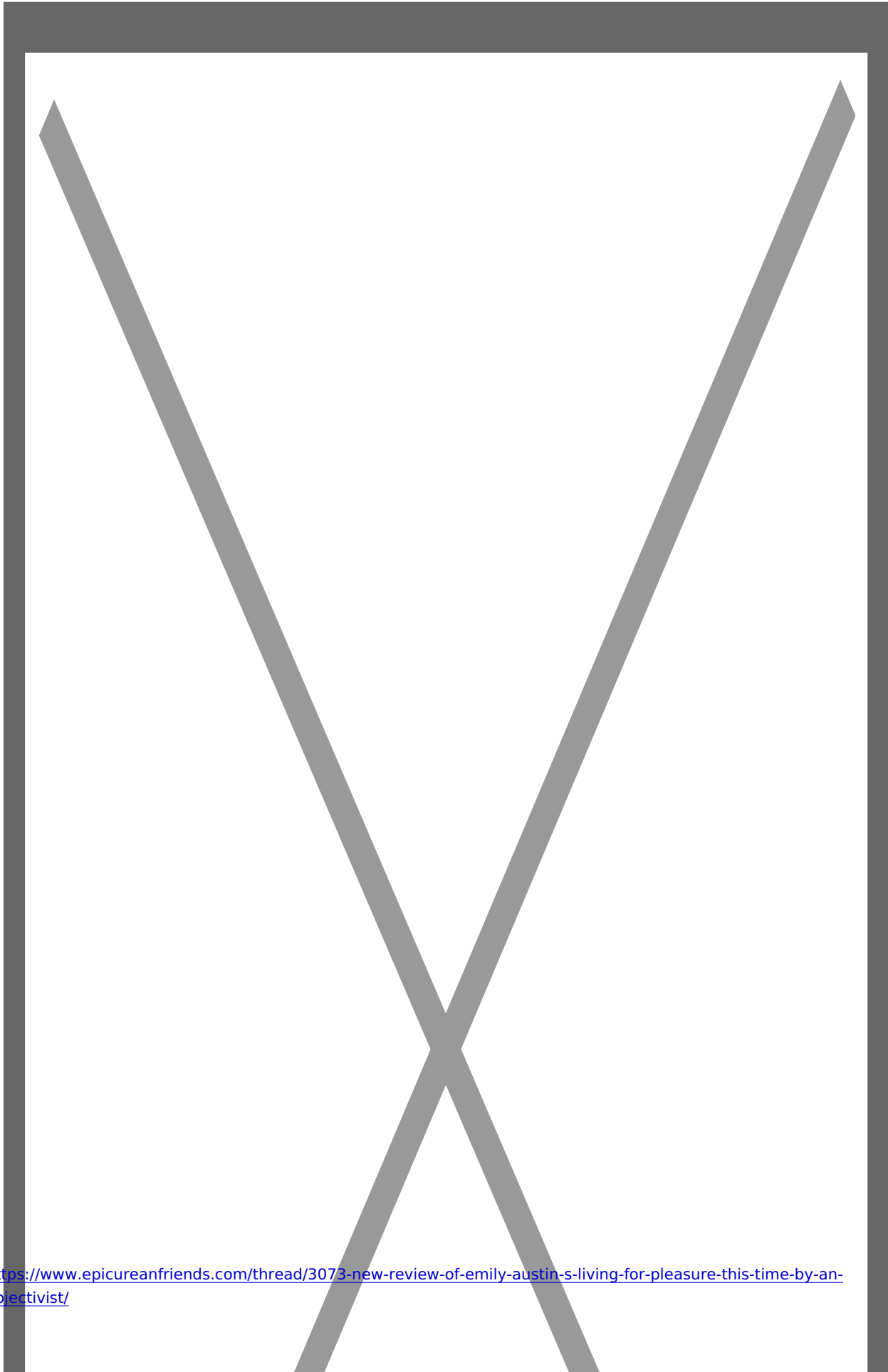


# **New Review of Emily Austin's "Living For Pleasure" - This Time By An Objectivist**

**Post by "Cassius" of May 18, 2023 at 7:20 PM**

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<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3073-new-review-of-emily-austin-s-living-for-pleasure-this-time-by-an-objectivist/>

