

The Ethics of Epicurus and its Relation to Contemporary Doctrines by Jean-Marie Guyau. Edited by Testa and Ansell-Pearson, translated by Testa

Post by “Godfrey” of May 2, 2023 at 6:42 PM

This is a fascinating read: Guyau, at the age of 19, wrote a 1300 page critique of Utilitarianism as an entry to a competition. The dissertation was very well received at the time; subsequently it was revised into two volumes, of which this is the first. This volume (240 pages or so) is dedicated to Epicurean philosophy.

This volume is divided into four books:

Book 1: The Pleasures of the Flesh

Book 2: The Pleasures of the Soul

Book 3: Private and Public Virtues

Book 4: The Modern Successors of Epicurus

Apparently the second volume deals with utilitarianism.... However, Guyau considers Epicurus to have been the first utilitarian philosopher. I've just finished Book 1, but already I think that this would be a great book for more people here to read and discuss. Not so much for utilitarianism, but because it's an excellent treatment of Epicurean philosophy. By virtue of being originally written in French, it has a slightly different linguistic approach to ours which will potentially depth to our understanding.

Post by “Godfrey” of May 2, 2023 at 6:50 PM

Here are some excerpts from the Editors Introduction, considering utilitarianism. Note that EP is being discussed in the introduction as utilitarian, *not* Utilitarian. Further, in Book 1 it's hardly mentioned: the focus is EP (as it appears to be throughout the book).

"In a way, one could say that utilitarianism is but a chapter (although an important one) in a broader history of Epicureanism."

"Against the traditional reconstruction of Epicureanism as an egoistic and apolitical morality, characterized by a lack of attention to social concerns and a withdrawal from politics, Guyau shows that it was within the Epicurean tradition that important notions of modern political thought were first developed, such as a society founded on mutual agreements and the idea of social progress. To the Stoic tradition of natural law Guyau opposes the Epicurean 'pact of utility', which embodies the natural right of not harming and not being harmed by others. The pact, as Guyau sees it, is a way to come to terms with the tension existing between individual and society, between egoism and altruism."

"For Guyau, Epicureanism's distinctive character resides in also considering the future when acting in the present. For the Epicurean, the present must be linked to the future, and both present and future converge in the composition of a 'whole of life'. It is this encounter between present and future in enjoyment that Guyau calls 'utility': utility is pleasure fecundated by the idea of time."

Post by "Cassius" of May 2, 2023 at 7:04 PM

Godfrey is this an old book for which you have a public link, or something more modern for which we will have to go digging?

Post by "Godfrey" of May 2, 2023 at 7:19 PM

For [Cassius](#) , here are some excerpts from the end of Book 1 regarding the absence of pain:

"We conclude then that the sovereign pleasure and the sovereign good is the absence of pain and trouble, aponia, ataraxia; it is rest itself and tranquillity, katastēma.

"Should we believe, following most critics, that Epicurus understood absolute imperturbability to be a state similar to sleep and death? - The idea of trouble, which Epicurus strongly conceived and developed, has its natural principle in the idea of harmony. One can only disturb that which is harmonious, and one only fears turmoil and trouble because one wishes to preserve harmony. The last word of Epicureanism, therefore, should not be aponia, the absence of pain, but rather the conservation of pleasure: it is with a view to conserving pleasure that we must avoid every change, every movement coming from the outside. It is to preserve pleasure that we must reduce ourselves to [a state of] imperturbability regarding the outside. This imperturbability is itself only a means - indeed, an infallible one - with the help of which one

preserves oneself, one maintains oneself, one persists in being and in the harmony of being.

"To summarize, the good according to Aristippus consists in moving, in changing oneself, running from pleasure to pleasure, enhancing past enjoyment with a new enjoyment. In contrast, to possess the good, Epicurus says, is to rest immobile in oneself. Instead of concerning oneself with gaining [new enjoyments] we need to make every effort not to lose anything. It is to restrain and restrict all the fugacious and superficial enjoyments to just one, an indestructible and profound one, which is an enjoyment of life itself. The good, then, is serenity."

"To express the ineffable enjoyment that Epicurus experiences when elevating himself above what is accidental and variable, he finds the word euphrosunē insufficient. The etymology of this term is eu-phrēn, and it expresses a fortunate disposition of the soul, a sort of fugitive chance. He situates the euphrosunē among the inferior pleasures of movement. Additionally, he even demotes to a second rank the chara, that is to say, the joy, elation, that has its source in movement (kata kinēsin) and in the tension of muscles or energy (energeia). The only really profound pleasure is constitutive pleasure, which is, as we have seen, the one that engenders the absence of pain and trouble: aponia and ataraxia. The Epicurean sage does not rejoice himself, rather he enjoys. – If Epicurus excludes everything that appears to imply movement and change from happiness, he does not limit himself to express his conception negatively. First, the term hēdonē katastēmatikē (stable and constitutive pleasure), which constantly appears in his writings, expresses something different from the absence of trouble and absolute imperturbability; it seems to designate a pleasure that is at the same time stable and profound, inherent in our nature, in our sensible constitution. Epicurus employs another term which is even more positive, eustathes katastēma sarkos (stable constitution of the flesh). We have seen him employing another expression that is not less striking: sumplērōthēsetai to tēs psychēs kai to tou sōmatos agathon (will fulfil the good of soul and body). This plenitude of good cannot be the void defining insensibility. Epicurus uses words like pistis bebaios, pistōma bebaiotaton, which are anything but negative: the unshakable assurance of the sage is not the laisser-aller of apathy. We will see him speaking elsewhere of the courageous struggle of the sage against fortune, tuchē antitattesthai. How could this conscious struggle be considered as that passive and empty resignation, which is so often attributed to the Epicureans? Finally, another strongly positive term that is employed by Epicurus confirms our interpretation: it is the term hugieia; that is, the healthy and good proportionate state of the being as a whole, body and soul, in order and harmony. This is undoubtedly the happiness that the Epicurean sage finds within himself once he has eliminated all trouble. 51"

