

# Modern Neuroscience And The Katastematic / Kinetic Debate

**Post by “Don” of June 29, 2023 at 2:14 PM**

Quote from Cassius - Admin Note

ADMIN NOTE: This thread was originally a part of a discussion of the translation of the Letter to Menoecus by Peter St. Andre [started here](#). This first post below was near the start of the tangent that led to the split-off, but you may need to read several posts before you get an idea of how the new thread title applies. -- Cassius

[Quote from Bryan](#)

Hello Don,

What about taking the second τὰς back to τὰς ἡδονὰς?

[Quote from Little Rocker](#)

Granted, I'm just eyeballing it, so I should take some time to give it closer attention, but I'm reading the second τὰς as a reference back to τὰς ἡδονὰς, with the ἡδονὰς understood, so taken together 'the pleasures of profligates or the [pleasures] lying in consumption.'

I address that elsewhere in my translation commentary, but, briefly, even if that's the course taken, I would still stand by something like "those (pleasures) stuck in the enjoyment of (only) those things from outside ourselves."

My take is that this is a direct swipe at the Cyrenaics.

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**Post by “Cassius” of June 29, 2023 at 2:15 PM**

As an aside, it is not the "within ourselves" aspect of such an interpretation that would bother me. Nothing wrong with the idea that we generate some of our pleasures internally rather than receiving it from outside our own bodies.

The issue I have is with the modern implications of "tranquility" as being "at rest" or "inactive" or similar words circling the drain of "nothingness."

I don't consider a mind actively exploring the depths of any part of nature to be "inactive" or in any way a negative concept. It is the Buddhist/(apparently Vedantic)/nihilist /Stoic view that tranquility implies detachment and being totally inactive mentally and physically, implicitly frozen in time, that I believe needs to be positively expelled from the interpretation of Epicurus. It is clear that many under the influence of other views are drawn to such an interpretation, and when we open the door to acceptance of that perspective, such a viewpoint undermines and distorts the rest of the philosophy. Why pursue pleasure when it is tranquility in the form of "detachment" that these people are arguing to be the goal?

If we take Epicurus as an example of his own paradigm, I consider Epicurus to be among the most "active" and energetic leaders in history. While much of that activity may have been mental rather than as a soldier or other "physical" way, his mind was not devoted to "rest" or "nothingness," and tranquility in the sense of a status quo unchanging passivity was the furthest thing from his mind.

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### **Post by “Bryan” of June 29, 2023 at 2:29 PM**

"...a Greek Man first dared to raise his mortal eyes in opposition

and he was first to resist in opposition-

whom neither the Reputation of the gods nor Thunderbolts nor the Sky

with its menacing roar restrained but even more stirred up in him

the sharp power of the mind- so that He desired

to be the first to break off the locked bolts of nature's doors." DRN 1.66-71

Sounds very vigorous and active indeed! As you allude to, his output of books and maintenance of a community is a testament to much activity.

## Post by “Don” of June 29, 2023 at 2:52 PM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

The issue I have is with the modern implications of "tranquility" as being "at rest" or "inactive" or similar words circling the drain of "nothingness."

Agreed.

I maintain (and I think we agree) that activity can be undertaken with a calm, tranquil mind.

For example, if I ever found myself in a foxhole, I would want a commanding officer who approached the mission with a clear eye and calm mind rather than some screaming, yelling lieutenant.

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## Post by “Bryan” of June 29, 2023 at 2:58 PM

Hello Don,

In response to Elli, you said.

### [Quote from Don](#)

I'm not saying I disagree with the sentiment you're expressing, but I'm not seeing how you get from <τὰς ἐν ἀπολαύσει κειμένους> to "those enjoyments that lie out of limits". Just trying to learn and understand.

I know we are always walking a line between translation and interpretation, but I am inclined to agree with your sentiment here! It seems to me "we do not mean (the... pleasures of) languishing in retirement" or something similar gets the idea in mind.

GPT "When, therefore, we say that pleasure is the ultimate goal, we do not refer to the pleasures of the profligate or those derived from indulgence."

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## Post by “Cassius” of June 29, 2023 at 2:58 PM

Right - this is part of why the accusation that Epicurus was a believer in "gods" because he didn't want to be prosecuted like Socrates falls flat. Virtually every aspect of Epicurean philosophy is controversial and goes directly against the grain of establishment society. Epicurus had to know and to accept that he was launching a life of controversy for himself and for his associated philosophers. It would have been much easier to say "Well I respectfully disagree with Plato in some minor ways, but we're all one big happy family so let's all get along and drink some wine."

He didn't do that, and I don't think that anyone who seriously accepts the viewpoint that life is short and nothingness is ahead of us for eternity would for a second want to hurry up the arrival of that nothingness except in extreme circumstances (giving up oneself for the life of a friend, for example). We aren't put here by some malevolent god or universe for the purpose of suffering, we are here to do our best to pursue "pleasure" while we can.

#### [Quote from Don](#)

For example, if I ever found myself in a foxhole, I would want a commanding officer who approached the mission with a clear eye and calm mind rather than some screaming, yelling lieutenant.

And as to that statement by Don I would amplify it, and say that those of us who accept the key tenets of the Epicurean worldview are in a foxhole, metaphorically speaking. Every direction you turn the voices are there to tell you to "give up" and "give in" because the fight can't be won.

Epicurus didn't "give up" or "give in" and those of us who are actively engaged should likewise "approach the mission with a clear eye and calm mind!" 😊

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### **Post by "Kalosyni" of June 30, 2023 at 10:43 AM**

#### Quote from Don

Epicurus is on record for including both kinetic and katastematic pleasures within his definition of "pleasure." I have come to understand kinetic pleasures as those arising from factors and circumstances outside of ourselves; katastematic pleasures are those arising from within ourselves (such as tranquility, pleasurable memories, etc.). While

Epicurus conveys (along with Metrodorus and Philodemus) that we can be more confident in katastematic pleasures, he clearly says that we should continue to "delight" in kinetic pleasures when they are available. It is the exclusivity of "getting stuck in" only seeing kinetic pleasures as pleasure that Epicurus is objecting to here with τὰς ἐν ἀπολαύσει κειμένους.

[Don](#), just wanted to add in my thoughts here...I think I understand kinetic (moving, rising and falling) and katastematic (static, still, or smooth) in a slightly different manner. I am coming to this with an intuitive approach: **both of these labels are describing the feeling nature inside the body-mind**. So the experience of eating something with a high quantity of sugar or honey will always be kinetic, but if you only use a very small amount of sugar then it may not create the same kinetic experience as compared to something with more sugar. Another example: eating whole grain/whole wheat bread with cheese when hungry could lead to more of a katastematic experience compared to eating a big bowl of ice cream which would cause a quick sugar spike and then a quick fall back down in glucose levels as insulin metabolizes the sugar (and thereby leaving you hungry again within a short period of time). So what I am thinking is that the "feeling-tone" and "excitement level" which arises while we partake of various pleasures AND it is up to each person to determine what feels best, such as if it is a dark and raining day then seeking some kinetic pleasures can help a sleepy person to wake up. Other people who feel anxious may need to turn toward katastematic pleasures.

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### **Post by “Don” of June 30, 2023 at 12:20 PM**

[Kalosyni](#) Thanks for the thoughts.

From my perspective:

The pleasure derived from the activity of eating is always kinetic.

The pleasure derived from the anticipation of eating or the recollection of eating is always katastematic.

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### **Post by “Godfrey” of June 30, 2023 at 1:55 PM**

[Quote from Don](#)

The pleasure derived from the anticipation of eating or the recollection of eating is always katastematic.

This doesn't sound right to me; at first blush I'd consider these to be kinetic. Katastematic, to me, would be more along the lines of the stable pleasure of knowing that you aren't going to go hungry any time soon, or the stable pleasure of having a correct worldview. Even though the anticipation or recollection of eating are "inner" pleasures, they are very kinetic. I see the difference between the activity and the anticipation of the activity as physical v mental and not kinetic v katastematic.

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### **Post by "Don" of June 30, 2023 at 2:35 PM**

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Even though the anticipation or recollection of eating are "inner" pleasures, they are very kinetic.

How?

And I realize typing that as a one word question \*looks\* combative or defensive. It's not meant to be. I'm just curious to hear your thinking behind how you'd characterize the anticipation or recollection as kinetic.

I'm getting my train of thought from Farrington's The Faith of Epicurus:

of the word *hedone* as applied to the philosophy of Epicurus. Epicurus uses the word *hedone* (pleasure) in four connections. It can mean either the 'pleasure' of the body or of the mind, and this 'pleasure' may be either kinetic (i.e., produced by a stimulus from without) or **katastematic** (i.e., a state of the organism created by itself without external stimulus). Only in the first of these four uses does 'pleasure' seem to be the appropriate translation for *hedone*. In the other three cases 'joy' would be more appropriate; and Merlan suggests that Epicureanism should be understood as a philosophy of joy. Even this word, I would add from an analysis of the Latin terminology in Lucretius, is too weak. In Lucretius *voluptas*, the Latin equivalent of *hedone*, bears the whole gamut of meaning from physical pleasure to rapt contemplation of the deity; and in the Greek of Epicurus *hedone* is often the equivalent of *to makarion* (blessedness), the state of being of the gods and of those men who have succeeded in sharing their mode of life. The proclamation of a hedonism of this noble type as the highest good could be the breath of life to a sick society.

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**Post by "Don" of June 30, 2023 at 3:42 PM**

As a further explanation of my perspective:

Katastematic is derived from καθιστημι (kathistēmi) which, among its many definitions, is "bring into a certain state; come into a certain state, become" LSJ references [PD13](#) specifically.

It is useless to be safe from other people while retaining suspicions about what is above and below the earth and in general about the infinite unknown.

οὐθὲν ὄφελος ἦν τὴν κατὰ ἀνθρώπους ἀσφάλειαν παρασκευάζεσθαι τῶν ἄνωθεν ὑπόπτων καθεστῶτων καὶ τῶν ὑπὸ γῆς καὶ ἀπλῶς τῶν ἐν τῷ ἀπείρῳ.

I believe the word there is talking about *bringing into the state* of viewing something with suspicion

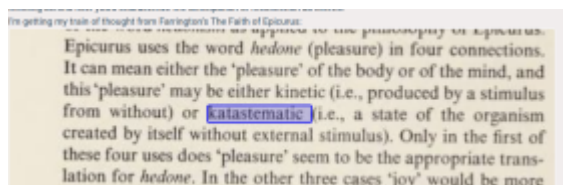
[καθίστημι - Wiktionary](#)

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## Post by "Cassius" of June 30, 2023 at 5:09 PM

Don:

I glanced back at the Gosling and Taylor treatment in "The Greeks on Pleasure" and I don't see at first glance any mention of a distinction between "produced by stimulus from without" or "created by itself without external stimulus." So I suppose the question then would be - What evidence does Farrington use to support his contention that this distinction of "produced by stimulus from without" vs "created by itself without outside stimulus" is a distinguishing factor of kinetic vs katastematic?



For example, as Gosling and Taylor come to their conclusion, I see no distinction being made about outside vs self-generated, but rather they are focusing on perception, which might be perception of something from either class:

claim to reliability. Apart from that we either have passages which are no evidence at all, passages where the author might well be fathering his own conception of the kinetic on Epicurus, and a fragment of Epicurus on which the most favourable interpretation makes all experiences of pleasure kinetic, and so, by implication, sensory pleasures, but which might also be saying nothing about kinetic pleasure at all but rather making the point that *ataraxia* and *aponia* are not just negative states, but the experiences of *chara* and *euphrosunē*. In addition the evidence of both Lucretius and Plutarch supports our view that 'pure sensory pleasure' and '*aponia*' 'joy' and '*ataraxia*' are four names for two conditions. The main argument for doubting Cicero and one possible reading of DL X.136 is that both suppose a view of katastematic pleasure and the good which makes it hard to see how it could be appreciated in perception, since any perception-

pleasure is kinetic. This is acknowledged by Rist ((2), p. 102) when he says that the experience of katastematic pleasure consists in gentle motions of atoms, so that the difference between the two pleasures comes down to a difference between the steadiness and endurance of the motions. The more one stresses this the less important the distinction comes to look, since any condition, however steady, of a living thing, must according to Epicurus, be a condition of perceiving: but there is no evidence of a special kind of perceiving or object of perception to constitute *ataraxia* and *aponia*. Consequently we should be left with steady long-lasting perceptions over against fleeting ones. 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.

is hard to believe that he would have been unaware of claims about a neutral state, or the possible charge that his ideal was indistinguishable from *apatheia*. So he would probably have a positive account of katastematic pleasure. It is probable that 'kinetic' would at that period suggest a view of process towards a state, and he would need to claim other pleasures than that. The interpretation has him do this in a way readily available after Aristotle's defence of Eudoxus, but adapting that way to his own preferred account not in terms of the actualization of capacities, but of the balance of nature, adopting a Platonic, not Aristotelian, criterion of relative pleasantness. It is an interpretation which has the best chance of allowing him to make perception the criterion of the good, and of allowing him to make strong claims about sensory pleasure without playing fast and loose on the nature of pleasure. While it has to be acknowledged that it flies in the face of Cicero, it needs emphasizing once more that Cicero's

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interpretation stands in need of defence: it is not supported by extant writings of Epicurus, and attributes views to him which ought to be surprising. Its main support comes from equally unsympathetic and so suspect interpreters. All are interestingly baffled by the apparent inconsistency between eulogizing sensory pleasures and so, presumably, unbridled sensuality, while advocating a life of simple asceticism and lack of disturbance. Perhaps the Epicurean complaint of persistent misunderstanding was justified (cf. Cicero *Fin.* II. iv.12).

