

Do Pigs Value Katastematic Pleasure? (Summer 2022 K / K Discussion)

Post by “Don” of June 29, 2022 at 11:26 PM

Had this been shared before?



[Epicurean Happiness: A Pig's Life?](#)

Epicurean Happiness: A Pig's Life?

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Post by “Cassius” of June 30, 2022 at 5:42 AM

That is a great find and an important paper to take note of, Don, thanks. Lots of good information in it - it even discusses the [Nikolsky](#) paper.

But after scanning through it what strikes me is it is almost a debate with himself, and notes that he has changed his own views over the years. I doubt a general reader is going to be able to read that and be anything but confused over the point he is making.

To me this one is probably an illustration of how you can talk yourself into a circle if you get obsessed over trying to decide what katastematic pleasure is and whether it is somehow "highest" and whether you should somehow care about it rather than the joy and delight and even cheerfulness which Konstan admits are KINETIC pleasures.

This is definitely one I will be using in the future as it is someone who specifically wrestles with [Nikolsky](#) and Gosling and Taylor without, in my view, scoring any points against them.

Good find.

Post by “Cassius” of June 30, 2022 at 5:57 AM

One thing more - as to a conclusion from all this.

After reading that, my view remains with [Nikolsky](#) that the kinetic-katastematic distinction, to the extent it was of significance to Epicurus at all (which is very unclear) arose as a response (as Konstan says) to positions taken by Plato about the nature of pleasure, and needs to be viewed primarily in that context.

Most all of us agree that pleasure is a sweeping word that contains every form of good feeling anyone can describe, and that it isn't possible to rate any kind of pleasure "objectively" as always better than another. If we try to do that (rank one type of pleasure as absolutely better than another, or "best") then we're going to involve ourselves in logical inconsistencies with the rest of Epicurean philosophy that go all the way back to its physics and epistemological bases.

So while I think this is a useful advanced topic to know about so as to navigate the logical debates of Greek philosophy wars, the suggestion that in real life we should deprecate joy and delight and mental pleasures (all of which are KINETIC) in favor of something which arguably is not even an "experience" does not provide a lot of help for us in developing therapies or practices for living real life.

It's really fascinating how this debate arose and why it perpetuates itself, and that's precisely where the [Nikolsky](#) article is essential reading.

Post by “Cassius” of June 30, 2022 at 6:28 AM

Gosh one more comment. I think this issue HAS to be considered in context of [PD18](#) and [PD19](#), which we hardly ever see discussed.

How can a finite life contain as much pleasure as one that is not time limited? To me the answer to that clearly derives from a way of looking at pleasures ("by reason!") that indicates that we are engaged in a logical battle (presumably with Plato et al) at an abstract level, rather than taking a pure "feeling" comparison of the pleasures of one against the other as we normally think of pleasure.

Everyone would intuitively want the longer portion, so what Epicurus is doing is showing a way of looking at the issue that satisfies us that we are not missing anything new and categorically different by not having the longer time. It to worry about the lack of time. But a way of looking at something does not change what we are looking at - pleasures are pleasures and unless we feel them then we are essentially dead and they are nothing to us.

Bottom line : before someone comes to a resting point on what they think about katastematic pleasure I would suggest they consider how their viewpoint relates to 18 and 19.

This is something that a pig cannot do, but also something that does not appear (to us) to bother the pig. We have the need for the analysis only because it bothers us if we don't.

Post by “Kalosyni” of June 30, 2022 at 7:06 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Everyone would intuitively want the longer portion, so what Epicurus is doing is showing a way of looking at the issue that satisfies us that we are not missing anything new and categorically different by not having the longer time....

...This is something that a pig cannot do, but also something that does not appear (to us) to bother the pig. We have the need for the analysis only because it bothers us if we don't.

This to me points to some deeper ideas that I would love to get into, however I am short on time today so will have to come back to this later. I would say that if anyone closely observes the nature and experience of pleasure over time, then it will make sense.

Post by “Cassius” of June 30, 2022 at 8:35 AM

Maybe one of the most productive ways to grapple with this involves being very clear what kinetic(active) and katastematic(static) really means, using examples.

What Kalosyni said is part of the problem: unless you take the time to study what the Greeks were saying, as Gosling and Taylor do in detail, it is natural to think that

"katastematic/static/ataraxia" translates into something like:

"I'm sitting on my porch meditating and clearing my mind and just feeling good without any troubles at all."

I am convinced that if you read Gosling and Taylor's description of the words and the history, you will conclude that even THAT example is an example of a "kinetic" pleasure. It is difficult or impossible to express in normal terms how a human being can experience anything that is unchanging and therefore "katastematic." That is because the Greeks were rigorously defining kinetic to include anything which involves any experience over time at all. Therefore ANY experience over time falls under "kinetic." As a result anything that you want to call "katastematic" loses that title if you can actually "experience" it. (I don't see this in the discussions but presumably you would need to divide PAINS into kinetic and katastematic as well as pleasures, which would also be an interesting way to get at the issues.)

To be katastematic/static under the definitions G&T pull out of Plato et al would involve true and absolute "rest" -- a state of no change whatsoever. That might almost be like a "freeze-frame" in a video -- where a particular set of circumstances exists in totally unchanging form. But such "states" do not exist in an Epicurean universe: everything is a combination of atoms whirling through space, and nothing is ever exactly the same for more than a moment in time.

All this would take a lot of work and study to document adequately, and this is too short an explanation without cites. But I know I remember G&T spending a lot of time on this, and if I recall correctly this aspect -- whether katastematic pleasure can be experienced - is a focus of Wenham's paper we have online here: [On Cicero's Interpretation of Katastematic Pleasure In Epicurus](#)

Wenham's abstract from that article:

Quote

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.

Post by "Godfrey" of June 30, 2022 at 4:37 PM

As I recall from a while ago, one of my conclusions from reading The Greeks On Pleasure was that the considered katastematic pleasure to be obtained when you absorb and understand the conclusions from natural science that we need not fear the gods or death.

[PD18](#): *As soon as the pain produced by the lack of something is removed, pleasure in the flesh is not increased but only embellished. Yet the limit of enjoyment in the mind is produced by thinking through these very things and similar things, which once provoked the greatest fears in the mind.*

[PD19](#): *Finite time and infinite time contain the same amount of joy, if its limits are measured out through reasoning.*

Also,

[PD11](#): *If our suspicions about astronomical phenomena and about death were nothing to us and troubled us not at all, and if this were also the case regarding our ignorance about the limits of our pains and desires, then we would have no need for studying what is natural. [PD12](#): It is impossible for someone who is completely ignorant about nature to wash away his fears about the most important matters if he retains some suspicions about the myths. So it is impossible to experience undiluted enjoyment without studying what is natural.*

To me, these describe how to achieve katastematic pleasure: by studying nature and achieving a correct worldview. This worldview provides a pleasure which is unchanging, unaffected by the slings and arrow of outrageous fortune. It doesn't mean that we've left behind the myriad of other pleasures and pains, but that they are embellishments to the pleasure of a correct worldview. We've built a stable base on which to make choices and avoidances regarding all other pleasures, all of which are constantly changing.

Post by “Don” of June 30, 2022 at 5:13 PM

I think I agree with you, [Godfrey](#) . My position is that katastematic pleasures - namely aponia and ataraxia - are what we feel in homeostasis when the body and mind are in proper working order and our minds are not troubled (especially by those existential fears of "the gods" and death). Then we can more readily experience other pleasures that give us variety of pleasure.

I need to go back and review [Nikolsky](#) et al.

Post by “Cassius” of June 30, 2022 at 5:48 PM

Godfrey's suggestion makes sense as a particular type of feeling of pleasure, and may be workable IF katastematic pleasure can indeed be "felt" under the authorities that talked about these issues.

The real rub is getting a consensus on whether it can be felt and then clearly delineating it from any other type of mental pleasure.

This is one of those areas where I think we just have to be flexible and realize that talking about it rather casually is one thing, but wrestling with the "experts" who have a lot more firepower in their citations is something else.

That's why for me it's a lot easier to take a position in what it is "not" (some special "higher" type of pleasure that is the "true goal" of life) than what it "is."

Post by "Godfrey" of June 30, 2022 at 8:54 PM

Here are some of my notes from TGOP which reinforce [Don](#) 's post above:

19.2.3 Ataraxia and aponia are considered conditions of life, not particular pleasures.

19.2.4 Since aponia is just a condition of painless perception it does not mean that Epicurus thought of a non-perceiving state as pleasurable.

19.3.2 Katastematic pleasures refer to "the well-established katastema (condition) of the flesh. Not to replenishment, movement, or katastasis eis phusin (restoration to the natural state). The latter was an argument against pleasure, on the basis that what was being returned to was the good, not pleasure. When the organism is operating properly it will be in a state of pleasure, and pain is a matter of unnatural operation.

19.3.3 Therefore kinetic pleasures are not a different kind than katastematic ones: they too are sensory and a matter of some part of the organism operating properly. Due to this most of Cicero can be discounted in this regard.

19.4.27 Ataraxia is achieved by the removal of superstitious fear and false beliefs, the constant memory of the truth, and attention to present experience and perception. Now the mind is free of disturbance and so memory and expectation operate without anxiety. Similarly when physical pain is removed the body operates without pain and that will mean that always some pleasurable and painless perception is occurring, a condition of good cheer.

19.4.30 *When the organism is functioning harmoniously it is always having some form of perception; since the operation is harmonious the perception is pleasant and without pain; that is just what aponia is. Ataraxia is the condition when, because of correct views, our expectations are undisturbed by fear, our desires do not pursue empty objectives and our memories are pleasant: this leaves us to enjoy our pleasures unanxiously.*

Related to this are these notes:

18.3.15 *A wise man needs to know certain basic facts about man and nature, convince himself of them and acquire certain habits of life. These will ensure that pleasure predominates. No daily hedonic calculus is necessary; the calculation is all at the stage of working out the facts, the effects of belief in them, and the proper regimen. From*

time to time one will have to review one's knowledge and confirm one's attitudes and practices. Once one is convinced of the truth of Epicurus' doctrines and has incorporated his teachings into one's life, one ceases to worry and lives a life as near to ataraxia and aponia as is possible for one. To achieve the best life possible, conviction and good habits are enough. One's wisdom shows in the acquisition and development of those

characteristics that will keep his life as pleasant as it can be, and that being so he will not be deluded into thinking that it will improve if only it lasts a little longer.

18.3.19 *Ataraxia consists in a condition of correct belief, and aponia in a condition free of bodily lack. The distinction between wisdom and ataraxia is therefore verbal rather than real. Since absence of wisdom is equivalent to the absence of ataraxia and therefore of mental pleasure, and its presence to the presence of mental pleasure, using it or mental pleasure as a criterion of worth amount to the same thing.*

Before reviewing my notes I had been thinking of these last two notes as references to katastematic pleasure, but now I see that wasn't what Gosling and Taylor were saying at all.

Post by "Don" of July 1, 2022 at 7:51 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

IF katastematic pleasure can indeed be "felt" under the authorities that talked about these issues

By "authorities," are you referring to ancient texts or current academics?

[Quote from Cassius](#)

whether {katastematic pleasure} can be felt

Isn't all pleasure a sensation by Epicurean definition? Πάθη is something that happens to you, something that is experienced. LSJ: "what is done or happens to a person or thing, opp. πράξις"

[Quote from Cassius](#)

clearly delineating it from any other type of mental pleasure

That's my position in defining it as the two components of homeostasis: mental and physical. It can be maintained over time while "kinetic" pleasure is momentary and provides variety, with "katastematic pleasure" providing a ground or background or foundation so to speak.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

wrestling with the "experts" who have a lot more firepower in their citations is something else

Bah! "Experts" can cherry pick just like anyone else. It's building a case using the texts that counts. We shouldn't wrestle in their ring. We should return to the texts and build our own. Always return to the books, to paraphrase Philodemus.

PS. That doesn't mean we can't use academics who've done some leg work. It is notoriously hard to access some of the ancient texts for numerous reasons. But leaning on translations is one thing. Accepting their commentary is another.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

That's why for me it's a lot easier to take a position in what it is "not" (some special "higher" type of pleasure that is the "true goal" of life) than what it "is."

The easy (painless) easy isn't always to be chosen, to paraphrase a certain ancient philosopher.



Post by "Cassius" of July 1, 2022 at 10:52 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

Isn't all pleasure a sensation by Epicurean definition?

Yes and that is definitely the starting point of the analysis, and why most of the academic statements strike me as wrong.

What I am really talking about are these articles, for existence the Konstan articles you've cited. I know what these recent writers are saying, and mainly I am trying to figure how to deal with the fact that what they are saying appears wrong, and yet we don't want to be a "ghetto" here where we talk only to ourselves and therefore appear "stupid" to people on the outside who say that the "experts" say something else.

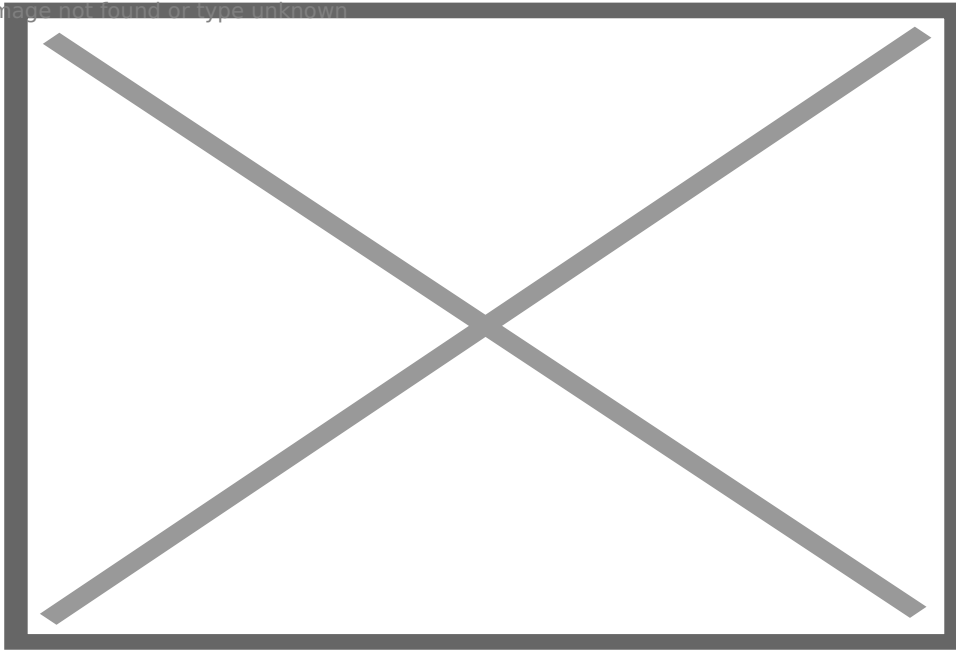
The constant situation is that people are going to read here things that (hopefully) makes sense, but then they go to the current academic articles and read a lot of spaghetti-like speculations that seem to lead nowhere (and ultimately contradict your basic observation that all pleasure is "felt").

That's the point of the Wenham article - Wenham is on our side and he fights that - and also the point of [Nikolsky](#). But they are the minority, so it's a matter of developing the best way to articulate things here while also preparing other readers to recognize that when they go "outside" they will read something else, so that they know what the issues are and why on side makes sense and the other doesn't.

Post by “Cassius” of July 1, 2022 at 1:06 PM

IT's this kind of thing that is the problem:

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[Reading Epicurus: Pleasure and pain](#)

For Epicurus, pleasure is nothing but the absence of pain. Pain can further be subdivided into pain of the body and trouble in the soul. This negative...

daily-philosophy.com

For Epicurus, pleasure is nothing but the absence of pain. Pain can further be subdivided into pain of the body and trouble in the soul. This negative description of happiness is surprising at first sight, but is a necessary component of the Epicurean philosophy of happiness.

This article is part of [The Ultimate Guide to Epicurus](#).

Epicurus on pleasure and pain

Epicurus has this to say about pleasure:

The magnitude of pleasure reaches its limit in the removal of all pain. When pleasure is present, so long as it is uninterrupted, there is no pain either of body or of mind or of both together. – Epicurus, [Principal Doctrines, #3](#) (transl. Hicks)

But what does this mean? As [previously discussed here](#), Epicurus does not think that there are any positive pleasures. What Epicurus calls pleasure is just the absence of pain. If we can reach a state of mind where all pain is totally absent, then we call state ‘happiness’.

Another example which implies that katastematic pleasure is the real objective above Kinetic:

[Pleasure and the Absence of Pain: Reading Epicurus' Hedonism Through Plato's Philebus Open Access](#)

Arenson, Kelly E. (2009)

Permanent URL: <https://etd.library.emory.edu/concern/etds/1r66j156t?locale=en>

Published

Abstract

Abstract Pleasure and the Absence of Pain: Reading Epicurus' Hedonism Through Plato's [Philebus](#) By Kelly E. Arenson

Epicurus made a name for himself in the ancient world when he identified pleasure with the absence of pain and proceeded to distinguish it from a second, seemingly different variety of pleasure--that found 'in motion' (kinetic). I interpret Epicurus' distinction through the lens of Plato's [Philebus](#) and the ancient debates concerning that dialogue. At issue in these debates and the theories that arise from them is whether pleasure is a process or an end and how pleasure ought to be conceived in terms of the harmonious functioning of a living organism. I argue that Plato identifies pleasure with the perceived process of restoration of an organism's natural harmony and that he uses this description to deny that pleasure is the good. Aristotle, rebuking the Platonic position, counters that pleasures are not processes of replenishment but are associated with the activity of an organism's unimpeded functioning. In the Epicurean development of these ideas, kinetic pleasure is the perceived restoration of the natural functioning of a living organism, and katastematic pleasure is painless, natural functioning itself, or health. On this reading, Epicurus considers any perceived affection that does not involve pain to be katastematic and thus the highest pleasure, including everyday sensory pleasures, such as taste. I show that Epicurus' distinction between pleasures serves as a dialectical response to the [Philebus](#) and bears the marks of Aristotle's response to the dialogue as well.