Footnote 51: "Félix Ravaisson (Essai sur la Métaphysique d'Aristote, II, 105, 106) seeks to refer [or reduce] hugieia and aponia to the mere absence of pain and trouble. Having this identification [of hugieia and aponia] as his starting point, this is Ravaisson's conclusion: 'The goal of wisdom and the art of living is, according to Epicurus, to reach a point where one no longer feels anything ... Epicureanism finds sovereign good in a state of absolute impassibility,

which is an abstraction, a negation, in a word, nothing.’ – Impassibility in relation to the exterior, maybe; but inner insensibility? – The [Epicurean] texts we have quoted prove the opposite. Ataraxia is, without any doubt, the negation of all that which is foreign to [a certain] being; but what is left is the being itself, which affirms itself in face of the exterior: the ineffable enjoyment of intimate harmony – spiritual and material – is this an abstraction, is this nothing? It seems much more logical to refer, by finding support in [Epicurus’] texts, aponia (the absence of ponos, pain or suffering) and ataraxia (the absence of trouble or turmoil) to hugieia (health) than to reduce, without a clear reason, hugieia to aponia. Epicurus does not say anywhere that the absence of pain [peine] constitutes pleasure all by itself. He rather says that ‘pleasure is perceived as soon as all pain is subtracted [enlevée],’ percipitur omni dolore detracto (Cicero, De finibus, X, xi, 37). Epicurus’ originality in relation to his predecessors – Aristippus, on the one hand, and Hieronymus, on the other – is precise to have denied the existence of a purely negative or neutral state, in which one would only find absence of pain: Epicurus this intermediate state, this medium quiddam (Cicero, De finibus, I, 38); it is not, therefore, turning it into his ideal. That which also helps refuting Ravaisson’s position is the consequences that he extracts from his hypothesis: ‘If the end goal of happiness is not suffering or perceiving any pain, doesn’t this mean that what is most desirable for man is to die – and, what is more, to never have come into existence in the first place?’ (Essai sur la Métaphysique d’Aristote, II, 113). – We will [later] see the verse of the poet that Ravaisson mentions attacked by Epicurus himself. – Moreover, Ravaisson writes, ‘Pleasure is nothing but the end of pain, and whenever pain comes to an end only by means of death itself.’ – Believing that Epicurus did not see these consequences or simply accepted them means attributing to him incredible naivety and absurdity. Let us look, by means of contrast, to a text by Epicurus: ‘Death is indifferent to us, because all good and all evil reside in the action of feeling, and death is the privation of sensibility: mēthen pros hēmas einai ton thanaton, epei pan agathon kai kakon en aisthēsei, sterēsis d’ estin aisthēseōs ho thanatos’ (Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers, X, 124). How could one [after reading this passage] still defend the thesis according to which Epicurus thought that insensibility and negation found in sterēsis (privation) consisted in achievement and perfection, or the sumplērōsis (plenitude) of the good? Neither insensibility nor death are good for Epicurus, and he clearly responds to all those who attribute this idea to him.”

“ ‘From the moment when we are freed from pain, we enjoy the deliverance itself and exemption from every kind of constraint.’ (Cicero, De finibus, I, xi, 37; I, xvii, 56) To live in freedom, in rest and harmony with oneself, to have the inner feeling that one lives, this is supreme pleasure, in comparison to which all the others are but so many changing forms. Forever the same, this pleasure can exist independently and subsist above all others.”

Lots to chew on!

Post by “Godfrey” of May 2, 2023 at 7:22 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3043-the-ethics-of-epicurus-and-its-relation-to-contemporary-doctrines-by-jean-marie/>

I downloaded this from Amazon. I think the French version is from 1874, I'm not sure when the English translation was done. But it's readily available.

Post by “Cassius” of May 2, 2023 at 8:15 PM

Interesting! I googled and look at one of the first pages that came up. Quite a graphic containing a phrase we have used ourselves in our discussions here:

Progressive Geographies

Thinking about place and power – a site written and curated by Stuart Elden

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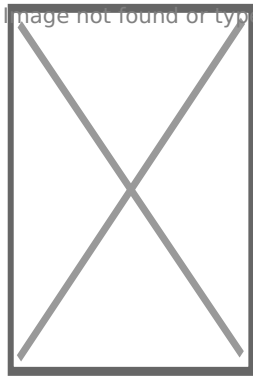
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Post by “Cassius” of May 2, 2023 at 8:17 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3043-the-ethics-of-epicurus-and-its-relation-to-contemporary-doctrines-by-jean-marie/>

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[The Ethics of Epicurus and its Relation to Contemporary Doctrines](#)

books.google.com

Someone previously remarked that the put Hermarchus (or is that Metrodorus?) on the cover?

Post by “Cassius” of May 2, 2023 at 9:09 PM

Godfrey I missed your long excerpt in post 4 earlier. Just to repeat some of it:

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

"To summarize, the good according to Aristippus consists in moving, in changing oneself, running from pleasure to pleasure, enhancing past enjoyment with a new enjoyment. In contrast, to possess the good, Epicurus says, is to rest immobile in oneself. Instead of concerning oneself with gaining [new enjoyments] we need to make every effort not to lose anything. It is to restrain and restrict all the fugacious and superficial enjoyments to just one, an indestructible and profound one, which is an enjoyment of life itself. The good, then, is serenity."

Yeah I guess if this is reflective of his views then I doubt I can climb aboard. I will give him credit for looking for something positive in stillness and immobility, and in fact it seems clear that that is the best face that one can put on an ascetic interpretation.

But I don't buy it at all. Thank Zeus Diogenes Laertius preserved clearly that Epicurus embraced BOTH the pleasures of rest and of motion. That Epicurus did so is to me obvious from many other texts, but there is no doubt that one can read portions of the letter to Menoecus in isolation and conclude that preservation and immobility are viable interpretations of some kind

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3043-the-ethics-of-epicurus-and-its-relation-to-contemporary-doctrines-by-jean-marie/>

of ultimate goal. Even I can stretch those words to seem acceptable, but in the end we can't dance around it.

I think it's highly valuable to have these discussions so we can confront them. It's also essential that we make clear that someone whose number one priority in life is immobility and fear of pain has profoundly misinterpreted Epicurus.

There's no way to avoid this controversy. It exists and people will always be confronted by it. I think Epicurus would expect us to stand tall and point out the errors as clearly as possible.

Post by “Godfrey” of May 2, 2023 at 11:04 PM

For me, this book isn't about climbing aboard. There seems to be more nuance to his position than what that summary indicates, and that's what makes it interesting to me.

[Quote from Guyau](#)

Finally, another strongly positive term that is employed by Epicurus confirms our interpretation: it is the term *hugieia*; that is, the healthy and good proportionate state of the being as a whole, body and soul, in order and harmony. This is undoubtedly the happiness that the Epicurean sage finds within himself once he has eliminated all trouble. 51

This sounds to me like homeostasis, in current terms.

Further:

[Quote from Guyau](#)

51 ...That which also helps refuting Ravaisson's position is the consequences that he extracts from his hypothesis: 'If the end goal of happiness is not suffering or perceiving any pain, doesn't this mean that what is most desirable for man is to die - and, what is more, to never have come into existence in the first place?' (Essai sur la Métaphysique d'Aristote, II, 113)... Moreover, Ravaisson writes, 'Pleasure is nothing but the end of pain, and whenever pain comes to an end only by means of death itself.' - Believing that Epicurus did not see these consequences or simply accepted them means attributing to him incredible naivety and absurdity. Let us look, by means of contrast, to a text by Epicurus: 'Death is indifferent to us, because all good and all evil reside in the action of feeling, and death is the privation of sensibility...' (Diogenes Laertius,

Lives of Eminent Philosophers, X, 124). How could one [after reading this passage] still defend the thesis according to which Epicurus thought that insensibility and negation found in *sterēsis* (privation) consisted in achievement and perfection, or the *sumplērōsis* (plenitude) of the good? Neither insensibility nor death are good for Epicurus, and he clearly responds to all those who attribute this idea to him."

