

ATARAXIA. Ataraxia is a term in ancient Greek philosophy for a state of freedom from worry or any other preoccupation. **A**taraxia is synonymous with true happiness; it is the detached and balanced state of a person who transcends the material world. **A**taraxia is a pleasant quietude that arises from suspending dogmatic attitudes while pursuing one's desire for continuing inquiry. **A**taraxia is a state in which one eschews biased opinions and instead savours the contentment and joy offered by philosophy.

There is no greater good than a state free from anxiety, suffering or pain, devoid of judgement or rigid beliefs; instead with tranquillity in one's life, requited love and inner peace ... this is happiness that can be learnt.

How then is it possible to learn happiness? One premise of this book is that our woes are created in the mind; most of our problems stem from the mental constraints and obstructions we create ourselves, chiefly our attachments. In that context this is a powerful stoic aphorism: "What counts in life are not our circumstances

... but how we deal with our circumstances." Accordingly it is clear that our mental disposition determines the degree of happiness we experience, rather than - for instance - whether we are rich or not. Furthermore, in everyday life it is important to assign the correct importance to the past as well as to the future.

Then we will acknowledge that - while we must learn from past mistakes - it is counterproductive to dwell on them; and the future - while careful planning is paramount - is unpredictable and if we overrate it, likely to cause anxiety. Thus the principle of living in the here and now is a requisite for happiness.

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