Post by "Cassius" of July 1, 2022 at 1:09 PM

All of which leads to this kind of statement at wikipedia: that Epicurus "idiosyncratically defined pleasure as absenced of suffering and that the goal of life is not "pleasure" but "atraxia meaning untroubledness.....' No real statement of PLEASURE as the goal either here or in the opening paragraphs of the wikipedia article on epicurus himself.

Ethics [edit]

Epicurus was a **hedonist**, meaning he taught that what is pleasurable is morally good and what is painful is morally evil.^{[65][66][67][7]} He idiosyncratically defined "pleasure" as the absence of suffering^{[66][7]} and taught that all humans should seek to attain the state of *ataraxia*, meaning "untroubledness", a state in which the person is completely free from all pain or suffering.^{[68][69][70]} He argued that most of the suffering which human beings experience is caused by the irrational fears of death, *divine retribution*, and punishment in the afterlife.^{[63][64]} In his *Letter to Menoeceus*, Epicurus explains that people seek wealth and power on account of these fears, believing that having more money, prestige, or political clout will save them from death.^{[63][64]} He, however, maintains that death is the end of existence, that the terrifying stories of punishment in the afterlife are ridiculous superstitions, and that death is therefore nothing to be feared.^{[63][64][71]} He writes in his *Letter to Menoeceus*: "Accustom thyself to believe that death is nothing to us, for good and evil imply sentience, and death is the privation of all sentience;... Death, therefore, the most awful of evils, is nothing to us, seeing that, when we are, death is not come, and, when death is come, we are not."^[72] From this doctrine arose the Epicurean epitaph: *Non fui, fui, non-sum, non-curo* ("I was not; I was; I am not; I do not care"), which is inscribed on the gravestones of his followers and seen on many ancient gravestones of the **Roman Empire**. This quotation is often used today at **humanist** funerals.^[73]

Plus THIS which identifies katastematic pleasures "as the focal ones to Epicurus."

Katastematic pleasure

from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

In **Epicurean** philosophy, **katastematic pleasure** is pleasure felt when being in a state of freedom from need or want, as opposed to kinetic pleasure, which is felt while performing a ratifying activity.^{[1][2]} Absence of pain, **aponia**, and lack of disturbance of mind, **ataraxia**, are two of the katastematic pleasures and often seen as the focal ones to **Epicurus**.^{[3][4]}

References [edit]

- ↑ Konstan, David, "Epicurus", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2013/entries/epicurus/>
- ↑ J. C. B. Gosling and C. C. W. Taylor. *Katastematic and Kinetic Pleasures*, in *The Greeks On Pleasure*. Eds. J. C. B. Gosling and C. C. W. Taylor. Clarendon Press, 1982
- ↑ Cicero, *De Fin* i 37-38
- ↑ Splawn, Clay (2002). "Updating Epicurus's Concept of *Katastematic* Pleasure". *Journal of Value Inquiry*. **36** (4): 473. doi:10.1023/A:1021997823870.

Post by “Cassius” of July 1, 2022 at 1:16 PM

So what we face here as people interested not only in understanding Epicurus ourselves but popularizing it for others is that out there in the wide world anyone who reads about Epicurus is

going to conclude that katastematic pleasure (which DL has mentioned to tell us only that Epicurus held it to be just one type of pleasure) should be considered to be the equivalent of "absence of pain" (which implies nothingness unless you define it much further) and thus that some counterintuitive and ephemeral concept of "nothingness.". Rather than keeping the focus on pleasure as Epicurus always did, people are being given the idea that rather than pleasurable living as ordinary people like you and me understand the term, the real focus and goal of Epicurean Philosophy is some form of nothingness. That may please the Buddhists and Stoics but is 180 degrees from what the clear bulk of the texts teach.

That is what casual readers have been doing for years and thereby ghettoizing it into a community only of those who fancy the idea of living in caves and running from all pain as the real goal of life.

That not only has a bad result, but more important there is good reason to think it is a total misreading of Epicurus, which sets us up for the task of straightening the whole thing out.

Post by “Don” of July 1, 2022 at 2:22 PM

Thanks, [Cassius](#) !! All good points and sources. Some random thoughts:

- So, we're setting up a David v Goliath scenario.
- The majority isn't always correct (ex, geocentrism anyone?)
- We got some Wikipedia editing to do, backed up with sources.
- The fact that that author reads all of Epicurus through the [Philebus](#) lens is problematic and frustrating.
- "Epicurus does not think there are any positive pleasures". By Zeus, What an ignorant statement!.. 😭 😊 None except for sex and pleasing sights and joy and....

That's enough for now.

Post by “Godfrey” of July 1, 2022 at 4:57 PM

Quote from [Cassius, of Arenson](#)

Epicurus made a name for himself in the ancient world when he identified pleasure with the absence of pain and proceeded to distinguish it from a second, seemingly different variety of pleasure--that found 'in motion' (kinetic).

As I've been struggling to express above, I'm beginning to have what I think is an answer to this argument. FWIW I'll try to clarify it here.

1. Pleasure and pain are, first and foremost, feelings.
2. Pleasure and pain are opposing feelings, so absence of either of them implies the maximum quantity of the other by definition.
3. Properly understanding natural science results in an abiding absence of pains which are due to fears of the gods, fears of death, and other fears caused by common myths. It also gives us knowledge of how to best live our lives in our particular circumstances, through prudent choices and avoiding of desires to pursue.
4. This abiding absence of pain due to understanding natural science is the only pleasure that could be properly considered katastematic. All other pleasures and pains come and go. Being pleasantly full for two or three hours is not, to my current thinking, katastematic. However living in a situation in which you will never have to worry about hunger, due to your reasoning about pleasures and pains concerning food, could be considered katastematic regarding hunger.
5. This abiding absence of pain is a pleasure which is properly referred to as wisdom and is also called ataraxia. If Epicurus indeed ever used the term "katastematic pleasure", which is debatable, I propose that this is what he was referring to. By this interpretation katastematic pleasure isn't meant to refer to being replenished, or to any specific part of the neurological process of experiencing pleasure. It's simply a background condition that we've created for ourselves through correct study and correct reasoning.

Could this be a valid counterargument to the above quote? Or am I misinterpreting something?

Post by “Don” of July 1, 2022 at 5:29 PM

[136] Διαφέρεται δὲ πρὸς τοὺς Κυρηναίκοις περὶ τῆς ἡδονῆς: οἱ μὲν γὰρ τὴν καταστηματικὴν οὐκ ἐγκρίνουσι, μόνην δὲ τὴν ἐν κινήσει: ὁ δὲ ἀμφοτέρων : : ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος, ὡς φησιν ἐν τῷ Περὶ αἰρέσεως καὶ φυγῆς καὶ ἐν τῷ Περὶ τέλους καὶ ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ Περὶ βίων καὶ ἐν τῇ πρὸς τοὺς ἐν Μυτιλήνῃ φιλοσόφους ἐπιστολῇ. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ Διογένης ἐν τῇ ἑπτακαιδεκάτῃ τῶν

Ἐπιλέκτων καὶ Μητρόδωρος ἐν τῷ Τιμοκράτει λέγουσιν οὕτω: νοουμένης δὲ ἡδονῆς τῆς τε κατὰ κίνησιν καὶ τῆς καταστηματικῆς. ὁ δ' Ἐπίκουρος ἐν τῷ Περὶ αἰρέσεων οὕτω λέγει: "ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀταραξία καὶ ἀπονία καταστηματικά εἰσιν ἡδοναί: ἡ δὲ χαρὰ καὶ ἡ εὐφροσύνη κατὰ κίνησιν ἐνεργεῖα βλέπονται."

136] 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."

This is the section in Diogenes Laertius referencing katastematic pleasures (underlined).

The quote from Epicurus at the end of Fragment 2.

Post by "Cassius" of July 1, 2022 at 5:38 PM

Godfrey I very much like the direction you are going in, but I unfortunately have to demur on "abiding.". I know some people who like that word (😊) but I do not think it adds anything to the discussion. If all it means is "long lasting" then that would be simply the time element that is a part of every pleasure - some last longer than others.

But I detect that it is being suggested as a good word (not tagging you personally) because it has a sort of Biblical flavor to it that implies it means something other and "higher" than "long lasting.". I will deflect from being more specific by saying it is almost the type word Dewitt would use to try to stretch a parallel with Christianity (I don't remember right now but maybe in fact Dewitt *did* use the word - I know others use it today).

But the end result problem is that I don't see any difference in kind from any other pleasure that comes from the confidence we get from studying natural science and understanding the Epicurean worldview (e.g what is said at the end of the letter to Herodotus about these studies making us much stronger than other people).

I would not have any real problem with saying that ALL such pleasures that come from the Epicurean worldview are "abiding" because in fact I do think they are long lasting - that

reference to how you can't make a Stoic out of an Epicurean applies.

But the reason I would say away from doing that is that I don't think the texts really support carving out longer-lasting pleasures and calling them "abiding" or anything else, especially since Epicurus warns in the letter to Menoceaous that it makes sense to seek not the pleasures that are longest, but the ones that are most pleasant.

But to repeat I find your direction generally makes sense, other than that it is not likely to help equip Don's "David" to meet the Academic Establishment's "Goliath."

(And though I am not fond of Biblical analogies I think Don is correct in suggesting that it is a very good analogy for the position we are in.)

Post by "Cassius" of July 1, 2022 at 6:03 PM

So to keep harping on what I think is probably the key point - it is the modern commentators who are equating "pleasures of rest" with "absence of pain" and that is how they are arguing that this "absence of pain /katastematic pleasure" is not what we should consider to be a "real pleasure" at all, but in fact as Elayne says in her article a "fancy pleasure" which is very difficult for normal people to understand, but which is in fact the "true goal" of life rather than pleasure itself.

That linkage is pretty much a core part of what has to be broken to get back to an understandable theory of pleasure as something we all feel and understand without explanation, which is the real heart and soul of the philosophy - something we don't need "expert academics" to explain to us.

Post by "Cassius" of July 1, 2022 at 7:08 PM

I've never been happy that we have a full statement of the problem in this website. [Elayne's article On Pain Pleasure and Happiness](#) is good, and I have my collection of cites in the [Fullness of Pleasure](#) article.

At the moment the only cite I would put here is one I always thought was the most clear - from Cicero in a moment of honesty when he was attacking an Epicurean:. That the Epicureans held

"that nothing was preferable to a life of tranquility crammed full of pleasures."". Which means to me that the situation we find ourselves in when all pains are gone is well described not as being some strange state of transcendence but what ordinary people can well understand as "crammed full of pleasures" (of any kind and combination, both mental and physical).

Cicero, In defense of Publius Sestius, 10.23: "He {Publius Clodius} praised those most who are said to be above all others the teachers and eulogists of pleasure {the Epicureans}. ... He added that these same men were quite right in saying that the wise do everything for their own interests; that no sane man should engage in public affairs; that nothing was preferable to a life of tranquility crammed full of pleasures. But those who said that men should aim at an honorable position, should consult the public interest, should think of duty throughout life not of self-interest, should face danger for their country, receive wounds, welcome death - these he called visionaries and madmen." Note: Here is a link to Perseus where the Latin and translation of this can be compared. The Latin is: "nihil esse praestabilius otiosa vita, plena et conferta voluptatibus." See also here for word translations.

Post by "Godfrey" of July 1, 2022 at 7:20 PM

OK abiding probably isn't a great word choice 😊 I'm having trouble coming up with a correct word; background condition is one attempt, maybe underlayment is another. I'm trying to express it from experience, not texts, so it's challenging.

[Quote from Don](#)

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."

Thanks for this quote [Don](#) . it's been some time since I read [Nikolsky](#), Wenham or Gosling and Taylor; how does this square with their arguments? Isn't their point that katastematic and kinetic weren't terms used by Epicurus? This would seem to contradict that view.

Post by "Don" of July 1, 2022 at 8:51 PM

Cicero:

nihil esse praestabilius otiosa vita, plena et conferta voluptatibus

"nothing is better than a life of ease, full of, and loaded with, all sorts of pleasures"

[Charlton T. Lewis, Charles Short, A Latin Dictionary, ōtīōsus](#)

[Charlton T. Lewis, Charles Short, A Latin Dictionary, plēnus](#)

[Charlton T. Lewis, An Elementary Latin Dictionary, cōnfertus](#)

My question: Does this describe a life of katastematic pleasure as a foundation filled with kinetic pleasure?

Post by “Don” of July 1, 2022 at 10:02 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

background condition is one attempt, maybe underlayment is another.

That's my take, as of (looks at time on phone...). Katastematic, from its basic meaning of "a condition or state of health," means to me the proper, undisturbed functioning of our body and minds. Free from fear. Free from anxiety. Free from pain, for the most part. We are mortal beings after all. Mens sana in corpore sano, so to speak. From that ground/foundation, we can better make sound, practical choices and rejections and enjoy the day to day pleasures as they arise, including the occasional luxury that becomes available, but also be unperturbed if circumstances change and we have to deal with scarcity from time to time. The absolutely necessary pleasures are easily obtained.

Post by “Don” of July 1, 2022 at 10:46 PM

Well, we've certainly strayed far from our delightful porcine mascot, haven't we? 😄

Post by “Godfrey” of July 2, 2022 at 12:51 AM

Quote from Don

My question: Does this describe a life of katastematic pleasure as a foundation filled with kinetic pleasure?

Reading it in this context and considering the source, it strikes me as quite a sarcastic and misleading description of that. As we often discuss, "a life of ease", of otiosus, might be absolute pleasure to some people yet entirely odious to others. And "crammed full of pleasures" seems to indicate disdain for prudent choices and avoidances.

Post by "Cassius" of July 2, 2022 at 6:33 AM

Now on the last comment there Godfrey I think probably Cicero's description is literally true but the sarcastic tone (which really was present) comes from the cultural bias against pleasure. This is also very similar to what Torquatus says in the "proof" sequence where he says imagine the life filled with pleasures of every kind and no pain - can we imagine anything better?

As for abiding to some extent maybe the issue is "confidence" or "attitude" which is something that seems to stay on over time.

As for the DL references to rest / katastematic, as you probably saw in G&T there had been a long history of Greeks talking about replenishment and active and resting pleasures, so Epicurus certainly would know of the terms and could have used them. So the issue is not whether he ever used the terms at all - the issue is more "Were these terms of significance to Epicurus as a focus and centerpiece of his philosophy?". We don't see Epicurus very often talking about types of pleasure, but he does so only occasionally.

It is really only the "alleged" linkage between katastematic pleasure (which occurs very rarely) and "absence of pain" (which does seem to be an important term, as it describes the limit) that allows these commentators to put katastematic pleasure in a special class.

Once that linkage is exposed as a mirage, the DL comments take on much less significance.

Again, any focus on a single "type of pleasure" as especially important is going to have this same logical problem - the focus on that pleasure tends to expand to "take over" the whole philosophy. The true focus seems to be that all pleasures are desirable, and personal to the person who feels them, and the only caution in pursuing them is that you need to be aware of

their price in pain, because if you aren't willing to pay that price then "don't make the purchase!"

We can list all sorts of pleasures, and the price that they cost in pain, but in a non-fated non-supernatural world the choice of which to pursue is always going to be contextual. When you are lying on the train tracks and hear a whistle in the distance, it's not the "pleasures of rest" that you want but the pleasures of "action."

But I do agree - you always want to keep the attitude of confidence that you understand the basic scheme of things with you, and this is going to make you a much stronger person than those who believe in myths. You want to build that into your frame just like you exercise to build muscles. And that's clearly something that Epicurus encouraged and wanted. But is there any real profit to be gained in calling that "katastematic pleasure," or evidence that when Epicurus discussed those attributes of confidence and strength of mind that he used that term?

Post by "Don" of July 2, 2022 at 6:50 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

quite a sarcastic and misleading description of that.

And "sarcastic and misleading" is exactly what I'd expect from our "dear friend" Cicero 😊

Post by "Don" of July 2, 2022 at 7:16 AM

I found a paper that I just started reading, then did a search here and found it only mentioned by [Cassius](#) in 2019. For ease of access:

Here is [Cassius](#) 's 2019 response:

Post

[**Another Article Insisting On The Importance of the Kinetic / Katestematic Distinction, Despite Citing Nikolsky**](#)

Thanks to Hiram for pointing out today an article on the kinetic / katastematic issue. The article is ""Epicurus' "Kinetic" and "Katastematic" Pleasures. A Reappraisal", Elenchos xxxvi (2015) fasc. 2: 271-296." I find the conclusion (which includes the assertion that kinetic pleasure is unnecessary) most unpersuasive:

epicureanfriends.com/wcf/attachment/2843/

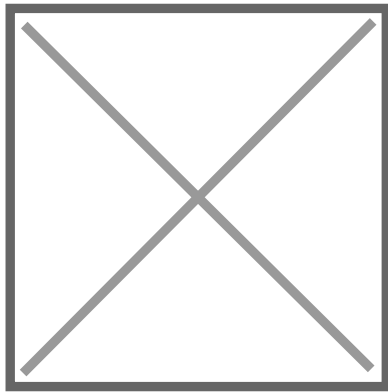
On the other hand, the article I think helps bolster the argument that the entire katatesmetic / kinetic distinction is a dead end. ...



Cassius

September 28, 2019 at 6:35 PM

And here is the direct link to the paper:



["Epicurus' "Kinetic" and "Katastematic" Pleasures. A Reappraisal", Elenchos xxxvi \(2015\) fasc. 2: 271-296.](http://www.academia.edu/271-296)

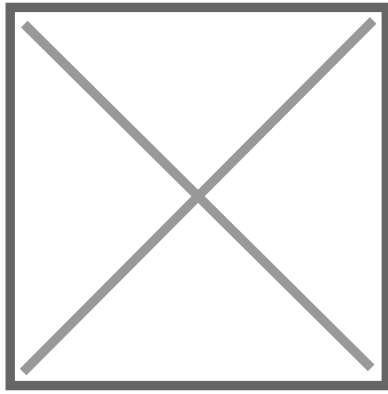
In this paper I shall offer new definitions for what seem to be the most dominant terms in Epicurus' theory of pleasures - "kinetic" and "katastematic". While...

www.academia.edu

I'm not sure I have the same reaction as [Cassius](#) , but hey it's early in the morning. I'll report back later, maybe after rereading [Nikolsky](#), too.

