

# Modern Neuroscience And The Katastematic / Kinetic Debate

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I've been meaning to address this from another angle but haven't made much progress. So, rather than let the perfect be the enemy of the good, I'm just going to put some thoughts down in a rather stream of consciousness fashion.

It begins with thinking about the *practical* implications of katastematic and kinetic pleasures. Why separate them, in addition to a philosophical argument? What use can we make of this distinction in terms of living our most pleasant lives?

The "fancy pleasures" theory would have one believe that katastematic pleasure is something special. Maybe a particular absence of a particular pain. If I reject that idea, where does that leave me? My answer is the same as it always is: the guides to living are pleasure *and* pain. Pain includes fears and desires, and Epicurus developed the three categories of desires. You might say that these are a more detailed way of understanding the guidance that we get from pain. Running with that for a moment, why would there not be a similarly more detailed way of understanding the guidance we get from pleasure? And since choosing/avoiding pleasure and avoiding/choosing pain are, to some degree, ways of achieving the same result, wouldn't it be logical to have categories of pleasure analogous to those of desires? If this is so, then I'm next suggesting that katastematic pleasures come from natural and necessary desires and that kinetic pleasures come from natural and unnecessary desires. OK, but how is this *useful*?

Pondering this leads me to thinking about the 80/20 principle: 80% (give or take) of a particular set of results tend to come from 20% (give or take) of a particular set of inputs. Applying this to pursuing pleasure, I'm suggesting that katastematic pleasures and natural/necessary desires are simply the 20% of things that an individual can choose to pursue, based on their individual circumstances, that will result in them achieving 80% of their pleasure. For instance, putting together and following a well-researched financial plan is something that will potentially result in a lifetime of pleasure while taking a relatively small amount of effort. Or, gazing at the stars each night can, bit by bit, result in a baseline of pleasure and of belonging to the material universe. What do these have in common? They are both effective ways of achieving a baseline of pleasure. Kinetic pleasure would, at least in this train of thought, be the 20% (+/-) of pleasure achieved by 80% (+/-) of actions.

This is unorthodox but, with further development, might provide a *useful* alternative to the primrose path of Ciceronian obfuscation that we now have. I hope it makes a certain amount of sense.... Anyway, I'd love to hear your thoughts: let 'er rip!