

Neither "ataraxia" nor "not ataraxia", but "Joy as the goal"

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 25, 2026 at 10:08 AM

There is no mandate by gods that Epicurean philosophical thought should be promoted for the sake of progeny or for the future benefit of humanity (unlike various world religions) and there is no mandate to convert people to Epicureanism. Given that this is so, what likelihood is there on the continuation on into the future? Shall we then just relax and "enjoy the ride"? Or for any of us, is our main driving force for promotion so that we have "like-minded friends" to discuss Epicurean philosophy?

There is no judge in the afterlife to declare that an Epicurean did not do what they were required to do. And indeed there are no requirements for doing things.

As Epicureans, we do seem to fall into two "philosophical camps"...those that hold to the importance of ataraxia and aponia (free from physical and mental pain) and those that hold to the importance of a life filled up with prudent pleasures (both active and static, and more pleasures than pains).

I would like to argue that we should not fall into either of these two camps, but first here is a comparison of this either/or dichotomy (fyi...made exclusively by me, and not AI):

Ataraxia as the Goal

Seeking out the painful aspects of your life and removing what you can

Being content with what you already have

Motivated by the desire to remove pain

Potential consequences: over-emphasis on relaxation and non-activity / non-effort. Frustration if you are not able to remove pains in your life.

Pleasure as the Goal

Seeking out the pleasurable aspects of your life and adding in what you can

Looking for more than what you already have

Motivated by the desire to add pleasure

Potential consequences: over-emphasis on sensory pleasures. Feelings of dissatisfaction when you aren't able to experience what you want to experience (both physical and mental).

I would like to propose a third way..."Joy as the goal" as I think that this puts a better spin on what is meant by "pleasure" in Epicurean philosophy...and I think it also leads to greater

motivation to "get off one's bum" and make effort toward a good life. I do seem to remember that there is at least one reference to joy in the extant texts, but will need to track that down.

I welcome any thoughts 😊

Post by “Cassius” of February 25, 2026 at 10:33 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

I would like to propose a third way..."Joy as the goal" as I think that this puts a better spin on what is meant by "pleasure" in Epicurean philosophy...and I think it also leads to greater motivation to "get off one's bum" and make effort toward a good life. I do seem to remember that there is at least one reference to joy in the extant texts, but will need to track that down.

I agree that it is important to emphasize joy, and the failure to do so is a big problem in modern Epicurean discussion.

However, from [Diogenes Laertius](#):

And Epicurus in the work on Choice speaks as follows: 'Freedom from trouble in the mind and from pain in the body are static pleasures, but Joy and exultation are considered as active pleasures involving motion. '

Joy falls within pleasure, not the other way around. I'd say what you are describing is one of many ways to explain that pleasure has many facets, but "joy" cannot *replace* "pleasure" as the global term. There are many types of pleasure which are also an important part of the goal but which do not fall within "joy."

[EpicureanFriends Side-By-Side Diogenes Laertius Ten](#)

Post by “Joshua” of February 25, 2026 at 8:55 PM

I agree with [Cassius](#) on pleasure, but I do want to add something relevant to joy. This comes from Julien Offray de la Mettrie's [Anti-Seneca](#); many here will recognize this from [Charles](#)'s work on the French materialists.

Quote

Nous sommes donc en droit de conclure que, si les joies puisées dans la nature & la raison, sont des crimes, le bonheur des hommes est d'être criminels.

We are therefore entitled to conclude that, if the joys drawn from nature and reason are crimes, then the happiness of men is to be criminal.

Post by “Matteng” of February 26, 2026 at 2:18 PM

Both is necessary to fulfill the natural/necessary desire for Eudaimonia, a life of Pleasure.

For Ataraxia and removal of Suffering/Pain we need to be active and pursue Pleasures prudently. To hide fearful of pain in a cave let you painfully starve full of agony.

To be a pure egoist let you live painfully. To be pure altruist let you live painfully.

To develop a Character full of Virtue(core phronesis) and love/friendship (philia) includes both: self interest + altruism and balances it which includes the motivation to lead a life of sustainable and optimal possible Pleasure for your life which you agree within yourself, Eudaimonia for which some kinds/ degree of pain and risk is worth it.