Post by "Don" of July 2, 2022 at 8:48 AM

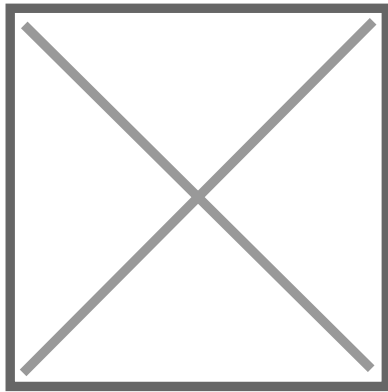
More by the same author:



["ΤΟ ΚΑΤ' ΕΝΔΕΙΑΝ ΑΛΓΟΥΝ AND EPICUREAN KATASTEMATIC PLEASURES", ORGANON 48 \(2016\): 5-19](#)

Abstr act. In this article I wish to emphasize the significance of τὸ κατ' ἔνδειαν ἀλγοῦν, an expression appearing in our sources on Epicurean ethics which...

www.academia.edu



["Epicurus' Varietas and ἡ κινητικὴ ἡδονή", Mnemosyne 71 \(2018\) 777-798.](#)

According to Epicurus' view which locates the summit of pleasure in the absence of all pain, once pain has been removed pleasure cannot be increased, but it...

www.academia.edu

Post by "Cassius" of July 2, 2022 at 3:14 PM

Someone said to me recently something that I think is an important part of this discussion:

"To an introvert, everything that the extrovert likes would seem to create anxiety and pain."

I think that's correct, and similarly:

To an extrovert, everything that the introvert likes would seem trifling and oppressively boring.

You can come up with all sorts of Mars v. Venus analogies.

The point is that the pleasures of one nature are going to pains to another nature, and vice versa, and that is why we are always going to get into trouble unless we philosophically reach for the higher ground, which is that it is "Pleasure" not "My kind of pleasure" which has to be identified as the best description of the ultimate goal of life *philosophically*.

Epicurus therefore embraced BOTH active and static pleasures, and did not obsess over ranking one higher than the other, because he knew that people and circumstances differ.

Identifying the generic goal of pleasure leads to the philosophic understanding that the real contest is not types of pleasure against types of pleasure. The real philosophic contest for all the marbles is pleasure vs "virtue" and "religious piety" and capital "R" "Reason."

On an individual level it is essential that we know our own selves and identify what types of pleasure are most valuable to our own natures. But in the game of Philosophy vs. Philosophy, we can't let the enemies of Pleasure divide us amongst ourselves by suggesting that only certain types of pleasure are acceptable. That's the old "divide and conquer problem, and that is exactly what "they" have done to Epicureans and Epicurean philosophy for 2000+ years.

Post by "Godfrey" of July 2, 2022 at 3:25 PM

So we don't have much to go on from Epicurus himself, including this fragment:

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."

Can any significance be derived from the fact that he wrote that peace of mind and freedom from pain *imply* a state of rest, whereas joy and delight *are seen to consist in* motion and activity? Could he have been suggesting that a katastematic state isn't experienced directly, but only through such pleasures as peace of mind and freedom from pain? Could he have been discounting katastematic pleasure altogether and answering Plato, et al, that it is only a mental description based on experienced pleasures?

This is a great example of the much documented issue of lack of documentation 🙄

Further, Cicero's opposition to Epicurus is well established. Knowing his agenda, relying on his presentation of what has become such a key idea is pretty much guaranteed to lead us into the

conundrum we're grappling with. This was his agenda after all.

Post by "Cassius" of July 2, 2022 at 5:06 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Could he have been discounting katastematic pleasure altogether and answering Plato, et al, that it is only a mental description based on experienced pleasures?

It's always dangerous to put too much weight on a few words without additional backup, but if the text supports the "imply" distinction as being something that has to be reasoned out, then your suggestion makes sense.

Clearly Epicurus did in fact state in other circumstances that, for example, we can understand that a limited life can have as great a pleasure as an unlimited life but it takes reasoning to reach that conclusion.

So that suggestion could not be unreasonable at all. What I think is unreasonable is the commentariat's suggestion that the only goal in life that anyone should pursue is "katastematic pleasure" or "absence of pain," and that pleasure as people ordinarily understand the word is something that is not worth pursuing.

I am not convinced that this understanding of the Epicurean worldview is properly called katastematic pleasure, but I am convinced that the understanding of the Epicureans worldview does allow a complete and satisfied life without worrying about gods and eternal torture in hell or the fact that we can't live forever.

The main implications that I would purge from the narrative is (1) that the goal should be defined as something other than "Pleasure," and (2) that when we use the word "Pleasure" as the goal, that there is any tension or absolute hierarchy between "active" or "resting" pleasures.

Said another way. I think that the confidence and strength of mind and calmness in the face of troubles that comes from the Epicurean worldview is in fact the most advanced and productive and accurate to the facts philosophy that anyone can hold, so in that sense such a level of understanding is the ultimate goal to which we all should aspire. As Torquatus says, such a person would be surrounded with pleasures of many kind (that are pleasurable to that person) and have no pain or fear of pain. That is a very good definition of the goal.

But is that definition of the goal accurately called katastematic pleasure? I doubt that a good case can be constructed for that position. Were someone to try to do it I suspect the academics,

who I do admit to be adept with the citations, would pretty effectively shoot down such a suggestion. And to close with a warrior analogy, I am not at all sure that that particular battle is worth fighting, even if we are "David.". There are too many other Goliaths waiting in the wings who need to be dealt with more urgently.

Post by “Don” of July 2, 2022 at 5:47 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

This is a great example of the much documented issue of lack of documentation

Well put! Exactly.

Remember, too, that when you say...

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Can any significance be derived from the fact that he wrote that peace of mind and freedom from pain imply a state of rest, whereas joy and delight are seen to consist in motion and activity?

That's not exactly what Epicurus said. That's an extrapolation and Interpretation of:

"ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀταραξία καὶ ἀπονία καταστηματικά ἐῖσιν ἡδοναί: ἡ δὲ χαρὰ καὶ ἡ εὐφροσύνη κατὰ κίνησιν ἐνεργεῖα βλέπονται."

That whole "which imply a state of rest" is contained in καταστηματικά. The only thing that we can be sure is that that first sentence reads:

"For ataraxia and aponia are 'katastēmatikai' pleasures..."

What did Epicurus mean by katastēmatikai pleasures?? That's the rub. LSJ says

καταστηματικός , ἡ, ὄν,

A.pertaining to a state or condition

as well as, in relation to musical instruments, "calming"

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, Κκ , κατάσση^τος , καταστηματικός](#)

That's a LOT of commentary and Interpretation that gets thrown about from "scholars" and "experts " and a LOT of it gets filtered through a Platonic lens before it ever settles on Epicurus.

If this is a direct quote from Epicurus from his *On Choices (and Rejections)*, then there's no doubt Epicurus had words to say about different kinds of pleasure. He says it right there:

ἀταραξία καὶ ἀπονία are this type of pleasures (ἡδοναί hēdonai); χαρὰ and ἡ εὐφροσύνη are

βλέπονται "seen" possibly "experienced? exist?"

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, βλέπω](#)

κατὰ κίνησιν ἐνεργεῖα (kata kinēsin "through/by way of motion" energeiai "activity, etc.")

[http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...ntry=e\)ne/rgeia](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...ntry=e)ne/rgeia) Note that LSJ has it defined as "the opposite of ἔξις" which is "a state or habit of mind" which seems exactly to me what the katastematic Pleasures point to: a state of being. So that dichotomy is reinforced using ἐνεργεῖα...

[Greek Word Study Tool](#)

Post by “Don” of July 2, 2022 at 6:48 PM

It seems to me that, just from observation, there are at least two types of pleasures that exist as states of being, as Epicurus points out, such as:

- being in a calm, tranquil state of mind (ataraxia)
- and feeling the the positive feeling of a body without pain in good working order (aponia)

We can work toward those states, and part of it is dispelling fears and anxiety and also taking care of our physical bodies. But once they are there, we don't "work at" feeling that pleasure. It just is (until our minds start to wander or we get distracted by that itch in our elbow...)

Then, on the other hand, there are pleasures that we derive from volitional actions in the moment, such as

- talking with friends
- remembering past pleasures
- taking a drink after a long hike

- eating your favorite food

So, right now, that's where I'm heading on "katastematic pleasures" and "pleasures of action". Whether there's any academic papers that back that up, I don't know.

Post by “Godfrey” of July 2, 2022 at 9:00 PM

If you haven't already, take a look at Long and Sedley's commentary in the Pleasure section of The Hellenistic Philosophers. They devoted a page or so to this topic.

Post by “Don” of July 3, 2022 at 6:39 AM

Have we brought up Fragment 68 yet?

68. To those who are able to reason it out, the highest and surest joy is found in the stable health of the body and a firm confidence in keeping it. (Saint-Andre)

τὸ γὰρ εὐσταθὲς σαρκὸς κατάστημα (katastēma) καὶ τὸ περὶ ταύτης πιστὸν ἔλπισμα τὴν ἀκροτάτην χαρὰν καὶ βεβαιοτάτην ἔχει τοῖς ἐπιλογίζεσθαι δυναμένοις.

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, κατάστημα](#)

εὐσταθὲς = "well based, standing firm, stable (relatively unchanging)"

σαρκὸς (sarkos, genitive) = "of the material which covers the bones of a creature; of the flesh; of the body (as opposed to the mind/soul/spirit)"

κατάστημα = "bodily or mental condition" So, Saint-Andre's "health" is a translation decision. The phrase at its most basic is "the stable condition of the body" which to me, again, implies homeostasis, a stable, well-balanced, body in good c working condition.

Saint-Andre notes VS33 as a complement:

33. The body cries out (σαρκὸς φωνή) to not be hungry, not be thirsty, not be cold. Anyone who has these things, and who is confident of continuing to have them, can rival the gods for happiness (εὐδαιμονίας eudaimonias).

σαρκὸς φωνὴ τὸ μὴ πεινῆν, τὸ μὴ διψῆν, τὸ μὴ ῥιγοῦν· ταῦτα γὰρ ἔχων τις καὶ ἐλπίζων ἔξειν κἂν <διὸ> ὑπὲρ εὐδαιμονίας μαχέσαιοτο.

LSJ also gives some references to Diogenes of Oenoanda, so I dug those up for our discussion here:

[DCLP/Trismegistos 865216 = LDAB 865216](#)

The inscription

And so the [are] If [prudence.]

Let us now [investigate] how life is to be made pleasant for us both in states and in actions.

Let us first discuss states, keeping an eye on the point that, when the emotions which disturb the soul are removed, those which produce pleasure enter into it to take their place.

[- ca.7 -] εἰσαν τὰ φρόν[ιμα].

ἡμ[εῖς δὲ ζη]τῶμεν ἤδη

πῶς ὁ βίος ἡμεῖν ἡδὺς

γένηται καὶ ἐν τοῖς κα-

ταστήμασι καὶ ἐν ταῖς

πράξεσιν. περὶ δὲ τῶν

καταστημάτων πρῶ-

τον εἶπωμεν, ἐκεῖνο

τηροῦντες, τὸ δὴ ὅτι τῶν

ἰοχλούντων τὴν ψυχὴν

παθῶν ὑπεξαίρεθέν-

των τὰ ἡδοντα αὐτὴν

ἀντιπαρέρχεται. □ vac. 1□

τὰ οὖν ὀχλοῦντα τίνα

Can't find a translation of this one:

column 3

σι(*)ν, □ vac. 1□ οὐκ ἐκείνας, □ vac. 1□ οὐκ ἐ-
κείνας, □ vac. 1□ ὧ Ζήνων καὶ Κλε-
άνθη, □ vac. 1□ καὶ σὺ Χρύσιππε, □ vac. 1□, καὶ (*)
ἄσοι τὴν αὐτὴν ὑμεῖν ἄ-
5[γ]ο[υ]σιν, □ vac. 1□ οὐκ ἐκείνας ἀπο(*)-
φαινόμεθα τὰς ἡδονὰς
ὑπάρχειν τ[έ]λος τὰς τῶν
πολλῶν, ἀλλὰ ταύτας ἄσ
ἀρτίως εἰρήκαμεν, □ vac. 2□ τέ-
10[λο]ς. μόνας. □ vac. 1□ εἰ γὰρ ἀρέσ(*)-
κει. γ' ὑμεῖν τὸ τῆς φύσεως(*)
ἀγαθὸν κατάστημά τι καὶ(*)
[οἰκ]εῖον τοῦτ' εἶναι τέ(*)-
λος κατὰ τὸν ἡμεῖν σύν -

Or this one:

column 4

φωνον λόγον, □ vac. 1□ τὸ δὲ τ[ῆς ἡ-]
δονῆς ὄνομα μεισε[ῖτε,]
τί οὐ πάλαι ἡμεῖν ἐλέ[ξα-]
τε; -τὸ μὲν δόγμα ὑμῶ[ν ἄ-]
5ληθές, ἄνδρες, τῷ δὲ [τῆς]
ἡδονῆς ὄνόματι φα[ύλω]ς]
κέχρησθε, ἵνα πρὸς [τοῦ-]
το ὑμεῖν εἴπαμεν· □ vac. 1□ [καί-]
νὸν μὲν οὐδαμῶς γ[ῦν]

10τάττομεν τόνδε τὸν [λό-]

γον κατὰ τοῦ προειρη[μέ-]

νου καταστήματος, [άλ-]

λ'ἄνωθεν ὠμειλη[μέ-]

νον πᾶσιν Ἑλλησιν [..]

Working on those last two, butt putting here for future reference. LSJ also cites Metrodorus, Fragment 5. Looking for that, too.

Post by “Kalosyni” of July 3, 2022 at 7:25 AM

I am really enjoying this thread!! (and I need to re-read from beginning to end, as may have missed reading a few entries). For me all of this discussion is the basis of well-being and happiness. And we can see what Epicurus may or may not have said. And we can also apply all of this in a practical way.

For example, yesterday I had a wonderful lunch with a good friend and I felt both very satisfied and also that I had eaten more than what I needed (and so felt overly full). But then not too much later after that, the idea of getting ice cream came to me, but I waited a few hours before getting some. The pleasure of the ice cream lasted only a short time, and then I felt too full again. So what was this craving, I wondered. Then I wondered if eating ice cream was a way to try to deal with any feelings of uncertainty, or was is boredom?

I have to say that for me, I am starting to see how eating just enough to relieve hunger provides a sense of well-being that "feels better" and "lasts longer" than eating when you aren't really hungry.

Post by “Don” of July 3, 2022 at 8:28 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

column 3

σι(*)ν, □ vac. 1□ οὐκ ἐκείνας, □ vac. 1□ οὐκ ἐ-
κειίνας, □ vac. 1□ ὦ Ζήνων καὶ Κλε-
άνθη, □ vac. 1□ καὶ σὺ Χρύσιππε, □ vac. 1□, καὶ (*)
ὅσοι τὴν αὐτὴν ὑμεῖν ἄ-
5[γ]ο[υ]σιν, □ vac. 1□ οὐκ ἐκειίνας ἀπο(*)-
φαινόμεθα τὰς ἡδονὰς
ὑπάρχειν τ[έ]λος τὰς τῶν
πολλῶν, ἀλλὰ ταύτας ἄσ
ἀρτίως εἰρήκαμεν, □ vac. 2□ τέ-
10[λο]ς, μόνας. □ vac. 1□ εἰ γὰρ ἀρέσ(*)-
κει. γ' ὑμεῖν τὸ τῆς φύσεως(*)
ἀγαθὸν κατάστημά τι καὶ(*)
[οἰκ]εῖον τοῦτ' εἶναι τέ(*)-
λος κατὰ τὸν ἡμεῖν σύν -

Or this one:

column 4

φωνον λόγον, □ vac. 1□ τὸ δὲ τ[ῆ]ς ἡ-]
δονῆς ὄνομα μεισε[ῖ]τε,]
τί οὐ πάλαι ἡμεῖν ἐλέ[ξα]-
τε; -τὸ μὲν δόγμα ὑμῶ[ν ἄ-]
5ληθές, ἄνδρες, τῷ δὲ [τῆ]ς]
ἡδονῆς ὄνόματι φα[ύ]λως]
κέχρησθε, ἵνα πρὸς [τοῦ]-]

το ὑμεῖν εἶπαμεν· □ vac. 1□ [και-]

νὸν μὲν οὐδαμῶς ψ[ῦν]

10τάττομεν τόνδε τὸν [λό-]

γον κατὰ τοῦ προειρη[μέ-]

νου καταστήματος, [άλ-]

λ'ἄνωθεν ὠμειλη[μέ-]

νον πᾶσιν Ἑλλησιν [..]

Display More

Ah! Now I see why there was no translation on the inscription website! These columns are from NF192 ("new fragment 192") first described in 2011 and then expanded on in this 2014 paper in JSTOR:

Diogenes of Oinoanda on the Meaning of 'Pleasure' (NF 192)

Author(s): Barnaby Taylor

Source: *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* , 2014, Bd. 191 (2014), pp. 84-89

Published by: Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43909587>

Here are two selections:

"Diogenes begins the third column by drawing a distinction between two types of pleasure, the 'pleasures of the many' (III.6-8) and the 'aforementioned pleasures' (III.8-9). In a forcefully-expressed sentence³ addressed to Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus and all their followers (III. 1-10), Diogenes states that only the 'aforementioned pleasures' constitute the moral end (ὑπάρχειν τ[έ]λος). As the editors suggest, Diogenes' 'pleasures of the many' must be equivalent to the 'pleasures of the profligate' listed by Epicurus at Men. 131-2: drinking, party-

ing, fish-eating, feasting, sexual enjoyment of boys and women.⁵ The 'aforementioned pleasures' are to be identified with the two forms of static pleasure adduced by Epicurus in the very same passage: freedom from bodily pain (aponia) and freedom from mental disturbance (ataraxia). The identification of static

pleasure with the moral end is standard Epicurean ethical theory: while all pleasures are good per se , any pleasure which is likely to be followed by pain, and thus threatens the stability of the state of painless tranquillity, ought to be avoided.⁶ As such, not all pleasures are to be

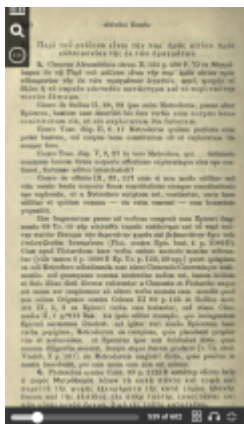
included in the moral end."

