

# Modern Neuroscience And The Katastematic / Kinetic Debate

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I'll approach katastematic/kinetic pleasure from slightly different perspective. This is something I was entertaining myself with on one of my midnight walks. One day I was reading something about dopamine and its function as a neurotransmitter and it occurred to me that pleasure might not be the highest good, in fact. Technically, pleasure may be just an emergent phenomenon caused by release of dopamine in animals' brains. Dopamine makes us want to pursue (or avoid) things. Without it, we wouldn't be even talking about pleasure and pain. We simply wouldn't know what these are.

To illustrate the power of dopamine, imagine yourself in front of a tasty looking burger. Next to the burger there are two pills. Let's make them red and blue for dramatic, Matrix-like purposes. Blue pill contains a chemical that completely blocks dopamine release in the brain. Swallow the pill and you would be staring at the burger until you die of hunger. You would have no motivation to eat it. You would not know what pleasure is. The red pill is cocaine-like chemical. Swallow it and you would find yourself devouring the burger in a state of ecstasy due to dopamine release flood. That would be the most pleasant burger in your life.

My point is, katastematic pleasure is a healthy, constant release of dopamine in our brains which allows us to feel pleasure anytime we're not in pain. This, to me, is the actual state of ataraxia. Enough dopamine to experience the pleasure of existence and to evoke the will to sustain that existence for as long as it's pleasurable.

Kinetic pleasure is a temporary spike of dopamine that makes us pursue imminent but short-lasting pleasures. I also consider it the main source of variety in experiencing pleasures discussed in [PD18](#).