Post by “Cassius” of February 26, 2026 at 5:57 PM

[Quote from Matteng](#)

To be a pure egoist let you live painfully. To be pure altruist let you live painfully.

i strongly agree with this.

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 27, 2026 at 7:49 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

As Epicureans, we do seem to fall into two "philosophical camps"...those that hold to the importance of ataraxia and aponia (free from physical and mental pain) and those that hold to the importance of a life filled up with prudent pleasures (both active and static, and more pleasures than pains).

I would like to argue that we should not fall into either of these two camps...

I wanted to mention that at the last Wednesday night Zoom (for Level 03 and above members), we did have a very good discussion on pleasure/happiness/ataraxia. And in the meeting it was said that it isn't an "either/or" because both sides of this are included in the goal of pleasure...and I agree. I still hold that there is a subtle "either/or" for individuals studying Epicurean philosophy in that they hold either a goal of removing pain (relief from pain) as being more important than "sensory pleasures / mind pleasures" or they hold that "sensory pleasures / mind pleasures" are more important than removing pain (relief from pain). I have heard it said that there is a label for those who place "sensory/mind pleasure" as being of higher importance as "maximalists". For those who put ataraxia as being of higher importance, they are called the "minimalists".

What got me thinking about this again, is my curiosity about what the Garden of Athens Epicurean philosophy group is doing, and I found this post about an introductory book that was published:

Post

[RE: "Epicurean Philosophy: An Introduction from the 'Garden of Athens'" edited by Christos Yapijakis](#)

I have just recently received an email from Christos Yapijakis indicating that he has read through this thread. His comments that I am pasting below were drafted as a private communication to me, rather than as an exhaustive commentary on the various points raised above, so please understand that they are written in that context. I asked him for permission (which he granted) to repost these so as to include them in the discussion.

It has been some time since this thread started and I have not...



Cassius

January 27, 2023 at 6:54 PM

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 27, 2026 at 8:30 AM

I've copied over from that thread (linked in the above post) on Christos' introductory book, which was shared by Christos.

The following is by Christos Yapijakis:

Quote

Regarding pleasure and happiness, just see [Epicurus' Letter to Menoeceus](#) that explicitly says that:

-We aim to happiness (eustatheia of katastematic pleasure/pleasurable state)

-We do not need pleasure unless our body is in pain lacking it

"He who has a clear and certain understanding of these things will direct every preference and aversion toward **securing health of body** and **tranquility of mind**, seeing that this is the sum and end of a **happy life**. For the end of all our actions is to be **free from pain and fear**, and, when once we have attained all this, the tempest of the soul is laid; seeing that the living being has no need to go in search of something that is lacking, nor to look anything else by which the good of the soul and of the body will be fulfilled. When we are pained lacking pleasure, **then, and then only, do we feel the need of pleasure**".

4. Regarding useful and harmful pleasures, again see [Epicurus' Letter to Menoeceus](#) that explicitly says that:

-Although pleasure is naturally akin to us, some pleasures lead to greater annoyance than pleasure

-Useful pleasures=those that appease pain or vary our enjoyment of life (the second ones we don't need necessarily)

-Harmful pleasures=those that result in more pain than pleasure

"...**we do not choose every pleasure whatever**, but often pass over many pleasures when a greater annoyance ensues from them. And often we consider pains superior to pleasures when submission to the pains for a long time brings us as a consequence a greater pleasure. While therefore all pleasure because it is naturally

akin to us is good, **not all pleasure is worthy of choice**, just as all pain is an evil and yet not all pain is to be shunned. It is, however, by measuring one against another, and by looking at the **conveniencies** and **inconveniencies**, that all these matters must be judged. "

All three papers I authored in that special issue of Conatus-Journal of Philosophy on "Philosophical Management of Stress" (the first ever such issue of an international philosophical journal and I was invited to be the Editor) promote Epicurean philosophy, although they do that in a more subtle, "politically correct" and objective way discussing other philosophical approaches too, which by comparison are barely useful for a very short period of time until reality prevails.

...

...Always remember that the pursuit of pleasure is the path to eustatheia and happiness (katastematic pleasure or pleasurable state) for Epicurus and not a goal by itself as Aristippus or 'prodigals' think (see letter to Menoecus DL 131-132).