" The final sentence of Diogenes NF 192 constitutes important new evidence in this regard. There, as we have seen, Diogenes justifies the Epicurean use of the term 'pleasure' to refer to the experience of the state of tranquillity that constitutes the moral end by stating that such usage is in line with the term's ordinary meaning. Crucially, however, he does not do so simply by appealing to contemporary ομιλία (as does Epicurus at Hdt. 67), but makes an explicitly historical claim, stating that the Epicurean use of the term 'pleasure', far from being a recent development, is in fact in line with what has been that term's ordinary meaning for all Greeks from the beginning. NF 192 thus provides uniquely valuable evidence concerning the Epicurean attitude to the value of ordinary language. Diogenes' defense of the Epicurean use of the term 'pleasure' to refer to tranquillity combines the issues of colloquialism and language history, connecting what he claims to be the contemporary colloquial usage of 'pleasure' with what he claims to have been the ordinary meaning of the same term from the beginning."

There's not a full complete translation of 3 & 4 in the paper, but there's enough I think for me to puzzle a literal one out later.

Post by “Don” of July 3, 2022 at 11:11 AM

Okay, here's Metrodorus, Fragment 5:



I just found this, and it also references Cicero so this may be a known fragment already.

(PS. I see it also references Epicurus Fragment 68 which has some similar wording. So, Metrodorus's contribution isn't earthshaking but does appear to be reinforcing.)

Nonetheless, there's our old friend κατάστημα right there (using the alternative c for sigma: κατάστημα).

Using <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/02102.htm> as a source for a translation of Metrodorus: "Metrodorus, in his book *On the Source of Happiness in Ourselves being greater than that which arises from Objects*, says: 'What else is the good of the soul but the sound state of the flesh, and the sure hope of its continuance?'"

The Greek for Metrodorus's quoted material is:

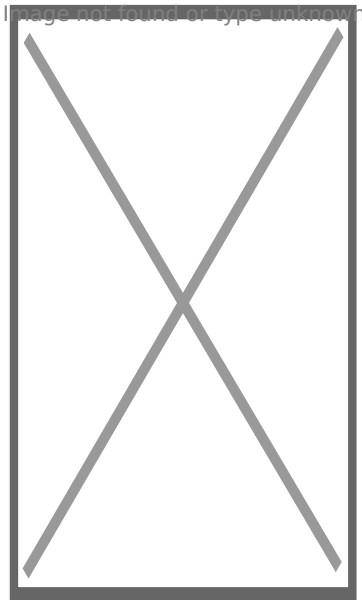
αγαθον, φησι ((he) says), ψυχης τι αλλο η το σαρκος ευσταθες καταστημα και το περι ταυτης πιστον ελπισμα.

Notes:

αγαθον ψυχης = "the good of the soul/psyche" Note also, is this "The Good" we've talked about elsewhere or just more like "for the benefit/good of the soul"?

το σαρκος ευσταθες καταστημα = "the sound state (katastema) of the flesh"

This is from



[Metrodori Epicurei Fragmenta collegit scriptoris incerti Epicurei Commentarium morale, subiecit Alfredus Koerte : Metrodorus, of Lampsacus, d. 277 B.C : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

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archive.org

Post by “Godfrey” of July 3, 2022 at 2:53 PM

[Don](#) for a 2000 year sidestep, does your interest in homeostasis come from reading Dopamine Nation? That book has been on my list for quite a while but I haven't got around to reading it.

Just curious. I don't want to derail this thread! Great research!

Post by “Don” of July 3, 2022 at 3:42 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Just curious. I don't want to derail this thread!

I sent you a conversation regarding the homeostasis topic so we don't derail 😊

And thanks! I'm enjoying the research 😊

Post by “Kalosyni” of July 4, 2022 at 12:56 PM

The closest think that comes to me regarding "homeostasis" is Vatican Saying 11 - "For most people, to be quiet is to be numb and to be active is to be frenzied." And so this is pointing at something which is neither.

Just like katastematic pleasure may be more highly valued for introverts, so too "homeostasis" may be more highly valued for introverts. Introverts are more sensitive to the internal feeling of the body.

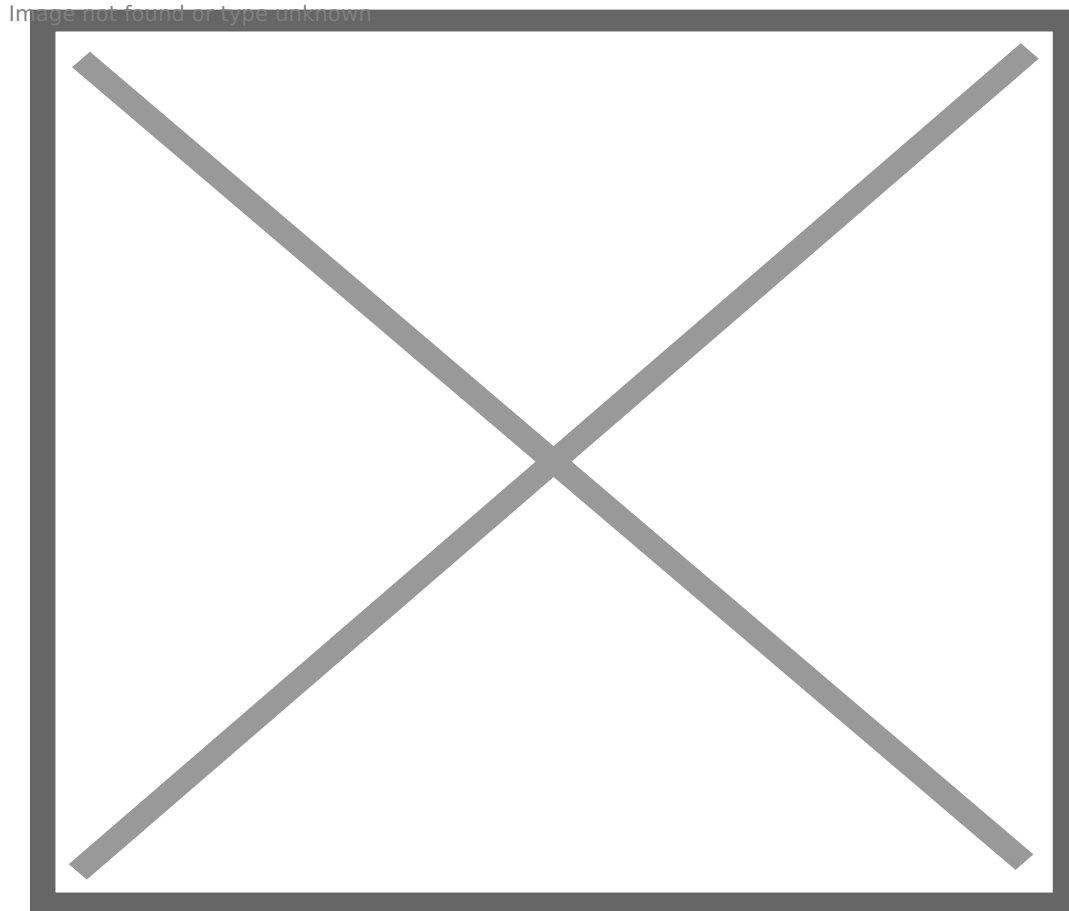
[Don](#) I don't remember if there is an article or discussion you may have posted some time ago on "homeostasis"? Or if you can post a link to an earlier discussion?

Post by “Don” of July 4, 2022 at 1:14 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

I don't remember if there is an article or discussion you may have posted some time ago on "homeostasis"? Or if you can post a link to an earlier discussion?

I've mentioned it several places. Here's a search:



[Search Results - Epicureanfriends.com](#)

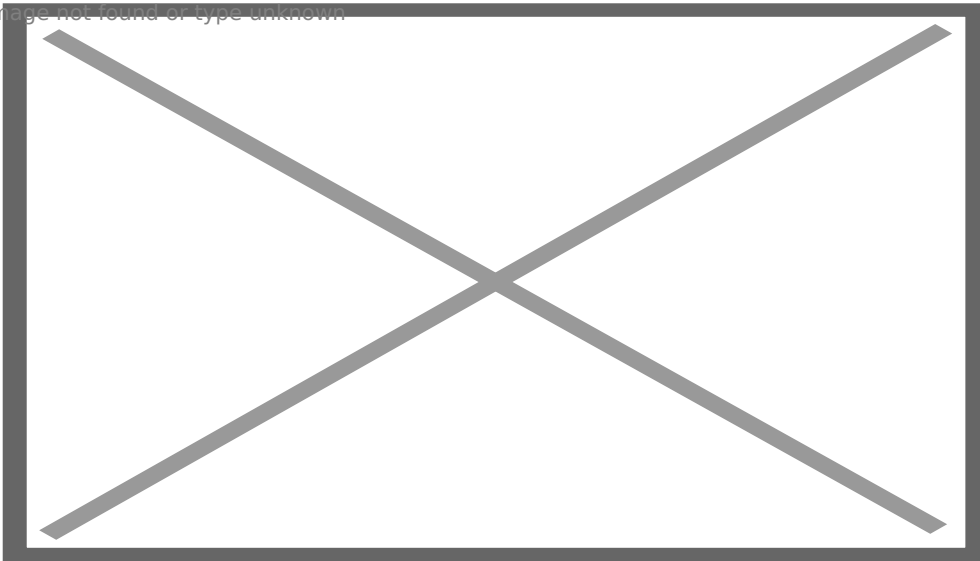
www.epicureanfriends.com

You'll see me mention Dr. Lisa Feldman Barrett and Dr. Anna Lembke in those search results.

Just so there's no confusion, homeostasis is not some idiosyncratic state that might appeal to introverts over extroverts. It is the well-functioning of one's body and mind when everything is in balance.

Here's the biological definition:

Image not found or type unknown



[Homeostasis \(article\) | Human body systems | Khan Academy](#)

Learn how organisms maintain homeostasis, or a stable internal environment.

www.khanacademy.org

As Khan says, homeostasis is "The tendency to maintain a stable, relatively constant internal environment."

Here's a PubMed paper:

Image not found or type unknown



[Homeostasis: The Underappreciated and Far Too Often Ignored Central Organizing Principle of Physiology - PubMed](#)

The grand challenge to physiology, as was first described in an essay published in the inaugural issue of *Frontiers in Physiology* in 2010, remains to integrate...

pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

"The health and vitality of the organism can be said to be the end result of homeostatic regulation. An understanding of normal physiology is not possible without an appreciation of this concept. Conversely, it follows that disruption of homeostatic mechanisms is what leads to disease, and effective therapy must be directed toward re-establishing these homeostatic conditions."

Homeostasis is not "mindfulness" or some "mystical" state, it is the foundational "health and vitality of the organism."

My take is becoming that this idea of biological homeostasis as the "health and vitality of the organism" is what Epicurus was referring to - generally - as *katastematic* pleasure. It is the underlying, foundational starting point of physical (*aponia*) and mental (*ataraxia*) health. If our body and mind are working properly and we are listening to our "feedback loops" of pleasure/pain, we can better *vary* our pleasure once we've achieved a homeostatic/*katastematic* foundation.

Post by "Cassius" of July 4, 2022 at 1:46 PM

My two cents is that I agree with the idea that Epicurus found pleasure in life itself and that helps explain his full attitude towards the availability of pleasure all the time.

Post by "Don" of July 4, 2022 at 4:46 PM

I wanted to address the title of Metrodorus's book that is cited by Clement of Alexandria.

The title in Greek is:

Περί του μείζονα είναι την παρ' ἡμᾶς αἰτίαν πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν τῆς ἐκ τῶν πραγμάτων

The "New Advent" English translation is:

On the Source of Happiness in Ourselves being greater than that which arises from Objects

I don't entirely agree with the translation choices made there, but they'll do well enough.

What I want to do is look at several key words that impact our current discussion on katastematic pleasure.

μειζονα = greater, larger (comparative degree of μεγας megas)

αίτιαν = (accusative singular) cause (translated above as "source" evidently)

- - την παρ' ήμας αίτιαν = the cause for us"

προς εϋδαιμονιαν = for eudaimonian (translated above (inadequately, IMHO) as "happiness"; personally I prefer "well-being" to connote or play on the eu + daimon origin of the word.)

πραγματων = (pragmaton, genitive plural of pragma). This is the important one.

Pragma has a number of definitions and connotations:

- deed, act, fact
- occurrence, matter, affair
- thing, concrete reality
- thing, creature
- thing of consequence or importance
- (in the plural) circumstances, affairs
- (in the plural, in bad sense) trouble, annoyance
- - της έκ των πραγματων "that which is from deeds/things/circumstances/etc."

Now, from Metrodorus's book, we get his quote asking "What else is the good of the soul but the sound state of the flesh, and the sure hope of its continuance?"

This is consistent with the title from what I can see. That title is saying that we can be more confident of "the hope of [the] continuance" of pleasure which arises within us than that which arises from deeds/things/circumstances/etc. This seems to me to be consistent with the emphasis on autarkeia (self-reliance) elsewhere in the texts and that we don't have to rely on outside circumstances for our pleasure. Of course, we can vary our pleasures with our deeds and circumstances! But the pleasure that arises from within ourselves - katastematic pleasure, namely aponia and ataraxia - is always near at hand. We have complete control over that whereas our circumstances are not always under our control due to chance and outside factors.

Additionally, one of the definitions of pragma in LSJ is "deed, act, the concrete of πράξις..."

Along those same lines, Πάθη (pathe) is something that happens to you, something that is experienced. LSJ: "what is done or happens to a person or thing, opp. πράξις (praxis)"

The pathe are pleasure and pain. In this definition, the pathe are opposed to praxis. We always have the pathe to rely on. I'm still mulling over the significance of this point, but I think there's a significance there, too.

Post by "Don" of July 9, 2022 at 10:39 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

The closest think that comes to me regarding "homeostasis" is Vatican Saying 11 - "For most people, to be quiet is to be numb and to be active is to be frenzied." And so this is pointing at something which is neither.

Here's some of my own commentary on [VS11](#).

[VS11](#) For most people, to be quiet is to be numb and to be active is to be frenzied.

τῶν πλείστων ἀνθρώπων τὸ μὲν ἡσυχάζον ναρκαῖ, τὸ δὲ κινούμενον λυτταῖ.

- τῶν πλείστων ἀνθρώπων (gen) the greatest number of people (i.e., the majority of people)
- ἡσυχάζω (hesykhazo) I. to be still, keep quiet, be at rest, Aesch.; ἡ ἀπορία τοῦ μὴ ἡσυχάζειν the difficulty of finding rest, Thuc.:—often in part., ἡσυχάζων προσμένω Soph.; ἡσυχάσσα by resting from war, Thuc.
- νάρκη I. numbness, deadness, Lat. torpor, Ar.
- κινέω (κινούμενον middle/passive participle?)
 - to set in motion, move, remove
 - (grammar) to inflect
 - to meddle
 - to change, innovate
 - to begin, cause
 - to urge on, stir on
 - to arouse, exasperate, anger, taunt, abuse
 - (passive) to be moved, to stir, to move
- λύσσα I. rage, fury, esp. martial rage, Il. 2. after Hom. raging madness, raving, frenzy, Trag. II. canine madness, rabies, Xen. λύσσα, αττιξ λύττα, ἡ

So an alternative translation by Don: For the majority of people, to be at rest is to be bored stiff; but to be active is to be raving like a rabid dog.

To me it seems to be saying there needs to be a balance or that stillness is important and that most people don't recognize this. Plus they're just running around to appear important or just simply to do something, they can't be alone with their own thoughts... they're not self-reliant.

Additional note: In light of the current discussion over multiple threads on *katastematic* and *kinetic* pleasures, I find the words ἡσυχάζον (hēsukhazōn) and κινούμενον (kinoumenon) VERY indicative of the senses of *katastematic* and *kinetic* (in fact, *kinoumenon* is directly related to that word in Greek). I find their juxtaposition here very interesting.

I also see his "for most people" directly implying "but not for us (Epicureans)". He is setting up a contrast with the masses against the Epicureans, and, from my reading here, the Epicureans *value* ἡσυχάζον and κινούμενον and the Epicureans do NOT see them as numbness and "raving like a rabid dog," respectively.

In fact, *hesykhias* shows up in a [PD14](#).

[PD14](#) . "Although security on a human level is achieved up to a point by a power to resist and by prosperity, the security afforded by inner peace and withdrawing from the crowd is the purest." White (2021)

Τῆς ἀσφαλείας τῆς ἐξ ἀνθρώπων γενομένης μέχρι τινὸς δυνάμει τινὶ ἐξερευσιτικῇ καὶ εὐπορίᾳ εἰλικρινεστάτη γίνεται ἢ ἐκ τῆς ἡσυχίας καὶ ἐκχωρήσεως τῶν πολλῶν ἀσφάλεια.

+ ἡσυχίας (*hesykhias*) "peace; silence, stillness"

+ + ἐκχωρεύω (*ekkhoreuo*) "to break out (ἐκ-) of the chorus (χορεύω)"

I find reading the ἡσυχάζον in [VS11](#) in light of the ἡσυχίας in [PD14](#) , and vice versa, to be intriguing.

Post by "Don" of July 9, 2022 at 11:26 PM

[U416]

Olympiodorus the Younger, Commentary on Plato's "[Philebus](#)," [p. 274 Stallb.]: Epicurus, referring to natural pleasure, says that it is *katastematic*.

Philo of Alexandria, Allegory of the Law, III.54, t. I [p. 118 Mang.]: ... to those who say that pleasure is katastematic.

