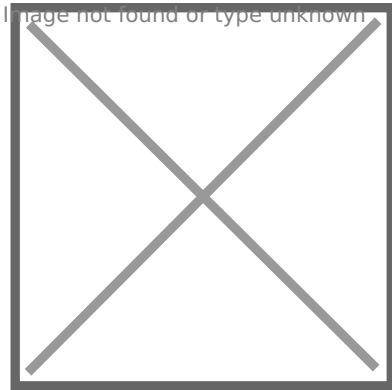


# "Lucretius on the Divine" - Dr. Christopher Eckerman

Post by "Don" of May 24, 2022 at 6:28 AM

I believe I posted this paper to another thread, but I'm putting it here for its pertinence to this topic:



[Lucretius on the Divine: DRN 3.17-30, 5.1161-93, and 6.68-79](#)

Lucretius on the Divine: DRN 3.17-30, 5.1161-93, and 6.68-79

[www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu)

He's Eckerman's info. He may be someone to explore further.

[Christopher Eckerman | College of Arts and Sciences](#)

[Chris Eckerman | University of Oregon - Academia.edu](#)

There are several Lucretius papers posted at his Academia page!

---

Post by "Kalosyni" of May 24, 2022 at 11:06 AM

Quote

As I shall argue, these sections provide no evidence in favor of the sup-position that Epicureans believed that gods exist outside the minds of humans.

Wow, this article looks really good!

## Post by "Cassius" of July 9, 2022 at 9:49 AM

This topic is always good for new discussion, and the thought just occurs to me today, connecting this topic with the term "shibboleth" as to the size of the sun, that here's another angle:

I am not sure whether Epicurus was aware in his own time of people who think this way (I am referring to scholars who are vigilantly "idealist" on the subject of the [Epicurean gods](#)) but if he were alive in the 20th/21st centuries he would definitely observe what the reaction I see today, which contrasts sharply with what even later Epicureans including apparently Philodemus had to say:

Epicurus was absolutely clear that his definition of gods was non-supernatural, non-omniscient, non-omnipotent, and totally without involvement in human affairs, and he really gave them no specific attributes at all other than deathlessness combined with the ability to "have a good time" without any pain, and to do this consistently and without end. As such, these beings are absolutely no threat to any of us (including to those scholars) and the [Epicurean gods](#) are really nothing more than what we would think of as "advanced space aliens" who are of little more relevance to us other than as good material for endless "Star Trek" episodes.

*Nevertheless*, just like with "pleasure as the good" and "pigs as mascots" and "the size of the sun," there exists a strong tendency in certain scholars to want to have absolutely nothing to do with Epicurus' suggestions as to these extraterrestrial beings. These scholars do everything in their power to write entirely out of Epicurean philosophy the position that the [Epicurean gods](#) could be "real," just like they would write out "pleasure" and "pigs" and "the size of the sun."

And interestingly at the same time such people are frequently (I presume) perfectly happy to watch science fiction movies about advanced races, they are frequently advocates of animal "rights" and the nobility of intelligent animals (dolphins, etc) and they certainly have no problems engaging in the pursuit of pleasure so long as they don't admit it publicly.

So in my own mind I am seeing a collection of "shibboleths" or "litmus tests" which do serve well as indications of where a scholar really is on Epicurus:

1. Do they focus on "Ataraxia" or "Katastematic Pleasure" as the highest good?
2. Do they run away from the "pig" model not for the reason that Cicero did (comparing Epicureans to living like cows) but as animals that pursue "unworthy" pleasures?
3. Do they default to the position that Epicurus was just wrong about the size of the sun so forget about the issue?

And to those I would add:

4. Are those scholars constantly on a campaign to "prove" that Epicurus was misrepresenting his own view of extraterrestrial "gods"?

