll ruin your

life" (on the epicurean subreddit I had someone ask me if I'd suggest that he should use only "a little" crystal meth and I'm like "well I'm not here to run your life..." haha) and here he suggests that you should SHOULD satisfy your desires to the point that it brings you the most pleasure without causing you undue pain.

If anything, it sounds like this might be one of us trying to blend in with the modern landscape of Epicureans by pointing to ataraxia as the goal, but then saying that doesn't actually mean you eschew all sensual pleasure.

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## Post by “Cassius” of September 23, 2022 at 8:28 AM

Right - I agree with both of these comments:

### [Quote from Don](#)

I maintain that cultivating tranquility is an important component of an Epicurean life, an Epicurean practice, but that is not at the expense of that "which the sensual enjoyment is attended by a kind of agreeableness." It's both

### [Quote from reneliza](#)

If anything, it sounds like this might be one of us trying to blend in with the modern landscape of Epicureans by pointing to ataraxia as the goal, but then saying that doesn't actually mean you eschew all sensual pleasure.

Both of which are stated very differently, and would be understood very differently by most people, from the following promoted to the world by OKeefe and many other writers as the way to understand Epicurus:

### Quote from OKeefe

"Given this pair of distinctions, the Epicureans maintain that the main constituent of the pleasant life, and hence, of the happy life, is the static mental pleasure of ataraxia, or tranquility—the state of being free from mental disturbance."

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## Post by “reneliza” of September 23, 2022 at 8:47 AM

So I went and read the whole article, and I actually really like it. It's about an Epicurean approach to digital spaces, and unlike most minimalist arguments suggesting that social media is only ever bad for you (like crystal meth! not even once!), says that we can't cast absolute moral judgments on it. He also goes into materialism, the gods, and what happens after death, because those things are all connected with ethics - even though they're usually brushed over or left out entirely.

#### Quote

The question is not "online or offline?" but "community or not-community?" In other words, are we using digital spaces to connect with one another in the shared project of diminishing pain, or vainly attempting to escape reality and disconnect from ourselves?

Digital Epicureanism relieves us of the need to make moral judgments about whether virtual and augmented realities are "good" or "bad". It's not about moralising against the coming metaverse - which would be futile anyway. It's about recognising the material nature of all layers of reality, and connecting throughout them in a conscientious way - from the most "meta" layers of the virtual and digital, to the more fundamental layers of flesh, soil and matter itself.

Even the digital world is fundamentally material and therefore "real" - not to mention that there are real flesh and blood people at the other end of every conversation. Not that these are arguments that have never been made before, but thinking of them through an Epicurean/materialist lens is one I've never really used on this exact topic before and it really does have me thinking about my own approaches.

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### Post by “Don” of September 23, 2022 at 9:56 AM

#### Quote

Quote from OKeefe

"Given this pair of distinctions, the Epicureans maintain that the main constituent of the pleasant life, and hence, of the happy life, is the static mental pleasure of ataraxia, or tranquility—the state of being free from mental disturbance."

I wouldn't call ataraxia the "main constituent" but I may go so far as to call it a necessary condition but not a sufficient one.

## Post by “reneliza” of September 23, 2022 at 10:35 AM

### [Quote from Don](#)

Quote

Quote from OKeefe

"Given this pair of distinctions, the Epicureans maintain that the main constituent of the pleasant life, and hence, of the happy life, is the static mental pleasure of ataraxia, or tranquility—the state of being free from mental disturbance."

I wouldn't call ataraxia the "main constituent" but I may go so far as to call it a necessary condition but not a sufficient one.

I would even agree that it's the “main constituent” - but I wouldn't phrase it that way because I don't think it's very helpful to do so.

Like if you have a glass filled to the very top with water, containing no air, (sticking with this metaphor haha) the “main constituent” is actually the empty space between the subatomic particles (okay this is an overly simplified and outdated understanding of atoms, but it's the only metaphor I've got!)

But speaking about it in those terms, as if the empty space matters more than the protons, neutrons, and electrons - as if the particles themselves are almost entirely irrelevant - is in no way useful for actually discussing the glass of water in front of us. Without the particles, it wouldn't be a glass of water at all. (But note - the same would be true without the empty space - BOTH are needed. The void takes up more volume but it is not more important)

Now I just need to come up with a different metaphor that isn't scientifically inaccurate

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## Post by “Kalosyni” of September 23, 2022 at 10:59 AM

### [Quote from Don](#)

I wouldn't call ataraxia the "main constituent" but I may go so far as to call it a necessary condition but not a sufficient one.

Questions to find more clarity:

-- Is there a physiological need in some people to seek out more "tranquility" because they are very sensitive to stimulus and easily disturbed by sensations of sounds.

-- Is "tranquility" a need which only arises in dependence with a given environment? Some environments are so tranquil that there is actually a much greater need for new sensory stimulation to alleviate boredom.

-- Is the basis of "tranquility" suggesting that Epicureans will live in out in the country-side and away from noisy cities? No need to find a "cave" to live in, but for some there is a need to move out of a city and live in the country -- at least for those who have overly-sensitive physiology.