Post by “Don” of July 10, 2022 at 12:06 AM

I knew I'd hit a nerve with Cassius on this whole katastematic/kinetic topic. I'm still digging through all the posts from today, and I'll have to go back and read [Nikolsky](#), G&T (not gin and tonic, unfortunately), et al. I'll have more to say over the next few days. Plus I'm digging into the original texts as well. *That's* the most important task in my opinion.

For the record, however, there is no doubt that Epicurus divided up pleasures into at least 2 different but related kinds. No matter what, we have to account for:

DL X.136. ὁ δ' Ἐπίκουρος ἐν τῷ Περὶ αἰρέσεων οὕτω λέγει: "ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀταραξία καὶ ἀπονία καταστηματικά εἰσιν ἡδοναί: ἡ δὲ χαρὰ καὶ ἡ εὐφροσύνη κατὰ κίνησιν ἐνεργεῖα βλέπονται."

And Epicurus, in his *On Choices*, says this, "For freedom from disturbance ("ataraxia") and freedom from suffering ("aponia") are katastematic pleasures, and joy and delight are viewed as kinetic and active." (trans. Inwood & Gerson)

Epicurus is quoted, directly dividing pleasures into at least 2 katastematic ones and at least 2 kinetic/active ones. He made the distinction. He used the terms. Note, however, that he is NOT quoted as putting them in a hierarchy that I can see, but the words are there.

Plus this is the passage directly before Epicurus's *On Choices* quote:

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."

Metrodorus's quote is:

νοουμένης δὲ ἡδονῆς τῆς τε κατὰ κίνησιν καὶ τῆς καταστηματικῆς.

Right there, again, is κίνησιν (kinēsin) and

καταστηματικῆς (katastēmatikēs).

Metrodorus is also quoted as saying (I'm paraphrasing, don't have it in front of me) that we can be more confident of the pleasures arising from states than from those of objects or activities outside of ourselves. To me, this points directly to the katastematic/kinetic debate plus seems to point to the importance of autarkeia/self-reliance.

So, even if by some chance Epicurus and Metrodorus were responding to criticism from another philosopher (and I don't think they were, but for the sake of conjecture), the two katastematic quotes show both Epicurus and Metrodorus accepted the terms and the categories as useful. We have to understand why, taking into account:

- All pleasure is good.
- The feelings are two: pleasure and pain.

Also for the record, I don't accept, as some academic commentators appear to, that ataraxia and aponia are "negative" or "not sensed". That makes no sense to me just because there's an a- "un-" prefix on the words. One can take pleasure in being in a state one can describe as being "undisturbed" or in a state one can describe as "pain-free." I simply don't accept that ataraxia and aponia are not "sensed."

Post by “Godfrey” of July 10, 2022 at 1:26 AM

Thanks for that compilation [Don](#) !

[Quote from Don](#)

One can take pleasure in being in a state one can describe as being "undisturbed" or in a state one can describe as "pain-free." I simply don't accept that ataraxia and aponia are not "sensed."

I tend to agree with this statement. I think it's a slippery slope from "not sensed" to "neutral state". But I would say that it's a different quality of pleasure: quieter, more subtle.

Post by “Don” of July 10, 2022 at 7:00 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

I would say that it's a different quality of pleasure: quieter, more subtle

ἡσυχία (hēsychia) "Stillness, rest, quiet" ([see my other post](#) where Epicurus uses this exact word).

Trivia: Hesychia was also "In Greek mythology, either the daemon personification of silence, a handmaiden of the god of sleep, Hypnos; or a mortal daughter of Thespius."

Post by "Cassius" of July 10, 2022 at 7:02 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

For the record, however, there is no doubt that Epicurus divided up pleasures into at least 2 different but related kinds. No matter what, we have to account for:

Unfortunately i cannot agree even with this statement. There is not doubt that Diogenes Laertius makes the assertion that that K/K distinction was significant to Epicurus, but there is strong reason to believe that Diogenes Laertius is wrong. And to "account for" the references that are cited is exactly what Gosling and Taylor and [Nikolsky](#) go through in great detail. The issue is not whether DL said what he said, but whether DL was right in saying it, and that's the crux of the problem.

We also know that for example Epicurus divided things into "natural and necessary," and that that distinction was significant to be recorded several places very clearly, including the [principal doctrines](#), the letter to Menoecus, and the vatican sayings

Whatever Epicurus may have thought about K/K, those thoughts were not significant enough to make it into those key documents. Here again, references to ataraxia and aponia are not admitted to be relevant to any kind of K/K distinction. The K/K distinction simply does not appear when the key aspect of pleasure as the good is discussed in the main places where pleasure is addressed.

And the reason why this is worth getting to the bottom of is what we see happening here - what is hardly more than a footnote in DL assumes significance out of all proportion to anything else, and comes to be seized on so as to take the place of the core original point about pleasure in the first place.

That's a large part of the reason Cicero seized on it -- to use as a battering ram to make the whole discussion of pleasure seem nonsensical.

Post by "Cassius" of July 10, 2022 at 7:17 AM

ABSTRACT

The paper deals with the question of the attribution to Epicurus of the classification of pleasures into 'kinetic' and 'static'. This classification, usually regarded as authentic, confronts us with a number of problems and contradictions. Besides, it is only mentioned in a few sources that are not the most reliable. Following Gosling and Taylor, I believe that the authenticity of the classification may be called in question.

The analysis of the ancient evidence concerning Epicurus' concept of pleasure is made according to the following principle: first, I consider the sources that do not mention the distinction between 'kinetic' and 'static' pleasures, and only then do I compare them with the other group of texts which comprises reports by Cicero, Diogenes Laertius and Athenaeus. From the former group of texts there emerges a concept of pleasure as a single and not twofold notion, while such terms as 'motion' and 'state' describe not two different phenomena but only two characteristics of the same phenomenon. On the other hand, the reports comprising the latter group appear to derive from one and the same doxographical tradition, and to be connected with the classification of ethical doctrines put forward by the Middle Academy and known as the *divisio Carneadea*. In conclusion, I argue that the idea of Epicurus' classification of pleasures is based on a misinterpretation of Epicurus' concept in Academic doxography, which tended to contrapose it to doctrines of other schools, above all to the Cyrenaics' views.

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The real issue here comes down to whether

(1) the term "Pleasure" as the goal of life needs to be replaced with "katastematic pleasure" as Wikipedia's commentators would do, or

(2) the term "Pleasure" as the goal of life is perfectly adequate, but needs to be stated clearly to include ALL pleasurable aspects of life of any kind, mental or physical, resting or active, necessary or unnecessary, or any other categories one wants to come up with.

It's when the categories (which allow us to focus on certain aspects of pleasure that allow us to focus on what is important to us at a particular moment) take over the entire discussion that the cart gets before the horse. I think this is directly analogous to the issue with "virtue" -- so long as we understand "virtue" in its proper role of a thing which is valuable for producing pleasure, then "virtue" is a valuable thing to talk about. It's when "virtue" becomes the goal in

and of itself that the problem arises.

Here, 'katastematic pleasure,' which is at most a single category of the much wider term "pleasure" threatens to take over the whole field, and crowds out a proper understanding that it is just one among many pleasures, not by any means the ultimate or highest or only significant pleasure to aim for.

Post by "Don" of July 10, 2022 at 7:49 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Unfortunately i cannot agree even with this statement.

It sincerely confuses me as to how you or anyone can say that. It's not Diogenes Laertius (DL) "asserting" this or even paraphrasing it. He's quoting Epicurus's *On Choices* and Metrodorus's *Timocrates*. I'll go back and read Gosling and Taylor and [Nikolsky](#), of course, to refresh my memory of their arguments, but the ancient booktitles are there, and I think *that* has to be accounted for. If we start saying, "Oh, Epicurus didn't really write that in a book with that title!" we're on a Skeptical slippery slope as to what few ancient texts we have. The flip side of this is Cicero and his whole creation of the characters Villeius and Torquatus and being able to take creative liberties with their dialogue. Yes, we can be a little more skeptical and critical of his work. But DL makes a point of basically saying, "I'm not making this up. Here are their exact words from these books."

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Whatever Epicurus may have thought about K/K, those thoughts were not significant enough to make it into those key documents.

To that, I'd say "Bingo!" According to *On Choices* and other quoted material, Epicurus used the words katastematic and kinetic. Yes, I will continue to "assert" that. But *maybe* they weren't central to his philosophy because THEY'RE BOTH PLEASURES. He didn't see the need to belabor the point. He didn't put them in a hierarchy. He recognized that, sure, there are different kinds of pleasure. In fact, there are two general "species." But his philosophy stood on the assertion that PLEASURE is the Good to which everything else points. He then needed to demonstrate *how* to live pleasurably by making choices and rejections, etc. My take on the *On Choices* quote from Epicurus is (and I'll go ciceronian and put dialogue in his mouth):

Epicurus: "Sure, I'll agree with the general idea that there are katastematic and kinetic pleasures, but the important thing is that they're *both* pleasurable! You also have two hands. Do you lift heavy stones with only one hand? Of course not! In the same way, to have a pleasurable life you need to consider all pleasures as available to you, and choose among all pleasures prudently, making choices and rejections among them. There is a time for stillness, there is a time for dancing."

It's not Epicurus saying katastematic pleasures are the *only* Good or the *only* Telos, it's the ancient and modern commentators trying to paint him into a Platonic or Aristotelean corner. I'm seeing this through a *Princess Bride* lens with Epicurus saying to his critics and the academics on the word "katastematic": "[I don't think it means what you think it means.](#)"

[Quote from Cassius](#)

what is hardly more than a footnote in DL assumes significance out of all proportion to anything else, and comes to be seized on so as to take the place of the core original point about pleasure in the first place.

Oh my, look at that. I think we might actually agree on that point.

Post by "Don" of July 10, 2022 at 8:47 AM

In fact, let me copy the relevant passage from DLX.136 ([emphasis added](#)) 😞

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 (καταστηματικῆν), but only that which consists in motion (κινήσει). 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 (and Avoidance)* 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."

So, what is DL "asserting" here?

- Cyrenaics only include kinetic pleasures under their definition of pleasure.
- Epicurus includes BOTH kinetic and katastematic in his definition.
- Where does Epicurus say BOTH pleasures are included? In the following works:
 - *On Choice and Avoidance*
 - *On the Ethical End*
 - the first book of his work *On Human Life*
 - the epistle to his philosopher friends in Mytilene
- Plus Metrodorus says both kinetic and katastematic pleasures are included in the Epicurean definition of Pleasure in *Timocrates*.
- Plus Diogenes (of Tarsus) says this in the seventeenth book of his *Epilecta*

There's no hierarchy asserted here. And the passage goes out of its way to say BOTH kinetic and katastematic pleasures are *included* in the Epicurean definition of pleasure in contrast to the Cyrenaics. And it cites *six* works that specifically make this point.

That's the kind of thing that needs to be accounted for: What's actually stated in the text.

PS. I should have also added that in addition to katastematic and kinetic pleasures, DL writes that Epicurus includes BOTH "pleasure of mind as well as of body." The Cyrenaics only included physical pleasure. So, those textual citations that DL cites appear to emphasize Epicurus included ALL pleasures: katastematic and kinetic, mental and physical, etc.

PPS. I'm wondering if Epicurus equated katastematic with mental and kinetic with physical? I'm not advocating that (yet), just raising the question.

Post by "Cassius" of July 10, 2022 at 9:34 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

To that, I'd say "Bingo!" According to *On Choices* and other quoted material, Epicurus used the words katastematic and kinetic. Yes, I will continue to "assert" that. But *maybe* they weren't central to his philosophy because THEY'RE BOTH PLEASURES. He didn't see the need to belabor the point. He didn't put them in a hierarchy. He recognized that, sure, there are different kinds of pleasure. In fact, there are two general "species." But his philosophy stood on the assertion that PLEASURE is the Good to which everything else points. He then needed to demonstrate *how* to live pleasurably by making choices and rejections, etc. My take on the *On Choices* quote from Epicurus is (and I'll go ciceronian and put dialogue in his mouth):

Epicurus: "Sure, I'll agree with the general idea that there are katastematic and kinetic pleasures, but the important thing is that they're *both* pleasurable! You also have two hands. Do you lift heavy stones with only one hand? Of course not! In the same way, to have a pleasurable life you need to consider all pleasures as available to you, and choose among all pleasures prudently, making choices and rejections among them. There is a time for stillness, there is a time for dancing."

This is where you and I completely agree. The issue is not the direction you are going, the issue is that the direction the "Wikipedia Worldview" of Epicurus is going, which (if accepted) would make Epicurean philosophy completely unacceptable to most of the world, especially (in Cicero's words) "the Senate" and "the Camp."

If we take the wider view of pleasure on which both you and I agree, then these difficulties dissolve and Epicurean philosophy is seen to be completely and vitally relevant to everyone in every aspect of life, *including* "the Senate and the camp."

[Quote from Don](#)

That's the kind of thing that needs to be accounted for: What's actually stated in the text.

And I grant you it takes effort to get through the lengthy and detailed discussions in Gosling and Taylor and [Nikolsky](#) but they WILL help on this issue.

Post by "Don" of July 10, 2022 at 9:45 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

And I grant you it takes effort to get through the lengthy and detailed discussions in Gosling and Taylor and [Nikolsky](#) but they WILL help on this issue.

Before I dig into them again:

A) Do they accept that Epicurus used the terms katastematic and kinetic, but those terms have been given undue importance by ancient and modern commentators?

B) Do they assert that Epicurus never used the words?

If B, I have strong objections to that argument.

Post by "Cassius" of July 10, 2022 at 11:10 AM

1 - Unfortunately there is really no way for me to summarize their argument satisfactorily, because they dive deep into all the specific cites you are raising above. But I think the general answers are:

A -- YES - that is their ultimate position

B -- NO - In fact their chapter is right after the main chapter on Epicurus.

2 - Despite what might appear to some that this discussion is distracting or unnecessary, I realized in recording the podcast this morning that pursuing the details on difficult topics can be very motivational. I think DEWitt makes the comment that Epicurean philosophy flourished while it was the topic of controversy, and died away when people stopped arguing about it. "Arguing about it" is a very important part of keeping it alive / bringing it back.

Post by "Cassius" of July 10, 2022 at 11:48 AM

In fact Don I suspect that after you read them you are going to conclude that their conclusions actually are consistent with yours.

The issue is much more on the level of "perspective" than it is on the details of ways that pleasure can be usefully discussed.

My best estimate of why this issue is significant is that:

- some people focus on the subject as a matter of considering details of types of pleasure, which is useful in itself, yes, but

- some people are focusing on the "polemical" aspect of the debate, in certain aspects of the details can be taken out of context to make it appear that Epicurus was being inconsistent, illogical, impractical, and useless. That's what Cicero was doing in general - attacking Epicurus - and so from the perspective of starting with the basics before moving into the details, these people see that these details can be used as a way to undermine the big picture. The examples from wikipedia are what we face today but it's interesting to note that [Nikolsky](#) published his paper in 2001 and thought it accurate to say:

*"Practically every modern survey of the Epicurean conception of pleasure **begins** by saying that Epicurus' concept of pleasure was twofold: in the opinion of researchers, Epicurus distinguished two kinds of pleasure — a 'static' pleasure or a pleasure 'in a state of rest' and a*

'kinetic' pleasure or a pleasure 'in motion.'"

And G&T Published in 1981 and saw the same issue then.

The problem stretches much further back than that too.

Post by “Cassius” of July 10, 2022 at 12:04 PM

I had a chance to re-read the G&T and [Nikolsky](#) articles over the last 24 hours and one comment that I think is worth making is this:

It is DEFINITELY important to Epicurus to have a sweeping definition of pleasure that includes basically any feeling of any kind that a person feels in any way. That means not only the "exuberant" activities like "sex, drugs, and rock and roll" but also all feels which are conscious in any way of the "smooth functioning" of the organism. This i take to be the meaning of Torquatus' example as to why the hand needs nothing more, because it is not in pain -- it is smoothly functioning, which is itself pleasurable.

It's this wide scope and sweep of the word "pleasure" that is important, because it is fundamental objection to Pleasure as the guide goal to observe that we don't always have the ability to pursue "sex, drugs, and rock and roll." Sometimes in life about all we can do, or should do, is calmly sit still and reflect on things that are mentally pleasurable to think about.

Those "quiet times" have to fall under the term "pleasure" in order for "pleasure" to be available to everyone everywhere except in the most extremely difficult of conditions -- and in those, where no pleasure of any kind is available or to be hoped for, that's where you can "exit the stage when the play ceases to please us.

But what I read in G&T and [Nikolsky](#) is pointing up that Epicurus' primary objective was to establish "Pleasure" as the guide/goal, and for that reason he (legitimately) wanted to include each and every and all experience of smooth functioning as under the umbrella of pleasure.

It's therefore a mistake polemically to deprecate any kind of pleasure, "static" or "active", because each have the place and time and appropriateness in life and an appreciation for ALL of them, working together as team, that's necessary in order to uphold "Pleasure" as the ultimate end rather than "virtue" or "godliness" or the other competitors for the title of "highest good."

Post by “Godfrey” of July 10, 2022 at 3:59 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

pursuing the details on difficult topics can be very motivational.

Yes, this is a very useful discussion. Painful at times but great for getting clarity. Thanks [Cassius](#) and [Don](#) !

[Quote from Cassius](#)

We also know that for example Epicurus divided things into "natural and necessary," and that that distinction was significant to be recorded several places very clearly, including the [principal doctrines](#), the letter to Menoeceus, and the vatican sayings

[Quote from Don](#)

To that, I'd say "Bingo!" According to On Choices and other quoted material, Epicurus used the words *katastematic* and *kinetic*. Yes, I will continue to "assert" that. But *maybe* they weren't central to his philosophy because THEY'RE BOTH PLEASURES. He didn't see the need to belabor the point.

This discussion has me thinking further about pleasures v desires. Whether with nefarious intent or through misunderstanding, it seems to me that the Platonic/Ciceronian treatment conflates and confuses pleasure with desire, and that this is a major cause of the *katastematic-kinetic* brouhaha.