All of us (including me) are going to go through various phases in our personal views on answers to those questions. However I am also convinced that the longer one studies, and the more one is willing to avoid "compartmentalization" so as to preserve some aspect of one's "modern" viewpoints, the more that person is going to appreciate the depth of Epicurus' thinking and conclude that none of these positions were lightly or erroneously chosen.

---

## Post by “Don” of July 9, 2022 at 11:56 AM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

1. Do they focus on "Ataraxia" or "Katastematic Pleasure" as the highest good?

I am coming around to the belief that katastematic pleasures, namely ataraxia and aponia, are foundational to a pleasurable life as taught by Epicurus. Epicurus's and other classical Epicureans' numerous uses of words connoting calm, peace, freedom from disturbance, etc. convey to me that without ataraxia and aponia, there's always going to be an impediment to living pleurably, wisely, nobly, and justly. This does **\*\*NOT\*\*** mean numbness or apathy. If I were looking to leadership in any endeavor, I'd want a calm, cool-headed leader, not one who is distracted, anxious, or fearful. If I'm making choices and rejections, I want to be calm, cool-headed, and undisturbed in either body or mind. The "gods" in their blessedness and incorruptible state enjoy this foundational pleasure.

This is all NOT saying that we don't enjoy so-called kinetic pleasures. But Metrodorus implies by the title of his book and the quote from it that we can be more confident in the continuance of the pleasure arising from a calm, undisturbed mind and a healthy, well-functioning body than we can of pleasures arising from external circumstances, objects, and activities. Katastematic and kinetic pleasures can work hand in hand with each other to provide the most pleasurable life, but if you're trying to enjoy a meal with friends while remaining anxious, you're not experiencing the maximum pleasure.

I'll leave that stand for now. I have more thoughts on the gods coming later.

---

## Post by “Don” of July 9, 2022 at 3:35 PM

## Quote from Don

Epicurus's and other classical Epicureans' numerous uses of words connoting calm, peace, freedom from disturbance, etc. convey to me that without ataraxia and aponia, there's always going to be an impediment to living pleasurably, wisely, nobly, and justly.

In light of my assertion here, I'm compiling said "numerous uses." Consider this just a start (I may move this somewhere else at some point as/if it grows):

DL X.37 (Letter to Herodotus). "Hence, since such a course is of service to all who take up natural science, I, who devote to the subject my continuous energy and \*\*reap the calm enjoyment of a life like this\*\*,..."

"Ὅθεν δὴ πᾶσι χρησίμης οὔσης τοῖς ὑκειωμένοις φυσιολογία τῆς τοιαύτης ὁδοῦ, παρεγγυῶν τὸ συνεχὲς ἐνέργημα ἐν φυσιολογία καὶ τοιούτῳ μάλιστα ἐγγαληνίζων τῷ βίῳ ἐποίησά σοι...

+ ἐγγαληνίζων τῷ βίῳ (enggalenizo to bio)- spend life calmly

+ + ἐγγαληνίζων related to γαληνισμός (galenismos, see DL X.83 below)

+ μάλιστα - superlative of μάλα "very, exceedingly"; "most of all, above all"; also used to strengthen statements.

DL X.83 (Letter to Herodotus) "who are not altogether entitled to rank as mature students can in silent fashion and as quick as thought run over the doctrines most important for their peace of mind."

ἐκ τούτων καὶ κατὰ τὸν ἄνευ φθόγγων τρόπον τὴν ἅμα νοήματι περίοδον τῶν κυριωτάτων πρὸς γαληνισμόν ποιοῦνται."

+ γαληνισμόν (galenismos) calming, (Epicurus); calming of the conscience (Aristotle)

+ + from γαληνός calm (also, "calm, especially of the sea" which fits with Epicurus's other nautical allusions; of persons, gentle)

Fragment 548. Happiness and bliss are produced not by great riches nor vast possessions nor exalted occupations nor positions of power, but rather by peace of mind, freedom from pain, and a disposition of the soul that sets its limits in accordance with nature.