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## **Post by "Cassius" of September 23, 2022 at 11:25 AM**

OK keeping in mind here that I think we are all largely on the same page but we're debating the "best" way to explain the issue in the world of 2022 among non-specialists:

I don't think I would agree that tranquility is a "necessary" condition.

If what we are talking about is "defining the best life" then yes it would be a significant part of the conceptual definition and in that sense it be necessary to include it somewhere in the definition of what to shoot for.

But if what we are talking about is explaining to real people a real working approximation of what we should work for at all times, then I think we would have to consider that there are times when "tranquility" is not an immediate focus, any more than many other pleasures are the immediate focus.

Getting back to the "natural and necessary" desires perspective, I would say it makes sense to include "the basics of life" (what we talk about as "necessary") as a necessary part of the goal an Epicurean would generally expect to secure at all times. But "tranquility" is often not available, as in wartime or in many other situations where energetic action is needed ( EG Epicurus diving into the stream to rescue the others in A Few Days In Athens).

Now I sense that will be responded to by the "hard cases make bad law" objection, but in this case I don't think that most of us live in a world where we can expect to be "tranquil" all the time.

To me the better way to articulate the goal in basic terms that are difficult to misunderstand is something more like:

"Life is about intelligently pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain in a way that ends up maximizing for you the pleasures of life, among which tranquility is an important pleasure along with many others."

But formulations that imply that tranquility is dominant or even "necessary" are the slippery slope to living in the cave. Some people can't achieve tranquility in the near term, but that does not mean they are any less Epicurean in pursuing the best mix of pleasure and pain that is available for them at any particular place or time.

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### **Post by "Cassius" of September 23, 2022 at 11:32 AM**

"Some people can't achieve tranquility in the near term, but that does not mean they are any less Epicurean in pursuing the best mix of pleasure and pain that is available for them at any particular place or time."

In saying that I am thinking back to the recent thread on "Whether one has to be well off to be an Epicurean" (or a title something like that - I will find it and link. - [Here it is](#))

I think it's a significant problem that many people get the idea that one has to be rich or successful to be an Epicurean, and I think what we are talking about now is related to that. One can be very upset and energetically engaged in some very difficult behavior that no one would call "tranquil" and still be a good Epicurean. In fact I would say that a person who in appropriate circumstances DOES NOT forgo tranquility in favor of vigorous action is the one who is not the good Epicurean (again, the "diving into the stream" example in AFDIA).

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### **Post by "reneliza" of September 23, 2022 at 11:34 AM**

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

[Quote from Don](#)

I wouldn't call ataraxia the "main constituent" but I may go so far as to call it a necessary condition but not a sufficient one.

Questions to find more clarity:

-- Is there a physiological need in some people to seek out more "tranquility" because they are very sensitive to stimulus and easily disturbed by sensations of sounds.

-- Is "tranquility" a need which only arises in dependence with a given environment? Some environments are so tranquil that there is actually a much greater need for new sensory stimulation to alleviate boredom.

-- Is the basis of "tranquility" suggesting that Epicureans will live in out in the countryside and away from noisy cities? No need to find a "cave" to live in, but for some there is a need to move out of a city and live in the country -- at least for those who have overly-sensitive physiology.

A) Absolutely yes. I'm autistic and very easily overstimulated by external factors. This is obviously different for different neurotypes and even just personalities. I try to keep this in mind when I post here, but I'm sure I often fail at that!

B) I think it's useful to draw a distinction between inner tranquility and outer tranquility. Some people need the latter for the former. Some people get bored to tears so fast in a tranquil environment that it actually disturbs their inner peace more than a busy, bustling environment.

It also depends on how you're defining "tranquility." I'm (usually) the type who can sit still all day in silence reading a good book. I'm still getting plenty of mental stimulation, but not much in sensory stimulation and that's no problem. I do tend to fidget but that's all me. It's not an external source of stimulation I need to seek out or that can be denied me (assuming I'm not being fully physically restrained which obviously has greater concerns for my ability to experience pleasure than just blocking my ability to fidget)

C) I think this is still person to person. A lot of people like me are homebodies and so living in the city may not be that disturbing. Or living in the country might have too many sensory obligations like mowing sprawling fields of grass or driving long distances for groceries. I personally don't like living too close to a city center, but I don't think this can just be boiled down to the more stimulation/less stimulation types of people.

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## **Post by "reneliza" of September 23, 2022 at 11:45 AM**

I'm coming more and more to think that there can't be a one size fits all approach. The Christians who think pleasure is immoral need a different approach from the stoics/buddhists/minimalists who are afraid of pleasure disturbing their peace of mind, and they both need a drastically different approach from the people on the hedonic treadmill chasing greater and greater highs.

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## Post by “waterholic” of September 23, 2022 at 12:18 PM

### Quote

-- Is there a physiological need in some people to seek out more "tranquility" because they are very sensitive to stimulus and easily disturbed by sensations of sounds.

I think the key word here is physiological, as raised by [Don](#). Whatever daily recipes could have been available in the Epicurean times, they are lost and even if they weren't, I doubt that much of it would be useful nowadays. I am curious if there have been attempts to construct a modern Epicurean "guide book" based on modern physiological and sociological studies, A/B testing (randomised controlled trials) and other modern methodologies?