Don's quote seems to hit on a key: of course there are different types of pleasure, but they're all pleasure. And pleasure is the goal, not any particular type of pleasure. More specifically, the *experience of the feeling which is pleasure* is the goal (or guide, if you prefer).

As to Cassius' quote, Epicurus clearly has a division of "things into natural and necessary". Correct me if I'm missing something, but I've never found a connection between *pleasure* and *natural and necessary* in any of the writings of Epicurus. The connection that he consistently makes, in all cases (at least in translation) is between natural and necessary and *desires*. In the PDs it's between desires and *pains*. But never pleasures.

Why? My thinking is that pleasure is typically a result. Desires are something that we can tangibly work with. Epicurus' concern is with describing *practice*, with things anybody can do to achieve pleasure. He doesn't care what type of pleasure you achieve, he's concerned with *how* you go about achieving pleasure. And to him, you do this by working with your desires and with your pains. If you understand your desires, you will be more effective at achieving pleasure. As you minimize your various pains, these will by definition be replaced with pleasure. But you must always remember that your guide and goal is pleasure. Understanding desires and

removing pains are only tools for pursuing pleasure. We can also pursue various pleasures for pure enjoyment, but for an effective practice to achieve lasting pleasure he focused on working with desires and on things which cause pain.

To me, this is the important concern for a practicing Epicurean. And the Golden Ones and The Cow have done a fine job of diverting the focus to sorting out fancy pleasures. But since they have been so successful, it's useful for us to untangle the mess that they've created.

Post by “Don” of July 10, 2022 at 4:42 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Correct me if I'm missing something, but I've never found a connection between pleasure and natural and necessary in any of the writings of Epicurus. The connection that he consistently makes, in all cases (at least in translation) is between natural and necessary and desires. In the PDs it's between desires and pains. But never pleasures.

You are correct. The word used is επιθυμία (epithymia "desire, yearning, longing; passion") not ηδονή (hedone)

Post by “Don” of July 10, 2022 at 4:44 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

My thinking is that pleasure is typically a result. Desires are something that we can tangibly work with. Epicurus' concern is with describing practice, with things anybody can do to achieve pleasure. He doesn't care what type of pleasure you achieve, he's concerned with how you go about achieving pleasure. And to him, you do this by working with your desires and with your pains. If you understand your desires, you will be more effective at achieving pleasure. As you minimize your various pains, these will by definition be replaced with pleasure. But you must always remember that your guide and goal is pleasure. Understanding desires and removing pains are only tools for pursuing pleasure. We can also pursue various pleasures for pure enjoyment, but for an effective practice to achieve lasting pleasure he focused on working with desires and on things which cause pain.

Brilliant! 😊 👍 👍

Post by “Cassius” of July 11, 2022 at 7:50 AM

I wake up this morning thinking about this, which is not a response to present interlocutors but to the Wikipedia-Epicureans.

If there is really one major primary and unyielding position I have on the "katastematic / kinetic" pleasure issue, it comes down to this:

I am going to presume that the goal of this website and at least most of our joint work here is to make Epicurean philosophy understandable and practical to a new generation of people. Given that presumption, and that the presumption that they aren't minting too many new people whose first language is ancient Greek, then it is imperative that the word "katastematic" not be left in Greek, but be translated into plain English. "Kinetic" needs the same treatment, but at least given our modern usage of the word "kinetic, that word is not so ambiguous and amorphous. I suspect what we are reading into it given the English version is not faithful to what was really meant philosophically by "kinetic," because "Kinetic" today has an implication of "frenzy" which is not positive. But at least "kinetic" is not grossly useless and meaningless and amorphous like "katastematic."

So what are we REALLY talking about in this issue?

Did Epicurus hold that the "healthy functioning of the organism" is a pleasure? HECK YES!

Did Epicurus hold that a background sense of calmness and tranquility is also a pleasure? HECK YES!

Did Epicurus hold that a confident continuation of our present state of pleasure is also a pleasure? HECK YES!

Did Epicurus hold that our ideal state of functioning to be filling our experience pleasures and thereby eliminating from our experience all pains? HECK YES!

And I suspect that we could go on and on, as long as we are clear what we are talking about in our native language.....

However for purposes of explaining Epicurus to other people and even most of us understanding it for ourselves, we need to be clear on what Epicurus did not do:

Did Epicurus hold that he had come up with a semi-mystical concept so subtle and so exotic that no one but a Greek uttering the incantation "katastematic" could understand what he was talking about? HECK NO!

Did Epicurus ever hint that "katastematic" pleasure, even when translated into understandable terms, was a special type of "fancy pleasure" (Elayne's term) which supercedes and transcends all other types of pleasure and is the true goal of life? HECK NO!

It's really only when we constantly talk about a word that no one today truly knows all the shades of (since we are not ancient Greeks) that we find the divide unbridgeable. Explain what is meant in clear terms and we can then agree where possible and reduce the disagreements to clearly defined issues, but until we explain in clear English terms what we are talking about, we just spin our wheels endlessly.

No one here at EpicureanFriends is guilty of what I am complaining about, and just to be super-clear I am 100% confident of the motives of everyone in this present conversation. But the Wikipedia-world is dominated by people who are perpetuating just this kind of confusing, and they are doing it because they will not accede to "PLEASURE" being what Epicurus held to be the goal and guide of life. And getting back to the opening premise, if the goal of the website here is to help explain Epicurus to a new generation of people, then we have to get ready to stand up to the Wikipedia-mindset on this issue.

Post by "Kalosyni" of July 11, 2022 at 9:12 AM

There is so much good stuff coming up here in this thread, yet it feels just beyond my ability to adequately synthesize. Thank you Don for your work on translation, and Godfrey you added some good stuff too.

And Cassius thank you for holding the line and your explanation in the above post. I would add that your label of the "Wikipedia-Epicureans" would refer to the "tranquility-as-the-goal-Epicureans". You continue to uphold the "fullness-of-pleasure-Epicureans" as the best way to bring forward the philosophy to the next generation -- and which is why I came onto this forum.

I think there are many layers to all this, such as if someone is hoping for a therapeutic benefit from Epicureanism -- and yes I confess that is me!

Until we create a kind of "Epicurean bible" we will continue to have these discussions and it will be difficult to bring the philosophy to the next generation.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

So what are we REALLY talking about in this issue?

Did Epicurus hold that the "healthy functioning of the organism" is a pleasure? HECK YES!

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Did Epicurus hold that a confident continuation of our present state of pleasure is also a pleasure? HECK YES!

Did Epicurus hold that our ideal state of functioning to be filling our experience pleasures and thereby eliminating from our experience all pains? HECK YES!

This is the kind of stuff that needs to go into a book (together with Epicurus' writings).

And I agree on not using the word "katastematic".

Post by “Don” of July 11, 2022 at 9:34 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

I would add that your label of the "Wikipedia-Epicureans" would refer to the "tranquility-as-the-goal-Epicureans".

Exactly. Wikipedia editors (of which I am one and anyone else can be, too!) are, for the most part, entering third-party information that should be sourced. There is nothing - except time - stopping any of us or anyone else from entering information, citations, and references to [Nikolsky](#), G&T, Wenham, DeWitt, Sedley, the sun-size paper author I forget their name, et al. to Epicurus-related articles on Wikipedia.

(Unless someone would like to share an experience that didn't go well in the past? Even so, the opportunity still exists.)

Post by “Kalosyni” of July 11, 2022 at 10:13 AM

I just found this, and it looks like a worthwhile read, and may be good for those who want a clear presentation of things -- Chapter 7 -- starts with a very clear introduction and then at about 5 pages into it, goes into a comparison of kinetic/kastastematic. I didn't get very far into it, so not sure what his full take on Epicureanism is. (Is this already referenced somewhere on the forum?)

"Pleasure in Ancient Greek Philosophy" by David Wolfsdorf

<https://sites.unimi.it/zucchi/NuoviFile/Wolsdorf12.pdf>

Post by “Kalosyni” of July 11, 2022 at 11:33 AM

btw -- Cassius, it may be tempting to want to "throw the baby out with the bathwater" on this writing by Wolfsdorf, but there still could be something helpful in it.

Post by “Cassius” of July 11, 2022 at 11:54 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

And I agree on not using the word "kastastematic"

That would be a wrong conclusion to draw from my rant. 😊

Ironically it is essential to use the word at proper times and contexts, because otherwise there will be no way to unwind the distortions Of two thousand years.

So I am not saying that we should never use the word, just that we should be clear how we are using it, and maybe above all else be considerate of when and where and how we use it, because virtually no one who is not a professional philosopher will have any clue what it means. Overuse of untranslated words can serve in talking to normal people as a barrier to the understanding of what should be and is a very simple philosophy that is not difficult at all to explain:

- There is no supernatural realm and no meddling God or gods.
- There is no heaven and hell and no existence after death.

- There is no fate and you are not a billiard ball.
- There is no absolute right / wrong / sin/ evil / good / virtue / depravity.
- Nature gave us only pleasure and pain as guides for us to make decisions on how to live.
- Do your best to intelligently maximize the pleasure and minimize pain in your life because you only live once.

I suppose one subtitle for this forum ought to be borrowed from Dewitts article: "[Philosophy For the Millions!](#)"

Post by “Godfrey” of July 11, 2022 at 2:53 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

- There is no supernatural realm and no meddling God or gods.
- There is no heaven and hell and no existence after death.
- There is no fate and you are not a billiard ball.
- There is no absolute right / wrong / sin/ evil / good / virtue / depravity.
- Nature gave us only pleasure and pain as guides for us to make decisions on how to live.
- Do your best to intelligently maximize the pleasure and minimize pain in your life because you only live once.

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Also something along the lines of "perception/sensations are our primary means of understanding. Reason can only be an effective tool in evaluating information that the senses provide: it cannot provide correct information about the world if it seeks to undermine the senses."

Post by “Cassius” of July 11, 2022 at 3:34 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Also something along the lines of "perception/sensations"

Yes it always seems there is more to add, and it's always a fun and productive exercise to think about what else needs to be made clear "up front" to introduce someone to Epicurus.

But no matter how long I think about it I can't figure out an appropriate occasion to say "You know all the basic stuff I told you about pleasure? You can now put that out of your mind because what I really want you to pursue is this Greek word that I can't really translate for you exactly into English but it sounds like "catatonic."



Post by "Cassius" of July 11, 2022 at 3:56 PM

You know there's another aspect of this discussion that's relevant to the presentation of Epicurean philosophy to "normal people" and we probably ought to consider it now too:

Quote

When, therefore, we maintain that pleasure is the end, we do not mean the pleasures of profligates and those that consist in sensuality, as is supposed by some who are either ignorant or disagree with us or do not understand, but freedom from pain in the body and from trouble in the mind. For it is not continuous drinkings and revelings, nor the satisfaction of lusts, nor the enjoyment of fish and other luxuries of the wealthy table, which produce a pleasant life, but sober reasoning, searching out the motives for all choice and avoidance, and banishing mere opinions, to which are due the greatest disturbance of the spirit. Of all this the beginning and the greatest good is prudence. Wherefore prudence is a more precious thing even than philosophy: for from prudence are sprung all the other virtues, and it teaches us that it is not possible to live pleasantly without living prudently and honorably and justly, (nor, again, to live a life of prudence, honor, and justice) without living pleasantly. For the virtues are by nature bound up with the pleasant life, and the pleasant life is inseparable from them. For indeed who, think you, is a better man than he who holds reverent opinions concerning the gods, and is at all times free from fear of death, and has reasoned out the end ordained by nature? He understands that the limit of good things is easy to fulfill and easy to attain, whereas the course of ills is either short in time or slight in pain; he

laughs at (destiny), whom some have introduced as the mistress of all things.

Does this mean that Epicurus has said (elsewhere) that he wouldn't know what the good is without the pleasures of sex and other activities which we'd all agree to be very "active" in nature, but that now that he knows what the good is he's going to throw them all out and live as "passively" and "quietly" as possible? That's the way I see this passage being interpreted all the time (again referring to the "modern commentator" world in general, not here).

To me, readings of that phrase that are consistent with the whole of the philosophy, and with the clear statement that he wouldn't know the good without active and indeed joy/delight/exuberant pleasures, is something like this:

"I've told you that "Pleasure" is the goal of life, but note that I have not told you which pleasures to pursue, and I have not told you that having sex 24/7 or having one drink after another 24/7 or partying 24/7 is the ultimate goal of life. If you do those things, any normal person in normal circumstances is going to destroy their lives and suffer much more pain that they will conclude is far worse than the pleasures they gained. What I am telling you is that the best you can do in life is to pursue pleasure prudently. Yes you should pursue the pleasures that allowed me to see what the good is, but pursue them in an intelligent (like I did) so that you don't run yourself into an early grave from all the partying. And when I say pursue those pleasures prudently, I don't mean abstain from them totally, or live in a cave, because the man who engages in too much frugality is making just as bad a mistake as the man who indulges in excess. You can always remember what the goal looks like by this mental exercise: "Let us imagine a man living in the continuous enjoyment of numerous and vivid pleasures alike of body and of mind, undisturbed either by the presence or by the prospect of pain. What possible state of existence could we describe as being more excellent or more desirable? One so situated must possess in the first place a strength of mind that is proof against all fear of death or of pain; he will know that death means complete unconsciousness, and that pain is generally light if long and short if strong, so that its intensity is compensated by brief duration and its continuance by diminishing severity. Let such a man moreover have no dread of any supernatural power; let him never suffer the pleasures of the past to fade away, but constantly renew their enjoyment in recollection, and his lot will be one which will not admit of further improvement."

Post by "Godfrey" of July 11, 2022 at 5:45 PM

If Liebersohn was correct in his assertions (in his paper on Kinetic-katastematic pleasure) that the Letter to Menoikos was written around 296 or 295 BCE and that it was written for people new to the philosophy, does this have any relevance in placing LM in relation to other passages

on pleasure? More or less developed due to being written when he was older or younger? More broad brushed for a newbie reader? Or are the contexts of the other passages too vague to make any reasonable assumptions?

Post by “Cassius” of July 11, 2022 at 6:40 PM

Great questions Godfrey. No doubt there are going to be differences in emphasis due to who he is talking to and at what stage of life. However I don't think these different things we are discussing are ultimately contradictory -- I think that they all can be reconciled quite well if one just takes a very expansive and sweeping definition of the word "Pleasure" and realizes that all qualifications and types of pleasure are going to come UNDER the umbrella of the main term.

And I do think that's an important point -- I think the motivation of the "Wikipedians" is to reduce the types of pleasure to only those which are "approved" and that makes way for Platonic / Aristotelian categorization into "better or worse" pleasures. And in fact we all do have personal preferences that determine how we personally weight (feel) pleasures and pains, but given that there is no god, no fate, no hard determinism, those are personal choices and not philosophical grounded. We as philosophers aren't gods and there aren't Platonic ideals and we can describe our thoughts to other people, but we can't make them "feel" the way that we do ourselves. The only ranking that works philosophically is that ALL pleasures are desirable / good, it's only that in certain contexts some pleasures cost more in pain than they are worth to the individual involved. If you remember that the ultimate term is Pleasure and that all the different feelings just have to be sorted out personally according to our personal feelings, then you're fine. But if you arrogate to yourself the right to tell everyone that your particular ranking is the "noble" or "worthy" or "divine" one, then you've become a priest and standing in the shoes of the type of supernatural god that we believe does not exist.

Post by “Don” of July 11, 2022 at 11:36 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I think the motivation of the "Wikipedians" is to reduce the types of pleasure to only those which are "approved" and that makes way for Platonic / Aristotelian categorization into "better or worse" pleasures.

I'm going to again stress that we're not dealing with a monolithic authoritarian editorial board of "Wikipedians." Each and every one of us has the ability to sign up for a free account and add content. Whether that's just External Links to pertinent papers on JSTOR or Academia or books, or actually adding prose edits in articles ***and backing them up with citations***, we can all do it. There's no barrier. I would have done it myself today but I was under the weather and took a sick day. My plan is to include some additional material directly in the katastematic article. It could use some bulking up.

What we're really dealing with here are people - the hoi polloi to use Epicurus's term - working under the influence of popular acculturation and academic indoctrination. They have not set sail in their own little boat, free from all indoctrination. The hoi polloi are not aware there's even a controversy. Although, I will admit there *may* be some Stoic or Platonic sympathizers selectively editing Wikipedia. Yet another reason to get an account, get on, and at least start providing some *referenced* counterpoints.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

"I've told you that "Pleasure" is the goal of life

I agree 100% with you. Why then, I ask, does Dewitt not want to just stop at saying this? Dewitt's whole "Epicurus didn't say pleasure was the greatest good. Life is the greatest good" is, in my opinion, an unnecessary obfuscation. When he writes in that paper Cassius posted today:

Quote

Pleasure Not the Greatest Good

IN SPITE of this teaching it was not the doctrine of Epicurus that pleasure was the greatest good. To his thinking the greatest good was life itself. This was a logical deduction from the denial of immortality. Without the afterlife this present life becomes the concentration of all values. Pleasure, or happiness, has its place as the end, goal or fulfilment of living.

It was the Stoics and Cicero who concocted and publicized the false report that Epicurus counted pleasure as the greatest good. This is mistakenly asserted in all our handbooks.

I see nowhere in any of Epicurus's writings or any early adherents of the Garden to substantiate a phrase like "Life is the greatest good." At least Dewitt does say "pleasure is the end, goal or fulfilment of living." But that's what the "greatest good" is although he tries to jump through some hoops to say otherwise. (Dewitt tries to use VS42)

This wording bothered me in DeWitt's book and it bothers me here. It seems a milquetoast concession to an uneasiness to just saying "Pleasure is the Greatest Good. It is the thing to which all things point."

Even if someone wants to say Epicurus was using the philosophical terminology of the other schools in saying "the greatest good" (I think this was not the case and that Epicurus was genuinely saying 'pleasure is the greatest good') "Life" can't be the "greatest good" because our lives can't point to life. That's a tautology. Maybe "Living is a pleasure."? Ok, but yeah.