τὸ εὐδαιμον καὶ μακάριον οὐ χρημάτων πλῆθος οὐδὲ πραγμάτων ὄγκος οὐδ' ἀρχαί τινες ἔχουσιν οὐδὲ δυνάμεις, ἀλλ' ἀλυπία καὶ πραότης παθῶν καὶ διάθεσις ψυχῆς τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ὀρίζουσα.

+ τὸ εὐδαιμον καὶ μακάριον - eudaimon & makarion, "happiness and blessedness", latter is SAME word used for the gods in PD1]

+ ἀλυπία καὶ πραότης παθῶν καὶ διάθεσις ψυχῆς τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ὀρίζουσα. "peace of mind, freedom from pain, and a disposition of the soul that sets its limits in accordance with nature."

+ + ἀλυπία (alupia) "freedom from pain or grief"

[PD14](#) . "Although security on a human level is achieved up to a point by a power to resist and by prosperity, the security afforded by inner peace and withdrawing from the crowd is the purest." White (2021)

Τῆς ἀσφαλείας τῆς ἐξ ἀνθρώπων γενομένης μέχρι τινὸς δυνάμει τινὶ ἐξερευριστικῇ καὶ εὐπορίᾳ εἰλικρινεστάτη γίνεται ἢ ἐκ τῆς ἡσυχίας καὶ ἐκχωρήσεως τῶν πολλῶν ἀσφάλεια.

+ ἡσυχίας (hesykhias) "peace; silence, stillness"

+ + ἐκχορεύω (ekkhoreuo) "to break out (ἐκ-) of the chorus (χορεύω)"

[PD17](#) Ὁ δίκαιος ἀταρακτότατος, ὁ δ' ἄδικος πλείστης ταραχῆς γέμων.

One who is just, moral, and virtuous has peace of mind; but one who is unjust is overflowing with agitation, confusion, and uncertainty.

+ ἀταρακτότατος (ataraktotatos) "not disturbed, without confusion, steady, of soldiers, X.Cyr.2.1.31: generally, quiet; not excited, calm"

+ ταραχῆς (tarakhes) "disorder, physiological disturbance or upheaval" i.e., the opposite of ἀταραξία (ataraxia)

Seneca, Letter 24: And in another passage (from Epicurus): "What is so absurd as to seek death, when it is through fear of death that you have robbed your life of peace?"

'quid tam ridiculum quam appetere mortem, cum vitam inquietam tibi feceris metu mortis?'

+ inquietam "restless, unquiet"

Seneca, Letter 66: For the absolute good of man's nature is satisfied with peace in the body and peace in the soul. I can show you at this moment in the writings of Epicurus a graded list of goods just like that of our own school. For there are some things, he declares, which he prefers should fall to his lot, such as bodily rest free from all inconvenience, and relaxation of the soul as it takes delight in the contemplation of its own goods.

Si qua extra blandimenta contingunt, non augent summum bonum, sed, ut ita dicam, condiunt et oblectant; absolutum enim illud humanae naturae bonum corporis et animi pace contentum est.

Dabo apud Epicurum tibi etiam nunc simillimam huic nostrae divisionem bonorum. Alia enim sunt apud illum quae malit contingere sibi, ut corporis quietem ab omni incommodo liberam et animi remissionem bonorum suorum contemplatione gaudentis;

---

### Post by "Cassius" of July 9, 2022 at 5:17 PM

That's a nice list of positive experiences in which pain is absent, but why do you think that those experiences are the same as "katastematic" pleasure?

I would say that those are experiences of living breathing active people who \*feel\* those experiences, and are no different than any other kind of experiences of pleasure.

All references to peace and absence of pain are equally explainable as conscious and active experiences of the mind which we find pleasurable. We will have to dig into the authorities to verify or dispute this, but active experiences of the mind are to my reading kinetic.

