

# Do Pigs Value Katastematic Pleasure? ( Summer 2022 K / K Discussion)

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An excerpt from “The Fixation of Satisfaction: Epicurus and Peirce on the Goal” by David B. Suits:

"The difference between kinetic and katastematic pleasure is mentioned without elaboration in Diogenes Laertius X.136. 'Kinetic' implies motion or change. Thus, kinetic pleasures are pleasurable changes. It is not that whenever there are changes, we take pleasure in them; rather, there is a kind of pleasure-kinetic pleasure-one of whose characteristics is that we experience a change of state. Whenever we undergo some pleasant change, such as satisfying a desire, the pleasure is of the kinetic type. If 'kinetic' refers to change, then 'katastematic' refers to non-change, or, we might say, a condition of satisfaction. Katastematic pleasure, then, is characterized by our remaining in a state. Or one could also say that kinetic pleasure are characterized by engagement in some activity, specifically some activity either away from something or towards something, either case implying a kind of struggle (although, as we will see later, the word 'struggle' is a bit too dramatic). Katastematic pleasure, on the other hand, are pleasures we take in, or because of, or during our relative inactivity-that is to say, in our not having to struggle away from anything or towards anything. I will elaborate on these ideas below. But we may as well admit at once that the distinction is vague.

If I have a headache, I take some aspirin, and not long thereafter I feel the pain receding. Eventually I am no longer in pain. Now, it is one thing to experience the headache's going away, when I am still in some pain, and another thing to be in a state without a headache at all. There is, then, the kinetic pleasure of the headache's going away, and there is the katastematic pleasure of not having a headache.

In addition, there are, I perceive, two kinds of katastematic pleasure. The distinction is hinted at now and again in the literature, but I want to make it explicit. (1) The headache has just now finally disappeared, and so I am in a state of *relief* from pain; I am in a state of having become satisfied. (2) It would usually be odd to say, some days later, that I am in a state of relief from the headache, and so katastematic pleasure of the second kind is a condition wherein I do not even consider the headache-I neither have a headache nor attend to the memory of it; I am in a state not unlike a person who never had a headache at all.

So it is also with mental disturbances. Suppose I am troubled in mind; I am worried about something-my job performance, perhaps. Now my attitude begins to change, either on account of my awareness of some change in the world (perhaps my employer praises me or gives me a raise), or in some change in my desires (perhaps I no longer care to please my employer). In

any case, my anxiety recedes. This is one kind of kinetic pleasure. Once the anxiety has vanished, I am in a state of relief from that anxiety. This is a *katastematic* pleasure of the first sort—a state of having been satisfied. And eventually not only am I not concerned about my job, I am not even attending to having been relieved of the former anxiety, and so I have attained a *katastematic* satisfaction of the second kind: a state of not being anxious, but also of not having just been relieved of anxiety.

Epicurus's notions of pleasure in motion and pleasure in rest have their analogs in Peirce's concepts about doubt and belief. 'Thought in action [doubt] has for its only possible motive the attainment of thought at rest [belief]; and whatever does not refer to belief is no part of the thought itself' (5.396). To adopt Epicurean terminology, we might say that *kinetic* thought has for its sole motive *katastematic* thought. In addition, belief (*katastematic* thought) involved the creation of some habit—a readiness for action—such that there can be *variations* of a habit without changing its nature: 'If beliefs do not differ in this respect, if they appease the same doubt by producing the same rule of action, then no mere differences in the manner of consciousness of them can make them different beliefs, any more than playing a tune in different keys is playing different tunes' (5.398). Again, 'the whole function of thought is to produce habits of action; and ... whatever there is connected with a thought, but irrelevant to its purpose, is an accretion to it, but no part of it' (5.400). Those comments by Peirce are echoes of Epicurus: 'As soon as the feeling of pain produced by want it removed, pleasure in the flesh will not increase but is only varied'.

I suggest, then, that Epicurean *katastematic* pleasure is analogous to Peircean belief as habit. When doubt and inquiry have come to an end, we have attained the calm state of belief. But this state of mind is not nothing. That is, it is not simply the absence of doubt (which might also describe a dead person). Rather, it is the undisturbed *working* of habit—our going through our activities without concern of question.

I take Epicurus as claiming that our hedonistic goal is to attain the fixation of *katastematic* satisfaction of the second sort, in both body and mind. Satisfaction in the body is called *aponia*; satisfaction in the mind is called *ataraxia*. We are ideally to be like the gods, who are neither being relieved of pain, nor in a state of just having been relieved of pain. This is so, because the gods are not the sort to have been in pain in the first place." (*Epicurus: His Continuing Influence and Contemporary Relevance* 142-144)

I recommend finding the full article and reading it. David Suits makes a compelling exploration of *kinetic* versus *katastematic* pleasure. Later in the book, several other authors make (unconvincing) arguments that *katastematic* pleasure is superior, that it is akin to tranquility, and that tranquility is synonymous with Stoical indifference, but this essay, in particular, seems to approach the distinction in a more reasonable light with respect to the source material.