I'm sorry to bring up the rabbit hole again, but it bothers me. To my understanding, pleasure is the greatest "thing" to which we can aspire in our lives because everything we do ends with "Should I do this?" And we answer the question in the end "is it pleasurable or painful?" If you ask "is it virtuous?" you have to answer a whole set of other questions that finally boil down to "will this provide me with pleasure or pain?"

I find Dewitt's formulation of "Life is the greatest good" a tad nonsensical. Of course, life - living - is great and a good thing but it's great because it's the only thing we have! We exist now. After we exist, we do not exist. Non Fui, Fui, Non Sum, Non Curo. Yes PD2 says "[Death is nothing to us](#); for what has disintegrated lacks awareness, and what lacks awareness is nothing to us." Before we "disintegrate" we're alive, we're living, we're making choices and rejections, and that's great. That's a pleasurable thing to experience. But I'm not persuaded by his "no definite article in Latin" idea, not his saying the Stoics and Cicero are the ones responsible for "Pleasure is the greatest good" from what I've seen.

And I know this has been written and cited before by Cassius, so in the interest of fairness and to work on my citation habits:

File

[Epicurus: The Summum Bonum Fallacy](#)



The aim of this article is to show how the lack of a definite article in Latin obliterated the doctrine of Epicurus that life itself and not pleasure is the greatest good.



Cassius

February 13, 2022 at 4:00 PM

[Common Fallacies About Epicurus \(#2\): Epicurus maintained that Pleasure is the "Greatest Good" - NewEpicurean](#)

Oh, and btw, I am feeling a little better after sleeping much of today away. From miserable to uncomfortable. The terrible can be endured...

Post by “Godfrey” of July 12, 2022 at 1:06 AM

[Don](#) enjoy the pleasure of feeling better!

Post by “Cassius” of July 12, 2022 at 7:34 AM

1. Yes feel better soon!

2. I have no real desire to defend the way DeWitt made his point but I do think he was on to something that is significant and not ludicrous. He's following through in the insight that he expressed as pleasure has no meaning except to the living. That's a clear application of all good and evil comes to us through sensation, which only occurs during life, and that point (there IS no afterlife!) Is of huge significance.

As I commented to Nate yesterday, how could anyone who sincerely holds this belief NOT see that every minute of life is valuable in an eternity of nothingness and want to get the most out of life that is possible?

Lucretius has an extended passage on this if I recall - where he points out that some who say that they understand the point still seem to fear death and rush to make sacrifices and worry what happens to their body - because they don't really believe that death is the end.

Life itself is not the guide - that would be circular and Dewitt doesn't say that, as you point out. It's the difference between your greatest "asset" (for most people a house or where they live) and what they do with that house (enjoy life in it).

Dewitts formulation of this in my view isnt clear because he doesn't carry it far enough and defend Epicurus far enough - but as is usually the case in my view, he is "in tune" with Epicurus' overall view of life - because he appreciates it and is attempting to follow it to its logical conclusions - in a way that most writers don't even try.

Most are caught up so much in this "absence of pain" rabbit hole trying to force it into their ascetic or Buddhist or stoic or even judeo+Christian paradigms that they miss the real foundation - that when you die you are gone forever and thus you "seize the day."

Dewitt slips sometimes because he isn't Dewittian (rebellious against the orthodoxy) enough.

Post by “Don” of July 12, 2022 at 8:00 AM

[Cassius](#) , I like your phrasing better than Dewitt's 😊 and yours doesn't rely on "Latin doesn't have a definite article."

Post by “Cassius” of July 12, 2022 at 8:33 AM

I am glad you reminded me of this section from Lucretius, the opening of book 3. For all the talk we see from the commentators about the intricacy of pleasure analysis, we hardly see any development and dwelling on this issue that after life there is nothing. And that's even among those who say that they know that the soul "consists wholly in the blood" and so these people need nothing else from philosophy on that point. They're just going through the motions, repeating that "[death is nothing to us](#)" but then glazing it over and skipping on to doctrines that they think that they can meld with their pre-existing philosophies.

When the truth is these people are not internalizing the real significance of death, when they should be acting on it with urgency and talking emphatically about how important it is to "make hay while the sun shines."

From book 3:

[31] Since then I have taught what are the first seeds and principles of things, how they differ in their figures, and of themselves fly about, beaten by mutual strokes, and from them all beings are produced, the nature of the Mind and of the Soul comes next to be explained in these my lines, and all the terrors of infernal pains banished, and headlong driven quite away, that from the bottom so disturb the life of man, and cover all things with the gloom of death, and leave no place for pure and unmixed pleasure to possess.

For what men vainly talk, that disease and an infamous life are more to be feared than the terrors of death, and they know that the soul consists wholly in the blood, and therefore they want no assistance from our philosophy, I would have you observe that those boasts are thrown out more for the sake of praise and popular breath (if their vanity by chance leads that way) than that they believe any such thing; for let these very men be banished from their country, and driven into a desert far from human sight, stained with the guilt of the foulest crimes, yet

they live on, afflicted as they are, with all sorts of misery, and wherever the wretches come, they fall a-sacrificing, and slay black cattle, and offer victims to the infernal gods, and in this deplorable state they, with more than common zeal, apply themselves to the offices of religion.

And therefore it is proper to view men rather under a doubtful fortune, and observe how they behave in circumstances of distress, for then they speak truth from the bottom of their hearts, the mask is pulled off, and the real man shows undisguised.

[59] Besides, covetousness and the blind desire of honors, which compel unhappy men to exceed the bounds of right, and urge on the partners and assistants of their crimes to strive day and night with the utmost pains to arrive at the height of wealth: these plagues of life are chiefly nourished by fear of death; for infamy, and contempt, and sharp want seem far removed from a sweet and pure state of life, and, as it were, hover about the gates of death; and wherefore will men, possessed by a false fear, labour to avoid, and stand at the remotest distance from them, they add to their heaps by civil war, and, insatiable as they are, double their riches, heaping one murder upon another. They laugh with cruel delight at the sad funeral of a brother, and hate and fear the entertainments of their nearest relations.

[74] From the same cause and from the same fear, envy often becomes the tormentor of mankind; they complain that one is raised to power before their eyes, another to respect, a third distinguished by shining honors, whilst they lie buried in obscurity, and are trod upon like dirt, and so they pine themselves to death for the sake of statues and a name; and some men, from a fear of death, conceive so great a hatred for life, and the preservation of their being, that in a gloomy fit they become their own executioners; not considering that this fear of death is the source of all their cares, this breaks through all shame, dissolves the bonds of friendship, and in short overturns the foundations of all goodness; for some we see betray their country and their dear parents, striving by that means to deliver themselves from death, and the pains of Hell.

For as boys tremble, and fear every thing in the dark night, so we, in open day, fear things as vain and little to be feared, as those that children quake at in the dark, and fancy advancing towards them. This terror of the mind, this darkness then, not the sun's beams, nor the bright rays of day can scatter, but the light of Nature and the rules of reason.

[94] First then, I say, the mind of man (which we commonly call the soul) in which is placed the conduct and government of life, is part of man no less than the hand, the foot, the eyes, are parts of the whole animal;

Post by “Cassius” of July 12, 2022 at 8:43 AM

And back on DeWitt's point, these discussions also remind me of what I think is (to me) the most clear and unmistakable way of referring to pleasure -- as "the guide" of life more so than "the good."

Lucretius Book 2

At quidam contra haec, ignari materiali,
naturam non posse deum sine numine reddunt
tanto opere humanis rationibus atmoderate
tempora mutare annorum frugesque creare 170
et iam cetera, mortalis quae suadet adire
ipsaque deducit dux vitae dia voluptas
et res per Veneris blanditur saecula propagent,
ne genus occidat humanum.

So I tend to think of DeWitt's point being that life is our greatest "good in terms of an 'asset'" while pleasure is the "guide" for what we do with that asset.

Pleasure as "the guide" seems a lot more compelling to me in many cases. Trying to decide what "the good" is often seems like a word game that never has an end, sort of like Epicurus' talking about walking around endlessly harping on the meaning of good.

But seeing pleasure as "the guide" of life is (to me) a lot more clear. I know what a guide is. And I know that even with a guide I can make mistakes, or get sick, or for any number of reasons fail to reach my destination. It's like that cliché we hear a lot today about how "the journey is more important than the destination." Yes I want a good idea of what the destination looks like so I can set off with that goal in mind, but for the day to day walking along the path to that final goal, which I may be unlucky enough never to reach, what I want is a reliable GUIDE. Lucretius' "Divine Pleasure, Guide of Life" is really a good phrase for that.

Post by “Kalosyni” of July 12, 2022 at 10:26 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

these discussions also remind me of what I think is (to me) the most clear and unmistakable way of referring to pleasure -- as "the guide" of life more so than "the good."

[Quote from Cassius](#)

It's like that cliché we hear a lot today about how "the journey is more important than the destination."

Pleasure is an experience --- I'd say that the goal of an Epicurean is to experience a pleasureable life.

A non-Epicurean may be focused on the life goal of getting things and achievements, through the abstraction of "virtue" or "being (or striving to be) a good person" or "excellence" or "rising to the top". But this would not guarantee a happy life. So Epicurus says here is the path that he believes will guarantee a happy life. And also important to consider that virtue still does have a place within Epicureanism, as a tool which leads to a good experience --- to give an analogy: one properly tunes up one's car engine so that the car runs smoothly. And another analogy: when playing a guitar one properly tunes the strings for the most pleasant sounds, avoiding over-tightening or under-tightening the strings -- so we "properly tune up our life" so that we don't go through life feeling tense, anxious or fraught, or lethargic or sleeping all the time -- and this would be important for the experience of a pleasureable life.

Post by "Don" of July 12, 2022 at 12:28 PM

I see pleasure as both the guide and the goal.

We aim toward the goal of a pleasurable life. That's the "greatest good (thing)" to my understanding.

We use the goal of pleasure as the guide in making our choices and rejections.

Post by "Godfrey" of July 12, 2022 at 3:06 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

We use the goal of pleasure as the guide in making our choices and rejections.

And the experience of pleasure, as well as pain, also provides feedback regarding our choices and avoidances. The process is a loop.

Post by “Cassius” of July 12, 2022 at 3:24 PM

I **think** this is the place we get into the issue of what is a concept and what is a feeling.

Pleasure can be thought of as a feeling which serves as a guide because it is ever-present in one form or another.

As for what the "goal" is - is not the "goal" something more conceptual that is not presently with us and may never be reached?

I don't profess an answer to that but we've seen a good many discussions about how "happiness" might be thought of as more of a concept.

Post by “Don” of July 12, 2022 at 5:13 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Pleasure can be thought of as a feeling which serves as a guide because it is ever-present in one form or another.

But pleasure isn't always being felt when making choices and rejections. True, we're either feeling pleasure or pain, but we're often extrapolating to future pleasure when making choices of actions.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

As for what the "goal" is - is not the "goal" something more conceptual that is not presently with us and may never be reached?

So, in light of my comment above, the pleasure we're aiming for as our goal is "not presently with us" which makes that pleasure the/a goal.

Post by "Cassius" of July 12, 2022 at 8:09 PM

I am kind of surprised that you take that position so I need to reflect on it, but given that we are positing that the healthy state of the body is itself pleasurable, and that some degree of pleasure is always available mentally (through memories at least) I would think it is true that "some" degree of pleasure is always available, even if it is drastically offset by a particular pain.

We probably need to discuss [PD03](#) in this context (The limit of quantity in pleasures is the removal of all that is painful. Wherever pleasure is present, as long as it is there, there is neither pain of body, nor of mind, nor of both at once.) but I think in past discussions most people have agreed that PD3 does not mean that different parts of the body and/or mind cannot be experiencing pleasure and pain at the same time, with the classic example being that of Epicurus taking pleasure in his friends and memories even though he was dying from a painful physical disease.

I think this is also referenced in the "I call you to continuous pleasure" passage and perhaps others.

Neither was he in debt to his teachers for his hedonism. None of them was a hedonist. He was in debt to Plato for suggestions concerning the classification of desires and the calculus of advantage in pleasure,⁴⁷ but differed from both Plato and Aristippus in his definition of pleasure. To neither of these was **continuous** pleasure conceivable, because they recognized only peaks of pleasure separated either by intervals void of pleasure or by neutral states. In order to escape from these logical dead ends Epicurus worked his way to a novel division of pleasures into those that were basic and those that were decorative.⁴⁸ The pleasure of being sane and in health is basic and can be enjoyed continually. All other pleasures are superfluous and decorative. For this doctrine, once more, he was in debt to no teacher.

EAHP Page 226:

THE NATURAL CEILINGS OF PLEASURE

Having established body and soul upon a parity, equal partners in life, Epicurus next proceeded to propound a number of paradoxes: first, that limits of pleasure were set by Nature, beyond which no increase was possible; second, that pleasure was one and not many; and third, that **continuous** pleasure was possible. These new doctrines were the offspring of controversy, because the contrary doctrines had been sponsored by Plato and his followers, who in this instance agreed for the most part with the multitude.

EHP Page 239:

hedonism as a practical code of conduct for mankind. No philosophy that offered merely intermittent intervals of pleasure would have possessed any broad or cogent appeal for those in quest of the happy life.

The predecessors of Epicurus had spent considerable thought upon the analysis of pleasure, but their attitude was in the main merely analytical and academic, lacking relevance to action. Their zeal was not for promoting the happiness of mankind. They were rather in the position of men who give themselves to the study of anatomy without contemplating the practice of medicine. The attitude of Epicurus, on the contrary, was pragmatic from the beginning. The declaration that "Vain is the word of that philosopher by which no malady of mankind is healed" has already been quoted.⁵¹

The desired logical basis for the continuity of pleasure was afforded by the discovery of natural ceilings of pleasures. From this is derived the division into basic and ornamental or superfluous pleasures, corresponding respectively to natural and necessary desires and those that are neither natural nor necessary. Hunger and thirst exemplify the

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former class while the desire for rich viands and rare wines belongs to the second class. Correspondingly, the satisfaction of normal hunger and thirst is a basic pleasure while the gratification of abnormal desires for rich foods and drinks is ornamental and superfluous.

This recognition of basic pleasures, in its turn, signified the recognition of a normal state of being, consisting of health of mind and of body and freedom from fears and all unnecessary desires, which was called ataraxy or serenity. This condition was denominated static, but allowance must be made for a certain variation. Hunger and thirst recur and call for satisfaction, which is a moderately kinetic pleasure, whereupon the individual returns to the normal state of absence of pain. Epicurus describes it in one of those reciprocal statements for which he had a preference: "Only then have we need of pleasure when from the absence of pleasure we feel pain, and when we do not feel pain we no longer feel need of pleasure."⁵² While these words have reference to the natural desires of the body, the description of the normal state must be understood to include freedom from pain in the body and

Post by "Cassius" of July 12, 2022 at 8:18 PM

This next section is directly relevant to what we have been discussing, and shows how DeWitt was on top of this issue and did not consider it a problem at all. He point out that Epicurus endorsed BOTH types of pleasure, and did not pursue one to the exclusion of the other. Instead of obsessing over the static/active issue like the modern commentators do, DeWitt never skips a beat: but simply incorporates the issue into the main body of the philosophy under "Pleasure" as the word is normally understood, and goes on down the road. This is well before Gosling & Taylor produced their analysis or [Nikolsky](#) produced his refinement. That's one of the reasons I continue to advocate that new people read this book first, even before they wade into Wikipedia or any of the other Cambridge or other "handbooks."

state was unjustified on the ground that two different things were thereby being denominated by one name. Cicero made a great to-do over this argument,⁵³ but it is really superficial and captious. The fact that the name of pleasure was not customarily applied to the normal or static state did not alter the fact that the name ought to be applied to it; nor that reason justified the application; nor that human beings would be the happier for so reasoning and believing.

Even at the present day the same objection is raised. For instance, a modern Platonist, ill informed on the true intent of Epicurus, has this to say: "What, in a word, is to be said of a philosophy that begins by regarding pleasure as the only positive good and ends by emptying pleasure of all positive content?"⁵⁴ This ignores the fact that this was but one of the definitions of pleasure offered by Epicurus, that he recognized kinetic as well as static pleasures. It ignores also the fact that Epicurus took personal pleasure in public festivals and encouraged

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his disciples to attend them and that regular banquets were a part of the ritual of the sect. Neither does it take account of the fact that in the judgment of Epicurus those who feel the least need of luxury enjoy it most and that intervals of abstinence enhance the enjoyment of luxury.⁵⁵ Thus the Platonic objector puts upon himself the necessity of denying that the moderation of the rest of the year furnishes additional zest to the enjoyment of the Christmas dinner; he has failed to become aware of the Epicurean zeal for "condensing pleasure."

On a level with this criticism is the allegation of a more recent writer that Epicurus put himself in a corner by defining pleasure as freedom from pain.⁵⁶ It was not Epicurus who put himself in a corner but rather Aristippus and Plato, who by recognizing only peaks of pleasure separated by intervals either void of pleasure or neutral or mixed, rendered all continuity of pleasure impossible and consequently all continuity of happiness. The error of the modern critic is to allow ancient controversy to vitiate the independence of modern judgments. The ancient enemies of Epicureanism were not concerned to present a total estimate of its teachings; they pounced upon those doctrines which, when considered singly, seemed susceptible of refutation or ridicule. They kept

were absent from the Authorized Doctrines. Its presence is easily overlooked, because the context of the controversy has become blurred with the lapse of time, but the emphasis derived from prominence of position must have been at one time arresting. It forms part of the famous tetrapharmacon, Doctrine 3. The first part, already quoted, identifies the basic pleasure as freedom from pain, the only kind that could be continuous: "The removal of all pain is the limit of magnitude for pleasures." This rules out the "neutral state" as postulated by Plato; it identifies the neutral state as one of static pleasure. The second part of the Doctrine disposes of Plato's "mixed states": "And wherever the experience of pleasure is present, so long as it prevails, there is no pain or distress or a combination of them." This amounts to denying that pain and pleasure are capable of mixing and of resulting in a state that is different from either. Epicurus implies instead and elsewhere

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teaches that pain is subtractable from pleasure, leaving a balance of the latter.⁵⁷ This principle applies either to physical pain or mental distress or to both together. It is essential to the thesis that continuous pleasure is possible.