---

### Post by "Cassius" of July 9, 2022 at 5:30 PM

So I will be arguing that the issue is not whether concepts denoted by peace of mind and freedom of pain are valuable to an Epicurean - they certainly are.

The question is whether these pleasures are in fact properly called "katastematic" and I will be citing the chapter devoted to just this question in Gosling and Taylor, which we have on the forum here:

File

#### [Gosling & Taylor - On Katastematic and Kinetic Pleasure](#)



Gosling & Taylor on Katastematic and Kinetic Pleasure



Cassius

February 3, 2018 at 1:28 PM

They go into great length debating the different positions, but here is one of their conclusory paragraphs. Unfortunately G&T go into great detail to consider every possible position, so they number their paragraphs in excruciating detail and often seem to be debating themselves. It's really necessary to read the full chapter to see how they marshal their evidence AGAINST the view that it was an important aspect of Epicureanism to distinguish between kinetic and katastematic pleasures.

19.0.4. The kind of view we wish to oppose holds that it was an important feature of Epicureanism to insist on dividing pleasures into two sorts, sensory ones on the one hand, and katastematic ones, of which lack of disturbance of mind (*ataraxia*) and lack of pain (*aponia*) are the important examples, on the other. The distinction was important to Epicurus because it was the latter which he wished to put forward as the good in life, and he needed the contrast in order to defend himself against the charge that he was advocating a life of debauchery. He can be seen doing this in the *Letter to Menoeceus* (DL X.131-2) where he says that when we call pleasure the goal we do not mean the pleasures of profligates, but to be without pain of body or distress of mind. The pleasures of profligates are obviously the sensory pleasures, and Epicurus is making it clear that he is putting forward something else as our goal. There are four objections which such views have to meet (see 19.0.6-9).

It's not good form to argue authorities, but few of us have written a whole book on the Greek views on pleasure, so the Gosling & Taylor viewpoint which they document at great length deserves (at least) a lot of attention.

---

**Post by “Cassius” of July 9, 2022 at 5:34 PM**

pleasures was one on which Epicurus put a particular emphasis, and that they were different kinds of pleasure, the good in life consisting in some of the latter. It is this feature of all such views which creates the problems. These are as follows:

(i) It is agreed on all these views that the good is *ataraxia* and *aponia*, as distinct from sensory pleasures. But Epicurus is very insistent on the importance of sensory pleasures. This

368

Katastematic and Kinetic Pleasures

19.0.6

is most obvious in two quotations given by Cicero (*Tusc.* III. xviii.41-2):

In that book which contains all your teachings [Epicurus,] . . . you say: 'For my part I cannot understand what that good is if one subtracts those pleasures perceived by taste, those from hearing and music, and those sweet movements, too, got from visual perception of shapes, or any of the other pleasures generated by any sense in the whole man. Nor can one hold that joy of mind is alone among the goods. For as I understand it the mind is in a state of joy when it has hope of all those things I have mentioned above, that nature may acquire them with complete absence of pain.' And these are his very words, so that anyone may understand what Epicurus recognizes as pleasure. Then a little lower down he says: 'I have often enquired of those who were called wise what they had left among the goods if they removed those ones, — unless they wanted to emit empty noises; I could learn nothing from them; if they want to boast about virtues and wisdom they will say nothing unless they mean the way by which those pleasures are achieved which I mentioned above.'