Do you know the basis of Farrington's reasoning? The bringing into a state you are referring to could be either perception of something from outside, or thoughts of understanding generated by oneself through true philosophy, could it not?

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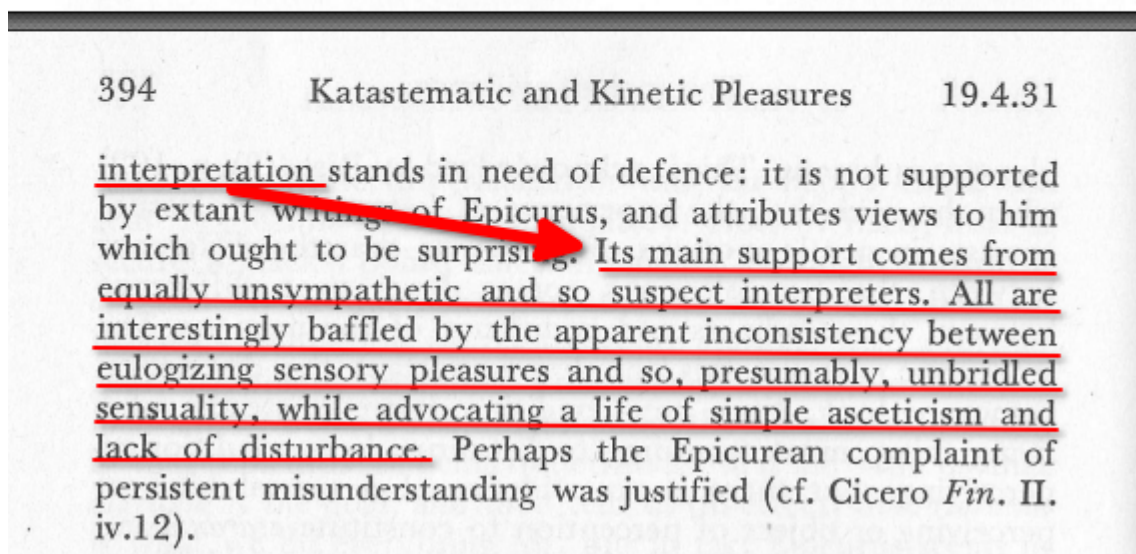
### Post by "Don" of June 30, 2023 at 5:15 PM

Good questions, Cassius. I'll have to dig into Farrington... But, in all honesty, I agree with him because he agrees with my interpretation 😊 not the other way around.

I've never been overly enamored of G&T's interpretation anyway IF I remember it correctly.

## Post by "Cassius" of June 30, 2023 at 5:15 PM

I think this portion of the last cite bears a lot of emphasis, because it is important to keep in mind that the standard interpretation of katastematic pleasure being the true goal goes hand in hand with, as Gosling and Taylor say, those who are "baffled by the apparent inconsistency of pleasure. While it has to be acknowledged that it flies in the face of Cicero, it needs emphasizing once more that Cicero's ality, while it is what I



## Post by "Cassius" of June 30, 2023 at 5:19 PM

### [Quote from Don](#)

I've never been overly enamored of G&T's interpretation anyway IF I remember it correctly.

At least in my case I always have a hard time getting a fix on what G&T's interpretation really is other than for the cites I included above. I suspect they realized that they were throwing a

nuclear bomb into the world of standard Epicurean interpretation and that they preferred to do so as gingerly as possible, so they wrap up their own views in layers of "This then that and then the other..." 😊

It would be a good addition to the discussion to try to summarize exactly what the opposing views are.

If in fact Farrington's position reduces to "generated from within" vs "generated from without" that would at least have the virtue of being clear and understandable, whether it's agreeable or not.

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### Post by “Don” of June 30, 2023 at 5:22 PM

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

If in fact Farrington's position reduces to "generated from within" vs "generated from without" that would at least have the virtue of being clear and understandable, whether it's agreeable or not.



there's something to be said for "clear and understandable"

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### Post by “Don” of June 30, 2023 at 5:43 PM

FWIW...

Post

**[RE: Do Pigs Value Katastematic Pleasure? \( Summer 2022 K / K Discussion\)](#)**

I will continue to soapbox the fact that katastematic and kinetic come directly from Epicurus in *On Choices and Avoidances*:

[...]

I will continue to soapbox that Metrodorus stated there were pleasures of activity and those of

"rest/states/stability":

[...]

This, to me, points to the "source" - "the sound state of the flesh" (to sarkos eustathes \*katastema\*) - being a more confident source -- according to Metrodorus himself -- of pleasure than "objects" (kinetic pleasure) outside of ourselves. It does...



Don

October 19, 2022 at 9:19 PM

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## Post by “Cassius” of June 30, 2023 at 5:44 PM

I will take a stab at one aspect of what I think is part of what G&T are saying:

Cicero objected to Epicurus' sweeping definition of pleasure as both (1) the standard active stimulations that we normally associate with pleasure and (2) the healthy painfree functioning of the living organism. Cicero objected because item (2) is not normally included within the standard definition of ordinary people - it is considered neutral. Cicero therefore insisted on considering these two types to be distinct categories and referenced kinetic vs katastematic as the way to do that.

In contrast, Epicurus held all pleasures to be desirable, and Epicurus did not elevate any type of pleasure over another - which he could not do, because if there are better and lower types of pleasures, then mastering the art of distinguishing between these types of pleasure would be more important than pleasure itself. Epicurus therefore considered that unity of all pleasures under the umbrella of 'pleasure' was critical to his analysis, with all kinds of pleasure to be pleasures of perception, while acknowledging also that some pleasures last longer than others. This would explain why Torquatus flatly holds that all who are without pain are in the greatest state of pleasure - you don't need to know any details about what they are doing because you have defined absence of pain - the normal state of life - to be pleasurable. So you can say without knowing any more details as an axiom: "I affirm that all who are without pain are in pleasure, and in that the fullest possible!" - [Cicero's On Ends, Book 2 \(V\)16](#)

You are then left with what Gosling and Taylor say as to Epicurus not considering this kinetic vs katastematic distinction between pleasures to be of prime importance:

"The more one stresses this the less important the distinction comes to look, since any condition, however steady, of a living thing, must according to Epicurus, be a condition of

perceiving: but there is no evidence of a special kind of perceiving or object of perception to constitute ataraxia and aponia. Consequently we should be left with steady long-lasting perceptions over against fleeting ones. 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."

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## Post by "Godfrey" of June 30, 2023 at 6:59 PM

[Don](#) , I particularly like the last 2/3 of the quote from Farrington. When I read his book a year or two, though, I found some of his interpretations to be quite interesting and others to be rather hostile. So I'm not quite sure what to make of him. I may have to re-read his book when I have some spare time... just one more book on the stack!

However, this:

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

"The more one stresses this the less important the distinction comes to look, since any condition, however steady, of a living thing, must according to Epicurus, be a condition of perceiving: but there is no evidence of a special kind of perceiving or object of perception to constitute ataraxia and aponia. Consequently we should be left with steady long-lasting perceptions over against fleeting ones. 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."

pretty much sums up my understanding of the topic. I think of katastematic as more of a "steady state" whereas kinetic is constantly changing. At least that's how I interpret the terms. Practically speaking, this conception requires some sort of a transition point between "constantly changing" and "steady state": this adds a layer of unnecessary complexity to determining the difference between the two. So from this point of view, defining the difference as "inside v outside" is maybe more concrete, but to me it seems incorrect.

Practically speaking, again, I subscribe to the idea that katastematic pleasure is largely because of correct views. Once you hold correct views you are in a steady state, because correct views shouldn't be constantly changing. (That's not to say that they won't change with additional information, but they are relatively stable.)

[Don](#) do you see homeostasis as being a helpful idea in sorting out this conundrum?

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### **Post by “Cassius” of June 30, 2023 at 7:10 PM**

I think it would also be fair to say for Gosling and Taylor that when they say that they don't consider the distinction between kinetic vs katastematic pleasures to be of prime importance, they aren't saying that it is not important to recognize that some types of pleasure last longer than others. The length of time a particular pleasure is available, and how we obtain it, is certainly an important aspect of judging what pleasures to pursue. The controversy seems to be more over whether there is some other quality about katastematic pleasure which elevates it above perception and somehow makes it more desirable than other types of pleasure and actually elevates it to being the "true end" rather than the perception of pleasure itself.

Maybe just as we acknowledge that pleasure means nothing unless we are living, we need to also acknowledge and make clear that pleasure means nothing unless we are perceiving it.

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### **Post by “Little Rocker” of June 30, 2023 at 7:53 PM**

This is a minefield, so I'll just register an occurrent thought. Epicurus clearly thinks that all pleasures are perceived (or available to perception), so I find G&T compelling on that front. The thing is, if all pleasures are a kind of perception, *and* all perceptions are a kinesis, then all pleasures are kinetic. Some are (perhaps) just more kinetic than others. Now, you could invent a different kind of perception, one in which the subject and the object of perception are somehow the same (that's, as I understand it, Aristotle's attempted, semi-incoherent solution), but G&T don't see any indication of that solution in Epicurus. And I'm not sure I do either.

So for what it's worth, I'm inclined to think the difference is that katestematic pleasure is *a/ways* there, always available to perception. I can call it to mind and experience it wherever I am. 'Kinetic' pleasure comes and goes. But that's just me shooting from the hip.

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## Post by "Don" of June 30, 2023 at 9:07 PM

### [Quote from Little Rocker](#)

This is a minefield

😂 LOL! Well, that hasn't stopped us before! 😂

Pleasure appears to be a "feeling," since it is canonically defined as one of the two feelings of the canon.

Is "feeling" a sensation? I would have to say yes, in the sense that every feeling is a sensation in the sense of PD2, but interestingly, Saint-Andre doesn't use sensation but awareness there:

*[Death is nothing to us](#); for what has disintegrated lacks awareness, and what lacks awareness is nothing to us.*

We are \*aware\* when we are \*feeling\* pleasure...therefore, it seems to be that feelings = sensations.

Or we may just be splitting hairs to no purpose:

αἴσθησις (aísthēsis)

- Perception from the senses, feeling, hearing, seeing
- Perception by the intellect as well as the senses
- That which is perceived: scent
- Ability to perceive: discernment
- Cognition or discernment of moral discernment in ethical matters

### [Quote from Little Rocker](#)

So for what it's worth, I'm inclined to think the difference is that katestematic pleasure is always there, always available to perception. I can call it to mind and experience it wherever I am. 'Kinetic' pleasure comes and goes.

Now, \*THAT\* I agree 100%! To continue on my soapbox/hobby horse: That's why we can be more confident in katestematic pleasures: *They are always available to us*. We can enjoy kinetic pleasures, but they are dependent on circumstances external to ourselves.

I realize I still need to again read G&T (Why do I read that "gin & tonic"??) but then I think... do I? I need to back and read Epicurus and what's left of the Epicureans first, I think.

## Post by “Don” of June 30, 2023 at 9:22 PM

### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

Don do you see homeostasis as being a helpful idea in sorting out this conundrum?

I do think "homeostatis" is helpful, but... I've come to understand that the concept of "homeostasis" has been somewhat replaced by "allostasis." Ex.: "[Clarifying the Roles of Homeostasis and Allostasis in Physiological Regulation](#)" (2014)

BUT when I talk (colloquially) about "homeostasis," I'm going to say that I mean an awareness of the well functioning of the body and mind accompanied by a state of satisfaction and contentment.

\*That\* I think is helpful, and what I believe I would call "ataraxia."

One thing I want to emphasize, too, is that I do not think there are only two katastematic pleasures, e.g., ataraxia and aponia; just like I don't think there are only two kinetic pleasures, e.g., khara and euphrosyne. Those are the four pleasures that Epicurus provides as his examples... but there is no way that those are the only four pleasures that Epicurus believed existed.