[Living for Pleasure: An Epicurean Guide to Life by Emily A. Austin - The Objective Standard](#)

Living for Pleasure offers a thorough presentation of Epicurean morality in a readable, entertaining style.

theobjectivestandard.com

Living for Pleasure is a fun and much-needed introduction to the ideas of one of the world's greatest philosophers. Epicurus's teachings about reason, desire, and tranquility are as important now as they were twenty-three hundred years ago.

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I think most of us here will find this largely positive review to be something we can mostly agree with, while at the same time it will help us to dive further into the differences between Rand and Aristotle and Epicurus.

The reviewer wishes that LFP had gone further into these differences, which is a perspective I can share without calling it a criticism. The thing I like about LFP is that it goes as far as it does in presenting a positive view of Epicurus that active and healthy people can embrace. When the reviewer talks about JFK's speech on the reasons for going to the moon, he doesn't so much point out a flaw in the book or in Epicurus but in the current orthodox understanding that Epicurus would hesitate to go himself if he had the chance.

The main failure I would point out in turn as to the review is that the writer does not acknowledge that Rand placed "selfishness" and "reason" at the heart of her philosophy, rather than the feeling of pleasure and the rejection of logical rationalism. But to explore that would open too many wounds for most Objectivists, who have a long way to go before they begin to realize that their own sin of rationalism - which many of them admit - is built in to Rand's' neo-Stoic and neo-Platonic worship of "reason" rather than the feeling of pleasure as the ultimate standard of a proper way to live.

Rather than continue my own comments I'll just post the link and we can discuss further to the extent people are interested.

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**Post by "stpeter" of June 3, 2023 at 10:53 PM**

For what it's worth, many years ago I wrote an essay entitled [Epicurean Pleasure and the Objectivist Good](#) (replying to an article by Ray Shelton). Full disclosure: I was much more under the influence of Rand back then...

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### **Post by “Cassius” of June 4, 2023 at 7:49 AM**

Thank you Peter. I don't have nearly the reading background (or processing power) in Rand that you have, but I see that your article is largely based on the widely held premise that Epicurus values katastematic pleasures higher than kinetic ones. If I thought that was correct I would have a major problem with Epicurus, and I would probably have dropped him long ago. I perceive this to be similar to why Nietzsche ultimately backed away.

But for me, this problem is overcome by arguments stated at length by Boris [Nikolsky](#) and Gosling and Taylor, who allege that this widely held premise is not correct, and that Epicurus did not hold katastematic as higher than kinetic, or place "tranquility" at the center of his philosophy rather than pleasure, as is attributed to him.

I doubt this thread is the place to elaborate on that for the moment, but I wanted to note that I think there is a lot to be gained in comparing and contrasting Rand with Epicurus, just as we do the Stoics and the others. It has been so long since I read those Shelton articles that I hardly remember them, but tracing out the reasons why Rand does not ultimately land on "pleasure" but on some version of "reason" (at least in common perception) is to me a fascinating subject.

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### **Post by “Don” of June 4, 2023 at 8:45 AM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

But for me, this problem is overcome by arguments stated at length by Boris [Nikolsky](#) and Gosling and Taylor, who allege that this widely held premise is not correct, and that Epicurus did not hold katastematic as higher than kinetic, or place "tranquility" at the center of his philosophy rather than pleasure, as is attributed to him.

Agreed about not elaborating on this thread; but, for the record: I have come to the understanding that Epicurus and his school taught that we can be more confident in having access to katastematic pleasure like ataraxia that arise from our minds than we can kinetic

pleasures that arise from external circumstances and activities. That doesn't make them "better" just more readily available.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of June 4, 2023 at 9:00 AM**

[Quote from Don](#)

That doesn't make them "better" just more readily available.