Here Epicurus is not just saying that sensory pleasures are a good thing, but that nothing is left to the good life if you subtract them. Indeed virtue and wisdom can only be praised if they are considered as a means to them and joy of mind is entirely dependent on them. Yet on any of the interpretations under consideration one would expect Epicurus to know perfectly well what would be left among the goods if sensory pleasures were subtracted: *ataraxia* and *aponia*. Since these

---

**Post by "Cassius" of July 9, 2022 at 5:36 PM**

19.0.7      Katastematic and Kinetic Pleasures      369

ix.30-1) who reports a dispute among Epicureans on the point, Epicurus holding that the good is recognized in perception 'as that fire is hot, snow white, honey sweet'. What precise form this view took we shall discuss in detail in the next chapter. For the moment it is enough to note that the good is appreciated or grasped in perception. It is easy enough to see how sensory pleasure might be grasped in perception. It is not so easy to see how the various versions of katastematic pleasure might be. If we turn to the first version above we find Cicero (*Fin.* I.xi.39) defending the Epicureans against the following objection: a hand that has nothing wrong with it lacks nothing; but if pleasure were a good, it would lack pleasure; therefore pleasure is not a good. The obvious assumption is that the pain-free hand is without any (felt) pleasure. Cicero's defence is that while this might be an objection to a Cyrenaic it cannot tell against Epicurus since for him the mere absence of pain is pleasure, indeed the greatest pleasure. This objection and the defence against it are used by Cicero to bring out the contrast between familiar sensory pleasures and conditions of being without pain either altogether or in particular organs. He is surely right to claim that if the mere absence of pain is the greatest pleasure then the greatest pleasures pass for the most part unnoticed, and certainly could hardly be given in perception without becoming sensory pleasures. In short, this interpretation makes it hard for Epicurus consistently to hold that the good is given in perception. Of course, Epicurus could say that

---

**Post by "Cassius" of July 9, 2022 at 5:43 PM**

19.0.8. (iii) The third objection is that Epicurus seems to be cheating. This is most obvious if we insist on a purely negative account of *aponia* and *ataraxia*. For in this case, as Cicero points out, many people would not agree to call these states pleasures simply in virtue of lacking pain, so that Epicurus would seem to be trading on using 'pleasure' in a new sense while relying on its old sense for part of his argument. But even if we take *aponia* and *ataraxia* to be joy, or the realization that pain is absent, if Epicurus is insisting on the difference between these and the kinetic pleasures of sense, then we have the following oddity: what the senses reveal as good is in fact something quite different from what really is good, for they give experience of kinetic pleasures whereas it is the quite different katastematic kind that is the good.

19.0.9. (iv) Finally, it would be somewhat surprising to find Epicurus allowing the existence of a state of a living thing lacking both pain and sensory pleasure. For according to *PD 2* there is no life without perception, and, according to the *Letter to Menoeceus* (DL X.124) it is in perception that good and evil are to be found: 'Get used to the thought that death has no relation to us; because every good and evil is in perception; and death is the deprivation of perception.' Good and evil are pleasure and pain respectively and these (DL X.34) are the only *pathē*. One would expect every good state to be a mode of perception, and perception to be the form of life. This is reinforced by the *Letter to Herodotus* (DL X.64-6) where after asserting that the soul brings perception to a body he writes: 'this is why so long as the soul is present, even if some other part is lost, perception never ceases'. As the passage goes on it is clear that this life and perception is a function of motions of the soul-atoms made possible by the protective sheath of the body. The picture is of a living thing in a state of constant motion of its atoms in interaction with its environment, the congenial motions being pleasures (DL X.34), the uncongenial ones pains. There is no place for a static or non-perceptive condition of pleasure.

Aside from showing what Gosling and Taylor are concluding (that katastematic pleasure is not a "greatest pleasure" or goal of life) the implicit presumption in these passages is that all pleasures which are "perceived" or "sensed" are kinetic, and that katastematic pleasures are not "perceived" or "sensed."

I still need to find the passage where G&T explain that, but I am afraid it is buried deep in a prior chapter.

So the point I am presenting is not that ataraxia and aponia are not wonderful things. The point I am presenting, and that G&T are arguing, is that experiences of ataraxia and aponia are \*perceptions\* and therefore do not meet the definition of "katastematic pleasure" in the authorities who devote time to talking about that term.