Little Rucker's point about katastematic pleasures being always there, always available to perception is exactly right (in my opinion). Ataraxia is always available to be sensed (IF you're body and mind are working right with correct attitudes toward the gods and death etc.) BUT, from my perspective, we also always have access to our memories, to our anticipations (in the colloquial sense not the Epicurean canonic sense). That availability to access and/or generate a particular mental state is what I think katastematic pleasures are. They are not dependent on outside circumstances or chance or fortune.

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## Post by “Don” of June 30, 2023 at 10:09 PM

I return to this section of Diogenes Laertius (10.136) over and over again when this topic comes up:

(Quote)

[136] He (Epicurus) differs from the Cyrenaics with regard to pleasure (περὶ τῆς ἡδονῆς). They do not include under the term the pleasure which is a state of rest (τὴν καταστηματικὴν - tes

katastematiken), but only that which consists in motion (ἐν κινήσει - en kinesei). **Epicurus admits both (i.e., katastematiken and en kinesei); also** pleasure of mind as well as of body (ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος),

**as he (Epicurus) states:**

1. in his work *On Choice and Avoidance*
2. **and** in that *On the Ethical End*
3. **and** in the first book of his work *On Human Life*
4. and in the epistle to his philosopher friends in Mytilene
5. So also Diogenes in the seventeenth book of his *Epilecta*
6. and Metrodorus in his *Timocrates*, whose actual words are : "Thus pleasure being conceived both as that species which consists in motion (τε κατὰ κίνησιν (kinesin)) and that which is a state of rest (καταστηματικῆς (katastematikes))."
  1. "νοουμένης δὲ ἡδονῆς τῆς τε κατὰ κίνησιν (kinesin) καὶ τῆς καταστηματικῆς (katastematikes)."

The words of Epicurus in his work *On Choice (and Avoidance)* are: "Peace of mind (ἀταραξία - ataraxia) and freedom from pain (ἀπονία - aronia) are pleasures which imply a state of rest (καταστηματικάι - katastematikai); joy (χαρὰ khara) and delight (εὐφροσύνη euphrosyne) are seen to consist in motion and activity (κατὰ κίνησιν ἐνεργεία - kata kinesin energeia)."

(End Quote)

According to this report, Epicurus mentions katastematic and kinetic (and mental and bodily) pleasures in at least **four books**, and the Epicureans [Diogenes of Tarsus](#) and Metrodorus each mention it in their books.

I'm still not entirely convinced that the best translation of katastematic is "state \*of rest\*". I think stable pleasure would be good, but is it stable because it's reliable - or 100% available at all times to paraphrase Little Rocker. καταστημα is defined by LSJ as "condition, state, not necessarily permanent: 1. bodily or mental condition, "τὸ εὐσταθὲς σαρκὸς κ." Epicur.Fr.68, Metrod.Fr.5, cf. Diog.Oen.29" (3 Epicurean sources cited)

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

[ U68 ] Plutarch, That Epicurus actually makes a pleasant life impossible, 4, p. 1089D: It is this, I believe, that has driven them, seeing for themselves the absurdities to which they were reduced, to take refuge in the "painlessness" and the "stable condition of the flesh," supposing that the pleasurable life is found in thinking of this state as about to occur in people or as being achieved; for the "stable and settled condition of the flesh," and the "trustworthy expectation" of this condition contain, they say, the highest and the most assured delight for men who are able to reflect. Now to begin with, observe their conduct here, how they keep decanting this "pleasure" or "painlessness" or "stable condition" of theirs back and forth, from body to mind

and then once more from mind to body.

Aulus Gellius, Attic Nights, IX.5.2: Epicurus makes pleasure the highest good but defines it as *sarkos eustathes katastema*, or "a well-balanced condition of the body."

> Metrodorus, Fragment 5: "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?'" (Source: [Metrodori Epicurei Fragmenta collegit scriptoris incerti Epicurei Commentarium moralem, subiecit Alfredus Koerte](#))

πιστὸν ἔλπιμα.

Cicero de finibus II, 28, 92 ipse enim Metrodorus, paene alter Epicurus, beatum esse describit his fere verbis cum corpus bene constitutum sit, et sit exploratum ita futurum.

Cicero Tusc. disp. II, 6, 17 Metrodorus quidem perfecte eum putat beatum, cui corpus bene constitutum sit et exploratum ita semper fore.

Cicero Tusc. disp. V, 9, 27 tu vero Metrodore, qui. . . definieris summum bonum firma corporis affectione explorataque eius spe contineri, fortunae aditus interclusisti?

Cicero de officiis III, 33, 117 nam si non modo utilitas sed vita omnis beata corporis firma constitutione eiusque constitutionis spe explorata, ut a Metrodoro scriptum est, continetur, certe haec utilitas et quidem summa — sic enim censent — cum honestate pugnabit.

Hoc fragmentum paene ad verbum congruit cum Epicuri fragmento 68 Us. τὸ γὰρ εὐσταθὲς καρκὸς κατάστημα καὶ τὸ περὶ ταύτης πιστὸν ἔλπιμα τὴν ἀκροτάτην χαρὰν καὶ βεβαιοτάτην ἔχει τοῖς ἐπιλογίζεσθαι δυναμένοις (Plut. contra Epic. beat. 4 p. 1089D). Cum apud Plutarchum haec verba omisso auctoris nomine referantur (vide tamen 6 p. 1090D Ep. Us. p. 122, 20 sqq.) putet quispiam ea soli Metrodoro adiudicanda esse nisus Clementis Ciceronisque testimoniis. sed quamquam summa sententiae eadem est, tamen initium et finis illius dicti diverse referuntur a Clemente et Plutarcho neque est causa cur suspicemur ab altero verba mutata esse. accedit quod non solum Origenes contra Celsum III 80 p. 165 et Gellius noct. Att. IX, 5, 2 ea Epicuri verba esse testantur, sed etiam Cleomedes II, 1 p. 112 Bak. his ipsis utitur exemplo, quo inelegantem Epicuri sermonem illustret. est igitur veri simile Epicurum haec verba pepigisse, Metrodorum ea recepisse, quia placebant propter vim et acrimoniam. ut Epicurus ipse non dubitabat dicta, quae summa diligentia acuerat, iterum atque iterum proferre (v. Us. stud. Vindob. X p. 181), sic Metrodorum magistri dictis, quae penitus in mente haerebant, pro suis usum esse non est mirum.

> Diogenes of Oenoanda:

Let us now [investigate] how life is to be made pleasant for us both in states (katastēmasi) and in actions (praxesin).\*\*

(εἰσαν τὰ φρόν[ιμα]. ἡμ[εῖς δὲ ζη]τῶμεν ἤδη πῶς ὁ βίος ἡμεῖν ἡδὺς γένηται καὶ ἐν τοῖς καταστήμασι καὶ ἐν ταῖς πράξεσιν.)

Let us first discuss states (περὶ δὲ τῶν καταστημάτων πρῶτον εἴπωμεν), 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.

Well, what are the disturbing emotions? [They are] fears —of the gods, of death, and of [pains]— and, besides [these], desires that [outrun] the limits fixed by nature. These are the roots of all evils, and, [unless] we cut them off, [a multitude] of evils will grow [upon] us.

\*\*in actions (praxesin) < πράξεσιν dative plural of πράξις "act, action, activity, deed, doing"

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

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## Post by “TauPhi” of July 1, 2023 at 4:29 AM

I'll approach katastematic/kinetic pleasure from slightly different perspective. This is something I was entertaining myself with on one of my midnight walks. One day I was reading something about dopamine and its function as a neurotransmitter and it occurred to me that pleasure might not be the highest good, in fact. Technically, pleasure may be just an emergent phenomenon caused by release of dopamine in animals' brains. Dopamine makes us want to pursue (or avoid) things. Without it, we wouldn't be even talking about pleasure and pain. We simply wouldn't know what these are.

To illustrate the power of dopamine, imagine yourself in front of a tasty looking burger. Next to the burger there are two pills. Let's make them red and blue for dramatic, Matrix-like purposes. Blue pill contains a chemical that completely blocks dopamine release in the brain. Swallow the pill and you would be staring at the burger until you die of hunger. You would have no motivation to eat it. You would not know what pleasure is. The red pill is cocaine-like chemical. Swallow it and you would find yourself devouring the burger in a state of ecstasy due to dopamine release flood. That would be the most pleasant burger in your life.

My point is, katastematic pleasure is a healthy, constant release of dopamine in our brains which allows us to feel pleasure anytime we're not in pain. This, to me, is the actual state of ataraxia. Enough dopamine to experience the pleasure of existence and to evoke the will to sustain that existence for as long as it's pleasurable.

Kinetic pleasure is a temporary spike of dopamine that makes us pursue imminent but short-lasting pleasures. I also consider it the main source of variety in experiencing pleasures discussed in [PD18](#).

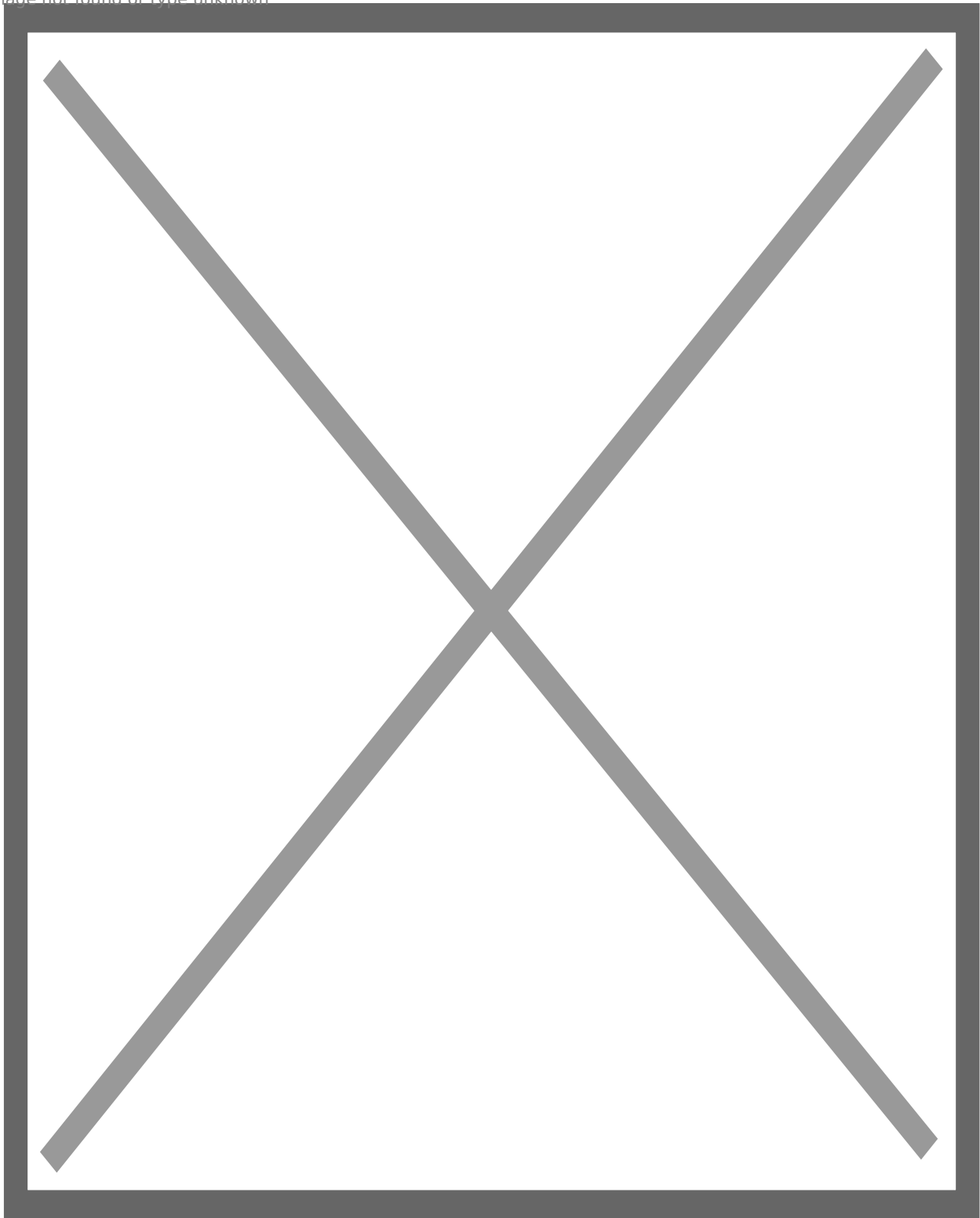
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## Post by “Don” of July 1, 2023 at 6:41 AM

I think [TauPhi](#) is onto something here with this line of thinking. My suggestion would just be to expand beyond dopamine when we consider the parallels between ancient katastematic/kinetic categories and modern neuroscience, and I do believe there are parallels. Maybe not one to one correspondence since Epicurus had no access to the research we have, but I feel his observations and intuition were ahead of their time.