Display More

Post by "Cassius" of February 27, 2026 at 9:01 AM

The part you have quoted there Kalosyni will be read by some people be circular or worse. It does not specifically identify what "happiness" is apart from pleasure. Further, in equating happiness to "katastematic pleasure" in that last sentence, the part you quoted will be erroneously read by some to exclude "kinetic pleasure." That is a terrible misreading of the full picture, which is that ALL feeling that is not painful constitutes pleasure, and that a life of happiness is nothing more than a life of pleasure.

A more focused explanation of the issue of how to view the happy state in relation to pleasure can be found in Sedley's Epicurean vs Cyreniac Happiness, and through reading what Torquatus has to say about the issue in On Ends.

File

[David Sedley - Epicurean vs Cyreniac Happiness](#)

Eudaimonia, happiness, is a property of a whole life, not of some portion of it. (Link to Article at the Academia.edu website.)



Cassius

February 23, 2025 at 6:48 AM

Post by “Cassius” of February 27, 2026 at 9:30 AM

I should also point out that this quotation in post 7 is a long distance from the point where this thread started out, when you advocated "Joy" as the goal ("Neither "ataraxia" nor "not ataraxia", but "Joy as the goal").

That's because katastematic pleasure specifically does not include joy. As I cited above from [Diogenes Laertius](#):

And Epicurus in the work on Choice speaks as follows: 'Freedom from trouble in the mind and from pain in the body are static pleasures, but joy and exultation are considered as active pleasures involving motion.'

If you believe that joy and exultation are an integral part of the Epicurean goal of life, then you specifically one would NOT limit the goal to only one kind of pleasure ("katastematic pleasure") as is implied in parenthetical construction in the sentence:

"the pursuit of pleasure is the path to eustatheia and happiness (katastematic pleasure or pleasurable state) (underline added)

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 27, 2026 at 6:42 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I should also point out that this quotation in post 7 is a long distance from the point where this thread started out, when you advocated "Joy" as the goal ("Neither "ataraxia" nor "not ataraxia", but "Joy as the goal").

I presented several ideas in the first post of this thread (the first point should have been addressed in a separate thread):

Point 1) There is no mandate to spread Epicurean philosophy to the masses

Point 2) There are some who study Epicurean philosophy and put more emphasis on one or the other...either pleasure (moving pleasures) or ataraxia.

Point 3) An alternate way to word "the goal" is by using the word "joy" (and I now see that joy is a subset of pleasure and so this would not correlate with the Epicurean texts).

We can continue to see that the words we use can be unclear or confusing, if they are too abstract (for both "camps" of Epicureans - both maximalists or minimalists).

This goes to show that both "camps" still need to consider "the ladder of abstraction" which illustrates the difference between abstract and specific words (developed by linguist S.I. Hayakawa in 1939, and introduced in his book "Language of Action". This tool illustrates how language moves from concrete, sensory details at the bottom (e.g."my speckled apple") to high-level, abstract concepts at the top (e.g."fruit" or "nutrition"). The bottom rungs consist of specific, tangible details, while the higher rungs represent increasingly broad, conceptual, or categorical terms - and it helps make communication more clear.

The following website has an illustration of the full ladder of abstraction:

[Up and Down the Ladder of Abstraction - Choosing the appropriate abstraction level - jtoy](#)

I believe that it is possible for something to sound correct (or even "wise") while being presented using highly abstract words, however those words end up not "working" in reality for two reasons:

- 1) differing understandings (cognition) of highly abstract words depending on the individual.
- 2) when you attempt to pin things down with specific and tangible human experiences, the "wise sounding" but abstract ideas don't work - are not helpful because they are too vague.