After giving Epicurus' view of death, this:

[Quote from Guyau](#)

" 'From the moment when we are freed from pain, we enjoy the deliverance itself and exemption from every kind of constraint.' (Cicero, *De finibus*, I, xi, 37; I, xvii, 56) To live in freedom, in rest and harmony with oneself, to have the inner feeling that one lives, this is supreme pleasure, in comparison to which all the others are but so many changing forms. Forever the same, this pleasure can exist independently and subsist above all others."

Which sounds something like what we often say, that we only have one life to enjoy so we should appreciate and make the most of it. And perhaps another version of homeostasis?

[Quote from Guyau](#)

It is to restrain and restrict all the fugacious and superficial enjoyments to just one, an indestructible and profound one, which is an enjoyment of life itself. The good, then, is serenity."

I'm not sure that I would equate "an enjoyment with life itself" with "serenity." My focus in this quote was the former, not the latter. And I was again comparing this to homeostasis. The quote itself seems contradictory, so one has to piece together the totality of his argument at look at the wording, knowing that it's a translation from Greek (or Latin) to French to English.

This is one reason why I feel that there's much to get from this book. He says a lot that I agree with, some things that I don't, and many that I need to think about more. It may be a little maddening, but at least for me, it's not a book that you can home in on one sentence or paragraph and draw a final conclusion, but an opportunity to consider the puzzle pieces and perhaps come away with a deeper understanding of my own interpretation even if I don't fully agree with him. There's a lot there to dig into, and he's quite sympathetic to Epicurus. So, another source to be aware of!

Post by “Cassius” of May 3, 2023 at 7:35 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3043-the-ethics-of-epicurus-and-its-relation-to-contemporary-doctrines-by-jean-marie/>

Yes I see where you are going Godfrey and I definitely want to read further into this.

At the moment I am thinking that the issue may be that in glass half full / half empty issue. In the face of an ambiguous construction (the end of pain) we project onto that ambiguity what we think we "should" project there given our cultural overlay.

Today we are taught either a sort of oppressive religious absolutism or a sort of nihilistic nothingness or other assorted oppressiveness as a default position that would occur when our personal needs and desires are reduced to zero, and so when I hear "absence of pain" I hear nothingness and immobility and nothing attractive whatsoever.

However if your starting presumption is that being alive in the absence of pain entails a fully effective organism that is able to accomplish everything it has the power to accomplish (and not just does nothing simply because it doesn't want to do anything) then maybe the picture you get of "absence of pain" immediately transforms into such a powerful image - and maybe that is Epicurus' frame of reference.

But to me it would all boil down to that initial set of presumptions and references that - like all the atoms in the universe - we too are in motion and doing things smoothly in a way that we find makes for pleasure and happiness, and that initial set of presumptions and references cannot be left to ambiguity.

I strongly doubt that Epicurus left it ambiguous in his own time - I feel sure his other writings explained this much more clearly than the letter to Menoecus - and I feel certain that given our cultural mess today that it is essential that this not be left ambiguous.

So yes we can say absence of pain constitutes an interesting generalized way to express the best state of existence, but the "then what is the person doing after that?" cannot be left to abstract notions that sound like "nothing," The explanation demands that the context and premises of the generalization be explained with clarity.

Post by “Godfrey” of May 3, 2023 at 12:09 PM

I probably shouldn't have led with "absence of pain".... I did so knowing that it's a hot-button issue here, and hoping to demonstrate that he presented an interesting view of it.

Having said that, Guyau does make an emphatic case *against* "absence of pain." Where I get uncomfortable (in a good way 😊) is with his narrowing the goal to a single focus of serenity. However, and I think [Don](#) might have something to say about this, it's not wrong to pursue serenity. Especially if you're thinking of it as homeostasis. A singular focus on serenity may not

be correct, but serenity allows for maximal appreciation of a variety of pleasures. I think Epicurus repeatedly makes the latter point.

Part of what's interesting to me is that Guyau wrote in French (which I don't speak) and naturally interpreted some of the tricky Greek words differently than we might. At the same time, much of what he wrote aligns well with my current understanding. Reading this book is making me think deeper, and in a new way, about a variety of ideas.

Post by “Cassius” of May 3, 2023 at 12:33 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Where I get uncomfortable (in a good way 😊) is with his narrowing the goal to a single focus of serenity

This is something I wanted to expand on before I saw your last post. I have the same issue with "homeostatus" or any similar words which leaves open the possibility that a human being might decide that his or her best life is sitting crosslegged on a floor staring at a candle.

I think this is behind the ambiguity of Chrysippus' hand analogy too.

We have to start with an understanding of what the normal healthy living thing does with its time so that we can understand what is presumed to be the result when all pain is eliminated.

I know in my case (and I suspect I am far from alone) any construct of the ultimate good or goal must convey as essential a view of what it means for the organism to function at peak performance. While I reject the view that "man is the rational animal" and therefore the exercise of reason is the highest way to spend ones time, I do think we can derive from our nature that we have a full set of bodily and mental faculties to exercise as part of a normal and healthy life, so that any generalization of a life of total pleasure with zero pain is going to incorporate in it the exercise of those capacities.

I am out of time to continue but this is the direction I would carry this, and it is my main complaint about the whole issue of using "absence of pain" as if it were a full and complete statement of the goal. The positive side of the exercise of mental and bodily functions to experience pleasure is the issue that can no longer (if it ever could) be left to unstated implication.

Post by “Godfrey” of May 3, 2023 at 1:22 PM

Two approaches to clarify an approach to the ultimate goal come to mind offhand:

1) Is the healthiest functioning of an organism stress free? Not entirely. Being stress free means that one's needs are met, but stress indicates a need for change and is a healthy response to stimuli. As humans, we can arguably be happier and more productive if we subject ourselves to a certain amount of stress (exercise, thinking about the value of serenity &c). But certain baseline mental stresses (fear of gods, fear of death &c) work against healthy functioning; eliminating these produces a baseline of serenity that allows for healthy functioning regarding other stressors.

2) Looking at the desires: to my understanding the necessary desires are pretty much a given that are specific to each individual at a specific time and are relatively easy to satisfy to maximize the specific individual's pleasure. The unnatural desires are, also, pretty much a given to each individual at a specific time and need to be fled from to maximize the individual's pleasure. This leaves the natural and unnecessary desires (Emily Austin's extravagant desires) as a potentially huge group of possibilities for pleasure, and the most active field of choices and avoidances (or engaging and fleeing). If we were to do nothing but seek serenity and avoid pain, then this category would be nonsensical.