It seems apparent that Epicurus was not himself someone who spent a great deal of time talking about the term "Katastematic" and so for the accepted definition of that term among other groups we are going to have to look elsewhere. (We'll find it eventually in G&T, perhaps using the cites in the [Nikolsky](#) or Wenham articles.)

---

### **Post by "Cassius" of July 9, 2022 at 5:45 PM**

This is the full statement of the G&T position which explains the value of ataraxia and aponia without mixing them up with "katastematic pleasure":

19.1.1. We would not pretend that these objections are conclusive, but they do indicate that certain styles of interpretation involve attributing rather obvious awkwardness to Epicurus. An interpretation which does not attribute them is thus far preferable. We shall now expound such an interpretation, and then proceed to defend it against at least the more obvious objections.

19.1.2. The passages quoted by Cicero in *Tusculan Disputations* (cf. 19.0.6) suggest a different picture of *aponia* and *ataraxia* whereby *aponia* is a condition of having sensory pleasures but with no accompanying pain, and *ataraxia* is a state of confidence that one may acquire such sensory pleasures with complete absence of pain. This confidence is itself a positive state. However unadulterated by pain one's sensory pleasures may be, one's pleasure is all too likely to be spoiled by various misapprehensions. These will be false beliefs about death, about the gods, about fancy diet, about the limits of bodily pleasure, about the desirability of long life and so on. These erroneous beliefs disturb the mind (cf. *PD* 10-12, 18-22) and their removal is required for *ataraxia* (cf. passages just referred to and also *DL* X.81-2, 124-6, 130-2). But for *ataraxia* more than the absence of false beliefs is needed: they have to be replaced by true ones. It is these that give confident expectation of a pleasant life, and so constitute the removal of anxiety. In short, those ancient critics who complained that Epicurus laid great emphasis on bodily pleasures would on this view be right: what is important is to get a life of sensory pleasure untroubled by pain; *ataraxia* is itself geared to *aponia*, and joy of mind generally is a matter of memory and expectation of unadulterated pleasure, based on true belief. The objection to the pleasures of profligates (*DL* X.131-2) and perhaps the only objection Epicurus has (cf. *PD* 10), is that they fail to remove anxiety. The point with profligates is, presumably, that they erroneously believe fine food to be necessary, fail to see when desire is satisfied, and so pursue their objectives to the point of consequent distress, and so foolishly fear, as threats to their good, things which should not be feared.

---

**Post by "Cassius" of July 9, 2022 at 5:52 PM**

## 2. How this interpretation meets the earlier difficulties

19.2.1. If we look at the objections which we held that some styles of interpretation have to meet, it should be clear that this interpretation does not have to meet them. So far as the first objection is concerned it would be no oddity on our view that Epicurus insisted on the importance of sensory pleasure. On the contrary, that is just what he thinks we should be after, with the proviso that we also secure absence of pain.

19.2.2. As to the second objection, on our view aponia is not a non-sensory pleasure but a condition of sensory pleasure. What perception reveals to us directly is the goodness of pleasure and the badness of pain and thereby that the only unqualified good is pleasure without pain. Since any painless perception is pleasant, perception reveals the goodness, though not, of course, the achievability, of aponia<sup>1</sup>. The value of ataraxia is parasitic upon that of aponia, since the only ataraxia worth having on Epicurus' view is that which comes from pleasant memories and confident expectations of sensory pleasures of a painless kind. These extend, as it were, present pleasures or modify present pains by surrounding them with a pleasurable ambience. Thus the body's pleasures have pride of place.

19.2.3. As to the third objection, Epicurus is clearly not, on our view, using 'pleasure' in a strained sense in applying it to katastematic pleasure. The most that could be claimed is that he is inclined to use 'ataraxia' and 'aponia' of conditions of life rather than particular pleasures, but this sort of use had been familiar at least since Plato's *Protagoras*, and is derived from the application of the word to particular pleasures. Whether our view is altogether free from criticism along these lines depends on what account we can give of kinetic pleasure, but at least Epicurus is not straining language, or obviously cheating in calling katastematic pleasures pleasures.