One additional point of concern: going down the rabbit hole of relativism can seriously damage the outcome. Bottom line: there is no way to fear gods and be Epicurean at the same time (as in, fearing gods is one's way of removing other anxieties).

---

## Post by “Eikadistes” of September 23, 2022 at 1:20 PM

I always reflect that Epicurus wrote that "**Pleasure is the Greatest Good**", not "*Painlessness*", nor "*Tranquility*", nor "*Indifference*", nor "*Emptiness*", nor any facsimile of "*Mokṣa*", "*Nirvāṇa*", "*Samādhi*", "*Satori*", or "*Kenshō*". He had the vocabulary to express the proposition that "*Painlessness is the Greatest Good*", but he **never, ever** did so.

Pleasure **IS** the Greatest Good. We do not need to apologize for *Pleasure* as though it is a bad word that needs to be replaced with a euphemism to make it more palatable to the sensibilities of the masses.

---

## Post by “Cassius” of September 23, 2022 at 2:37 PM

Yes Nate I agree. There are multiple perspectives that have to be appreciated and understood and allowing one perspective to dominate the others ends up with a similar problem as when we mix up the ends with the means, as is the problem with "virtue."

And as Ren says it's never going to be the case that everyone is going to agree on a single perspective - nor should we expect them to.

The issue for those who consider themselves to be primarily Epicurean seems largely to be a matter of finding a way to work with these several perspectives without letting any of them crowd out the big picture of the full Epicurean worldview.

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### **Post by “Don” of September 23, 2022 at 2:41 PM**

A lot going on in this thread and I have some thoughts on specific comments, but for now I'd like to be clear about what I mean when I use tranquility or ataraxia.

I don't mean some mystical state or some "special" state or some woo-woo state.

I do mean simply a clear-headed, calm mind unruffled by anxiety or fear.

A person can have that state if they are relaxing, if they are engaged in action, even if they're on the battlefield. It means someone isn't freaking out. It means they approach decisions clearly, decisively, with no equivocation or regret.

Does that state arise naturally? Yes.

Does it take practice to achieve and maintain that state? Absolutely.

Is it better to have that state as a foundation from which to confront the "slings and arrows" of daily life than other states? Yes indeed, in my opinion.

In the end, I don't think one can truly be happy, be filled with well-being, or experience satisfaction unless you're working towards having that calm baseline to work from.

---

### **Post by “Cassius” of September 23, 2022 at 4:02 PM**

Your definition is thoroughly suitable to me, but I believe would have been totally unsuitable to Cicero, as it would have prevented him from ridiculing Epicureans as worthless in civil society.

As to whether your definition would be suitable to the professional academic class today, I very much doubt it, as it would prevent them from keeping Epicureanism in a medicine box for use mainly in nursing homes and anxiety clinics.

I would like to think that, over time and little by little, we can make a dent in public perception and widen the discussion toward your definition.

Ren's caveat is correct though, in that I don't think we can ever expect, nor should we try, to convince "everyone" of all dispositions that the Epicurean view is "best." But in the world at large I am convinced there are huge numbers that would profit if they understood how and why the modern academic interpretation is so off base.

So many of us here end up saying about Epicurus "that's the way I always thought before I heard of Epicurus." That number could really grow if we could leapfrog the Ciceronian / academic box.

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### Post by “Don” of September 23, 2022 at 4:47 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

would have been totally unsuitable to Cicero

[Quote from Cassius](#)

suitable to the professional academic class today, I very much doubt it,

😄 Ask me if I care about what Cicero and the academics think! I'm just trying to make sense of this philosophy for my own life! 😄

---

### Post by “reneliza” of September 23, 2022 at 5:16 PM

To clarify, I don't mean that Epicureanism isn't a one size fits all philosophy (although it may not be, I think it has vast utility for the vast majority) but that the way to approach different kinds of people about the philosophy depends on their own background.

I never needed to be told that pleasure is good. That was obvious to me. I needed to be told that just having calm undisturbed peace of mind was ALSO good. And I definitely define it the same as Don does. Having this kind of mindset actually helps me get more pleasure from my active pleasures because I'm not constantly looking to the next one. So it's not only for

moments of meditation in my dark cave (although I do like me a dark cave lol)

Edit: essentially, I needed it explained to me how to make pleasure continuous, and Epicurus did that.

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### **Post by “Kalosyni” of September 23, 2022 at 8:08 PM**

#### [Quote from Don](#)

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A person can have that state if they are relaxing, if they are engaged in action, even if they're on the battlefield. It means someone isn't freaking out. It means they approach decisions clearly, decisively, with no equivocation or regret.

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In the end, I don't think one can truly be happy, be filled with well-being, or experience satisfaction unless you're working towards having that calm baseline to work from.

Display More

So then this "working towards having a calm baseline" would require therapeutics?

And if so, then we need to list all of them -- sourced from PD's, Vatican Sayings, Letter to Menoecus, Diogenes Laertius wise man sayings, and Cicero's Torquatus -- so we see what specifically leads to this calm baseline.

