

Pleasure, Desire and Limits

Post by "Cassius" of July 18, 2022 at 2:41 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

So, katastematic pleasure is mentioned but the distinction itself between katastematic and kinetic was not important enough to mention.

When one fills a glass with water, the glass is full of water without any air, and we no longer leave room for the people of sour disposition to say that it is "half-empty." If we want to squash the people of sour disposition fully (which we may need to do if their name is Plato) then we might usefully call the quality of being full "the state of zero-emptiness."

But I doubt if there is much call in life, short of dealing with obstinate manipulators like Plato, to dwell on terms like "zero-emptiness." Nonstandard terms tend to confuse regular common-sense people. And for good reason - why would people of good faith talk in riddles? The answer to that is that people like Plato are not acting in good faith, and they love word games as a way to deceive the man-on-the-street.

Sometimes we have to fence with Platonists and it is necessary to use nonstandard words to show how pleasure can be continuous.

But the price of playing footsie with Plato is you get quoted talking abstractly, and that can be taken out of context and used against you by tricky lawyers like Cicero.

Maybe Shakespeare had the best advice for how to deal with lawyers! 😊

At any rate, part of our legacy now for those who are students of Epicurus is to become familiar with the terms of this debate. From 50 BC on to today it has become necessary to learn to see Cicero's challenge can not only be defused, but turned around and used as a method of explaining how Epicurus meant what he said and said what he meant when he identified "Pleasure" as the guide and goal of life.

I keep forgetting to mention this, but I think the same answer here is the proper framework by which to understand the otherwise perplexing hypothetical of the statue of Chryssipus mentioned by Torquatus. We've got to be quick footed enough to know that something that can be both an excellent answer to Chryssipus but also a deadly mistake if mishandled in responding to Cicero. I place no blame on Torquatus but entirely on Cicero - had Cicero let him, Torquatus could have explained all this probably much along the lines we are doing now, and saved the world 2000 years of misunderstanding.

But that misunderstanding was exactly what Cicero was trying to accomplish.