Post by “Cassius” of May 3, 2023 at 1:48 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

If we were to do nothing but seek serenity and avoid pain, then this category would be nonsensical.

And if we were to imply that this category is to be frowned upon or minimized, then we would truly have a prescription for minimalism and asceticism that would totally contradict what we know about the facts of life and endeavors of every authentic ancient Epicurean who ever existed. There are literally zero examples of Epicureans who lived that way, and it is only the speculations and rumors surrounding ascetic interpretations of lines like we "could" compete with zeus for happiness with only bread and water and similar anecdotes that allow people to make these arguments. And this isn't just a "Roman Epicureans weren't good Epicureans" thing either - the will of Epicurus and his property holdings at death are only part of the evidence that he lived a normal life.

Again - presuming "serenity" means what most people interpret it to mean, as largely denoting mental and physical inactivity. No one generally says "I want to live a serene life" and expects the listener to understand a normal healthy active life.

Post by "Cassius" of May 3, 2023 at 3:11 PM

Godfrey --

I relate this issue in my mind with a passage I read years ago in section of Wikipedia which criticized Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. I had to go back into the old versions to find this as it seems to be no longer on the current page:

Promotion and Dissemination of Psychological Procedures to determine intervention potency.^[185]

Philosophical concerns with CBT methods

The methods employed in CBT research have not been the only criticisms; some individuals have called its theory and therapy into question. For example, Fancher^[185] argues that CBT has failed to provide a framework for clear and correct thinking. He states that it is strange for CBT theorists to develop a framework for determining distorted thinking without ever developing a framework for "cognitive clarity" or what would count as "healthy, normal thinking". Additionally, he writes that irrational thinking cannot be a source of mental and emotional distress when there is no evidence of rational thinking causing psychological well-being. Or, that social psychology has proven the normal cognitive processes of the average person to be irrational, even those who are psychologically well. Fancher also says that the theory of CBT is inconsistent with basic principles and research of rationality, and even ignores many rules of logic. He argues that CBT makes something of thinking that is far less exciting and true than thinking probably is. Among his other arguments are the maintaining of the status quo promoted in CBT, the self-deception encouraged within clients and patients engaged in CBT, how poorly the research is conducted, and some of its basic tenets and norms: "The basic norm of cognitive therapy is this: except for how the patient thinks, everything is ok".^[196]

Meanwhile, Slife and Williams^[184] write that one of the hidden assumptions in CBT is that of determinism, or the absence of free will. They argue that CBT invokes a type of cause-and-effect relationship with cognition. They state that CBT holds that external stimuli from the environment enter the mind, causing different thoughts that cause emotional states: nowhere in CBT theory is agency, or free will, accounted for. According to Slife and Williams, at its most basic foundational assumptions, CBT holds that human beings have no free will and are just determined by the cognitive processes invoked by external stimuli.

Another criticism of CBT theory, especially as applied to major depressive disorder (MDD), is that it confounds the symptoms of the disorder with its causes.^[188]

To be clear, I am not now talking about CBT in any substantive sense, I just want to echo a criticism of ANY approach that it should first define and present what healthy normal human action looks like, and THEN present diagnosis and recommendations on how to proceed from any existing current point to get to that goal.

Of course I think Epicurus does that - there are many passages remaining, and I feel sure there were many more, about how healthy normal people should spend their time while alive. I do not mean in the sense of recommendations as to careers or other specifics, but in the sense that the underlying presumption of the Greek experience to which Epicurus is in agreement is that one should live a normally active and healthy and full physical and mental life. I cannot imagine that they thought that any healthy normal person would take their statements as a prescription to go live in the proverbial cave on bread and water and stare at a candle.

Yet in the world we are in today it is my contention that the person who is normally educated and acclimated to prevailing cultural and educational advice is apt to take just that approach when hearing "the goal of life is the absence of pain." For two thousand years we've been subjected to religious absurdities that imply that our treasure is in heaven or somewhere else and that the best we can hope for is to shelter in place from pain while we wait for our Redeemer to come pick us up. In this context it's just not a good idea to expect someone who may be under the influence of such absurd views of the ideal state to take for granted that "living without pain" really means LIVING without pain in normal and healthy human ways, and not like a monk or a lama sitting cross-legged with palms up waiting to absorb the vibrations of the universe (or some such thing).

It is our lot as modern fans of Epicurus that Epicurus has been lumped in with those who preach quietism and pacifism and similar views, and that means that many people who come here, or who are alert to seeing Epicurean discussion on facebook or the internet, may think that we too here hold and promote such views.

And that presents an interesting environment in which we need to find ways to make very clear, from the beginning, that the point of Epicurean philosophy is how to LIVE, and not how to while away or time immobilized and fearing the next pin to drop while we wait for death to deliver us to some better world and away from this one which is alleged to be fated to be nasty, brutish and short.

If we aren't clear on why it is better that we have been born than that if we had not been born at all, we haven't even started to understand how to live.

And so in answer to that criticism of CBT I underlined above -- I agree with it -- we need to be sure we are being clear about the details of the goal that Epicurus was presuming - I would argue - that we would all understand. That doesn't mean that we have to get involved in every specific of life, but it means we need to find a way to be clear that living means enjoying life fully and not ascetically.

Post by “Godfrey” of May 3, 2023 at 3:50 PM

Since there is ambiguity surrounding the original Greek words and the dearth of extant texts (made worse, as you point out, by rival misinterpretations and the undue acceptance of these) it would seem that the best clarification of pleasure would be in outline form that builds up to a precise explanation.

I'm time crunched at the moment, but post #13 would be a piece of that: relating pleasure to the doctrines of desire and to modern understanding as well as to the extant texts. Having a document showing how the pieces fit together in the comprehensive philosophy, but focusing on the ethics of pleasure to present a logical argument.

Post by “Kalosyni” of May 4, 2023 at 8:51 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

We have to start with an understanding of what the normal healthy living thing does with its time so that we can understand what is presumed to be the result when all pain is eliminated.

41. One must laugh and seek wisdom and tend to one's home life and use one's other goods, and always recount the pronouncements of true philosophy. γελᾶν ἅμα δεῖ καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν καὶ οἰκονομεῖν καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς οἰκειώμασι χρῆσθαι καὶ μηδαμῆ λήγειν τὰς ἐκ τῆς ὀρθῆς φιλοσοφίας φωνὰς ἀφιέντας.

([source](#))

This is clear and simple and I'm thinking that one interpretation of "use one's other goods" is that these are the "goods" of friendship and self-sufficiency, etc.

It would be good to clearly define "happiness" and the path to it, as that would make things less ambiguous.

