

Discussion of the thread - Against Katastematic Supremacy - Pleasure Is A Unified Whole And Not A House Divided - Forum Editorial Policy

Post by "Cassius" of July 18, 2026 at 4:08 PM

Let me expand further on what I have said in some of these recent comments.

When Epicurus says that he is not able to conceive the good without the pleasures that he mentions, all of those pleasures he mentions are "active" - not "katastematic" under the normal definition that people seem to be presuming. While pleasure is the supreme good, it is not the pleasures of the moment, but the life of pleasure, which is foreseen to be the final result, and that means at time choosing pains.

In other words, there are many perspectives on pleasure and the life of pleasure, and more than one can be true at the same time, and they are not in conflict.

What most of us seem to accept here is that the word katastematic refers to something that is stable or established. Is there something there which is not a subset of DURATION, which is referenced in [PD09](#)? Of course we want our pleasures to have the longest duration possible!

Is anyone here thinking I am advocating against pleasures being stable and established? OF COURSE NOT. What I am saying is that 'stability' and 'being established' are attributes of something else, not of themselves, and that something else is PLEASURE.

Rather than taking the passage "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" in isolation, we should consider it with all the rest we know. We know that Epicurus held that because there are only two experiences, for the living human whenever pain is not present what is present is pleasure. This quoted passage need be saying nothing more than that mental or bodily well-being (meaning when pain is absent) constitutes a "stable" perspective on the goal of life. This is a perspective that does not change and does not vary from person to person. This is because we all want 100% pleasure and 0% pain in mind and body. At individual times and places, however, some people are going to engage in food, some in sex, some in zip-lining, and some in studying ancient Greek literature. Those activities and the pleasures that come from them are as stated in [PD09](#) - they vary in intensity and duration and parts of the body that are effected -- they CHANGE with the circumstance.

But those changing circumstances are exactly what human life is made of. *At the same time*, we maintain a stable attitude that our goal - to the extent we can attain it - is 100% pleasure and 0% pain. This is a goal that is stable and which never varies, and if we keep it mind mind

with the reasons for it, then we can have confidence and not be deterred by obstacles.

Is this interpretation spelled out by Diogenes Laertius? Is exactly the same description given by Gosling and Taylor or Boris [Nikolsky](#) or Emily Austin or Kelly Aronsen? No, but the writers u have listed are making an effort to present a theory in understandable terms without just chanting Greek words as if they were stating something impossible for the American mind of 2026 to understand in English.

And whichever interpretation you end up taking for yourself, you end up focusing on pleasure in understandable terms that does not incline you toward thinking that being "untroubled" is the best you can do with your life. There are all sorts of ways to be "untroubled" in life and you damn well better specify what you mean rather than leave it to the imagination that blowing your mind out with drugs, or worse, is an equally acceptable way to become "untroubled."

There is absolutely no reason that the factors listed by Epicurus in regard to pleasure - intensity, duration, and parts of the body effected - are not all that anyone needs to make rational decisions about what activities to pursue and what results should be considered the target. And to repeat - injecting untranslated Greek terms into the ultimate description causes much more harm than good.

So I certainly am not arguing against the value of attitudes, or the value of locking up in your mind certain knowledge about import topics, or anything of the sort connected with stability and being established. But the reason this dispute arises is because that's not the interpretation that normal people are going to give to attempts to hold up "Tranquility" or "Calm" or the like as Epicurus' true goal of life. If someone is in this group it is because they are legitimately trying to make use of Epicurean philosophy not only for themselves - but in the great Epicurean tradition, for others as well. And that means being able to explain it in understandable terms.

If katastematic means simply stable and established then say so, and talk in plain terms about how much we value and appreciate things that we have been able to make stable and established in our lives. If someone wants to argue that it means something else - that it is not in fact pleasure, that it means something higher and better than pleasure itself -- then they can take that argument outside this group, because that is the straight highway to asceticism, minimalism, and the total abandonment of the term "pleasure" as we see happening so often. it's not even a slippery slope - it's a Chinese bullet train to that same destination.

Stating things plainly in English will not tempt anyone to think that "tranquility" is an attribute of pleasure that can be detached from pleasure itself. Stating things plainly in English will not tempt people to think that being "tranquil" is the Epicurean supreme good. When virtually every expert has their own individual interpretation about what katastematic means and what activities fall within it, that's neither a stable nor established base on which to move forward. And to let this argument undermine the whole philosophy - as it is doing - is absolutely unacceptable.

it's the job of Academics to debate each other. It's our job to make Epicurean philosophy useful for ourselves and other regular people.