

# Differences between Epicureanism and Cyrenaicism

Post by "Cassius" of November 4, 2021 at 2:40 PM

The opening of Chapter 19 of Gosling & Taylor's "The Greeks on Pleasure" is also very informative. In it, they observe that

" It has usually been taken as fairly unproblematic which pleasures are kinetic. All sensory pleasures fall into this category and

perhaps some mental ones such as learning. This determines Usener's selection of passages, and it tends to be a point of

agreement among commentators who disagree about the nature of katastematic pleasure and its relation to kinetic." (my emphasis. Elsewhere in the book they discuss this further and make clear that kinetic implies change of any kind, which is why they include learning here, and when you think about the "change" component, it's sweeping in scope.)

At the end of the first paragraph is the sentence "But he [a commentator] agrees that all sensory pleasures are kinetic."

In other words, when you trace back the meaning of "kinetic" you find that it really means anything that changes, and that means not only bodily pleasure but also mental pleasure -- in fact ANYTHING that you can sense as pleasurable. Which logically leads you to the question, "Well if you can't sense katastematic pleasure (if you can sense it, it must be kinetic) then what good is katastematic pleasure?"

And I would say thus you're on the trail of the ridiculous position that there's something special called katastematic pleasure which is what Epicurus held to be the real goal of life.

I know my position here sounds radical and hard to accept, but read [Nikolsky](#) first (he's shorter) and then read this chapter. [Gosling & Taylor - On Katastematic and Kinetic Pleasure](#) Gosling and Taylor are well-credentialed academics and don't suffer from the disrepute in which DeWitt is held in some (not all) academic circles.

## Katastematic and Kinetic Pleasures

19.0.1. Nevertheless, Epicurus considered pleasure to be the good and he that pleasantly oneself that *katastematic* was the good. While he allowed of other, kinetic pleasures, these *katastematic* ones take pride of place. The highest pleasure and greatest good is to be without pain or disturbance, and it is this condition at which all living things naturally aim. It has usually been taken as fully unproblematic which pleasures are kinetic. All sensory pleasures fall into this category and perhaps some mental ones such as learning. This determines Uicker's selection of passages, and it tends to be a point of agreement among commentators who disagree almost the nature of *katastematic* pleasures and its relation to kinetic. Thus Diarr, and after him Ritz,<sup>4</sup> argue that every kinetic pleasure presupposes the presence of a *katastematic* one, since any sensory pleasure requires the good, and therefore painless, condition of at least part of the organ in question, and that is another way of saying that there is prior *katastematic* pleasure in the organ. On the other side Morijn argues for a more positive view of *katastematic* pleasures, considering it the state of joy of a being free of pain and anxiety. But he agrees that all sensory pleasures are kinetic.

19.0.2. With the nature of kinetic pleasures thus agreed, the point of dispute becomes just how Epicurus thought of *katastematic* pleasures, and why he used the same word for both kinds. The *DionysBlat* position makes *katastematic* pleasure in danger of being the negative condition of lacking pain or anxiety, and this makes one wonder why Epicurus was not content to join those mentioned by Aristotle (*EN* 1100a24) who thought the best condition one of apatheia. On the Morijn view it becomes slightly more intelligible why