<sup>1</sup> Nor does it reveal the choiceworthiness of individual pleasures (see 20.1.1).

The aponia statement is particularly important.

The question we are talking about is whether there is any form of "non-sensory pleasure" that was of importance to Epicurus, and they are arguing that there was \*not\* a "non-sensory" form of pleasure.

I perceive however that the real reason that we are having this discussion is that people are considering "katastematic pleasure" to be a form of sensory pleasure, and that's what Gosling and Taylor deny is the case based on their extensive study of PRE-Epicurean thought, during which these terms were apparently developed. Given that Epicurus did not take the time so far as we know it to offer his own discussion of "katastemic pleasure," if he cared about the term at all, it is a fair inference that we and he and everyone concerned with the issue should use the standard meaning of katastematic pleasure, which G&T assert to mean to be "non-sensory."

---

### **Post by "Cassius" of July 9, 2022 at 6:00 PM**

OK here is some important G&T discussion of the derivation of the katastematic term:

painless sensory pleasures. The question is what force Epicurus might have given to the terms 'katastematic' and 'kinetic'. The word 'katastematic' is an adjective from the noun '*katastēma*', and we know (cf. Plut. *Non Posse* 1089d = U 68) that one Epicurean expression for *aponia* was 'the well-established *katastēma* (condition) of the flesh'. One might therefore expect that katastematic pleasure is pleasure of the organism in proper condition. We also know (cf. 8.2, 15.1, Appendix B) that during the fourth century, and in many cases associated with the Academy, there had been various analyses of pleasure which had portrayed it as a *genesis*, a replenishment, a movement, or a *katastasis eis phusin* (restoration to the natural state). The purpose of many of these views had been to show that pleasure could not be the good since it was a movement aimed at an end term, and it is the end term that must be the good. Clearly

anyone wishing, like Epicurus, to hold that pleasure is the good, might feel the need, against such views, still in evidence when the *Magna Moralia* was written, to assert that in addition to such kinetic pleasures (pleasures of movement) there are pleasures of the *katastēma*. Indeed, if our view is correct, Epicurus, perhaps taking a hint from Aristotle, seems to have held that when the organism is operating properly it will be in a state of pleasure, and pain is a matter of unnatural operation. This, note, is a view about the organism, not individual organs. At any time a properly functioning organism will be perceiving, but not, of course, with every organ. Many organs will be in good condition, but pleasureless because not perceiving. There is no reason for Epicurus to hold, in Cicero's example (cf. 19.0.7) that a hand without pain experiences pleasure, only that an organism which is perceiving and without pain experiences pleasure.

Another source of doubt is authors other than Cicero. First we shall consider some remarks in Lucretius,<sup>1</sup> and secondly Plutarch's *Non Posse* where he argues that it is not possible to live happily by Epicurus' prescription. In neither does one find any sign that the distinction between katastematic and kinetic pleasure is of any importance in Epicureanism.

19.4.19. Lucretius is mainly concerned with Epicurus' natural philosophy and gives very little attention to the ethical side. At the beginning of Book II, however, we find a passage where he writes of the pleasure of being above the common hurly-burly where people pursue useless ends:

Do you not see that nature's only vehement demand is that pain be quite absent from the body, and that it enjoy with the mind sweet sense free of care and fear? So we see that altogether there are few things necessary for our bodily nature, just what will remove pain and be able to spread a picnic of many delights (16–22).

In the context 'sweet sense' must refer to sensory pleasure. There is no sign of an important contrast between this and katastematic pleasure, which is the good. On the contrary, what the body requires is pleasure-without-pain, where 'pleasure' refers to sensory pleasure. Lucretius shows just the lack of interest in any contrast between kinetic and katastematic pleasure, or between sensory pleasure and the good, which, on our interpretation, one would expect him to show, but which might be surprising if the distinction had the importance for Epicurus that Cicero's text suggests.