Post by “Cassius” of May 4, 2023 at 9:04 AM

This illustrates my love-hate relationship with the Epicurus Wiki at Epicurism.info: Two excellent paragraphs followed by immediate schizophrenic retraction -- as if "Oh NO Epicurus can't be in favor of a full life -- that would contradict our orthodox view of him! "

And of course it includes the trope that those poor stupid ROMAN Epicureans just didn't understand what Epicurus was all about! Which of course fails to account for why the Romans would be so stupidly interpreting Epicurus when they had ALL his texts with a complete explanation and 200 years of examples of people applying it, while the writer of this note has access only to a small fraction of that information.

NUTS TO ALL OF THAT!

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Vatican Saying 41

<<Prev | [Vatican Sayings](#) | Next>>

Γελᾶν ἅμα δεῖ καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν καὶ οἰκονομεῖν καὶ τοῖς
[One ought] to laugh at the same time → and practice philosophy and manage one's household and [use] the

λοιποῖς οἰκειώμασι χρῆσθαι καὶ μηδαμῇ λήγειν τὰς ἐκ τῆς
rest (of one's) familiar things → and in no way stop [propagating] the [utterances] → →

ὀρθῆς φιλοσοφίας φωνὰς ἀφιέντας.
of [correct] philosophy → →

Translation

Template:Vatican Saying 41

Analysis

With this Saying Epicurus disavows any allegiance to ascetic, monastic ideals. A philosophically enlightened person is not at all like the stereotype of the dour hermit, less yet the reclusive misanthrope. Such a person feels free to laugh out loud, and practices philosophy daily, naturally. Such a person lives a normal life, minding his/her business, managing his/her household, handling all the daily, familiar affairs of domestic life.

At the same time, the Epicurean-in-action never ceases to propagate the pronouncements of Epicureanism, thus becoming both a source of Epicureanism for others, and a living model, all at the same time. Unlike, however, the coldly forbidding Stoic Sage --and with this insinuation Epicurus may possibly have meant to launch an oblique attack on his philosophical rivals of the Arcade-- who is aloof and unapproachable, the Epicurean is someone the majority can easily relate to, and an attractive role-model for many. It is not hard to like a person who laughs generously, lives a normal life, and has some good advice to offer on occasion.

~~This Saying stands in striking contrast to the general attitude of Epicureanism, focused on withdrawal as it is. Despite Epicurus' lukewarm "permission" that one live a normal life, one full of the toils and troubles of quotidian occupation, this text seems to applaud a seemingly most un-Epicurean type of person, one occupied with household, possessions, (family?) and a plethora of other matters that constitute the ancient and modern concept of "normality".~~

~~It seems that Roman Epicureans felt closer to, or applied themselves more eagerly to this particular facet of Epicureanism than the original, Greek denizens of the Garden. Obviously such cloistered students of philosophy could not have been managing their households according to the social norms of ancient Athens, but were rather involved in a more "intensive course" of study, leaving much (or most, likely) of the rest of their lives behind them in order to live close to their Sage.~~

~~In a rather striking paradox, with this Saying Epicurus seems to praise quite a different type of student than those who worshipfully surrounded him in the Garden. Or, perhaps, he was speaking presciently of the future of Epicureanism, the global, post-Garden "society" of those whose life is illuminated by his teaching.~~

Post by “Cassius” of May 4, 2023 at 9:13 AM

OK ok I had to look it up: anyone who writes "quotidian" rather than "everyday" or "commonplace" has some interpretive issues of his own to sort out! 😊 It's almost as if that note were written by two separate people.



The part I struck out in red represents everything wrong in modern Epicurean commentary.

Post by “Eikadistes” of May 4, 2023 at 9:32 AM

It seems anachronistic to re-contextualize Vatican Saying 41 in a Roman context. I have always taken this pronouncement to be directed toward Epicurus' correspondents who were logistically unable to relocate into the Garden. Unlike *Noah's Ark*, which apparently functioned like Mary Poppins' carpet bag (finite geometric dimensions with infinite volume), the Garden had limited space. Surely, "his friends who were so numerous that they could not be contained in whole cities" could not all cohabit with the Hegemon. The author's commentary seems to parrot the criticism that it is impossible to live according to Epicurus' teachings.

Post by “Pacatus” of May 5, 2023 at 4:27 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

By virtue of being originally written in French, it has a slightly different linguistic approach to ours which will potentially depth to our understanding.

This, I think, is an oft-overlooked principle. I corresponded online for years with a guy whose 1st language was Portuguese; he was also fluent in Spanish and English (and, as I recall, had a good grasp of French). His English was impeccable, better than a great many native-English speakers we also corresponded with - in fact, he wrote his PhD dissertation (economics) in

English.

I once asked him if changing languages changed his thinking. His response: Absolutely. In fact, he would often switch languages (at least in his mind) to evoke new perspectives/insights to whatever he was thinking about.

I am sure that translation from, e.g. Greek, through different languages also adds to insight.

[Sadly, I am mostly restricted to English; used to know a bit of Hebrew and a much-impooverished Spanish. All lost in the mists of Lethe.]

Post by “Godfrey” of May 6, 2023 at 8:45 PM

More food for thought: Guyau on the gods. The idealist v realist debate has gone on for at least 150 years.... Notes from Book Three, Chapter 4 - *“Epicurean Piety. The Struggle against Divinity understood as Efficient Cause”*

- Even if there isn't a divine creator, this doesn't have to lead to atheism.
- If it's a fact there all men believe in the gods, in order for the philosophy to be founded on facts it must take this into account.
- Creation doesn't require divinity. And according to Epicurus the supreme happiness of the gods would preclude them from taking on the task of creating and managing the universe.
- Epicurean theory of the gods seems rather strange, but it follows *“logically from the principles”*. It attempts to interpret superstitious beliefs that come from *“hallucinations”*.

(Note: apparently utilitarianism has a definition of "interest" which I think is something like "self-interest" and contrasts with "obligation". In utilitarianism, it seems that this self might be a person, a group, a nation, or whatever particular entity is being considered.)

- Oddly *“for a utilitarian system, religious sentiment and the cult of divinity become entirely disinterested.”*
- Whereas prayer typically involved fear and petitioning the gods, Epicureans consider the gods to be indifferent to their concerns. *“Prayer becomes, then, useless and absurd; pure worship replaces it, but a form of worship detached from every personal feeling. Vulgar piety is always mixed with feelings of fear and hope. People pray to the gods in order to obtain the goods they desire, or to eliminate the evils they fear. The Epicurean, on the other hand, does not fear*

anything coming from the gods, nor does he expect anything from them, and nevertheless, he worships them. Why? Because they are [the expression of] an ideal form of happiness and serenity; because they represent that which the Epicurean ought to be; because they are beautiful to contemplate, and they enchant our own thoughts, just like the marbles of Phidias please our sight.