Yes, and having a type of pleasure that is "readily available" is essential to Epicurus being able to maintain that the wise man who pursues pleasure can always find it and thus be able to say that he is happy.

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### **Post by “stpeter” of June 4, 2023 at 2:31 PM**

[Cassius](#) Thanks for the pointer to the paper by Boris [Nikolsky](#) - that's new to me and I'll read it soon.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of June 4, 2023 at 4:18 PM**

You're welcome. [Nikolsky](#) himself credits Gosling and Taylor in their "Greeks on Pleasure" for his inspiration, and I see that Emily Austin in "Living for Pleasure" footnotes that she sides with Gosling and Taylor as well. So other than DeWitt, who mentions the issue but does so mostly in passing, credit probably goes to Gosling and Taylor for blazing the modern trail on this.

G&T marshal the evidence for why the Ciceronian / modern interpretation that elevates katastematic pleasure / tranquility as the true end is wrong, and [Nikolsky](#) advances the case of how the problem got accentuated due to the editing choices of Diogenes Laertius in organizing his comments along the division of Carneades (if I recall correctly).

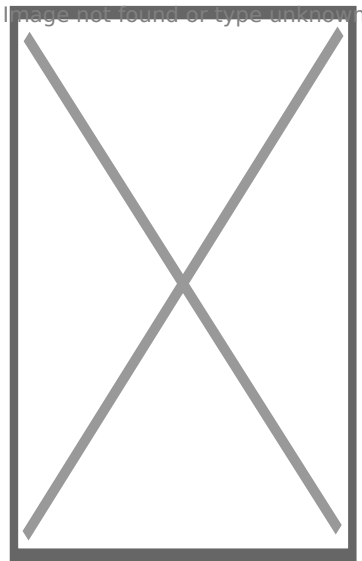
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### THE FAITH OF EPICURUS

analysis of the relevant texts in Aristotle and Epicurus recently made by Philip Merlan (*Studies in Epicurus and Aristotle*). In the first place this analysis profoundly modifies our understanding of the word *hedonism* as applied to the philosophy of Epicurus. Epicurus uses the word *hedone* (pleasure) in four connections. It can mean either the 'pleasure' of the body or of the mind, and this 'pleasure' may be either kinetic (i.e., produced by a stimulus from without) or katastematic (i.e., a state of the organism created by itself without external stimulus). Only in the first of these four uses does 'pleasure' seem to be the appropriate translation for *hedone*. In the other three cases 'joy' would be more appropriate; and Merlan suggests that Epicureanism should be understood as a philosophy of joy. Even this word, I would add from an analysis of the Latin terminology in Lucretius, is too weak. In Lucretius *voluptas*, the Latin equivalent of *hedone*, bears the whole gamut of meaning from physical pleasure to rapt contemplation of the deity; and in the Greek of Epicurus *hedone* is often the equivalent of *to makarion* (blessedness), the state of being of the gods and of those men who have succeeded in sharing their mode of life. The proclamation of a hedonism of this noble type as the highest good could be the breath of life to a sick society.

\_\_\_ I will add that I liked

the take on katastematic and kinetic pleasures in The faith of Epicurus by Benjamin Farrington.



[The faith of Epicurus : Farrington, Benjamin, 1891- : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

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**Post by “Godfrey” of June 4, 2023 at 5:28 PM**

I seem to recall that the Wenham article in the Filebase is helpful on this subject as well.

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**Post by “stpeter” of June 7, 2023 at 8:27 PM**

During the extensive research I've performed in preparation for writing a book about Aristotle's conception of human flourishing, I skimmed Gosling & Taylor's book. I did not agree at all with their interpretation of Aristotle, which makes me skeptical about their interpretation of Epicurus, but I'll need to read their chapter on Epicurus because I skipped it the first time around since my focus was purely on Aristotle at that time.

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**Post by “Cassius” of June 7, 2023 at 9:52 PM**

If there's a way to summarize how you think they erred on Aristotle that would be interesting too.