Interesting articles/papers. The NLM ones are waaay into the weeds and I haven't read past the abstract, but sharing for possible future reference. The Psychology Today and other ones are a little more accessible.

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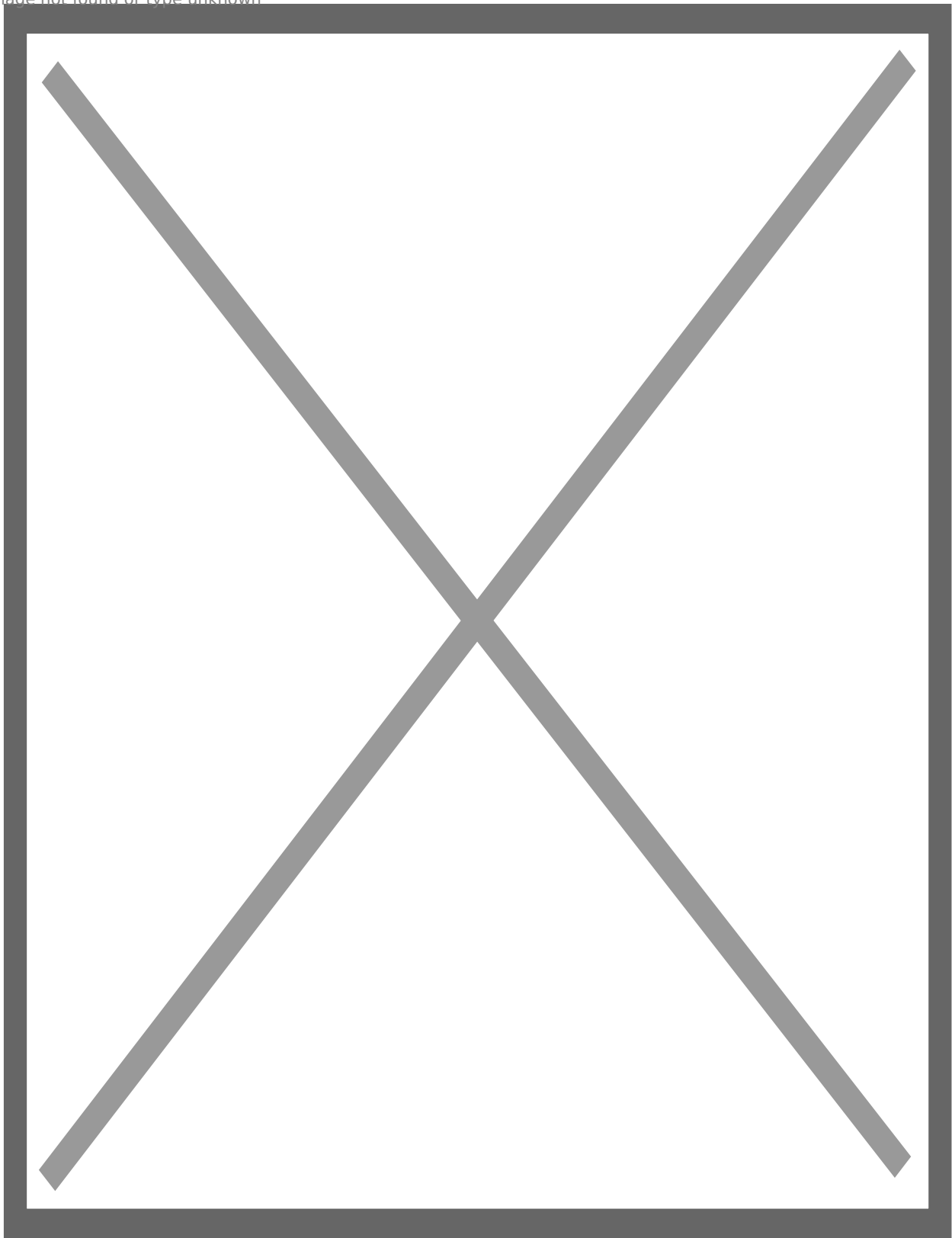


[The Neurochemicals of Happiness](#)

Seven brain molecules that make you feel great.

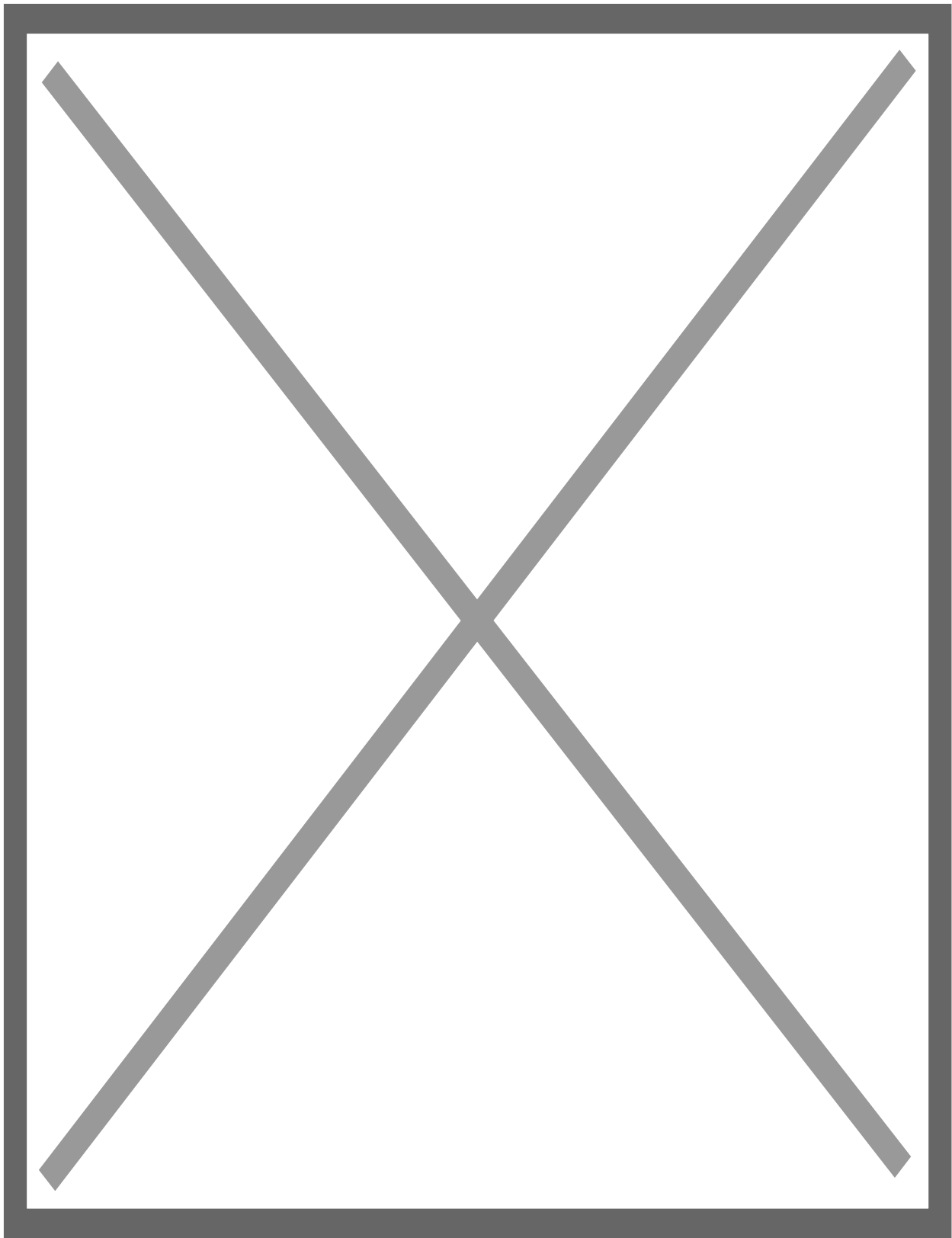
[www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com)

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[Happiness & Health: The Biological Factors- Systematic Review Article](#)

Happiness underlying factors are considerable from two dimensions: endogenic factors (biological, cognitive, personality and ethical sub-factors) and exogenic...  
[www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)

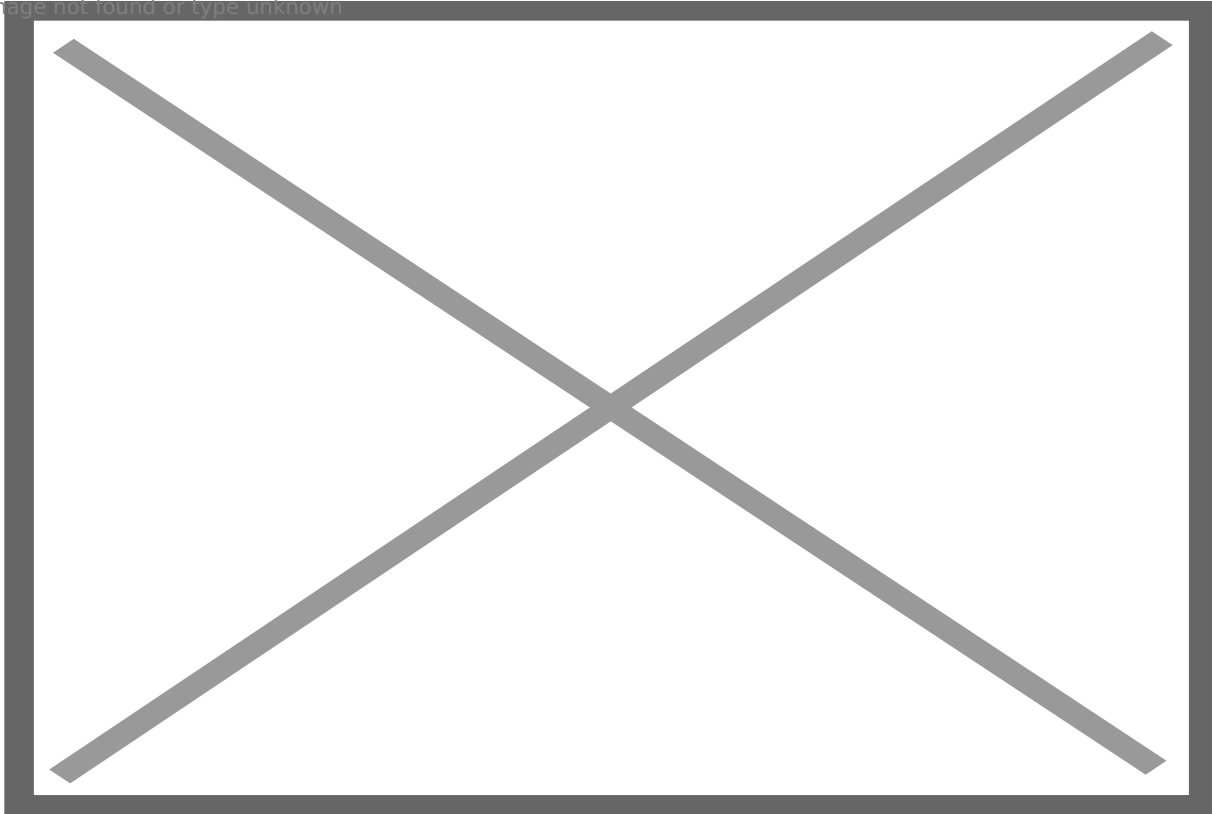


[Pleasure systems in the brain](#)

Pleasure is mediated by well-developed mesocorticolimbic circuitry, and serves adaptive functions. In affective disorders anhedonia (lack of pleasure) or...