So that is what I want to shed some light on...and hopefully find some clarity and also continue to find language and words that actually work! 😊

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 27, 2026 at 7:28 PM

Here is a better article:

Quote

...psychologists call “[the curse of knowledge](#).” The curse is actually a [cognitive bias](#), or a systematic error in our thinking. In this case, a communicator mistakenly, and often unconsciously, believes that everyone in the conversation shares the same knowledge, understandings, and experiences they do. The result is that they skip over the vital

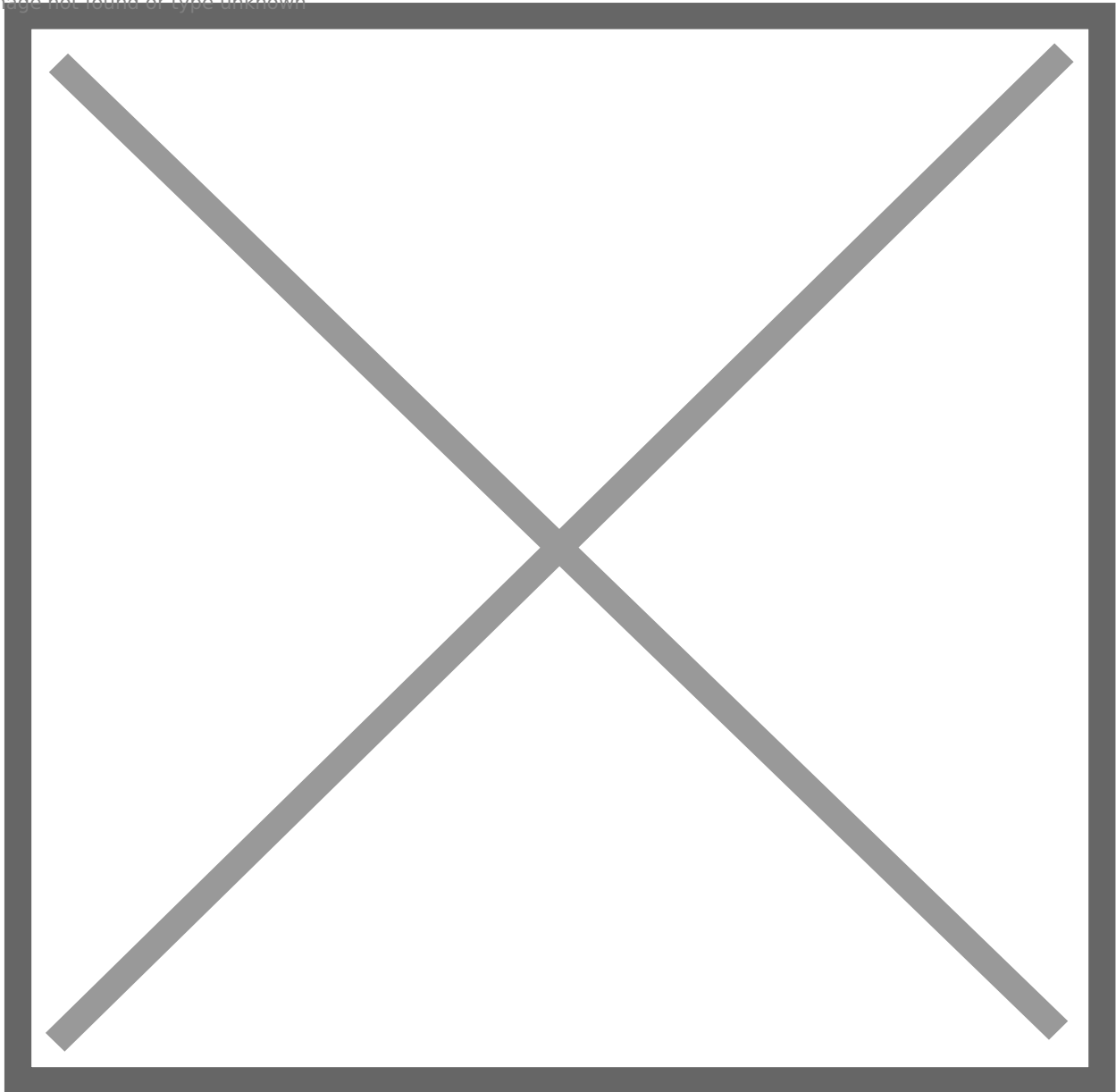
information others will need to comprehend their message.

The curse of knowledge is why laypeople find scientific studies tangled, students find geometric proofs baffling, and everyone finds instruction manuals tortuously frustrating. The researchers, teachers, and technical writers had difficulty imagining what it was like to not know what they knew and so communicated their ideas ineffectually.

