

# Epicurean Philosophy In Relation To Gulags and the Rack

Post by "Cassius" of April 30, 2025 at 7:26 AM

## [Quote from Pacatus](#)

This seems to me to point up what I consider to be the major error of the Cyrenaics (as articulated by Aristippus the Younger): that there is a third "neutral" condition that is neither pleasure nor pain. The Epicurean category of katastematic pleasure - in addition to the kinetic pleasures that seem to be the only ones the Cyrenaics recognized - corrects this error.

Yep I agree that this was an error by the Cyreniacs. But there's a book to be written to explain exactly "why" this was an error. Were the Cyreniacs less human than everyone else and "felt" things differently, or were they failing to make an intellectual point that Epicurus made later?

Further, I am not sure that it is correct to say that "katastematic" pleasure is what fills in the "neutral" gap. That would be an interesting question. While Don and I differ on the implications of katastematic pleasure, I am not sure that even Don would say that.

The relevant text from Diogenes Laertius 10-136 (Hicks) is:

## Quote

He differs from the Cyrenaics with regard to pleasure. They do not include under the term the pleasure which is a state of rest, but only that which consists in motion. Epicurus admits both; also pleasure of mind as well as of body, as he states in his work On Choice and Avoidance and in that On the Ethical End, and in the first book of his work On Human Life and in the epistle to his philosopher friends in Mytilene. So also Diogenes in the seventeenth book of his Epilecta, and Metrodorus in his Timocrates, whose actual words are: "Thus pleasure being conceived both as that species which consists in motion and that which is a state of rest." The words of Epicurus in his work On Choice are: "Peace of mind and freedom from pain are pleasures which imply a state of rest; joy and delight are seen to consist in motion and activity."

In relation to 10-34 Hicks:

## Quote

Opinion they also call conception or assumption, and declare it to be true and false; for it is true if it is subsequently confirmed or if it is not contradicted by evidence, and false if it is not subsequently confirmed or is contradicted by evidence. Hence the introduction of the phrase, "that which awaits" confirmation, e.g. to wait and get close to the tower and then learn what it looks like at close quarters. They affirm that there are two states of feeling, pleasure and pain, which arise in every animate being, and that the one is favourable and the other hostile to that being, and by their means choice and avoidance are determined; and that there are two kinds of inquiry, the one concerned with things, the other with nothing but words. So much, then, for his division and criterion in their main outline.

I can see how it would be easy to read these two together and say that rest vs motion fills in the gap. But DL also implies that the mind vs body distinction is relevant. (Did the Cyreniacs exclude the mind from pleasure?) And I don't think it's logically necessary that adding "states of rest" to "states of motion" thereby rules out any other kind of pleasure. And to me the implication of "there are only two feelings" does not equate to "Yes, and those two categories are "Pleasure of rest" and "Pleasure of Motion." At the very least one might equally say "Yes, and those two categories are Pleasures of the Mind and Pleasures of the Body." And there are probably other ways of subdividing pleasure up as well.

Not trying to pick nits here, but as this subject is so important, we want to be sure that we are not projecting our own views so as to miss other implications.