

Discussion of the thread - Against Katastematic Supremacy - Pleasure Is A Unified Whole And Not A House Divided - Forum Editorial Policy

Post by "Cassius" of August 4, 2026 at 9:03 PM

[Quote from DaveT](#)

... Now, take that short explanation and see how I don't care about any discussion of kinetic and katastematic pleasures. Epicurus is telling me quite clearly that absent pain, I have pleasure.

Dave, the further I read into Arenson's book the more i would encourage the part I underlined. I'm not disagreeing with what you are saying about your more practical approach - I am saying that i don't think you are going far enough.

Arenson is building the case (with many of the same cites as [Nikolsky](#) and Gosling & Taylor) that the kinetic/katastematic issue is focused on responding to arguments that health is not a pleasure, that replenishment pleasures have nothing to do with "the good," and that what Epicurus was doing was rejecting that argument and saying that indeed replenishment and active pleasures of any kind are definitely in the category of "good," regardless of whether they are "becoming" or "being."

I'm one of those people who find that entire argument singularly uninteresting and unpersuasive, and I am willing to dig into it only because I see that it has been use for what i consider to be very damaging purposes.

So I agree that not worrying too much about kinetic vs katastemtatic is exactly the right approach for most people.

But it's also exactly the right approach in regard to worrying about absence of pain.

It's total BS to build a theory on thinking that Epicurus did not know the difference between bread and water vs steak and wine, and that he would not prefer the latter absent some particular circumstance that would make choice of the latter lead eventually to more pain than pleasure.

And *of course Epicurus* would not suggest that the bare description of "absence of pain" would constitute the ultimate goal of life. Sensory deprivation may have some enjoyable short-term aspects in certain circumstances, but to assert that sensory depriivation is the ultimate best human experience is totally absurd -- and therefore I do not think he would have meant anything absurd.

"Absence of Pain" is every bit as tied to responding to the arguments about process vs state and being vs becoming that Plato and Aristotle were wrestling with as is the kinetic/katastematic distinction. "Absence of pain" supplies the "state of being" that can be thrown in the of the Platonists and others who insist that only the "complete" can be the highest good.

If you're into logic puzzles the kinetic and katastematic pleasure distinctions, and "total absence of pain" are great logical solutions to tricky questions. but they have only the most abstract of connections to real life decisions.

And the reason I am reacting against your formulations so far is that your suggestion that we should first eliminate pain and only afterwards concern ourselves with real-world mental and bodily pleasures turns the true priority on its head.

The point of [PD04](#) is to emphasize the point that we should NOT obsess about pain or make it the focus of our lives, because pain is ultimately manageable - it can be terminated by death if it gets too severe, and when it is not so severe we can almost always find ways to experience offsetting pleasures that outweigh those pains.

All of which is to repeat that the common sense application of pleasure being the supreme good and always balancing pleasures against pain, with the goal of greatest *net* pleasure, are the key to be practical application of the philosophy. Ideas like kinetic and katastematic and "absence of pain" are fine for those who want to debate the logical formulas, but they absolutely should not be used to corrupt the common sense balancing of pleasures and pains that every infant or animal understands before they become corrupted through having to deal with Platonism and Stoicism and the rest.