Nor does the idea have to be complicated to fall prey to the curse. Everyone is susceptible. Thankfully, there is a mental tool that can help us break the curse: the “ladder of abstraction”

The link:

Image not found or type unknown



[Boost your communication skills with the “ladder of abstraction”](#)

The “ladder of abstraction” reveals why people communicating about the same thing may be doing so at different levels — and how to fix that.

bigthink.com

And another quote:

Quote

Hayakawa’s point is that words often contain more ambiguity than we typically account for. Their effect extends beyond their dictionary definition. They also evoke feelings, imply meanings, and suggest nuances that shift based on the identities, histories, expertise, and personalities of the user and recipient alike.

Consider, for instance, the abstract phrases we bandy about in political discussions — things like *liberty*, *free enterprise*, and *social justice*. Each sounds agreeable when viewed from the ladder’s tippy-top rungs. But as Hayakawa points out, scuttle down to the bottom rungs, and you’ll find that people can have wildly different opinions on the concrete details. The words they use may be the same, but their meanings are not.

“Definitions, contrary to popular opinions, tell us nothing about things. They only describe people’s linguistic habits,” Hayakawa argues.

And a third quote:

Quote

According to Hayakawa clear communication, “as well as clear thinking,” involves a “constant interplay of higher and lower level abstractions.” In other words, by traveling up and down the ladder, we reveal the meaning behind the details and vice versa.

A brilliant example of such rhetorical balance comes from Jared Diamond’s Pulitzer Prize-winning *Guns, Germs, and Steel*: “We all know that history has proceeded very differently for peoples from different parts of the globe. In the 13,000 years since the end of the last Ice Age, some parts of the world developed literate industrial societies with metal tools, other parts developed only nonliterate farming societies, and still others retained societies of hunter-gatherers with stone tools.”

Notice how Diamond starts with abstract concepts like *history* and *different peoples*. These concepts seem simple enough, but to clarify his meaning, he takes a few steps down the ladder. To *history*, he adds the characterization of “the 13,000 years since the end of the last Ice Age.” *Different peoples* is elaborated on to include “literate industrial societies,” “nonliterate farming societies,” and “hunter-gatherers.”

The rest of Diamond’s introduction to his book continues in this vein. He uses concrete details to show how more abstract concepts connect to the real world; meanwhile, the abstract gives meaning to the facts and details.

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 27, 2026 at 8:10 PM

Here is a diagram that I just made which has the telos at the top and then "climbs down the ladder of abstraction"...and it is still a work in progress ... open to thoughts and suggestions.



Post by “Matteng” of May 1, 2026 at 4:19 PM

Is/Can Aponia be part of Eudaimonia ? A challenging question, I know.

In my view Epicurus reached Eudaimonia the happy life but he had extreme pain, so no aponia, or do I miss something ?

Or is it more relative understood, so to have more aponia than pain in life ?

This desire for Aponia is understandable and natural but also a Point of attack for other philosophical schools, for example Cicero and the Stoics would say that it is impossible t get to aponia, we have no complete control to avoid always pain, especially when you get older in life.

Post by “Eikadistes” of May 1, 2026 at 5:39 PM

[Quote from Matteng](#)

Is/Can Aponia be part of Eudaimonia?

Definitely!

In two places, the supreme pleasure of the gods is referred to as παντελή εὐδαιμονίαν (*pantelē eūdaimonían*) "complete happiness" (Laértios 10.116) and τελείαν εὐδαιμονίαν (*teleían eūdaimonían*) "perfect happiness" (*On Piety* 13), so there are equivalencies between "happiness", "pleasure", and "blessedness". "Complete happiness" (as of the gods) **does** require painlessness (*aponía*).

In the *Epistle to Menoikeús*, Epíkouros also writes that "those necessary [desires] are [instrumental] to happiness" (10.127), being the reduction of hunger, thirst, and cold.

[Quote from Matteng](#)

In my view Epicurus reached Eudaimonia the happy life but he had extreme pain, so no aponia, or do I miss something ?

I agree. I think his reconstructed sayings, and his *Last Will* document that he was at least, generally happy when he died. "Even if the wise were tortured on a rack, they would be happy" (Laértios 10.118). It was inevitable, and, like Metródōros, he accepted it as any other natural event.