Those who denied that pleasure was the telos were naturally not concerned with the question of the continuity of pleasure, but there was an analogous question of equal consequence, whether the wise man could be happy under all circumstances. The importance of this revealed itself shortly after Plato's demise and showed no abatement for three centuries. In two passages Cicero lists the names of those who gave an affirmative answer — from which the name of Plato is conspicuously absent — and elsewhere he pretends to cite the opinion of Epicurus, misrepresenting him shamelessly and using his name as an excuse for parading a tedious collection of his own translations from Greek tragedy on the topic of pain.⁵⁸ What Epicurus is on record as saying is this: "Even if under torture the wise man is happy."⁵⁹ Cicero chose to imagine him in the brazen bull of the tyrant Phalaris, in which the victims were roasted alive, and as saying "How pleasant; how little this torture means to me!" This is a shabby invention and shameless

words, known even beyond his own sect, exhibit the triumph of happiness over pain: "On this blissful day of my life, which is likewise my last, I write these words to you all. The pains of my strangury and dysentery do not abate the excess of their characteristic severity and continue to keep me company, but over against all these I set the joy in my soul at the recollection of the disquisitions composed by you and the rest." ⁶⁰ He is here exemplifying the subtraction of pain from pleasure, leaving a balance of pleasure, which is happiness. The letter is addressed to Idomeneus but is intended for the whole Lampsacene circle, which made many contributions to the literature of the school. It is the grateful recognition of this service, together with all that it implies, that in this instance is declared to outweigh the physical pains.

It was the discovery of static pleasure, without which continuity of pleasure was impossible, that resulted in the division of pleasures into

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static and kinetic. There was no call for such a division until the name of pleasure had been extended to denote the possession of health. On this point, however, as on many others, greater precision is possible. The modern use of the word *static* as opposed to *kinetic* is Aristotelian in origin. The Epicurean word is *katastematikos*, from *katastema*, explained in the lexicon as "stable condition." It connotes, moreover, change of state, from action to rest. To Epicurus it denotes a normal state of pleasure to which the individual returns after kinetic pleasure, which is activity. For example, it is the comfortable feeling that follows after the satisfaction of hunger and thirst, the relaxed condition that follows after attending the theater, a public festival or a banquet. Exceptionally, it describes the return to normal after the joy of escape from peril of life.

Since this innovation was, as it were, the keystone of the new hedonism, it is not surprising to learn that it was expounded in the letter addressed to the philosophers in Mytilene, which is rightly regarded as

innovation is made clear by a sound paragraph of Laertius.⁶¹ Discussing the divergence from Cyrenaic doctrine he quotes a phrase of Metrodorus: "Pleasure being thought of both as associated with motion and as static." Epicurus is quoted at slightly greater length: "Serenity of mind and freedom from bodily pain are static pleasures, but joy and delight are seen to be associated with motion, that is, activity." In both these passages modern usage calls for the adjective *static*; the Greek would demand *catastematic*. *Static* and *kinetic* would apply to the state of a stone, now lying on the ground, now sent hurtling through the air. *Catastematic* and *kinetic* would apply to the pleasure of a healthy Epicurean, now enjoying a quiet evening at home, now having a rollicking time at one of the monthly banquets.

The fact that this extension of the name of pleasure was so long and malevolently contested is merely proof of the jealousy of rival schools and of the real validity in the arguments. The validity of the main contention, that continuity of happiness must be conceded to be feasible, was not contested. The leading philosophers after Plato seem to have made this concession, and much that Plato had said about pleasure became obsolete. Theophrastus was an exception, who, attaching great value to external goods and evils, declared "that Fortune, not

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wisdom, rules the lives of men" and "that the happy life cannot mount the scaffold to the wheel."⁶²

CONTINUOUS PAIN IMPOSSIBLE

Post by "Don" of July 12, 2022 at 9:53 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I am kind of surprised that you take that position

Just so we're clear and I can verify that I'm making the point I thought I was:

What position do you think I'm taking?

Post by “Cassius” of July 13, 2022 at 8:37 AM



Quote from Cassius

Pleasure can be thought of as a feeling which serves as a guide because it is ever-present in one form or another.

But pleasure isn't always being felt when making choices and rejections. True, we're either feeling pleasure or pain, but we're often extrapolating to future pleasure when making choices of actions.

I took that as a statement that pleasure is not always ever-present in one form or another, meaning that pleasure might not always be available as a guide.

Post by “Don” of July 13, 2022 at 8:51 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)



Quote from Cassius

Pleasure can be thought of as a feeling which serves as a guide because it is ever-present in one form or another.

But pleasure isn't always being felt when making choices and rejections. True, we're either feeling pleasure or pain, but we're often extrapolating to future pleasure when making choices of actions.

I took that as a statement that pleasure is not always ever-present in one form or another, meaning that pleasure might not always be available as a guide.

Ah! Got it. Mea culpa.

I wasn't saying pleasure isn't or can't be present.

But, by definition (I think), if we're making a choice about an action, the pleasure we will get as a result of that action is in the future. We have not felt *that* pleasure yet but are using past and present pleasure to extrapolate into the future that *choice* A will bring X amount of pleasure in the future; choice B will bring Y amount of pleasure and Z amount of pain. If predicted X is greater than Y pleasure, I should go with choice A for that pleasure. (I'm excluding pain in the equation for ease of argument, but that would factor in if I were to choose C pain for greater future pleasure).

We're always weighing present pleasure being felt now or was in there past against future pleasure that will be felt then.

That's what I mean by the present guide and the future goal.

Post by "Cassius" of July 13, 2022 at 9:08 AM

I didn't think we disagreed on that - so very good.

I keep coming back in my mind to one of the biggest challenges here being the over-restrictive definition of pleasure that we live under today.

It's almost as if people today think that if you aren't presently engaged in sex or drinking bouts or massages then you aren't experiencing pleasure, and they INSIST on separating out what we might call "intellectual" or "emotional" feelings of satisfaction and other "background feelings" as something other than "Pleasure."

I think that extended quote from DeWitt is right on point with this, and its something with which I think everyone here on the forum basically agrees: that if you feel ANYTHING at all (and we are constantly feeling lots of things as part of being alive) then those feelings are either (1) pleasure or (2) pain.

This isn't psychological babble based on Epicurus having an "ebullient" personality like a child or a puppy or cat who is "easily amused."

It's the foundational understanding about a universe in which there isn't a god to tell us what to do, and there aren't absolute ideal forms of right and wrong to go by. The only stop and go standard given us by nature is Feeling (pleasure and pain). All good and evil comes to us through sensation, meaning what we feel, and the realization that this is the true foundation of

morality is such a huge "fight" to get people to understand and accept that all the rest can sort of fade into the background.

As DeWitt points out, it was apparently argued in the ancient world (and still is today) that Feeling/Pleasure-pain can't serve as the guide of life because it isn't always available -- sometimes we're just numb -- and to what do we look when we are just feeling numb?

That's a decent argument against looking to Pleasure as your ultimate guide, so Epicurus had to meet it. And I think it's a good argument to point out that there are an innumerable number of types of pleasures, and some or other are "always" available in life -- even if it's only closing your eyes and remembering good things from the past. But the "always" has to be put in quotes because there are times when pain becomes so sharp and overwhelming and with no hope of relief that you do in fact choose to "exit the stage" under those circumstances. Epicurean philosophy isn't magical and can't fix every problem - which is why you do work hard to plan ahead and set future goals (as you're saying) to work toward future pleasure even when you're in a lot of pain.

And I feel confident that we should label that feeling that comes from looking ahead to future pleasure as - itself - a pleasure.

Maybe in the end Cicero realized the importance of this argument and that's why he shot so many barrages at it and tried to make it look ridiculous.

Post by “Don” of July 13, 2022 at 10:49 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I keep coming back in my mind to one of the biggest challenges here being the over-restrictive definition of pleasure that we live under today

Agreed. There's a linkage of "pleasure" with "profligacy" or "indulgence" in modern parlance... And it seems Ancient parlance, too.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

that if you feel ANYTHING at all (and we are constantly feeling lots of things as part of being alive) then those feelings are either (1) pleasure or (2) pain.

Agreed. I am coming around to feeling this and not just intellectually thinking it. I don't think there is a neutral state although I'm going to have to go back to Barrett and Lembke to think

about this in light of their research. (Sent thoughts, [Godfrey](#) ?)

On a related note, it seems Dewitt was fully on board with katastematic and kinetic pleasures in Epicurus's philosophy.

To me, this is making more and more sense (in light especially of Metrodorus's book reference). We can be more sure of internal freedom from pain in the body and internal freedom from disturbances in the mind than we can of external sources of pleasure... Even if necessary pleasures are easy to come by. The katastematic pleasures of ataraxia and aponia are "states or conditions of being" generated from within ourselves. We free our minds from trouble and fear by internalizing Epicurus's principles on the gods, death, the nature of the universe, etc. - by mulling them over and accepting or rejecting their validity and veracity. We free our bodies from pain by healthy habits and prudent choices. *Ataraxia & aponia* allow for continuing pleasure regardless of external circumstances. If we have them, we have well-being (eudaimonia). Kinetic pleasures or pleasures of sight, sounds, touch, etc. vary the pleasure and we enjoy luxuries if and when they become available.

Not an entirely thought out position, but this is where I'm heading.

Post by “Godfrey” of July 14, 2022 at 1:24 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

I don't think there is a neutral state although I'm going to have to go back to Barrett and Lembke to think about this in light of their research. (Sent thoughts, Godfrey ?)

Practically speaking I don't think there's a neutral state.

Neurologically speaking I'm not qualified to answer that. But of course I'm happy to toss out an opinion. 😊 The affective circumplex and the teeter totter are both conceptual models or analogies and therefore it could be assumed that they don't fully represent the biological processes at work. They seem to imply a neutral state at 0,0 or at perfectly level, respectively. But it could be that these implied states are a failure of the analogies, or that they are so infinitesimal as to be meaningless.

Post by “Godfrey” of July 14, 2022 at 2:03 AM

[Don](#) I'm coming to the idea that the detailed discussions of types of pleasure, such as katastematic and kinetic, are a misunderstanding and obfuscation of what Epicurus was saying. The way I read the PDs and the letters, pleasure is pleasure. Sure there are varieties of pleasures, but they are of very minor concern.

What I see as the problem is conflating pleasures and desires. It's very easy to do, and in conflating them, one can then imply that there are greater and lesser pleasures and hence pleasure can't be "the good". But the way I read Epicurus' works, he treats pleasure and desire very differently. He categorizes desires, but not pleasures. And in doing so he provides a way to understand and work with desires. A way that is intended to result in an abundance of pleasure. Worrying about what type of pleasure is best serves no purpose for living his philosophy. (Some of these thoughts were prompted by the Liebersohn article in which he tried to make a connection between katastematic-kinetic and necessary-unnecessary. In reviewing Epicurus' writings and giving it some thought, I think he totally missed the boat [if you will].)

An interesting thing, though, is that Epicurus does mention desire and pain together. I only recently noticed this, and haven't yet given it adequate thought. But I don't believe that this leads to either an "absence of pain" or a "remove all desire" interpretation. He makes clear that we choose some pains for a greater pleasure. I think that he's doing something similar by ranking desires: he's giving us a practical framework to work with desires, just as we can use pain as a tool to increase pleasure.

Post by “Don” of July 14, 2022 at 5:57 AM

I think [Godfrey](#) 's point that desires (επιθυμία) and pleasure (ηδονή) are two different things is a very important one, and conflating the two is part of the trouble in discussing this topic.

In re-reading G&T I'm struck by their conclusion in 19.4.30:

Quote

It seems simplest just to suppose that when the organism is functioning harmoniously it is always having some form of perception; that since the operation is harmonious the perception is pleasant and without pain; and that is just what aponia is. Ataraxia is the condition when, because of correct views, our expectations are undisturbed by fear, our desires do not pursue empty objectives and our memories are pleasant: this leaves us to enjoy our pleasures unanxiously.

This seems in line with where I'm coming down, especially in light of Metrodorus 's fragment. G&T's "when the organism is functioning harmoniously it is always having some form of perception" seems to me to have parallels to the homeostasis and interoception of modern biology. Their "this leaves us to enjoy our pleasures unanxiously" seems again to bolster the points I was trying to make in post #92 above. Ataraxia and aponia become the condition (katastema) that is always available to us once we internalize Epicurus's teachings, freeing us to enjoy the pleasure that comes from our prudent choices of which desires will lead to a pleasurable life.

Post by "Cassius" of July 14, 2022 at 8:23 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

I think Godfrey 's point that desires (επιθυμία) and pleasure (ηδονή) are two different things is a very important one, and conflating the two is part of the trouble in discussing this topic.

I think we had a good discussion about some of this last night.

I think most people will have no problem understanding that pleasure and pain are feelings.

But what are "desires"? I presume you are saying that they may generate feelings if met or unmet, but are not feelings themselves?

So how in plain English do we suggest Epicurus was considering desires to be described? Are they goals? Opinions? Thoughts? Will?

And how would this relate to the apparent use of the terms choices and avoidances?

Post by "Cassius" of July 14, 2022 at 8:32 AM

Also -

1 - we may need to split this out into its own topic.

2 - Any ultimate wording on this will need to explain the statement to Pythocles about limiting desires in a way that does not seem to launch the way down the slope to Buddhism and even

nihilism.

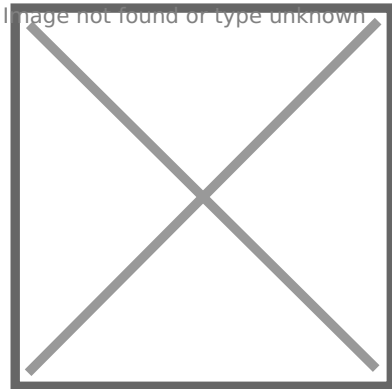
I agree it's an important issue because it is one of the lines of attack against Epicurus. Why not completely limit your desires and stay in your cave or even put a bullet in your brain?

Post by “Don” of July 14, 2022 at 8:44 AM

Let's start with some definitions and we're going to focus on the word Epicurus uses not the translation for right now:

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, ἐπιθυμία](#)

I'm including the Blue Letter Bible entry to illustrate that the Christians took ἐπιθυμία to be inherently bad. Mostly I think because any choice not sanctioned by the church was evil. Remember that the Greek for choice is αἴρεσις hairesē whereby we get English heresy.



[G1939 - epithymia - Strong's Greek Lexicon \(kjv\)](#)

G1939 - ἐπιθυμία epithymía, ep-ee-thoo-mee'-ah; from ; a longing (especially for what is forbidden):—concupiscence, desire, lust (after).

www.blueletterbible.org

And finally, some translations for ἐπιθυμία :

Woodhouse, S. C. (1910) English-Greek Dictionary: A Vocabulary of the Attic Language, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited.

appetite idem, page 35.

aspiration idem, page 45.

bent idem, page 74.

caprice idem, page 112.

concupiscence idem, page 156.

craving idem, page 182.

desire idem, page 215.

hunger idem, page 410.

inclination idem, page 428.

itch idem, page 461.

longing idem, page 498.

lust idem, page 505.

passion idem, page 597.

predilection idem, page 634.

proneness idem, page 653.

vagary idem, page 942.

want idem, page 961.

whim idem, page 976.

wish idem, page 983.

So you can decide to fulfill an επιθυμία or not. It is an opportunity for a volitional and/or a cognitive act. It could also be a sensory stimulation as in realizing you're hungry or thirsty.

You want something. You decide whether or not you pursue it, to fill that perceived need. So, sensation may be part of it.

The feeling you experience by fulfilling that want, desire, passion, hunger, longing is either pleasurable or painful.

Still thinking...

Post by “Don” of July 14, 2022 at 9:29 AM

Quick thought:

As animals, we have a desire to feel pleasure.

As humans, we have the capacity to choose which desires to feel pleasure we pursue.

Post by “Cassius” of July 14, 2022 at 10:09 AM

OK those are helpful. Here's one of the BIG quotes that is thrown out often, and we need to be able to put it in context of the global philosophy and especially [VS63](#): "Frugality too has a limit, and the man who disregards it is like him who errs through excess."

An obvious approach might be to note that money or wealth is specifically referred to, rather than all the "joy and delight" pleasures in general so perhaps there was a context in which this Pythocles was too interested in money in particular. I can't imagine Epicurus saying, for example, "*If you wish to make Pythocles Happy, do not give him more happiness, but diminish his joy and delight.*"

Does Philodemus in his "On Property Management" mention anything like this?

It would be interesting if the sources that preserve this are not the core ancient Epicureans but Seneca the Stoic and Stobaeus (Of whom Wikipedia says: "Of his life nothing is known.^[2] He derived his surname apparently from being a native of [Stobi](#) in [Macedonia Salutaris](#).^[3] The age in which he lived cannot be fixed with accuracy.^[3] He quotes no writer later than the early 5th century, and he probably lived around this time.^[3] From his silence in regard to [Christian](#) authors, it has been inferred that he was not a Christian.^[2] However, his name would probably indicate that he was a Christian, or at least the son of Christian parents.^[3]")

This is NOT in Diogenes Laertius or Diogenes of Oinoanda(???)

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Johannes Stobaeus, *Anthology*, 3.17.24: Again from Epicurus: "If you wish to make Pythocles rich, do not give him more money, but diminish his desire."

Cf. *Ibid.*, 23 [Arsenius, *Paroemiogr. Gotting. t. II p. 382, 11*]: The precept of Epicurus...
& *Ibid.* XVII.37: Epicurus, when asked how one can enrich oneself, responded: "Not by accumulating extraneous goods, but rather by trimming one's needs."

Seneca, *Letters to Lucilius*, 21.7: In order that Idomeneus may not be introduced free of charge into my letter, he shall make up the indebtedness from his own account. It was to him that Epicurus addressed his well-known saying, urging him to make Pythocles rich, but not rich in the vulgar and equivocal way. "If you wish to make Pythocles rich," said he, "do not add to

his store of money, but subtract from his desires.”