

# Modern Neuroscience And The Katastematic / Kinetic Debate

Post by "Cassius" of June 30, 2023 at 5:44 PM

I will take a stab at one aspect of what I think is part of what G&T are saying:

Cicero objected to Epicurus' sweeping definition of pleasure as both (1) the standard active stimulations that we normally associate with pleasure and (2) the healthy painfree functioning of the living organism. Cicero objected because item (2) is not normally included within the standard definition of ordinary people - it is considered neutral. Cicero therefore insisted on considering these two types to be distinct categories and referenced kinetic vs katastematic as the way to do that.

In contrast, Epicurus held all pleasures to be desirable, and Epicurus did not elevate any type of pleasure over another - which he could not do, because if there are better and lower types of pleasures, then mastering the art of distinguishing between these types of pleasure would be more important than pleasure itself. Epicurus therefore considered that unity of all pleasures under the umbrella of 'pleasure' was critical to his analysis, with all kinds of pleasure to be pleasures of perception, while acknowledging also that some pleasures last longer than others. This would explain why Torquatus flatly holds that all who are without pain are in the greatest state of pleasure - you don't need to know any details about what they are doing because you have defined absence of pain - the normal state of life - to be pleasurable. So you can say without knowing any more details as an axiom: "I affirm that all who are without pain are in pleasure, and in that the fullest possible!" - [Cicero's On Ends, Book 2 \(V\)16](#)

You are then left with what Gosling and Taylor say as to Epicurus not considering this kinetic vs katastematic distinction between pleasures to be of prime importance:

"The more one stresses this the less important the distinction comes to look, since any condition, however steady, of a living thing, must according to Epicurus, be a condition of perceiving; but there is no evidence of a special kind of perceiving or object of perception to constitute ataraxia and aponia. Consequently we should be left with steady long-lasting perceptions over against fleeting ones. It seems simplest just to suppose that when the organism is functioning harmoniously it is always having some form of perception; that since the operation is harmonious the perception is pleasant and without pain; and that is just what aponia is. Ataraxia is the condition when, because of correct views, our expectations are undisturbed by fear, our desires do not pursue empty objectives and our memories are pleasant: this leaves us to enjoy our pleasures unanxiously."