He was definitely "happy" in the general sense of neither grieving nor complaining, and he "expired undauntedly" (*On Death* 39.15), but I wouldn't say that he was enjoying "perfect happiness" or "pure pleasure" just because his mind was untroubled. *Ataraxia* is just half the formula.

Post by "Don" of May 2, 2026 at 8:01 AM

[Quote from Matteng](#)

Is/Can Aponia be part of Eudaimonia ?

FWIW Here's an extensive thread on aponia's meaning:

Thread

[The Meaning of the Greek Word "Aponia"](#)

"Aponia" is a key term in Epicurean philosophy. What exactly does it mean? There seems to be a consensus that it translates to "absence of pain," but is this a reference to bodily pain, to mental pain, to both, or with other connotations? This thread is for discussion of the meaning of "Aponia," including citations to reference where the term appears in Epicurean texts.

ή, (ἄπονος)

A [non-exertion](#), [laziness](#), [X.Cyr.2.2.25](#), Arist.Rh....



Cassius

December 3, 2023 at 11:05 AM

Post by “Matteng” of May 2, 2026 at 3:57 PM

[Quote from Eikadistes](#)

He was definitely "happy" in the general sense of neither grieving nor complaining, and he "expired undauntedly" (*On Death* 39.15), but I wouldn't say that he was enjoying "perfect happiness" or "pure pleasure" just because his mind was untroubled. *Ataraxia* is just half the formula.

I understand how an interpretation of absolute eudaimonia can be easily criticized by opponents of Epicureanism.

Aponia, as never having pain in life is not reachable. Maybe this is even more unrealistic as the Stoic Sage of perfect Virtue.

There is no absolute avoiding of pain possible, even to avoid greater pain, we have to choose some pains what Epicurus also teaches, so this he couldn't have meant.

But a process view makes sense, every living being is naturally avoiding pain, searching for example always pain would destroy every organism.

So Aponia as a goal is complete rational but more as a quantitative / relative goal than an absolute.

To have more Aponia than Ponia/Pain in life makes sense and another point of defense of Aponia / Epic. Eudaimonia is that mental Pleasure can "counter" bodily pain and overshadow it.

So maybe in a specific sense Epicurus had until his death complete Eudaimonia ?

Or can we have Eudaimonia and loose it ? But when Eudaimonia is about the whole life then there is maybe just one answer, but maybe this answer lies only in one person and that is the feeling person.

The question " Did/Do I have a happy life" ? Can I agree with me and live in harmony with myself, my "good self", my eu daimon ?

Post by “Don” of May 2, 2026 at 7:26 PM

I'm still of the opinion that ataraxia has to do specifically with rooting the fundamental causes of fear and anxiety, ie, death, divine punishment, etc. I don't see one who has ataraxia as never ever being afraid of anything, never ever being anxious about some aspect of life. But the root causes of existential dread, fear, anxiety, once those are torn out - root and branch - they don't return and one has an unshakable foundation upon which to build one's life.

Something similar could be going on with aponia. How that works, I'm not exactly sure - Epicurus definitely uses it to refer to physical and mental pain, but I drop this here as a prompt for discussion.

Post by “Matteng” of May 3, 2026 at 3:30 AM

Good points,

I think on Philodemus and Emily Austin, that it the Epicurean Sage feels pain/fear/passions for natural/necessary desires.

In the past I thought of Epicureanism more as a realistic form of Stoicism but here is a crucial difference.

It is about avoiding unnecessary pain not avoiding the faculty of feelings.

What is the difference between mental aponia and ataraxia ?

Post by “wbernys” of May 3, 2026 at 6:16 AM

[Quote from Matteng](#)

What is the difference between mental aponia and ataraxia ?

I don't think there really is distinction, I suspect they are just synonyms without definition. Like Joy and Delight. I suspect when Epicurus used these words they were basically stand ins for what we today call Serenity and Tranquility.

A basic translation to catch the idea from the fragment in Diogenes is "Aponia (Serenity) and Ataraxia (tranquility) are pleasures characterized by a state of rest, whereas Chara (Joy) and Euphrosune (Delight) are pleasures characterized by Motion or activity". Two synonyms for each thing used commonly.

As i've looked more into this i think i've agreed more with [Cassius](#) that Kinetic and Katastematic distinction has been heavily overlapped by modern commentators.