- According to Seneca, Epicurus removed disinterestedness from his ethics, but then he placed it in his piety. Seneca objects to this. Guyau: *"However, the piety of the Epicureans is indeed less astonishing than it seems, especially if one realizes that it does not cost a great deal of effort [to them], [or] if one realizes that effort and trouble would be much greater if one were to succumb to vulgar beliefs. Their piety also seems less astonishing if one realizes that these beliefs themselves have a natural ground and are quite rational in their principles. The gods really exist according to Epicurus; they are beautiful and happy. They are like an embellished image of ourselves: why wouldn't we, then, bow before them?"*

- Guyau dismisses the idea that Epicurus was insincere in his presentation of the gods and was actually an atheist.

- *"If Epicurus clearly affirmed the existence of the gods, if he consecrated a full work to piety, and if he offered his life as an example of the piety he praised in his writings, this is because he really believed in the existence of the gods, which he worshipped as genuinely real beings."*

- Lange (a contemporary of Guyau) came up with the idealist interpretation of the gods: Epicurus' gods did not have real existence: they were simply ideals. 'Undoubtedly, Epicurus honoured the belief in the gods as an element of [the] human ideal, but he did not see in the gods themselves exterior beings. Epicurus' system would reveal itself as fully contradictory were we not to look at it from the perspective of this subjective respect for the gods, which creates a harmonious agreement within our soul.' According to Lange, while the many worshipped the gods because they believed in their existence, Epicurus did the opposite: he did not believe in them, but nevertheless worshipped them. When Epicurus revered the gods for their perfection, 'it mattered little to him whether this perfection showed itself in exterior acts, or if it was employed only as an ideal within our thought'.

- But Lange had no textual basis for his theory, he based it on resolving what he saw as a contradiction in the system. Guyau believes that this contradiction doesn't exist. *"We have seen that, on the contrary, Epicurus' doctrine does not contain any contradiction but only a certain number of unsound deductions."* I'm assuming these are unsound based on modern science, but his wording is unclear.

- *"For Epicurus, the gods certainly represent an ideal, but it is a realized ideal, as well as a living ideal."*

- *"His system rests precisely on the identity of the subjective and the objective, for he claims that every sensation necessarily corresponds to a reality. Additionally, according to him, given*

that every idea has its roots in sensation, the human mind cannot have any ideal superior to reality itself. It is from reality that our mind borrows the ideal it conceives."

- "Epicurus' gods were not mere ideals and, as we have seen, they even nourished themselves with very real food, like simple mortals. Philodemus even asks himself whether or not the gods sleep. Ideals do not eat or sleep. We should not attribute modern doctrines to Epicurus, doctrines that are born from the progress of the sciences and of thought. Epicurus' system, with its strong and weak points, simply accords with its own time."

Post by "Pacatus" of May 7, 2023 at 1:18 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

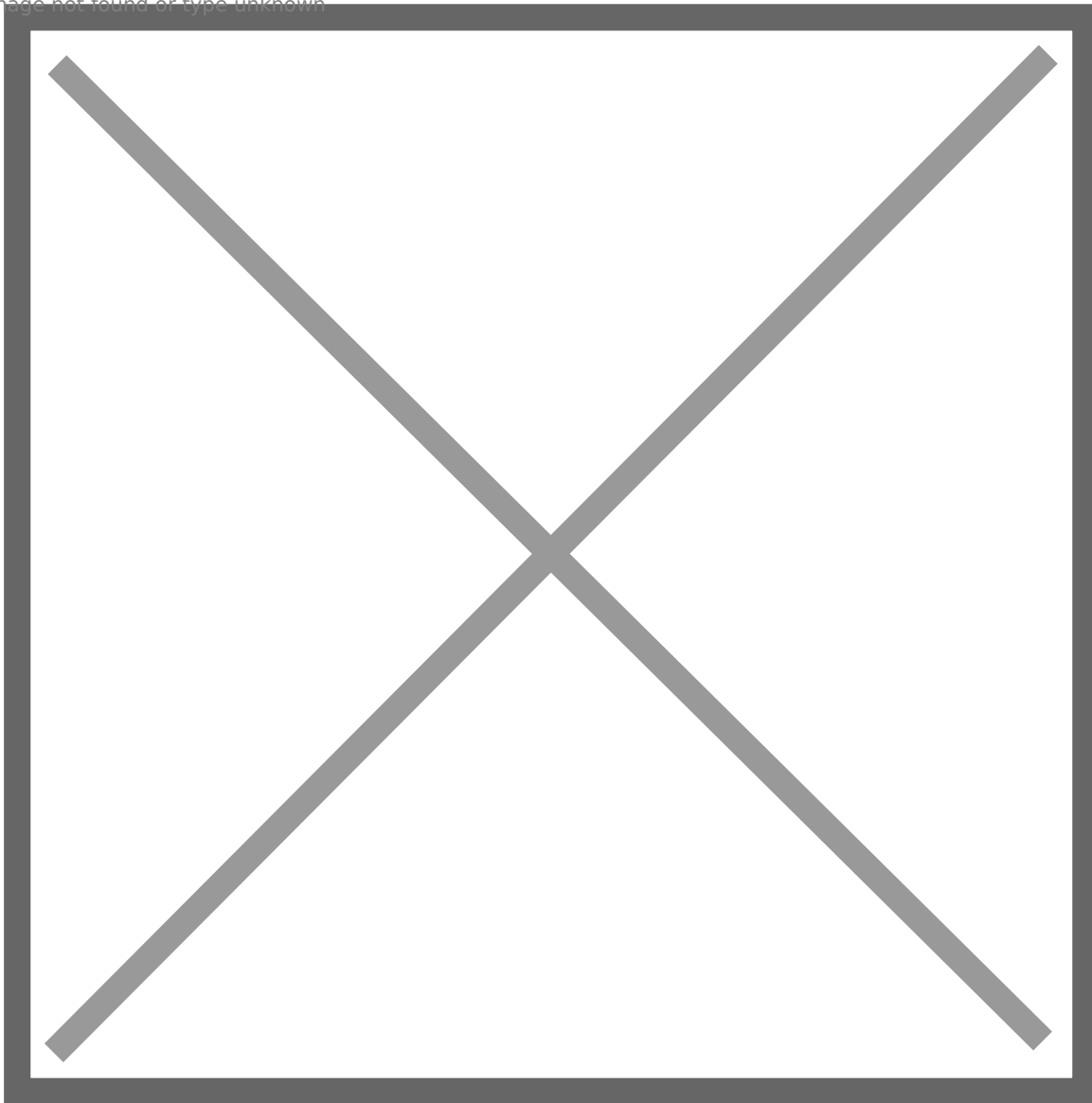
Again - presuming "serenity" means what most people interpret it to mean, as largely denoting mental and physical inactivity. No one generally says "I want to live a serene life" and expects the listener to understand a normal healthy active life.

Just a brief interjection as I work more through this discussion (and am reading the Kindle free sample of the book):

Personally, I have never thought that's what serenity means - and I'm not convinced that most people do. I think it would be an extremely narrow (mis)interpretation.

