

# The Use of Negation in Epicurean Philosophy Concepts

Post by "Cassius" of April 20, 2025 at 2:44 PM

## [Quote from Godfrey](#)

It's been some time since I read Gosling and Taylor, but if I recall correctly, they consider the understanding of philosophy to be something of a one-and-done pleasure and they call it katastematic.

Unfortunately I cannot outright confirm or deny that statement with a particular cite. Since Rolf is new and is actively engaged in this thread, rather than pass over it let me just say I consider that Gosling and Taylor's "The Greeks on Pleasure" to be one of the most exhaustive and best resources these issues involving pleasure.

However it is also very long and detailed and not a quick read. Especially in the katastematic pleasure chapter (which is the inspiration for the Boris [Nikolsky](#) article here in the files section of the forum which I highly recommend that Rolfe read first) Gosling and Taylor tend to be so cautious in their wording that it is sometimes hard (at least for me) to be sure what their conclusion really is.

It seems to me that they were especially cautious in their wording of the katatestematic discussion, likely because they were aware that they were disagreeing with the powers-that-be in the academic world who take the majority view that Epicurus identified the true goal as ataraxia and ataraxia to be a katastematic pleasure. It is clear that G&T's chapter disagrees with that viewpoint, and Emily Austin states in a footnote in her book that she agrees with G&T's position. G&T also inspired [Nikolsky](#) to write his article "Epicurus On Pleasure," but not because G&T stated their conclusion in revolutionary flag-waving terms.

Even though it's immediately apparent that "katatestematic pleasure" has all sorts of issues even describing, the issues can also be subtle, and it takes considerable time to understand why the issue is important. But it is very important because getting caught up in amorphous and exotic thoughts that can seem to be implied by the term "katatestematic pleasure" is (in my view) the best way to turn any normal person into a useless ivory-tower jellyfish and make them run from Epicurus as fast as they can. And that's the reason why I think that viewpoint is so favored by many, especially by those who can otherwise hardly find it in themselves to utter the word "pleasure."

I would highly recommend to Rolfe or anyone else who has the time (but not early in their reading!!) that they should eventually read the G&T book. If someone is new and simply has to get to the bottom of that issue, read the [Nikolsky](#) article as it is much shorter and more clear in its conclusions.

The main danger is to energetic people (either younger like Rolfe or motivated at any age) who pick up from conventional articles praising katastematic pleasure and think it is the true goal of Epicurus. Most of them will sense immediately that there are all sorts of issues and contradictions in it, and they will think that if Epicurus thought that then he is worthless to them, just as they should reject all forms of otherworldly Buddhism / Stoicism / nothingness / ivory tower detachment.

There are very legitimate ways of making sense of what Diogenes Laertius has to say about katastematic pleasure, and Boris [Nikolsky](#) offers explanations as do Don and others here. I think Emily Austin made a very good decision to confine it to a footnote in her book and not get distracted by it. There's a time and place for fighting it out on this issue, and we do that here in the forum if you dig into prior discussions, but representing katastematic pleasure to new people as the real goal of Epicurus is the best way to send normal healthy people running away from Epicurean philosophy.