Important note I recently looked into which I think some people may not know, Epicurus thinks pleasure is a complete perfected unity, which is always in it's perfect state and never mixes with pain to form like "80 percent pleasure, 20 percent pain", as Usener 421 explicitly says "since Epicurus does not believe that pain is mixed with pleasure, nor indeed the bad with the good"

Furthermore, PD3 is explicit that "whenever pleasure is present, as long as it is uninterrupted, there is neither pain in body or mind, or both together". In PD4 as well he doesn't comfort us against disease by saying pleasure can mix with the disease, but that disease allows more periods of pleasure (a perfect compete feeling) than pain (an alien bad feeling)

Serenity, Tranquility, Joy, and Delight, are thereby equal variations of pleasure, but not increases, which just take different shapes and I think [Kalosyni](#) idea that Joy should be seen as the goal, not pleasure, is misleading for this reason, for this would suggest we should prioritize moments of joy even if they lead to losses of tranquility in more moments. Since it wrongly thinks Joy is an increase and not merely a variation of the same perfect unity of pleasure.

Post by “Don” of May 3, 2026 at 7:35 AM

Great thought-provoking posts, [Matteng](#) and [wbernys](#) . I'll address a couple points in a bit.

For me, there has to be something to the fact that aponia and aponos, in regular popular ancient usage, meant things like non-exertion, laziness; without toil or trouble, free from the

necessity of labour. The adverb *aponōs* shows up in [Herodotus](#) as "without trouble":

Quote

subdue all Hellas without fighting. [2] As long as the Greeks who were previously in accord remained so, it would be difficult even for the whole world to overcome them by force of arms; "but if you do as we advise," said the Thebans, "you will *without trouble* (*aponōs*) be master of all their battle plans. [3] Send money to the men who have power in their cities, and thereby you will divide Hellas against itself; after that, with your partisans to aid you, you will easily subdue those who are your adversaries."

I know Epicurus redefined some words to fit his philosophy, but they were all still in the semantic range of the popular usage. So, while I'm not *entirely* onboard with [wbernys](#)'s point about *aponia* and *ataraxia* being synonymous, I do think Epicurus specifically uses them to illustrate *katastematic* pleasure for a reason, same as his choice of *khara* and *euprosyne* as kinetic examples. The reason I'm reluctant to go the synonymous route is that Epicurus has to be pointing out the different kinds or aspects of *katastematic* pleasure, same for kinetic. It seems to me he's trying to say that there are multiple, numerous kinds of pleasure within the human experience. Broadly speaking, there is pleasure and there is pain. But within those TWO ways - and ONLY TWO ways - of experiencing the world, there are numerous variations.

That said, the nuance of *aponia/aponos/aponōs* of meaning free from work, exertion, toil, means to me an easy-going, effortless way of being. Surfing on the ocean, untroubled by any turbulent waves. I've seen *ataraxia* being connected with a calm sea. Maybe *aponia* could be (and I'm going off on my own here) is effortlessly surfing the waves when they do arise.

Maybe *aponia*, instead of freedom from pain, would be better thought of as freedom from toil, exertion, work, as in not fighting against one's existence. Effortlessly dealing with choices and rejections, letting the little things flow over you like "water off a duck's back" and "going with the flow." So, maybe serenity isn't a bad choice in the end.

I agree that modern commentators overplay *katastematic/kinetic*, Epicurus didn't say to pursue one aspect of pleasure only. However, those who would completely discount *katastematic/kinetic* as irrelevant, I disagree with as well. Just like the categories of desire, *katastematic/kinetic* has something to teach us about the multiplicity of pleasure.

[Quote from Matteng](#)

What is the difference between mental *aponia* and *ataraxia* ?

Great question. It may be subtle, but there has to be a distinction. The closest I can come is that it's a matter of perspective. *Ataraxia* is focusing on the lack of disturbance, *aponia* is focusing on the ability to effortlessly deal with disturbance when it arises.

Post by “Kalosyni” of May 3, 2026 at 8:32 AM

[Don](#) I am grateful to read your your very good and helpful input on this thread. 😊

[Matteng](#) and [wbernys](#) I think it is important to consider that the teachings of Epicurus are not presented in a linear fashion - and you need to look at the whole picture.

