

Welcome Max Duboff

Post by "Max DuBoff" of July 7, 2026 at 1:13 PM

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I don't think there's any way for katastematic pleasure to have intensity, because if so it couldn't be perfect at every moment (we could always imagine that it could be a bit more intense

This is an intriguing comment!

A pleasure with no intensity would, to me, describe a neutral state, which of course doesn't exist for Epicurus in the pleasure/pain relationship. This is why I prefer "complete" to "perfect". To my understanding a pleasure or pain requires all three components of intensity, location and duration: if any one of these doesn't apply, how can a pleasure or pain be experienced? Further, to my way of thinking a katastematic pleasure can vary in intensity, say from contentment to joy.

On a related note, I'm not clear as to what constitutes a bodily katastematic pleasure. Or possibly any katastematic pleasure.... It would seem to me to be a matter of duration, of being "lasting". This gets into the squishy question of what is meant by "lasting". Eternal? Being around longer than most pleasures? Persisting regardless of any external circumstances or new information?

Being now a "senior citizen", it's become quite apparent to me that all bodily pleasures and pains come and go. This is the lens through which I view bodily katastematic feelings with suspicion, but of course it may have nothing to do with that I suppose. Does it have to do with a material world in which everything is ultimately physical?

To be clear, katastematic pleasure is experienced; but, by saying it has no intensity, I mean that it couldn't be made stronger or weaker. It just is or is not present.

For someone who thinks contentment or joy is a katastematic pleasure, my claim doesn't make much sense. So you need to maintain that katastematic pleasure has intensity; but then I'm not sure how you can maintain that katastematic pleasure is complete. You'll probably need to go for a Rist-style explanation that all that matters is that painless has more spatial extension than pain.* I think this view has other problems, namely, that it clashes with PD 3 (on Rist's view, the blessed state isn't the complete removal of pain).

You're right to ask what a katastematic pleasure is. My view is that only ataraxia and aponia are katastematic pleasures. The simple reason is there's no evidence for anything else being one. These are the only katastematic pleasures listed in DL 10.136 and Men. 128 (the former explicitly indicates they're called katastematic, and they must be in the latter).

*Rist, *Epicurus: An Introduction*, p. 110: "Similarly when Epicurus said on his last day that, although his bodily pains were now intense, yet he was still enjoying happiness, he must have meant, in terms of the atomic theory, that, although he was suffering in some of his bodily structures, yet the atomic compounds in his mind and in the rest of his body, the vast majority, that is, of his atomic structures, were free from pain and thus enjoying the supreme happiness."