---

### **Post by “Don” of September 23, 2022 at 9:21 PM**

### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

So then this "working towards having a calm baseline" would require therapeutics?

And if so, then we need to list all of them -- sourced from PD's, Vatican Sayings, Letter to Menoecus, Diogenes Laertius wise man sayings, and Cicero's Torquatus -- so we see what specifically leads to this calm baseline.

I'm not sure of "therapeutics" but maybe techniques? Exercises? Suggested activities? Epicurus did make the direct comparison between medicine and philosophy, so there's something there.

I'd have to review all those texts, but I can say that I doubt we'll find specific instructions. Our textual treasury is just not deep enough 😭 However, I'm going to offer that his "maza (bread) and water" comment in Menoikeus is an instruction - a declaration - to pay attention to the daily, ordinary pleasures in the moment. To take pleasure in the ordinary. That's a powerful instruction!

I recently had someone recommend The Mindfulness Solution by Dr Ronald Siegel, PsyD. I just started listening to the audiobook, but it's mindfulness sans woo. And it says exactly what I'm saying: mindfulness makes us better at paying attention to - and enjoying! - the everyday experiences we have, makes us less anxious about the future, and less stressed about the past. That sounds exactly like what Epicurus was advocating to me! I'll have to listen to more, but what I'm hearing is encouraging and I think directly applicable to Epicurean practice.

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### **Post by "Don" of September 23, 2022 at 11:33 PM**

Random Internet sites I found sort of on this topic I now submit for consideration, neither endorsing nor disapproving at this point:

(Edit: I'm slowly going back and pulling out quotes and commenting. I hope that doesn't change anyone's reactions 😊 )

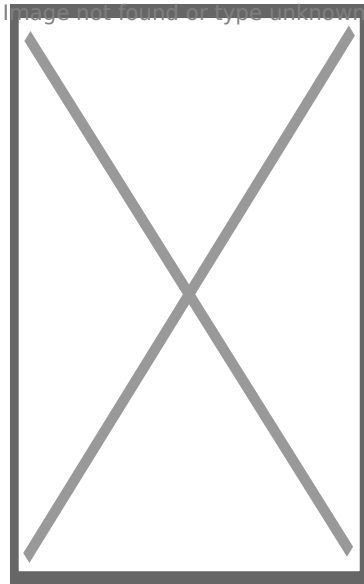
#### [Living Like an Epicurean - Pondering with Pete](#)

My biggest takeaway from this exercise is that living with intent improves your happiness. Regardless of if you live like an Epicurean, a Stoic, a Taoist, or...  
ponderingwithpete.com

Quote

My biggest problem with Epicureanism is their belief in absolute goodness and absolute badness. I think life is much less stressful and more enjoyable when we consider everything's goodness or badness to be relative. Some things seem bad in the moment but end up being good; I think an Epicurean mindset of absolute good and badness precludes one (at least practically) from having faith that some bad things may turn out to be good things.

I found some interesting comments from this college student, but the excerpt above made me sad. I'm not sure where he got the "absolute" idea from, but I suspect it was "all pleasure is good .." But he overgeneralized to "all pleasure should be chosen" I think.