We see in [PD27](#), it says: "Of all the things which wisdom acquires to produce the blessedness of the complete life, far the greatest is the possession of friendship."

This PD brings in the idea of "the blessedness of the complete life".

The primary ancient Greek word for the blessedness of a complete (fortunate) life is **makarios** (μακάριος), often used to describe the enviable state of the gods or the self-sustained blessedness of a life where all needs are met. Another crucial term for the enduring, flourishing "good life" is **eudaimonia** (εὐδαιμονία), representing lasting happiness and prosperity.

- **"Blessedness" - Makarios (μακάριος):** Refers to a state of supreme happiness, often signifying being blessed or fortunate, particularly used to describe divine existence or the secure, self-sustained state of the wealthy. It implies a total satisfaction where all needs are met and secured, frequently translated as "blessed" or "happy".
- **Eudaimonia (εὐδαιμονία):** Translates to "happiness," "flourishing," or "living well." It is often considered the pinnacle of human life, as a life of complete well-being rather than just a fleeting emotion.

At the end of the Letter to Menoeceus we see:

"Meditate therefore on these things and things akin to them night and day by yourself; and with a companion like to yourself, and never shall you be disturbed waking or asleep, **but you shall live like a god among men**. For a man who lives among immortal blessings is not like unto a mortal being."

For me, it seems clear in my imagination that the gods are living in a state of joy.

Post by “Kalosyni” of May 3, 2026 at 9:00 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

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"Meditate therefore on these things and things akin to them night and day by yourself; and with a companion like to yourself, and never shall you be disturbed waking or asleep, but you shall live like a god among men. For a man who lives among immortal blessings is not like unto a mortal being."

For me, it seems clear in my imagination that the gods are living in a state of joy.

There is lots of good discussion happening here. But I wanted to re-state what and why I titled this thread as: "Neither "ataraxia" nor "not ataraxia" but "Joy as the goal". Perhaps it would have been more clear if I had said "eudiamonia" instead of joy.

My primary intention is for us to get out of our heads the common mantra put forward by the internet search engines (and by many philosophy scholars) that the end-all, be-all goal of Epicureanism is ataraxia. It's like this: Let's say you have a goal of having an omlet for breakfast. But then you state: "My goal is eggs". And you ignore that there is something much bigger (the omlet) which contains cheese and all the veggies, plus milk (and butter and the use of a hot frying pan) that go into the omlet and the making of the omlet.

Post by "Don" of May 3, 2026 at 9:30 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

"Neither "ataraxia" nor "not ataraxia" but "Joy as the goal".

Singling out any one of the examples that Epicurus gives (ataraxia, aponia, khara, euprosyne) as THE goal is problematic to different degrees.

Saying something like Pleasure is The Goal takes in the full spectrum of pleasure writ large.

Post by "Eikadistes" of May 3, 2026 at 3:32 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

Saying something like Pleasure is The Goal takes in the full spectrum of pleasure writ large.

No doubt; the Hegemon does not mince words:

ἡΔΟΝΗΝ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΤΕΛΟΣ

"**The goal is *hēdonén***" (10.11).

I go with "**pleasure**", here, but if there *were* another noun I'd experiment with as a substitute for "pleasure" (from **hēdoné**), I think I'd entertain the idea of "**sweetness**", as in, "the **sweet** life" or "living **sweetly**". It also compliments the gastronomical approach of the Epicurean school. I might also consider "**delight**" and "**delights**", but both of those import their own, cultural nuances.

We can also leave "hedone" untranslated (as we often do with "ataraxia"), but I'm not sure that this approach would be helpful for new students reading in English. I think anything besides "pleasure" (in English) is more likely to cause confusion about "the goal" than to prevent it.

Post by "Don" of May 3, 2026 at 3:59 PM

[Quote from Eikadistes](#)

I think I'd entertain the idea of "sweetness", as in, "the sweet life" or "living sweetly". It also compliments the gastronomical approach of the Epicurean school. I might also consider "delight" and "delights", but both of those import their own, cultural nuances.

Nice post. The inadequacy of translation is always going to dog us, although I usually advocate for multiple words in English to try to convey some of the nuance as opposed to using Greek untranslated.

Maybe the goal *is* a sweet, pleasant life after all.

Pleasure is The Supreme Good to which all points.