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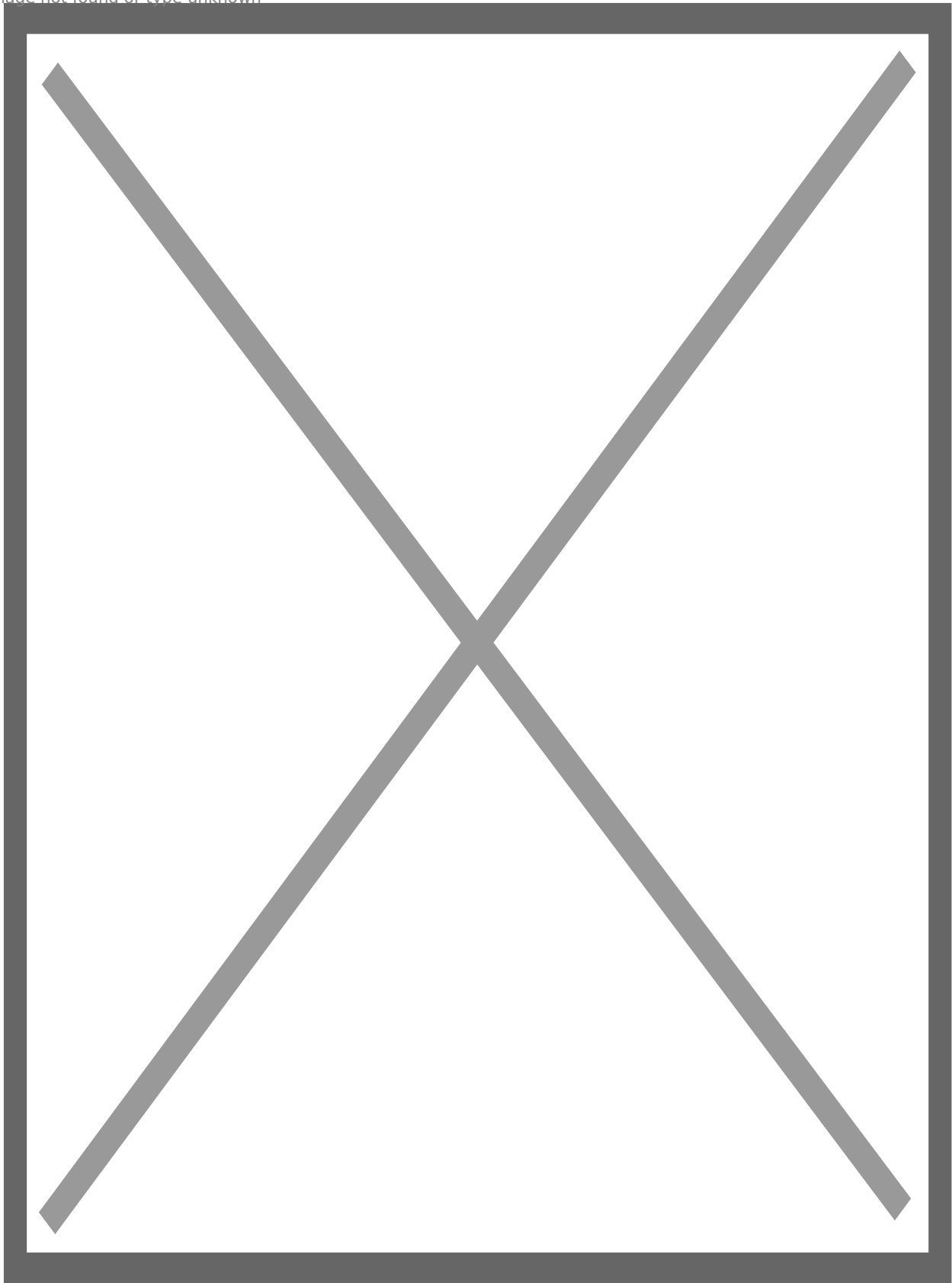


[UConn Researcher: Dopamine Not About Pleasure \(Anymore\) - UConn Today](#)

Contrary to a long-held scientific idea, psychologist John Salamone says an increasing number of studies show that the neurotransmitter has to do not with...

[today.uconn.edu](http://today.uconn.edu)

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## [How Brain Chemicals Influence Mood | UPMC HealthBeat](#)

Learn more about common brain chemicals, or neurotransmitters, and how they affect your thinking and overall health.

[share.upmc.com](https://share.upmc.com)

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### **Post by “Godfrey” of July 1, 2023 at 1:40 PM**

Quote from TauPhi

it occurred to me that pleasure might not be the highest good, in fact. Technically, pleasure may be just an emergent phenomenon caused by release of dopamine in animals' brains.

I agree that a basic understanding of neurochemistry can aid in the pursuit of pleasure and well-being. But pleasure remains the way that we experience our neurochemical functioning and so, I think, remains the highest good/the goal/the guide. Neurochemistry is the mechanism of pleasure but, to my way of thinking, doesn't supercede pleasure. For it to do so we would need equipment that would instantaneously monitor our levels of the various chemicals. The equipment that we have for that is our faculty of Feelings.

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### **Post by “Don” of July 1, 2023 at 1:59 PM**

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

I agree that a basic understanding of neurochemistry can aid in the pursuit of pleasure and well-being.

Agreed!

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

pleasure remains the way that we experience our neurochemical functioning

Agreed!! And well put, Godfrey.

### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

I think, [pleasure] remains the highest good/the goal/the guide. Neurochemistry is the mechanism of pleasure but, to my way of thinking, doesn't supercede pleasure. For it to do so we would need equipment that would instantaneously monitor our levels of the various chemicals. The equipment that we have for that is our faculty of Feelings.

Again, well put. If I may add, our brains are what we have to "monitor our levels of the various chemicals." 😊 Our feelings and sensations (including interoception) are how we experience that monitoring. And as Dr. Lisa Feldman Barrett points out, that monitoring and prediction function is the main job of our brains... that whole reasoning thing comes along for the ride later on as I understand it.

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### **Post by "Don" of July 1, 2023 at 3:10 PM**

(I realize this thread has strayed waaaaay off the original topic 😊 but this is a good conversation, so I'll let Cassius decide if it needs to be branched off or not)

In thinking about this a little more...

We always have to remember not to confuse desires with feelings. I don't think we're doing that here, but just putting that notice up again.

It also seems to me that ataraxia ((tranquility), aponia\* (see footnote), chara, (joy) and euphrosyne (delight) could be described as \*emotions\* that is how we \*experience\* pleasure in our body and mind. Pleasure and pain are the two valents available to us to describe our affect with level of arousal the other axis. I go back to the circumplex model of affect:

An external file that holds a picture, illustration, etc. Object name is fig-1.jpg

Euphrosyne and xhara would be positive (pleasant) valence with high arousal (in the Happy Quadrant); ataraxia and aponia would be high positive valence and low arousal (in the Content(ment) Quadrant).

Maybe katastematic and kinetic were simply Epicurus way to describe the quadrants on the right (NOTE: Knowing fully well he didn't have a circumplex model of affect!! This is just a modern way of diagramming affect). Cyrenaics ONLY accepted the upper right quadrant as "Pleasure"; Epicurus accepted everything to the RIGHT of the vertical axis. I've stated this before (I think on one of the podcast threads, so sorry if this is duplicating what you've already read there.)

I have no trouble accepting that some people, ancient and modern, would only use PLEASURE to describe active pleasures one engages in with their body. I'd still call those kinetic pleasures... a pleasurable feeling \*caused\* by a external circumstances in which one engages. To describe it another way, people can SEE you engaging in activities from which you derive kinetic pleasures. Katastematic pleasures are those engaged in INSIDE your head (or in your chest if we're using the "your mind is in your chest/abdomen" paradigm of Epicurus). People can't SEE you engaged in those activities although they can be very powerfully felt by you.

Again, running the risk of thinking out loud but trying to add fuel to the fire for further conversation... or maybe that's fire to the minefield to paraphrase Little Rocker 😊 .

\*aponia - I don't see - and don't think it's interpreted correctly - aponia as "being free from pain" in the sense of just "not feeling any pain." The word is "a + ponia (ponos)". Ponos includes:

πόνος (pónos)

- work, especially hard work; toil
- bodily exertion, exercise
- work, task, business
- the consequence of toil, distress, trouble, suffering
- anything produced by work, a work

It seems to me that aponia is to the body as ataraxia is to the mind. Ataraxia is a tranquil, well-functioning, calm mind. Aponia is the sense of your body working perfectly, the sense/feeling that athletes (And I wouldn't know this from first-hand experience 😊 ) get when they're in the flow and their bodies are just acting effortlessly. That's my sense of aponia.

## Post by “Don” of July 1, 2023 at 4:06 PM

Okay, further thoughts...

Epicurus likes his parallel constructions (ex., his "never too old... never too young..." sections in Menoikeus), so how would those (conveniently) four feelings of pleasure line up ... extrapolating from my thoughts above in post 128:

<b>"Feeling"</b>	<b>Pleasure Category</b>	<b>Valence</b>	<b>Arousal</b>	<b>"Source"</b>
Ataraxia	Katastematic	Positive	Low	Mental Source (Internal Stimuli); Not Observable

Aponia	Katastematic	Positive	Low	Bodily Source (Internal Stimuli); Not Observable
Khara	Kinetic	Positive	High	Mental Source (External Stimuli); Observable
Euphrosyne	Kinetic	Positive	High	Bodily Source (External Stimuli); Observable

What I'm proposing here is that Ataraxia is the parallel to Khara; Aponia is the parallel to Euphrosyne.

Khara is "joy, delight" in being a spectator or member of audience. You experience pleasure from the experience. You can still be observed (it's a kinetic pleasure) engaging in the activity, but the pleasure is felt primarily as an internal feeling. It's still an external stimuli, but your "body" isn't as involved. LSJ definition includes "joy in or at a thing." Think watching a dancing or singing performance. The corresponding katatematic pleasure example is ataraxia.

Euphrosyne is "[mirth, merriment, esp. of a banquet, good cheer, festivity](#)." Euphrosyne is the pleasure you feel when actually involved yourself - with your body - in an activity. The corresponding katastematic pleasure example is aponia.

### Post by "Cassius" of July 1, 2023 at 4:09 PM

#### [Quote from Don](#)

(I realize this thread has strayed waaaaay off the original topic 😊 but this is a good conversation, so I'll let Cassius decide if it needs to be branched off or not)

Do you have a suggestion on where it started branching and how to describe the topic? Are you thinking it's a modern psychology heading?

### Post by "Don" of July 1, 2023 at 5:53 PM

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

### [Quote from Don](#)

(I realize this thread has strayed waaaaay off the original topic 😊 but this is a good conversation, so I'll let Cassius decide if it needs to be branched off or not)

Do you have a suggestion on where it started branching and how to describe the topic?  
Are you thinking it's a modern psychology heading?

Maybe back at post 100??

It seems to me we're diving into katastematic and kinetic and modern neuroscience??

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### **Post by “Godfrey” of July 1, 2023 at 5:54 PM**

That's a great layout of the issues, [Don](#) ! A lot to digest. Your chart in post #129 seems to me to be the most useful place to start tiptoeing through the minefield.

1) I totally agree that kinetic pleasure can be either mental or physical, and the same for katastematic pleasure.

2) I'm not sure that degree of arousal is pertinent. It may be, but it seems to me that the difference between katastematic and kinetic is a factor of **time** rather than "intensity". For example, I can be hungry and get pleasure from relieving that hunger. But I can be a little bit hungry (low arousal, negative valence) or really hungry (high arousal, negative valence). What makes the pleasure from eating kinetic is that it changes my temporary state from hunger (pain) to pleasure (absence of pain = negative pleasure), possibly with the additional positive pleasure of tasting really good. But before long I'll be hungry again, either way. (BTW you can further say that relieving the hunger results from a natural and necessary desire, whereas tasting really good is related to natural and unnecessary desires. I think this is a separate issue from being kinetic or katastematic.) The katastematic pleasure of a correct worldview or of knowing that my needs are cared for for the foreseeable future could last years, not hours or minutes, and becomes a sort of "background" state of pleasure.

3) I don't think that observability is relevant to either kinetic or katastematic pleasure. For instance, someone teaching a correct worldview is in a sense witnessing the source of their student's resultant katastematic pleasure. And the source of a kinetic pleasure may be either observable or not. Think about meditating: in one way, it's an activity that involves continual moving between pleasure and pain, both physical and mental. Sitting there quite still, your

back could be getting sore or you may be experiencing a particularly painful thought. Then you let go and "poof", the pain is gone. Likewise for pleasure: you might notice (or think) "oh, my back doesn't hurt anymore, this feels great!" or "I'm so relaxed"; then "poof" something unwanted, distressing or otherwise painful comes up. This is kinetic, but not observable.

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## Post by "Don" of July 1, 2023 at 6:34 PM

[Godfrey](#) , I can always rely on you for insightful responses and thoughtful posts! Great appreciated! 😊

Let me think about a few of your points.

Just for my own putting things in order...

### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

the difference between katastematic and kinetic is a factor of time

Hmmm.... I'm going to have to think about that. If I understand you correctly, you're saying katastematic pleasure has a longer "shelf life" whereas kinetic pleasures are of (relatively) shorter duration? To break down some of your examples:

### Quote from Godfrey (edited, with notes from Don)

- I can be hungry (*Don: pain or absence of pleasure*)
- and get pleasure from relieving that hunger (*Don: I would characterize that as kinetic pleasure while eating; gaining pleasure from remembering the meal - from my perspective - would be katastematic*)
- I can be a little bit hungry (low arousal, negative valence)
  - or really hungry (high arousal, negative valence).
- What makes the pleasure from eating kinetic is that it changes my temporary state from hunger (pain) to pleasure (absence of pain = negative pleasure) (*Don: Negative pleasure?? I'd accept negation of or opposite of pleasure but not the term "negative pleasure." Or maybe I'm just reading too much into that.*)
- But before long I'll be hungry again, either way. (*Don: Okay, fleeting/temporary pleasure is being characterized as kinetic, right? ... because it changes?*)

And then you discussed katastematic pleasure...