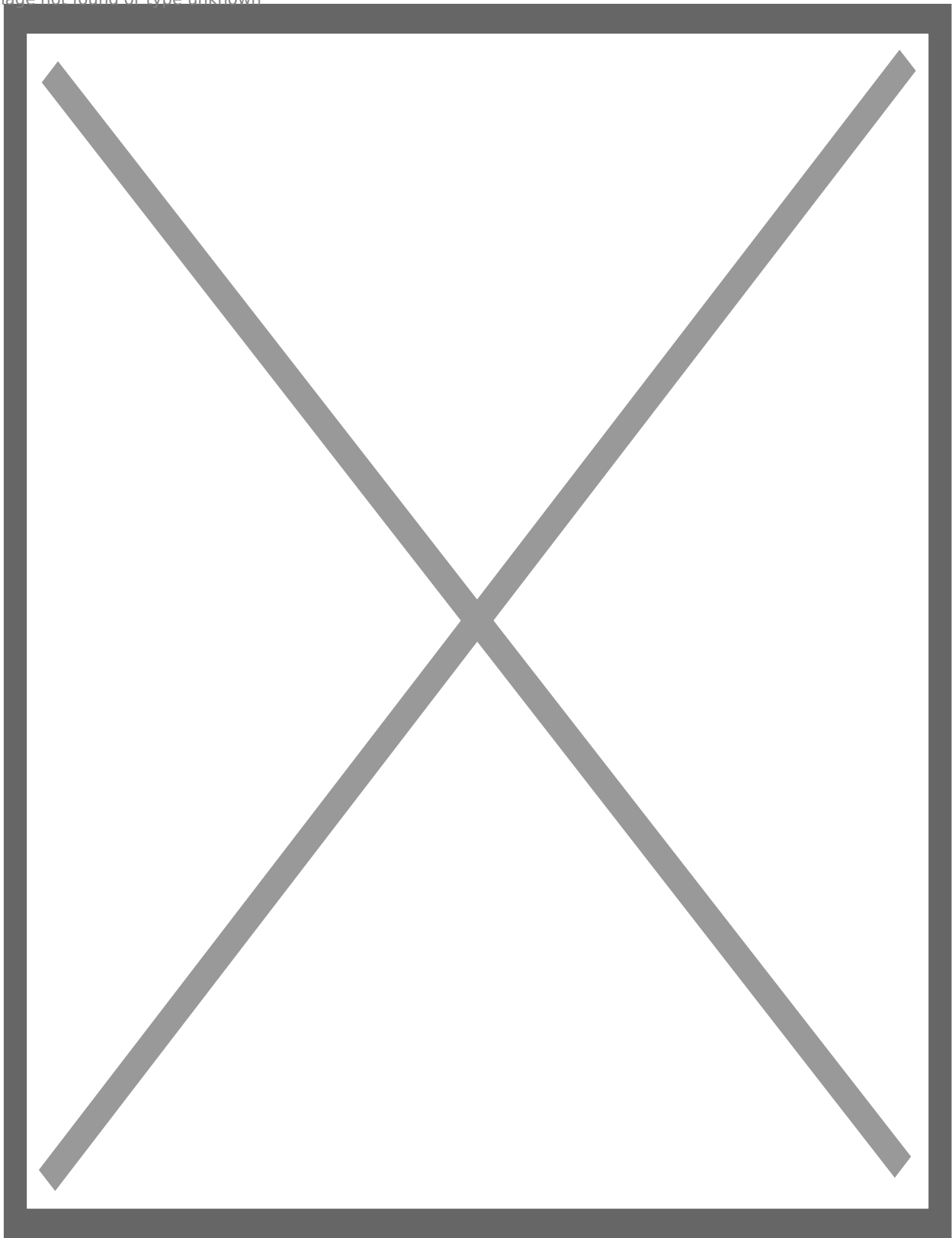


### [Epicurean Spiritual Exercises | Counter-Currents](#)

1,291 words Trans. Guillaume Durocher Translator's Note: The following is drawn from Pierre Hadot, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique ?* (Paris: Gallimard,... counter-currents.com

I think some on this forum flinch at the term "spiritual exercises" but I chalk that up to Hadot's idiosyncracies. This excerpt of his work seems mostly uncontroversial to me, except for bringing up "asceticism". It seems to me primarily a bringing together of some of the practices scattered in Epicurean texts which *could* be a helpful start.

Image not found or type unknown



[Philosophy As a Way of Life](#)

Philosophy, as it is practiced today, is abstract, theoretical, and detached from life. In the Greco-Roman world, it was something quite di...

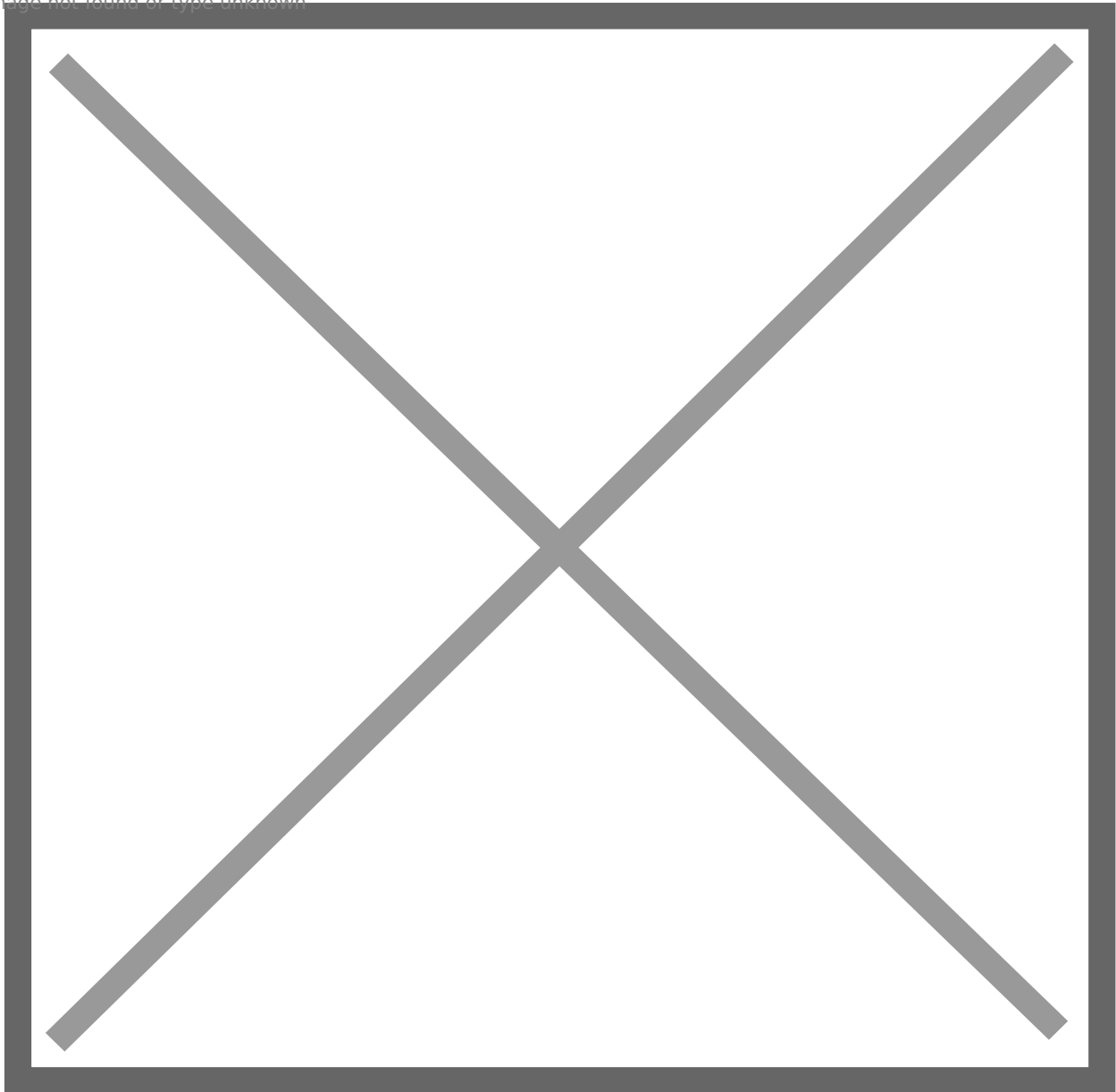
[www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org)