<sup>1</sup> We are indebted to Professor A. A. Long for making us realize the significance of this passage.

19.4.18. These doubts arise from within Cicero's own text. Another source of doubt is authors other than Cicero. First we shall consider some remarks in Lucretius,<sup>1</sup> and secondly Plutarch's *Non Posse* where he argues that it is not possible to live happily by Epicurus' prescription. In neither does one find any sign that the distinction between katastematic and kinetic pleasure is of any importance in Epicureanism.

19.4.19. Lucretius is mainly concerned with Epicurus' natural philosophy and gives very little attention to the ethical side. At the beginning of Book II, however, we find a passage where he writes of the pleasure of being above the common hurly-burly where people pursue useless ends:

Do you not see that nature's only vehement demand is that pain be quite absent from the body, and that it enjoy with the mind sweet sense free of care and fear? So we see that altogether there are few things necessary for our bodily nature, just what will remove pain and be able to spread a picnic of many delights (16–22).

In the context 'sweet sense' must refer to sensory pleasure. There is no sign of an important contrast between this and katastematic pleasure, which is the good. On the contrary, what the body requires is pleasure-without-pain, where 'pleasure' refers to sensory pleasure. Lucretius shows just the lack of interest in any contrast between kinetic and katastematic pleasure, or between sensory pleasure and the good, which, on our interpretation, one would expect him to show, but which might be surprising if the distinction had the importance for Epicurus that Cicero's text suggests.

<sup>1</sup> We are indebted to Professor A. A. Long for making us realize the significance of this passage.

That's enough of my clips for now.

This is a very complicated subject about which the experts themselves are widely divergent, so my first and main position is that we need to be very careful about taking any position that implies that the goal of life is not adequately conveyed in the single word "pleasure."

---

**Post by "Kalosyni" of July 9, 2022 at 6:24 PM**

Thinking we should cross reference to this thread:

Thread

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

Had this been shared before?

<https://www.academia.edu/resource/work/47860495>



Don

June 29, 2022 at 11:26 PM

---

### **Post by “Cassius” of July 9, 2022 at 7:20 PM**

I'll put this comment here, because it applies here, even though it applies in numerous other threads:

Why do I think this topic is so important that it needs to be discussed in so much detail?

Because I think the ULTIMATE point, on which I think Don and I agree, is that Epicurus taught that ALL Pleasure is desirable, that PLEASURE is the alpha and omega of a blessed life, and because there is ultimately no absolute standard of higher pleasures which all human beings should pursue equally.

The question in every case is that each person has to ask himself:

[VS71](#). Every desire must be confronted by this question: What will happen to me if the object of my desire is accomplished, and what if it is not?

And there is no absolute right and wrong answer to that question using any form of categories that applies to everyone all the time and everywhere except "pleasure" and "pain."

Definitely there are lots of other ways of looking at the question, such as asking oneself whether the desire/ sought after pleasure is "natural" or "necessary," and you can ask whether it is bodily or mental, and how long the pleasure will last, and how much pain will be required to get that pleasure, and how intense the relative pains and pleasures will be, and all sorts of other "practical" questions.

But what the advocates of "katastematic" pleasure clearly appear to be doing, and we see it in the way the entries at wikipedia are written and in many of the recent articles, is to seek to replace "PLEASURE" in the minds of the student of Epicurus with something entirely different, but which does in effect relegate "pleasure" as commonly understood to be a term of second-place status. And that guts the heart out of Epicurean philosophy and replaces it with a minimalist, simplistic, "let's do just enough to get by so that we never experience any pain at

all" mentality.

That's the danger, and that's the problem with focusing on "katastematic pleasure" as fundamental, that Gosling and Taylor, Nikolsky, and Wenham identify in very well- documented terms.