### Quote from Godfrey (with notes from Don)

The katastematic pleasure of:

- a correct worldview
- or of knowing that my needs are cared for for the foreseeable future...
  - could last years, not hours or minutes, and becomes a sort of "background" state of pleasure.

Okay, so you are including the long-term ("background") characteristic as (one) defining feature of katastematic pleasure. With short-term pleasure being a feature of kinetic pleasure... and its "kinetic" aspect is this exact fleeting feature it has?

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

I don't think that observability is relevant to either kinetic or katastematic pleasure.

So, it doesn't matter - from your perspective - what kind of activity is involved in causing the pleasure. I'll have to dig into that. Not saying I disagree or agree... Have to consider. Thank You for some food for thought!!!

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**Post by “Cassius” of July 1, 2023 at 7:02 PM**

[Quote from Don responding to Godfrey](#)

If I understand you correctly, you're saying katastematic pleasure has a longer "shelf life" whereas kinetic pleasures are of (relatively) shorter duration?

Someone will ask: If duration is the difference between katastematic and kinetic, what is the exact dividing line between the two and how is that line philosophically established? Would the time frame be a second, minute, hour, day, or what?

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**Post by “Don” of July 1, 2023 at 8:36 PM**

[Quote from Cassius](#)

### [Quote from Don responding to Godfrey](#)

If I understand you correctly, you're saying katastematic pleasure has a longer "shelf life" whereas kinetic pleasures are of (relatively) shorter duration?

Someone will ask: If duration is the difference between katastematic and kinetic, what is the exact dividing line between the two and how is that line philosophically established? Would the time frame be a second, minute, hour, day, or what?

That's exactly the reason I'm not ready to embrace that suggestion just yet.

---

### **Post by "Godfrey" of July 1, 2023 at 11:49 PM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Someone will ask: If duration is the difference between katastematic and kinetic, what is the exact dividing line between the two and how is that line philosophically established? Would the time frame be a second, minute, hour, day, or what?

Actually, I sort of asked that in post #19 😊 After rereading that post I'm thinking that kinetic is of short duration and katastematic is of long duration, and there's a large gap between the two. There's no precise point that differentiates between the two. But it's a good question and I don't know if there's anything resembling a precise answer. (If we were Supreme Court justices we could say we know it when we see it, but that's too sloppy for earnest philosophical discussion. )

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### **Post by "Godfrey" of July 2, 2023 at 1:47 AM**

Upon further percolating, what happens if we remove duration from the definitions of kinetic and katastematic pleasures? Would it be that kinetic pleasure is a condition of a change of state and katastematic pleasure is a condition of being in a state? This actually seems like the simplest and most accurate definition. It might also be the most useful, if it's combined with the categories of desires and we want to concentrate on experiencing pleasure and not on

spending our time analyzing it.

Using motion or the lack thereof as the defining characteristic of kinetic or katastematic has, I think, been refuted on the grounds that all atoms are in motion no matter what type of pleasure you are experiencing, and therefore there is only kinetic pleasure. Is there anything in the Greek (or Latin) that would support the idea that Epicurus was referring to change, not motion, if/when he used the terms kinetic and katastematic?

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### Post by “TauPhi” of July 2, 2023 at 7:58 AM

[Godfrey](#) Thanks for your post #27. I loved it and it's hard not to agree with you but I'd like to comment on this sentence:

#### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

Neurochemistry is the mechanism of pleasure but, to my way of thinking, doesn't supercede pleasure.

When we talk about neurochemistry, we venture into the world of molecules and atoms. To me, atoms will always have precedence over everything. This is how I understand objective way of looking at things. Trying to understand objective truth about our existence gives us a chance for subjective, pleasant life as humans because objective knowledge removes subjective fears and destroys subjective superstitions. When I was talking about dopamine I didn't mean to suggest that it replaces pleasure. By saying that pleasure might not be the highest good I was coming from objective perspective. Objectively atoms and void are the highest good as they are building blocks of everything else.

That said, I'm not sitting now in front of the screen thinking 'a combination of carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen and oxygen was just released by my neurons therefore I am capable of doing x and y'. I'm not a Spock. I'm purely human and from my subjective, human perspective I do find pleasure the ultimate motivator. I also fully realise that philosophy is a discipline invented by humans and is intended to be practiced from human perspective. I'm perfectly capable of thinking, talking and experiencing pleasure, feelings, friendship and everything else human but I try to remind myself that I live in the universe that is not created for me and all my subjective experiences most likely have objective truth behind them.

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### Post by “Don” of July 2, 2023 at 12:43 PM

### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

Upon further percolating

😊 I like that! From now on, I will no longer cogitate or "meditate on these things," I'm going to "percolate on these things." 👍

### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

Would it be that kinetic pleasure is a condition of a change of state and katastematic pleasure is a condition of being in a state? This actually seems like the simplest and most accurate definition.

Yes, I agree with the following addenda: I think this line gets to the heart of Epicurus's recognizing these two categories of pleasure... and his and others saying we can have more confidence in the katastematic pleasure. There's not only the "state" of feeling katastematic it is also the "stability" of katastematic pleasure. We can have confidence in the availability of katastematic pleasure because it is a "stable condition" of the mind or a "background or foundational" condition of the mind. This, to me, is also connected to the characteristic of the sage in that "once the sage has become wise, they will no longer fall back into ignorance." Once incorrect ideas are rooted out, they can't grow back. This is where ataraxia comes from: The mind being in a stable condition of not being worried about death, the gods, etc. Once the incorrect views are rooted out, we achieve a stable tranquil condition of the mind that is no longer troubled by these views.

I don't think the "motion of the atoms" has anything to do with Epicurus's categorization of pleasure into katastematic or kinetic. As Godfrey points out, the atoms are moving all the time. I don't see any way to have the atomic motions be concerned with the kinetic/katastematic distinction.

### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

Is there anything in the Greek that would support the idea that Epicurus was referring to change, not motion, if/when he used the terms kinetic and katastematic?

I'll use that as a jumping off point to look at the Greek and Latin (I rarely need much provocation to return to dictionaries and etymologies 😊 ) κατάστημα literally means "condition, state, not necessarily permanent: bodily or mental condition, "τὸ εὐσταθὲς σαρκὸς κ." Epicur.Fr.68, Metrod.Fr.5, cf. Diog.Oen.29" Check out the post above where I shared those references to Epicurus, Metrodorus, and Diogenes Oenoanda.

I found this interesting article online: <https://cup.columbia.edu/wp-content/upl...-Appendix-6.pdf>

and this one: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/14932622.pdf>

There' also Hiram's article: <https://societyofepicurus.com/on-the-standar...tatic-pleasure/>

I admit I have not read these yet but was intrigued by the abstracts. I'll try to read them soonish but if anyone beats me to it, please share thoughts!

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### Post by “Don” of July 2, 2023 at 12:47 PM

I like [TauPhi](#) 's post above (No. 39) because it gets at again how we co-exist with two very real perspectives: At our most basic, we exist as atoms and void. There's no getting around that. That is true.

However, we don't experience our existence \*as atoms and void\* (or as interactions of chemicals). We experience our lives at the level of feelings and sensations. That is ALSO true.

Both can be true at the same time and neither need override the other.

I hope I've characterized TauPhi's points correctly!

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### Post by “Don” of July 2, 2023 at 3:48 PM

That quote in the definition in post 40 is from

Fragment 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.

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

The εὐσταθὲς (eustathes) there is "well based, standing firm, stable (relatively unchanging)." The κατάστημα (katastēma) is the "condition, state."

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### Post by “Pacatus” of July 2, 2023 at 3:51 PM

I would say that “atoms” (subatomic particles, energy, space, etc. – the basic physics of the universe and the combinations that define our world: emerging molecules, neuro-chemical processes, etc.) are **the fundamental facts of the case. Such facts are neither good nor bad - they just are.**

Such things as consciousness, *pathe*, the ability to choose, etc. are **emergent phenomena** from those fundamental facts that are facets of what it means to be a human being.

Talk of “the good” is ethical discourse (which is not the same as Stoical/Kantian/Christian moralistic discourse). And so, the “highest good” remains *eudaimonia* – which, from an Epicurean perspective, is defined by *hedone/aponia/ataraxia*.

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I realize there are a number of etc's. in this post: I am not a scientist. 🤔 😞 ... etc. ...

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## Post by “Godfrey” of July 2, 2023 at 6:18 PM

[Don](#) I've added those articles to my reading list as well 😞

In the meantime, here's my latest line of thinking. It's rather stream-of-consciousness, but at least it's a starting point. I've come to think of the natural and unnecessary (extravagant... how about "mahvelous"?) desires as the "sweet spot", the place where we do most our personal ethical work. We try to set up our lives so that the natural and necessary ones are for the most part taken care of (stable?). We root out our toxic desires. This leaves us in what we might loosely call a *katastematic* state with regard to both the natural/necessary and toxic desires.

The reason that I bring this up is to suggest that *katastematic* pleasures may be the "sweet spot" for working with our pleasures. (As I said, I'm figuring this out as I write...) Take hunger as an example:

- I'm hungry (a state of pain)
- I eat (a kinetic pleasure leading to a change of state).
- I'm nourished (a state of pleasure)

How do I add to my state of pleasure regarding hunger? Eating nourishing food, and eating food that doesn't spike my blood sugar are two ways: they each increase the duration of my state of nourishment. If I'm well nourished, then every now and then I can enjoy an extravagant meal without causing much disruption to my state of nourishment. But every few hours I'll be hungry

again. That gives me regular opportunities to make choices and avoidances that will increase my overall pleasure.

Suppose I'm terrified of dying and going to hell.

- I'm terrified (a state of pain)
- I study Epicurus (a kinetic pleasure leading to a change of state)
- I'm no longer terrified (a state of pleasure)

This pleasurable state may last the rest of my life, or I may need to periodically study and refresh my understanding of why I shouldn't be terrified.

Both of the above states of pleasure are stable, but their duration varies. If we treat this state as a "sweet spot" to work with, we would search out various fears and desires that we experience. Then we would determine how best to work with each one so as to spend the greatest amount of time in a stable state of pleasure regarding each particular fear or desire. Further, we might begin with the ones that cause us the most distress. We would try to make wise choices regarding acting on each fear or desire, so that we maximize the resulting state of pleasure. Thought of in this way, katastematic pleasures serve as the major guide to well-being. Kinetic pleasures are then both a means to that end and a way to add variety to our pleasures, depending on the circumstances in which they're chosen. It seems to me that this presents kinetic and katastematic pleasures as *functional* parts of a unified system for maximizing pleasure, which after all is what Epicurus was attempting to create. This is unlike the Cyrenaic system, which only accepts kinetic pleasures and therefore lacks the sophistication that Epicurus brought to living a life of well-being.

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## Post by "Don" of July 2, 2023 at 8:37 PM

I'm repeating myself a bit with this post but wanted to keep it for future reference in one spot...

Two key words:

καθίστημι "to make" in [PD21](#) - "to bring into a certain state; bring; replace or restore; etc."

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

κατάστημα "condition, state, not necessarily permanent: bodily or mental condition"

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

I want to (once again) compile instances of the use of those words that I feel are pertinent. I am intentionally NOT including Cicero's materials because, honestly, I don't necessarily consider him a reliable source. I'm limiting my sources to Epicurus, Metrodorus, and Diogenes of Oenoanda for now. And, yes, I have to "trust" others for reporting the words of Epicurus and Metrodorus... but at least we have Diogenes' Wall.

[PD21](#) One who perceives the limits of life knows how easy it is to expel the pain produced by a lack of something and **\*\*to make one's entire life complete\*\***; so that there is no need for the things that are achieved through struggle.

ὁ τὰ πέρατα τοῦ βίου κατειδῶς οἶδεν ὡς εὐπόριστόν ἐστι τὸ <τὸ> ἀλγοῦν κατ' ἔνδειαν ἐξαιροῦν καὶ τὸ τὸν ὅλον βίον παντελεῖ καθιστάν (< infinitive of καθίστημι). ὥστε οὐδὲν προσδεῖται πραγμάτων ἀγῶνας κεκτημένων.

Fragment 2:

Lack of mental disturbance and lack of bodily pain are static pleasures, whereas revelry and rejoicing are active pleasures involving movement.

ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀταραξία καὶ <ἡ> ἀπονία **\*\*καταστηματικά\*\*** εἰσιν ἡδοναί. ἡ δὲ χαρὰ καὶ ἡ εὐφροσύνη κατὰ κίνησιν ἐνεργεία βλέπονται.

Fragment 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.

**\*\*τὸ γὰρ εὐσταθὲς σαρκὸς κατάστημα\*\*** καὶ τὸ περὶ ταύτης πιστὸν ἔλπισμα τὴν ἀκροτάτην χαρὰν καὶ βεβαιωτάτην ἔχει τοῖς ἐπιλογίζεσθαι δυναμένοις.

Metrodorus (Diogenes Laertius, 10.136):

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."

Μητρόδωρος ἐν τῷ Τιμοκράτει λέγουσιν οὕτω: νοουμένης δὲ ἡδονῆς τῆς τε κατὰ κίνησιν καὶ τῆς καταστηματικῆς.

Metrodorus, Fragment 5: "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 (τὸ σαρκὸς εὐσταθὲς κατάστημα)\*\***, and the sure hope of its continuance?'"

Diogenes of Oenoanda:

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

(εισαν τὰ φρόν[ιμα]. ἡμ[εῖς δὲ ζῆ]τῶμεν ἤδη πῶς ὁ βίος ἡμῶν ἡδὺς γένηται καὶ ἐν τοῖς **\*\*καταστήμασι\*\*** καὶ ἐν ταῖς πράξεσιν.)

Let us first discuss states (περὶ δὲ τῶν καταστημάτων πρῶτον εἴπωμεν), 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.

One thing that I find interesting is that only in Metrodorus (Fragment 5 & DL10.136) and Epicurus' Fragment 68 (i.e., DL10.136) do we find εὐσταθὲς modifying κατάστημα. That's "well based, standing firm, stable (relatively unchanging)." κατάστημα itself is simply "condition, state."

The other references only use κατάστημα and related words alone:

Epicurus: Fragment 2 (& Diogenes 10.136): καταστηματαί

Metrodorus (DL 10.136): καταστηματικῆς

Diogenes of Oenoanda: καταστήμασι

So, the idea of a \*stable/"relatively unchanging" condition is not necessarily conveyed by the second set of references, only the connotation of "state, condition." If that's the case, then we're talking about "state, condition" in contrast to kinesis "motion, opp. rest (στάσις)". Kinesis in LSJ includes opp. ἡρεμία (eremia) which is also a "quietude of the mind." So, this implies to me that we are, indeed, talking about pleasure "at rest (residing in a particular state or condition)" and pleasure "in motion."

### **PostScript...:**

In thinking some more, I note that Fragment 68 doesn't mention pleasure in general **\*\*BUT\*\*** it does mention a KINETIC PLEASURE!

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.

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

χαρὰν is simply the accusative of χαρά (khara)... Where do we see χαρά? RIGHT THERE in Epicurus's category of kinetic pleasures: ἡ δὲ **χαρὰ** καὶ ἡ εὐφροσύνη κατὰ κίνησιν ἐνεργεῖα βλέπονται.

SO... That means that we could substitute kinetic pleasure in Fragment 68!

- To those who are able to reason it out, the highest and surest kinetic pleasure is found in the stable health of the body and a firm confidence in keeping it.

Question, of course, is HOW can the "stable health of the body and a firm confidence in keeping it" be a KINETIC PLEASURE!!??

Curiouser and curiouser!

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## Post by “Don” of July 2, 2023 at 11:04 PM

There aren't a lot of opportunities, but I decided to try and replace single words with either katastematic or kinetic pleasure.

It should also be remembered that the phrase "kinetic pleasure" isn't *actually* what Epicurus says. What he says is (as literally as I can make it):

"Peace of mind (ataraxia) and freedom from pain (aponia) are condition/state pleasures; joy (khara) and delight (euphrosyne) are seen in relation to (κατὰ) motion (κίνησις) by means of activity (ἐνεργεία)."

ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀταραξία καὶ <ή> ἀπονία καταστηματικάί εἰσιν ἡδοναί. ἡ δὲ χαρὰ καὶ ἡ εὐφροσύνη κατὰ κίνησιν ἐνεργείᾳ βλέπονται (seen).

ἐνεργείᾳ is a dative case of ἐνέργεια which comes up in Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics: See <https://sites.google.com/view/epicurean...n-ethics-book-1>

Epicurus also uses the word in the Letter to Herodotus:

[37] "Hence, since such a course is of service to all who take up natural science, I, who devote to the subject my continuous *\*\*energy\*\** (τὸ συνεχές *\*\*ἐνέργημα\*\**) and *\*\*reap the calm enjoyment of a life\*\** (ἐγγαληνίζων) like this, have prepared for you just such an epitome and manual of the doctrines as a whole.

Here are my replacments:

519. The greatest fruit of justice is a katastematic pleasure (serenity).

δικαιοσύνης καρπὸς μέγιστος ἀταραξία.

Letter to Menoikeus:

The steady contemplation of these facts enables you to understand everything that you accept or reject in terms of the health of the body and the katastematic pleasure (serenity) of the soul — since that is the goal of a completely happy life.

so that in old age you can be youthful by taking kinetic pleasure (joy) in the good things you remember

τῷ μὲν ὅπως γηράσκων νεάζῃ τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς διὰ τὴν χάριν τῶν γεγονότων

(LOL! Well that blows my memories are katastematic pleasure out of the water!!)

Scholion to the Letter to Herodotus, DL.10.66

[He says elsewhere that the soul is composed of the smoothest and roundest of atoms, far superior in both respects to those of fire ; that part of it is irrational, this being scattered over the rest of the frame, while the rational part resides in the chest, as is manifest from our fears and our kinetic pleasure (joy)

(Interesting note here is that fear is contrasted with a kinetic pleasure. Not sure if there's any significance, but there you have it.)

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## Post by “Godfrey” of July 3, 2023 at 1:15 AM

OK now things may be getting clearer but more confusing at the same time....

Now I understand where the table in post #30 comes from; it sometimes takes a few repetitions for an idea to sink in. 🙄 So, as I interpret this, all Epicurus is saying is that kinetic pleasure (which he defines as joy, delight, merriment: totally counterintuitive to me) is more intense than katastematic pleasure. And perhaps more observable because you're smiling and laughing. That seems to me to be rather banal, not very useful, and I think different from most of the academic interpretations. Not that the academic interpretations agree on much. But I readily admit that I may have got lost in the weeds and am totally missing the point.

I'm curious how this relates to [PD09](#):

*If every pleasure were condensed in <location> and duration and distributed all over the structure or the dominant parts of our nature, pleasures would never differ from one another.*  
Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* 115 (1987)

I never considered that this could be referring to kinetic and katastematic pleasures. If so, is it saying that worrying about the difference between kinetic and katastematic pleasures is rather banal and not very useful? I've got to let this percolate 🤔 Maybe for a couple of weeks 🤪

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## Post by “Don” of July 3, 2023 at 7:33 AM

### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

Now I understand where the table in post #30 comes from; it sometimes takes a few repetitions for an idea to sink in...perhaps more observable because you're smiling and laughing. That seems to me to be rather banal, not very useful

LOL... And that "observable" idea of my theory is blown out of the water anyway with the section from the letter to Menoikeus: "so that in old age you can be youthful by taking joy (kinetic pleasure) in the good things you remember" and Fragment 68 "To those who are able to reason it out, the highest and surest joy (kinetic pleasure) is found in the stable health of the body and a firm confidence in keeping it." See posts above.

Those two alone muddy the waters considerably!

It may be useful to dig into the the implications of the energeia aspect of those pleasures involved in motion. But I'm \*almost\* back at square one.

There still has to be a distinction that is of paramount importance here for Epicurus in defining the spectrum of pleasure he recognizes with the pleasures accepted by the Cyrenaics. On its surface, I still think the circumplex quadrants have something to speak to that with low and high arousal. ...hmmm .... Maybe \*that\* has some connection to energeia?? By Zeus! This is a minefield!!! 😊

On energeia and kinesis, check out the Wikipedia article here: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potential...ity?wprov=sfla1>

I need to read these closer too:

<https://cup.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Philosophies-of-Happiness-Appendix-6.pdf>

<https://cup.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Philosophies-of-Happiness-Appendix-8.pdf>

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## Post by “Don” of July 3, 2023 at 12:11 PM

### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

I'm curious how this relates to [PD09](#):

If every pleasure were condensed in <location> and duration and distributed all over the structure or the dominant parts of our nature, pleasures would never differ from one another. Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* 115 (1987)

In scanning those articles and the info on *energeia*, I'm wondering now if PD9 can be interpreted as the difference in our soul-atoms distributed throughout our bodies that allow sensation and the soul-atoms specifically located in our chest that is the rational part of our *psykhē*.

I'm beginning to think (as of ... What time is it right now? I could change my mind by this afternoon 😊 ) the *katastematic* pleasure is the preferred background condition of being. Kinetic pleasure is the moment by moment awareness of individual pleasures. *Katastematic* pleasure is the calm ocean, kinetic pleasures are the waves.

That metaphor needs work, but.... Discuss.

PS. The ocean metaphor isn't mine btw. One of the papers used this. I like it.

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## Post by “TauPhi” of July 3, 2023 at 1:07 PM

### [Quote from Don](#)

the *katastematic* pleasure is the preferred background condition of being. Kinetic pleasure is the moment by moment awareness of individual pleasures. *Katastematic* pleasure is the calm ocean, kinetic pleasures are the waves.

[Don](#) This metaphor of yours is pretty similar in essence to how I understand *katastemic* pleasure. My understanding is probably not even close to what Epicurus had in mind, but I kind of like it. Especially, because I came up with my metaphor thanks to one of my favourite dreams from the past. Anyway, here it is (the metaphor for *katastemic* pleasure, not the dream).

I like to imagine myself as a lonely child in a deep forest for the first time. Inexperienced, ignorant and scared of my present surroundings. The forest is full of ghosts, screams and shadows. Everything seems hostile to me. Everything wants to hurt me. So I crouch up

trembling next to the closest tree, praying for my life. And it seems to work. I'm still alive. And I eventually stop praying and I'm still alive. So I get up and get the courage to open my eyes and look around. I forgot for a moment that I'm scared and I start to investigate my surroundings. Enough time passes and I know now that the ghosts and shadows are caused by the sun and leaves. They are quite beautiful, in fact. Screams don't come from human flesh hungry beasts but animals living peacefully in the forest. I know the forest. I understand it. And one day when I'm comfortable and confident enough I close my eyes, spread my arms, smile and inhale in awe my beautiful forest. And from now on nothing is going to take that feeling of connection, harmony, inner peace and joy from me until I die. I know how to sustain that feeling because I know and understand enough.

This is how I imagine katastemic pleasure and the ideal progress in life. It's quite close to ataraxia, I guess. As you said [Don](#), katastemic pleasure is ever present background and it's there for grabs if one puts enough effort to understand how to get it. Kinetic pleasures are all the little things in between. In my metaphor, these are trees, leaves, sun and animals. They are temporary excitations that bring variety to life. And maybe I'm wrong imagining it this way but even then, it's a pleasant thought.

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### **Post by “Don” of July 3, 2023 at 1:57 PM**

I think you're onto something, [TauPhi](#) .

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### **Post by “Godfrey” of July 3, 2023 at 2:28 PM**

Just finished reading this article from post #48: <https://cup.columbia.edu/wp-content/upl...-Appendix-6.pdf>

#### [Quote from Don](#)

the katastematic pleasure is the preferred background condition of being. Kinetic pleasure is the moment by moment awareness of individual pleasures. Katastematic pleasure is the calm ocean, kinetic pleasures are the waves.

This (current 😊 ) interpretation seems to be the author's conclusion as well and makes a lot of sense to me. In the article she gives the idea some context wrt Plato, Aristotle and Cicero which is helpful. Plus, this interpretation has the virtue of simplicity. It seems that it may have been

Cicero who made such a complex and confusing issue of it. Imagine that!

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### Post by “Don” of July 3, 2023 at 2:37 PM

Which all makes sense since the Cyrenaics would not have accepted the "ocean" just the "waves" as pleasure.

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### Post by “Don” of July 3, 2023 at 2:50 PM

#### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

It seems that it may have been Cicero who made such a complex and confusing issue of it. Imagine that!

LOL! Cicero? Obfuscating the issue? Unthinkable! 😏

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### Post by “Godfrey” of July 3, 2023 at 2:51 PM

This article addresses what has really been bugging me: the precise meanings of *khara* and *euphrosyne* in Fragment 2 from Epicurus. I just can't wrap my head around these terms in the context of this discussion, and they seem to be the source of what I find "off" in the chart in post #30. (BTW, apologies for "banal" and "useless"; I didn't mean to sound so harsh.)