Apparently, it was originally related to weather: clear, calm, bright. Figuratively, the Latin *serenitas* was also used to mean "cheerful, glad or joyous."

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[serene | Search Online Etymology Dictionary](#)

The online etymology dictionary (etymonline) is the internet's go-to source for quick and reliable accounts of the origin and history of English words,...

www.etymonline.com

[serenitas - Wiktionary](#)

[serenus - Wiktionary](#)

In any event, I suspect that Guyau (knowledgeable in philology I think) would have had the notions outlined in etymonline in mind. Nevertheless, if he left it at “The good then is serenity” – without qualification – even in French, I think we would all agree that that is a one-sidedness of the kind sometimes applied directly to the Greek *ataraxia* (and which has been discussed often on here).

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3043-the-ethics-of-epicurus-and-its-relation-to-contemporary-doctrines-by-jean-marie/>

Post by “Pacatus” of May 7, 2023 at 1:38 PM

Added note:

I also think that we do well to understand that pleasures do not (necessarily, or even usually) come “single file” as it were - but can (and maybe mostly do) combine in ways to enhance each other in an overall experience. Then it would seem generally to be a misguided reductionism to try to separate and isolate each individual pleasure in some “utilitarian” quest to identify how many “utils” each one contributes.*

I can be serene while robustly cheering on my favorite NBA team, while enjoying a quiet martini on our deck overlooking the lake, while enjoying a good meal or congenial conversation (even friendly debate). Each of those pleasurable experiences is made up of any number of pleasures - and *ataraxia/serenity*.

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* This is not say that contemplating those individual pleasures might not be useful sometimes - but not, for me, as some kind of abacus-like hedonic “calculus.”

Post by “Pacatus” of May 7, 2023 at 2:08 PM

I like what the translator says about Guyau taking an evolutionary view of any philosophical system - while recognizing the importance of trying to identify the associated germinal ideas at the foundation. I would add: a dialectical-evolutionary approach, taking into account multiple perspectives (a kind of dialectical perspectivism).

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Okay [Godfrey](#)! You got me: I had to buy the book! ☐

Post by “Godfrey” of May 7, 2023 at 4:22 PM

I hope you amass many "utils" from reading it 😊 I certainly have!

Post by “Pacatus” of May 8, 2023 at 12:51 AM

I finished reading the chapter in which Guyau says “The good then is serenity.” The preceding pages of the chapter contrast Aristippus’ notion that there exists an indeterminate state between pleasure and pain – and Epicurus’ rejection of such a state. For Epicurus, *hedone/aponia/atarxia* (and *eudaimonia*) congeal, as it were – sometimes subsumed under the heading of just *hedone* (or perhaps *eudaimonia**).

In this schema, so-called kinetic pleasure is the active (and enjoyable) response to some *pone* – such as hunger. Pleasure comes from both satisfaction of the hunger and from the sensual taste of the food (however simple). The afterward feeling of satisfaction and contentment is also pleasure (so-called katastemic?).

In rejecting Aristippus’ neutral state, Guyau uses the word “serenity” to refer to the ability to generally sustain that state of *hedone/aponia/atarxia/eudaimonia*. That is, for him, the ultimate hedonic *telos* – even if perfectly achievable only by an archetypal Epicurean “sage.” (Though Guyau also seems to affirm that – with attention to a due natural frugality/simplicity – such an ideal is within the grasp of most of us, which Epicurus intended.)

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* I do not see *hedone/aponia/atarxia* as instrumental virtues aiming at *eudaimonia* – as if that were some other value-in-itself. I rather see a eudaimonic life as constitutive of the most pleasurable/pleasant life I can put together. *Eudaimonia* is not separable from *hedone*.

Post by “Pacatus” of May 8, 2023 at 1:16 AM

Twenty-odd years ago, a philosopher friend of mine suggested that I read Kant’s *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (though my friend was thoroughly Aristotelian). In the attempt, I had such a strong, negative emotional reaction that I kept throwing the book on the floor and (literally) kicking it across the room. I never got close to finishing it.

Kant claimed a kind of axiomatic “self-evidence” for **duty** as the basis for all morality and moral agency. The book hit me in the face with the very “Pavlovian” social programming that informed my childhood and formative years – and remained locked in my subconscious, to be triggered (most often with anguishing guilt, sometimes nightmares) by whatever “post-hypnotic” triggers were embedded. (Some therapy helped alleviate that – but, likely due to my

own failings on follow-through, did not eliminate it.)

Even after discovering Epicurus, I have not been adept at putting together all the “clues” to complete the puzzle in a therapeutic way (again, my failings). But Guyau takes on that debilitating Stoic/Kantian virtue/duty driven morality (calling Kantianism a “new Stoicism) *mano y mano* - in a way that just toggled all the right switches in my slow-to-learn brain.

I can honestly say that, had I read Guyau 20 years ago, I would have become an Epicurean 20 years ago. (This is not to in any way deprecate all that I have read on Epicureanism in recent years - including the wonderful stuff on here: Guyau simply hits me **directly** where I have lived.) Fortunately, as Epicurus said (in other words), it is never too late.

So, [Godfrey](#), I am profoundly grateful! ☐☐

Post by “Cassius” of May 8, 2023 at 7:10 AM

Thank you Pacatus that gives me more incentive to read this book.

Much as with the other words like "tranquility," I obviously have no problems with the desirability of "serenity," but I continue to think there is something missing when someone seems to be seeking to wrap up in a single word -- which to me constitutes at most an "adverb" (such as "I am living serenely") -- without explicitly stating that the act of "living" in such a way entails all sorts of physical activities that are the true heart of what is going on.

I will eventually get this book so I can see how my concerns compare to Guyau's explanation of the topic. Perhaps many years ago my concern would be out of place, and it would go without saying that the praise of absence of pain was not intended to elevate a state of mind to a self-contained objective. Paraphrasing a Platonist who DeWitt cites in his book, I don't think Epicurus expected that naming "pleasure" the guide of life could ever be interpreted as a call for the draining of all active physical and mental pleasures from life .

But I definitely think in today's intellectual mix this cannot be left unexplained, and I would like to see where Guyau fits into this.

Post by “Don” of May 8, 2023 at 7:54 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

don't think Epicurus expected that naming "pleasure" the guide of life could ever be interpreted as a call for the draining of all active physical and mental pleasures from life .

Quote from Epicurus

67. I do not think I could conceive of the good without the joys of taste, of sex, of hearing, and without the pleasing motions caused by the sight of bodies and forms.

I continue to soapbox that all pleasures are included in Epicurus's definition of pleasure/hedone; however, he also taught that we can have more confidence in pleasure that arises from within ourselves (tranquility, memory, anticipation, etc.) than that which arises from outside ourselves (sex, food, music, dance, etc.) . That which arises from within are always at hand.

