

# Discussion of Article: "On Pleasure, Pain and Happiness"

Post by "Cassius" of July 15, 2019 at 10:33 AM

Here are several clips from [a chapter of Gosling & Taylor's "The Greeks on Pleasure"](#) which appear relevant.

First, this one may seem to be a little confusingly written, but the context here is that G&T are saying that they are opposing ALL of the views stated in the rest of paragraph, and not just the views stated in the second part of the first sentence. The second and following sentences are a continuation of the view that they oppose, not a statement of their own views. G&T are opposing all the views stated in this paragraph, as made clear by the final sentence, which states that they are going to provide four objections which "such views" have to meet.

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They conclude in the end that the Katastematic /Kinetic distinction was **not** important to Epicurus, and that gave [Nikolsky](#) the idea for his article cited later in this post:

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Here is a clip stating that Cicero's interpretation that there is an internal conflict is defective and can be explained away. Note that G&T say that Cicero's interpretation "**is not supported by the extant writings of Epicurus**" and "**attributes views to him [Epicurus] which ought to be surprising.**"

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And here is the most clear statement of the Gosling & Taylor conclusion: "what is important is to get a life of sensory pleasure untainted by pain." (a reflection of Cicero's "*nothing was preferable to a life of tranquillity crammed full of pleasures*" from Defense of Publius Cestius)

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Here is the conclusion by [Nikolsky](#) that Epicurus is far from seeing pleasure in a neutral state, and that both Cicero and Diogenes Laertius were both forcing Epicurus into a mold of their own

exactly the same place, making it fit his argument. From this we can conclude that Athenaeus' report goes back to the same doxographic tradition as Cicero's text and therefore cannot be regarded as an independent and reliable piece of evidence.

In my view, all the facts examined above testify that the Epicurean concept of pleasure differs from the way it is represented in Cicero and Diogenes Laertius. Epicurus is far from seeing pleasure in a neutral state – a state in which both pain and usual, positive kind of pleasure are absent. Nor does Epicurus have all those contradictions of which Cicero accuses him and which are related to the division of pleasures into kinetic and static ones. One gets the impression that Cicero and Diogenes try to impose this division on Epicurus, reading it into phrases the actual meaning of which is absolutely different: Diogenes finds it in a sentence which is in fact dealing with the physical and emotional side of any pleasure, and Cicero, in his turn, infers it from the two characteristics of pleasure – as the absence of pain and as a pleasant movement perceived by the senses. Having attributed the distinction between the two kinds of pleasure to Epicurus, Cicero tries to find it in some other utterances by the philosopher as well. For example, Torquatus in the first book of *De Finibus*, right after his statement about two kinds of pleasure, quotes Epicurus' words:

*omnis autem privatione doloris putat Epicurus terminari summam voluptatem, ut postea variari voluptas distinguique possit, augeri amplificarique non possit.*<sup>78</sup>

According to Torquatus, Epicurus says here that static pleasure is the supreme form of pleasure and when it is achieved, sensory kinetic pleasures can only impart variety to it, but cannot increase its magnitude.<sup>79</sup> However, as Gosling and Taylor justly notice,<sup>80</sup> Epicurus' phrase itself says nothing

And here is [Matthew Wenham](#) reaching the same conclusion, that pleasure is an EXPERIENCE / sensation of pleasure, not some kind of "static" / "katastematic" state from which feeling is absence.

# On Cicero's Interpretation of *Katastematic* Pleasure in Epicurus

*Mathew Wenham*

The standard interpretation of the concept of *katastematic* pleasure in Epicurus has it referring to "static" states from which feeling is absent. We owe the prevalence of this interpretation to Cicero's account of Epicureanism in his *De Finibus Bonorum Et Malorum*. Cicero's account, in turn, is based on the Platonic theory of pleasure. The standard interpretation, when applied to principles of Epicurean hedonism, leads to fundamental contradictions in his theory. I claim that it is not Epicurus, but the standard interpretation that generates these errors because the latter construes pleasure in Epicurus according to an *attitudinal* theoretical framework, whilst the account of pleasure that emerges from Epicurean epistemology sees it as *experiential*.