#### Quote

He (Epicurus) was in fact an ascetic. Pleasure, for him, is not sensuality and luxury but freedom from pain and tranquility. If we live a simple life, restrict our desires, free ourselves from the fear of death, and learn to accept our mortal condition, we can have a tranquil life, and recover the simple joy of existing, with a feeling of profound gratitude for life.

AND there it is! In their defense, they're summarizing Hadot who said the same thing above in those excerpts. There's some other interesting items in here comparing the various schools, but the old ascetic trope lives on.

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[Why Epicurean ideas suit the challenges of modern secular life](#)

Sure, Epicureans focused on seeking pleasure - but they also did so much more.  
bigthink.com

Finally read this one in its entirety and probably my favorite one of the bunch. This author seems to get it. 👍👍 Not a mention of asceticism!

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**Post by “Pacatus” of September 25, 2022 at 1:55 PM**

Comments by Kalosyni on the physiological need for tranquility, especially for some (I would count myself there) and Don's comments on ataraxia generally, reminded me of this that I came across:

"For ataraxia, ultimately and simply, is a physical undisturbedness." [That is, not simply a mental state.]

[https://www.academia.edu/34402398/What\\_...card=view-paper](https://www.academia.edu/34402398/What_...card=view-paper) (p. 458)

I think that some sharp distinction between the mental and the physical is likely wrong: fear, for example, is manifest in the body as well as mind (say, as a tingling numbness) – as is any disturbance (tarache). Absence of such disturbances I would see as pleasure – and not necessarily strictly "katastemic": think of the feeling of release/relief when a strong emotional disturbance (say, fear or rage) is assuaged.

[I hasten to add that I'm not implying mind and body are separate – as if the mind were some kind of "ghost in the machine".]

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### **Post by "Don" of September 25, 2022 at 2:10 PM**

At the risk of repeating myself, I'm coming to think of katastematic pleasure as generated within myself. As Epicurus does, I include ataraxia and aponia in that category. Kinetic pleasures I'm coming to think of as being generated from taking part in an activity like dancing, sex, eating, relaxing, etc.

Granted, I need texts to back up my intuition but that's where I'm headed.

So to connect this to [Pacatus](#) post above, I'd agree that fear is manifest or felt in the body and mind; however, I'd say it originates in the mind since it can be demonstrated that two people can have very different reactions to the same stimuli. Removal of that fear then leads to ataraxia in the mind.

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### **Post by "Pacatus" of September 25, 2022 at 2:46 PM**

[Don](#)

I tend to think of the mind/consciousness as being emergent phenomena/processes/expressions of the brain, which is part of the body. People do respond to stimuli differently, both physiologically and psychologically.

I tend to think that all feelings (pathe) originate from physical stimulus at some time (to be redundant: "originally") - but can subsequently be re-remembered, re-examined, re-imagined by mental processes (conscious or subconscious). And then such brain/mind activities can neurologically produce stimuli in the rest of the body (think imagining a sexual experience, or recalling a past experience of terror in a nightmare).

However, none of that answers the so-called "hard questions" of consciousness - such as intentionality, decision and choice. Again, I just tend to think of them as emergent phenomena/processes/expressions of the underlying physical/neural substratum. And I accept them (as opposed to some strict determinism). [Which is not really an answer, if one can be had.]

~ ~ ~

I have no education or expertise in any of this: it's just how I work it out for myself - and subject to change.

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## Post by "reneliza" of September 25, 2022 at 8:48 PM

### [Quote from Pacatus](#)

I tend to think that all feelings (pathe) originate from physical stimulus at some time (to be redundant: "originally") - but can subsequently be re-remembered, re-examined, re-imagined by mental processes (conscious or subconscious). And then such brain/mind activities can neurologically produce stimuli in the rest of the body (think imagining a sexual experience, or recalling a past experience of terror in a nightmare).