<https://cup.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Philosophies-of-Happiness-Appendix-8.pdf>

I'm not sure that it provides a satisfying answer. But there is this:

[footnote] xi *However, we should allow also for another possibility. Epicurus is not a systematic philosopher in the same way as Aristotle. We have seen that in his use of the term pathos he slides from a generic sense to a more restricted, technical sense. Likewise, although he may say that animals experience hedonê, while joy is a rational emotion (and thus imply that pleasure is a function of the non-rational soul), he may use the terms somewhat*

*interchangeably. Thus he may not always parse out the precise distinction between pleasure and joy; he may see the katastematic condition as a fluid conjunction of pleasant experiences of both the rational and non-rational dimensions of the soul.*

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## **Post by “Don” of July 4, 2023 at 12:10 AM**

I've been giving this ocean metaphor more thought, and I'd like to share a refinement that [Godfrey](#) offered this evening at our happy hour. I hope he doesn't mind my posting. I think it's a brilliant modification.

So, my issue of seeing katastematic pleasures as the ocean and kinetic pleasure as the waves was the idea of seeing waves as disturbances. There is a tradition of comparing ataraxia (a quintessential katastematic pleasure) to sailing on calm seas. Waves, to me, signified disturbance, turbulence, etc. Not something to take pleasure in.

Enter [Godfrey](#) 😊 ...He offered that if the ocean is katastematic pleasure, think of the waves as surfers do. Surfers seek out waves, large and small. They can ride them for a long time, sometimes they wipe out. To me, even the wipe outs are a valuable metaphor. Maybe those are the pleasures that aren't necessarily choiceworthy by everyone?? But, in any case, waves CAN be pleasurable. Thanks, [Godfrey](#) !!

So, I'm trying to not become completely enamored of the ocean/wave metaphor...but I'm liking this. As you've seen, I've left out Cicero's "Torquatus" material so far. I'm still not convinced Cicero is a reliable narrator, but supposedly Cicero requested Atticus to get Phaedrus's Epicurean text "On the Gods" when Cicero was writing his "On the Nature of the Gods." But what happens if we take this ocean/waves metaphor and look at what "Torquatus" has to say. I'm not going to be exhaustive, but let's take a look...

### [Quote from Cicero, On Ends, 1.11](#)

And therefore Epicurus would not admit that there was any intermediate state between pleasure and pain; for he insisted that that very state which seems to some people the intermediate one, when a man is free from every sort of pain, is not only pleasure, but the highest sort of pleasure. For whoever feels how he is affected must inevitably be either in a state of pleasure or in a state of pain. But Epicurus thinks that the highest pleasure consists in an absence of all pains; so that pleasure may afterwards be varied, and may be of different kinds, but cannot be increased or amplified.

From this, we can see:

- Epicurus would not admit that there was any intermediate state between pleasure and pain
- he insisted that that very state... when a man is free from every sort of pain, is not only pleasure, but the highest sort of pleasure.
- the highest pleasure consists in an absence of all pains
- pleasure may afterwards be varied
  - may be of different kinds, but cannot be increased or amplified.

If we examine this, we find a "state" (let's say "condition") which would be katastematic pleasure.

"That very state (condition)" is "free from every sort of pain." Every sort of pain? Would that be both freedom from mental pain (ataraxia?) and physical pain (aponia?)? That's how I could read it.

Pleasures that are varied then could be the kinetic pleasure which are of different kinds and varied, BUT the background condition of katastematic pleasure - the background pleasure - cannot be increased or amplified. Once erroneous views are eradicated, they can't grow back. Correct views once established cannot be increased or amplified.

#### Quote

it is inevitable that there must be in a man who is in this condition a firmness of mind which fears neither death nor pain

There's that "condition" with "firmness of mind"... sounds katastematic.

I'll leave it there for now, but there are ways to interpret Cicero's "Torquatus" material as this katastematic background/foundation ocean of pleasure punctuated by waves of kinetic pleasure without too many gymnastics.

Fascinating stuff!

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### Post by “Godfrey” of July 27, 2023 at 7:14 PM

I've been meaning to address this from another angle but haven't made much progress. So, rather than let the perfect be the enemy of the good, I'm just going to put some thoughts down in a rather stream of consciousness fashion.

It begins with thinking about the *practical* implications of katastematic and kinetic pleasures. Why separate them, in addition to a philosophical argument? What use can we make of this distinction in terms of living our most pleasant lives?

The "fancy pleasures" theory would have one believe that katastematic pleasure is something special. Maybe a particular absence of a particular pain. If I reject that idea, where does that leave me? My answer is the same as it always is: the guides to living are pleasure *and* pain. Pain includes fears and desires, and Epicurus developed the three categories of desires. You might say that these are a more detailed way of understanding the guidance that we get from pain. Running with that for a moment, why would there not be a similarly more detailed way of understanding the guidance we get from pleasure? And since choosing/avoiding pleasure and avoiding/choosing pain are, to some degree, ways of achieving the same result, wouldn't it be logical to have categories of pleasure analogous to those of desires? If this is so, then I'm next suggesting that katastematic pleasures come from natural and necessary desires and that kinetic pleasures come from natural and unnecessary desires. OK, but how is this *useful*?

Pondering this leads me to thinking about the 80/20 principle: 80% (give or take) of a particular set of results tend to come from 20% (give or take) of a particular set of inputs. Applying this to pursuing pleasure, I'm suggesting that katastematic pleasures and natural/necessary desires are simply the 20% of things that an individual can choose to pursue, based on their individual circumstances, that will result in them achieving 80% of their pleasure. For instance, putting together and following a well-researched financial plan is something that will potentially result in a lifetime of pleasure while taking a relatively small amount of effort. Or, gazing at the stars each night can, bit by bit, result in a baseline of pleasure and of belonging to the material universe. What do these have in common? They are both effective ways of achieving a baseline of pleasure. Kinetic pleasure would, at least in this train of thought, be the 20% (+/-) of pleasure achieved by 80% (+/-) of actions.

This is unorthodox but, with further development, might provide a *useful* alternative to the primrose path of Ciceronian obfuscation that we now have. I hope it makes a certain amount of sense.... Anyway, I'd love to hear your thoughts: let 'er rip!

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## Post by "Godfrey" of July 27, 2023 at 7:22 PM

Here are some texts that may reinforce my post to some degree....

Diogenes of Oenoanda fragment 34:

- *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.*
- *Well, what are the disturbing emotions? They are fears -- of the gods, of death, and of pains --and, besides these, desires that outrun the limits fixed by nature. These are the roots of all evils, and, unless we cut them off, a multitude of evils will grow upon us.*

PDs:

- [PD15](#) *Natural wealth is both limited and easy to acquire, but the riches incited by groundless opinion have no end. St-Andre*
- [PD21](#) *One who perceives the limits of life knows how easy it is to expel the pain produced by a lack of something and to make one's entire life complete; so that there is no need for the things that are achieved through struggle. St-Andre*
- [PD26](#) *The desires that do not bring pain when they go unfulfilled are not necessary; indeed they are easy to reject if they are hard to achieve or if they seem to produce harm. St-Andre*
- [PD30](#) *Among natural desires, those that do not bring pain when unfulfilled and that require intense exertion arise from groundless opinion; and such desires fail to be stamped out not by nature but because of the groundless opinions of humankind. St.-Andre*

## Post by “Don” of July 27, 2023 at 11:58 PM

### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

wouldn't it be logical to have categories of pleasure analogous to those of desires? If this is so, then I'm next suggesting that katastematic pleasures come from natural and necessary desires and that kinetic pleasures come from natural and unnecessary desires . OK, but how is this useful?

I'm intrigued by your idea, but not sure if I'm fully onboard...yet. Let me make sure I understand your suggestion:

Fully agree & acknowledge that Epicurus provides a categorization of desires and a categorization of pleasures.

Your positing that our basic needs (natural and necessary desires) give rise to katastematic pleasure - our "baseline" pleasure (the "ocean" in the water metaphor earlier above?) and this

is a result of 20% of actions/choices/avoidances, giving rise to 80% of our pleasure in life. Kinetic pleasure (the "waves" in the metaphor above) arises from 80% of our actions but only contributes 20% of our overall happiness. So we need both the 80% katastematic and 20% kinetic to live fully pleasurable 100% lives. Percentages aside, you're proposing that the bulk of our "baseline" pleasure is going to come from meeting our "natural and necessary" desires, but the kinetic pleasure is ...to make up a new metaphor... the icing that really makes the cake delicious?

Is that summary aligning with your thinking?

If so, the one thing that strikes me as askew is comparing desires with pleasure. Desires to me are one thing; pleasure and pain are another thing. Desires imply cognition and rational decision-making, whereas pleasure and pain are sensations which we can't decide not to feel.

Like I said, I'm intrigued and you may be onto something... just still percolating.

That said, I do like your striving to make things practical and useful and to get off "the primrose path of Ciceronian obfuscation." (A NICE touch of wordsmithing that phrase is!)

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## Post by "Godfrey" of July 28, 2023 at 2:17 AM

You make some good points [Don](#) ... I'm definitely still percolating as well!

The 80/20 part needs a lot more explanation and clarification and is probably best left out for now. It also is a modern idea and is just confusing things at this point. (Having said that, the 80/20 Principle by Richard Koch is an excellent book on the subject, and one theme of the book is maximizing happiness.)

### [Quote from Don](#)

the one thing that strikes me as askew is comparing desires with pleasure. Desires to me are one thing; pleasure and pain are another thing. Desires imply cognition and rational decision-making, whereas pleasure and pain are sensations which we can't decide not to feel.

Excellent point! I'm basically seeing the pursuit of pleasure and analysis of desires as two mental models to help achieve the goal of pleasure. In order to maximize our pleasure, we can focus on either or both. For the moment let's ignore the categories to get to the "higher level" thoughts. Thinking out loud, the moment that we "pursue" a pleasure we have created a desire that we are attempting to satisfy. By experiencing the pleasure, we have satisfied the desire.

So any choice or avoidance is, I think, subject to this process as you rightly describe.

OK, so, working with choices and avoidances, let's now look at categories. I guess what I'm trying to get to is using PDs 15, 21, 26 and 30 as a boardwalk to the ocean of katastematic pleasure, and in so doing to demystify katastematic pleasure and make it a practical idea. The way that I'm trying to do this is by thinking in terms of efficiency: thinking through the things in our lives that give us the most lasting pleasure and/or the most nagging pain, and determining the most effective ways to address these things so as to maximize our pleasure. By no means would this mean eliminating the "icing on the cake" (or the cake), but it's a way to organize our time to provide the greatest pleasure, whatever that may be for each of us. It's also a way to dig into some of these issues like pleasure v desire, katastematic v kinetic, intensity and duration of pleasure....

#### [Quote from Don](#)

you're proposing that the bulk of our "baseline" pleasure is going to come from meeting our "natural and necessary" desires, but the kinetic pleasure is ...to make up a new metaphor... the icing that really makes the cake delicious?

Yes, but I'm reading natural and necessary as defined as "those that bring pain when unfulfilled and that don't take undue effort to fulfill." There is no pre-determined list of these things, they are only things described by this definition. And, to me, this definition describes desires that, when fulfilled, give us "a lot of bang for our buck", that bang for our buck being katastematic pleasure. So Epicurus isn't laying down some mystical dogma, he's describing the most efficient way to maximize our pleasure. Very practical and medicinal.

Katastematic pleasures then are those that result from specific (to each individual) natural and necessary desires as just defined. Referring to the examples in post #57 above, two of these could be (for a particular individual, and possibly changing over time) the pleasure of financial stability, and the pleasure of awe combined with a sense of belonging in the material universe.

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### **Post by "Godfrey" of July 28, 2023 at 12:39 PM**

#### [Quote from Don](#)

Desires imply cognition and rational decision-making, whereas pleasure and pain are sensations which we can't decide not to feel.

This needs a bit more parsing: I don't think that there's always a rational component to desires. In fact a large part of advertising is finding ways to create desires which get beneath the rational. Choosing whether or not to act on a desire is definitely a rational operation, but on some level a desire is a craving, a feeling, perhaps a type of pain.

From Oxford Languages Dictionary online:

de·sire /də'zī(ə)r/ noun

a strong feeling of wanting to have something or wishing for something to happen.

"a desire to work in the dirt with your bare hands"

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## Post by “Don” of July 28, 2023 at 1:31 PM

### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

This needs a bit more parsing: I don't think that there's always a rational component to desires. I

With your explanations there, I fully agree!

### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

Choosing whether or not to act on a desire is definitely a rational operation,

Yes.

I could see there being "subconscious" desires or ingrained habitual desires.

Edit:

I think I would also include addiction in this category.