Post by “Kalosyni” of May 8, 2023 at 8:28 AM

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

* I do not see hedone/aponia/ataraxia as instrumental virtues aiming at eudaimonia - as if that were some other value-in-itself. I rather see a eudaimonic life as constitutive of the most pleasurable/pleasant life I can put together. Eudaimonia is not separable from hedone.

Some thoughts perculating in response. The sensations of hedone/aponia/ataraxia result due to choices, and our choices are limited by the options we can imagine, and those choices are limited by the options which are realistically available to us. My niece has five children that she home-schools, and I seriously doubt that tranquility and serenity will be available to her (except in very brief moments) till they grow up and move out of the house (three boys and two girls). And yet, since hedone is additive (not subtractive) then I say that hedone (both of mind and of body) could be a direct path to happiness for her. If she thinks she needs aponia and ataraxia to be happy then she will wait a long time.

Post by “Don” of May 8, 2023 at 10:01 AM

I maintain that ataraxia is a sort of mindset. The metaphor is sailing on calm seas. It affects how we approach other choices. To me, ataraxia is the eye in the hurricane. We can have a tranquil mind in the midst of chaos. It's "katastematic" because it is a state of being arising from within. As opposed to the pleasure or pain that comes from activities.

I fully agree that parenting can be chaotic, but we have the choice to deal with it calmly (at least internally) or with anger or impatience. And sometimes we will be angry but we need to know if it does, does it come from a place of correcting behavior of children or protection of them or from some other place?

Post by “Godfrey” of May 8, 2023 at 10:33 AM

Thank you [Pacatus](#) for the kind words!

Post by “Godfrey” of May 8, 2023 at 10:39 AM

Once one has children, keeping one's calm becomes a natural and necessary desire. When looked at in this way, it bumps it up in the list of priorities to be dealt with.

I wish I'd understood this while rearing my kids, but I was stuck in the mindset of duty ethics. Fortunately I'm beginning to figure this out, now that further challenges await (as they always will).

Post by “Don” of May 8, 2023 at 10:42 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Once one has children, keeping one's calm becomes a natural and necessary desire. When looked at in this way, it bumps it up in the list of priorities to be dealt with.

What's Epicurean for "Amen!"

Post by “Godfrey” of May 8, 2023 at 10:45 AM

Having now read further in Guyau it appears that he interprets Epicurus one way, but understands Epicureanism another way. His thoughts on Epicurus don't always agree with ours, but his thoughts on using the philosophy seem to.

Part of his approach is that philosophies, like organisms, grow and evolve. So in reading the book it's possible to take issue with some of his interpretations and still get a lot of benefit from his presentation.

Post by “Cassius” of May 8, 2023 at 10:56 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

he interprets Epicurus one way, but understands Epicureanism another way

Can you summarize his view of the difference?

Post by “Pacatus” of May 8, 2023 at 12:41 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

but I continue to think there is something missing when someone seems to be seeking to wrap up in a single word

Especially in a translation. But I do recall Luther's "solas": sola gratia, sola fide, sola scriptura -- grace alone, faith alone, scripture alone.

Epicurean version: sola hedone, sola aponia, sola ataraxia. 😊🤔 [Don](#): apologies for mixing Latin and Greek. 😭

Post by “Don” of May 8, 2023 at 1:20 PM

monon hedone, monon aponia, monon ataraxia? 😊

Post by “Pacatus” of May 8, 2023 at 1:33 PM

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

I like what the translator says about Guyau taking an evolutionary view of any philosophical system – while recognizing the importance of trying to identify the associated germinal ideas at the foundation. I would add: a dialectical-evolutionary approach, taking into account multiple perspectives (a kind of dialectical perspectivism).

I wanted to add to my comment about Guyau’s evolutionary approach ...

Here’s what I mean by “dialectical perspectivism”* (which is not the simple thesis-antithesis-synthesis):

There is no “view from nowhere – or from everywhere” (the so-called “God’s-eye view”): there are only multiple perspectives. A metaphor –

First you look through this window into the room; then another window, etc. Maybe you get in through an open door. Even if you get to stand in the center of the room, your view as you turn around changes. No one of those views is the sole “right one.” But false perspectives (e.g. manipulated with mirrors, in this visual metaphor) are possible.

My perspectivism is more that of the Spanish existential philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset than of Nietzsche – but the idea is that the best we can really do is to allow ourselves as many perspectives as possible, sort through them, form the best picture for ourselves (which will itself be a personal, existential perspective), and be willing to change our “view” as new views come to fore for us.

In terms of Epicurus and the evolution of Epicureanism, I think we need to approach it the same way, as we each personalize our application. And always read critically, every source. I might find a given viewpoint or quote personally helpful: but that doesn’t mean it is some definitive summation – just a helpful perspective. (I don’t know yet how Guyau presents his evolutionary analysis; have to keep reading ... ☐)

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* The method is how I recall one writer describing Marx's dialectical approach in Capital: analyzing from such conceptual viewpoints as use-value, labour-value, exchange-value and value.

Post by "Godfrey" of May 8, 2023 at 2:39 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Can you summarize his view of the difference?

To add to what [Pacatus](#) just said....

The book is part of a reworking of a dissertation that Guyau wrote, which was a critique of utilitarianism. He considered Epicurus to be the first utilitarian philosopher. In Book 4 of this book he looks at 17th and 18th century utilitarian/Epicurean thinkers. Since I'm not well versed in utilitarianism, or in the other philosophers he discusses, I can't comment very intelligently (assuming that I ever comment intelligently 😊) on those subjects.

I agree that we can *critically* personalize our approach in the context that [Pacatus](#) describes, subject to continual verification. We on this forum don't always agree on everything and we rarely agree with the academics: this necessitates that we form our own opinions. And of course philosophizing is thinking, not copying. This book is a useful vehicle for stimulating thinking and for examining Epicurus in a historical context which begins with Epicurus and ends with Guyau.

So, to answer your question [Cassius](#), I was referring specifically to the subject of pleasure. The way that I read Guyau, he thinks that Epicurus tends toward tranquility. But he thinks that tranquility is incomplete and he embraces an inclusive view of pleasure, much as we do. So we can disagree with his interpretation of this, while at the same time agreeing with his conclusion.

Post by "Don" of May 8, 2023 at 7:39 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Once one has children, keeping one's calm becomes a natural and necessary desire. When looked at in this way, it bumps it up in the list of priorities to be dealt with.

What's Epicurean for "Amen!"

τῷ ὄντι! (tō onti)

[how are τῷ ὄντι doing? - Textkit Greek and Latin Forums](#)

Indeed! Really! In fact! In reality!

Amen is actually ancient Greek ἀμήν (amén), from Biblical Hebrew אָמֵן ('āmēn, "certainly, verily") but I like τῷ ὄντι! for our purposes better.

Of course, there's always *By Zeus!* 😊