I'm not sure I entirely agree with the first part (I don't disagree either, it's just interesting and I need to think on it more), but the second part is so important.

A lot of what I hear around the internet about Epicurus talking about remembering past pleasures is presented like a very calm quiet contemplation and as such it doesn't seem like a true pleasure in the way people usually mean the word, but a very whitewashed kind of pleasure that is basically just a neutral state that he's pretending is the same as pleasure. And sure some memories are like that, (and sometimes that tranquil state is more pleasurable than an activated state would be - often even, to me)

But the mind can also produce quite strong sensations in the body and it's important to remember that. It seems like a pretty fundamental tool for Epicureanism - when certain pleasures are unavailable, we can still experience a strong pleasurable sensation by remembering them.

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### **Post by “Don” of September 26, 2022 at 12:42 PM**

I'm leaning toward Metrodorus in his fragments. Here's what I posted in another thread:

"Metrodorus, in his book On the Source of Happiness in Ourselves being greater than that which arises from Objects, says: 'What else is the good of the soul but the sound state of the flesh, and the sure hope of its continuance?'"

This, to me, points to the "source" - "the sound state of the flesh" (to sarkos eustathes \*katastema\*) - being a more confident source of pleasure than "objects" (kinetic pleasure). It does NOT say the source "in ourselves" is "better (more value)" just that we can be more "sure" of its continuance - I would add - because we have control over it.

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### **Post by “Kalosyni” of September 26, 2022 at 9:12 PM**

#### [Quote from Pacatus](#)

“For ataraxia, ultimately and simply, is a physical undisturbedness.” [That is, not simply a mental state.]

Well now, this got me thinking about when the startle reflex is activated -- heart-rate, blood pumping, adrenaline all amped up and that is the "fight or flight response".

#### [Quote from Don](#)

"Metrodorus, in his book On the Source of Happiness in Ourselves being greater than that which arises from Objects, says: 'What else is the good of the soul but the sound state of the flesh, and the sure hope of its continuance?'"

And also, this brings up the firm belief that an Epicurean would not choose to be employed in any kind of high-risk/high-adrenaline enterprises -- or anything which disturbs the physical body

or threatens its continuance.

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### **Post by “Don” of September 26, 2022 at 9:25 PM**

#### [Quote from Pacatus](#)

“For ataraxia, ultimately and simply, is a physical undisturbedness.” [That is, not simply a mental state.]

[https://www.academia.edu/34402398/What ...card=view-paper](https://www.academia.edu/34402398/What...card=view-paper) (p. 458)

In taking another look at that quote, I would call "a physical undisturbedness" aponia instead of ataraxia.

---

### **Post by “Cassius” of September 27, 2022 at 10:15 AM**

#### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

And also, this brings up the firm belief that an Epicurean would not choose to be employed in any kind of high-risk/high-adrenaline enterprises -- or anything which disturbs the physical body or threatens its continuance.

I thought I better comment on this sentence. I think it's consistent with the idea that "in general" an Epicurean would not choose a career in politics or something that depends on the whims of crowds.

But to say flatly that "an Epicurean would not choose to be employed in any kind of high-risk/high-adrenaline enterprises" would IMHO probably be going too far. I doubt that it is the risk or the adrenaline are determinative - those would be according to our judgment as to whether it is "worth it" or not. I realize that applies to politics and fame as well, but I think the closer reading of some of the fragments indicates that Epicurus said we need to be flexible on firm rules and allow for personal preference.

Not only would many of the Roman Epicureans (especially Cassius Longinus himself) be an example of that, but I personally respect the decisionmaking of [Amrinder Singh](#) (member here

was killed in an ultralight accident) or Martin (who likes zip line rides - if I had a picture link i would link it 😊 )

Obviously it is prudent to be very careful about high-risk activities. But I thought I better mark the point that I would not suggest the strict avoidance of these activities just for the sake of a longer life - just prudence and a careful review of the risk-reward analysis before engaging in them.

Quote from Letter to Menoecus

And just as with food he does not seek simply the larger share and nothing else, but rather the most pleasant, so he seeks to enjoy not the longest period of time, but the most pleasant.

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### **Post by “Pacatus” of September 27, 2022 at 1:39 PM**

[Quote from Don](#)

In taking another look at that quote, I would call "a physical undisturbedness" aponia instead of ataraxia.

Yes, I think that makes better sense,

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### **Post by “Cassius” of September 27, 2022 at 2:31 PM**

These last comments point up the issues of ataraxia and aponia. If all "disturbance" is "pain" then why were two words necessary?

The implication to me is that the issue of "disturbance " much involve some subtlety different than "pain" rather than mental vs bodily pain -- unless there is evidence that disturbance was always used only in a mental context.

---

### **Post by “Godfrey” of September 27, 2022 at 5:41 PM**

Off the top of my head, might aponia and ataraxia relate to pain and suffering? Where pain has a physical cause and suffering is a mental reaction to said cause? Both pain and suffering are reactions, or *pathe* as I understand what [Don](#) has often said. I'm just putting this out as an initial response: I'm not at all sure that this is on the right track.

---

### **Post by “Don” of September 27, 2022 at 6:20 PM**

My understanding is that aponia has to do with pain in the body, ataraxia with disturbance in the mind

---

### **Post by “Pacatus” of September 27, 2022 at 6:54 PM**

God, I'm going to hate myself for saying this! ☐☐

Are we worrying this too much?

It seems to me that (whatever the ancient Greeks might have thought) the mind/body distinction is at best relative. That does not make it unimportant, Yes, I can (hopefully) overcome – at least somewhat, if not perfectly – the *tarache* in my mind that stems from the *pone* in my aching tooth. (Most Buddhists would, I think, say something similar.)

But – and this was my whole original thrust – from an Epicurean view, there is no disembodied (non-physical) substance called mind or soul – as a substance of some sort.^ So everything is, at bottom, physicalist. (My attempt was to get at this by thinking in terms of substance versus process – mental processes emergent from physical substance,)

But, in everyday, therapeutic lingo, it makes sense to distinguish between physical pain and possibly attendant mental suffering.

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^ The whole notion of a non-physicalist "substance" inescapably (to my mind) brings in the realm of the supernatural.

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### **Post by “Don” of September 27, 2022 at 10:41 PM**

### [Quote from Pacatus](#)

God, I'm going to hate myself for saying this! ☹️

😬 LOL! Uh oh!

### [Quote from Pacatus](#)

Are we worrying this too much?

First, I'll say "no" to that 😊 but only because Epicurus repeatedly brings up the health of the body and the tranquility of the mind, or variations on that theme. As such, it seems to me that it's good to understand what the significance was to Epicurus and the classical Epicureans and how it can be applied to an Epicurean way of life.

### [Quote from Pacatus](#)

It seems to me that (whatever the ancient Greeks might have thought) the mind/body distinction is at best relative. That does not make it unimportant, Yes, I can (hopefully) overcome - at least somewhat, if not perfectly - the tarache in my mind that stems from the pone in my aching tooth. (Most Buddhists would, I think, say something similar)

The distinction may be relative realistically, scientifically, or medically; however, how we experience our minds is often very different than how we experience our bodies.

The disturbance in my mind is not \*always\* connected to an immediate physical pain in my body. It could just as easily - or more easily - have originated from rumination on a memory of an event earlier today, yesterday, or years ago.

Also, [the ponos of aponia isn't pain per se. Ponos is defined as:](#)

- work, especially hard work; toil
- bodily exertion, exercise
- work, task, business
- the consequence of toil, distress, trouble, suffering
- anything produced by work, a work

So, aponia is not so much "pain" in the body (and I've been guilty of perpetuating that mistake!) as it is a lack of exertion, toil, distress, suffering. In light of that, I may begin to interpret aponia as a positive relaxation in the body, a body that's not stiff and tight and troubled and exhausted; the same way I'd interpret ataraxia as a positive calm, clear-headed, mindful attitude in the mind.

### [Quote from Pacatus](#)

But – and this was my whole original thrust – from an Epicurean view, there is no disembodied (non-physical) substance called mind or soul – as a substance of some sort. ^ So everything is, at bottom, physicalist.

Oh, of course! \*Everything\* has a natural, material origin. We're all - and every part of us - just atoms and void! Yep! But that doesn't mean our different parts don't have different needs anymore than we wear shoes on our head or eat with our ears. I'm being absurd, obviously, but just because there's no non-physical supernatural woo-woo "mind" doesn't mean I don't have a "mind" that I need to care for for my mental well-being.

I really like your posts, and they've also given me a chance to think out loud. Keep them coming!

---

### **Post by “Pacatus” of September 28, 2022 at 12:15 AM**

#### [Don](#)

Thanks for all that, Don. “Thinking out loud” on here is pretty much all I’ve got, with my weird, grab-bag history. ☐☐

For me, though, this is the most helpful:

“So, aponia is not so much ‘pain’ in the body (and I've been guilty of perpetuating that mistake!) as it is a lack of exertion, toil, distress, suffering. In light of that, I may begin to interpret aponia as a positive relaxation in the body, a body that's not stiff and tight and troubled and exhausted; the same way I'd interpret ataraxia as a positive calm, clear-headed, mindful attitude in the mind.”

When I say “helpful,” I mean it will help me tonight and tomorrow in a true therapeutic sense. (It reminds me of the Taoist wu-wei – without having to imbibe the whole of that philosophy; if that makes sense.)

Anyway, just: Thank you

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### **Post by “Cassius” of September 28, 2022 at 3:03 PM**

I had been looking for this following quote and just found it. It mostly relates to the issue of "avoiding all pain" and whether we should draw a bright line against all high risk / high adrenaline enterprises.

Quote from Plutarch

14. Plutarch, On Peace of Mind, 2 p. 465F (Johannes Stobaeus, Anthology, 29.79): For this reason not even Epicurus believes that men who are eager for honor and glory should lead an inactive life, but that they should fulfill their natures by engaging in politics and entering public life, on the ground that, because of their natural dispositions, they are more likely to be disturbed and harmed by inactivity if they do not obtain what they desire.