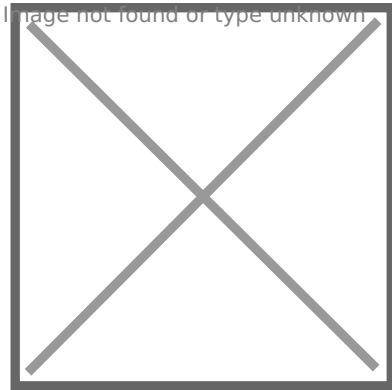


Eat Drink and be Merry!

Post by “kochiekoch” of September 27, 2023 at 10:13 PM

As per our Wednesday discussion, eat drink and be merry shows up in a couple of places in the bible. One is in Ecclesiastes:



[Bible Gateway passage: Ecclesiastes 8:15 - Living Bible](#)

Then I decided to spend my time having fun because I felt that there was nothing better in all the earth than that a man should eat, drink, and be merry, with...

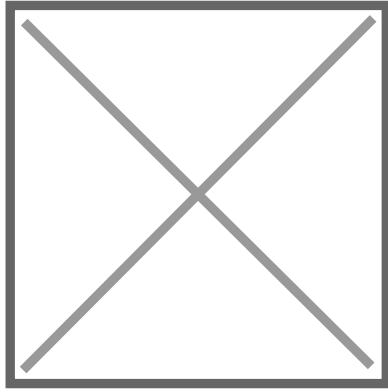
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>>Ecclesiastes 8:15

Living Bible

¹⁵ Then I decided to spend my time having fun because I felt that there was nothing better in all the earth than that a man should eat, drink, and be merry, with the hope that this happiness would stick with him in all the hard work that God gives to mankind everywhere.<<

And then there's Paul. 1 Corinthians is considered one of his authentic letters, unlike about six others in the New Testament :



[Bible Gateway passage: 1 Corinthians 15:32 - Living Bible](#)

And what value was there in fighting wild beasts—those men of Ephesus—if it was only for what I gain in this life down here? If we will never live again after...

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>>1 Corinthians 15:32

Living Bible

³² And what value was there in fighting wild beasts—those men of Ephesus—if it was only for what I gain in this life down here? If we will never live again after we die, then we might as well go and have ourselves a good time: let us eat, drink, and be merry. What’s the difference? For tomorrow we die, and that ends everything!<<

The jist of it in the bible is that it's not a good idea. God will get you for it. Living like those Greeks. 😊

Post by “Eikadistes” of September 27, 2023 at 10:39 PM

In *Epicurus & Apikorism*, Yaakov Malkin makes an interesting argument that Epicurean thought heavily influenced the production of the Books of *Ecclesiastes* and *Job* from the Old Testament. The link is tenuous, but note-worthy.

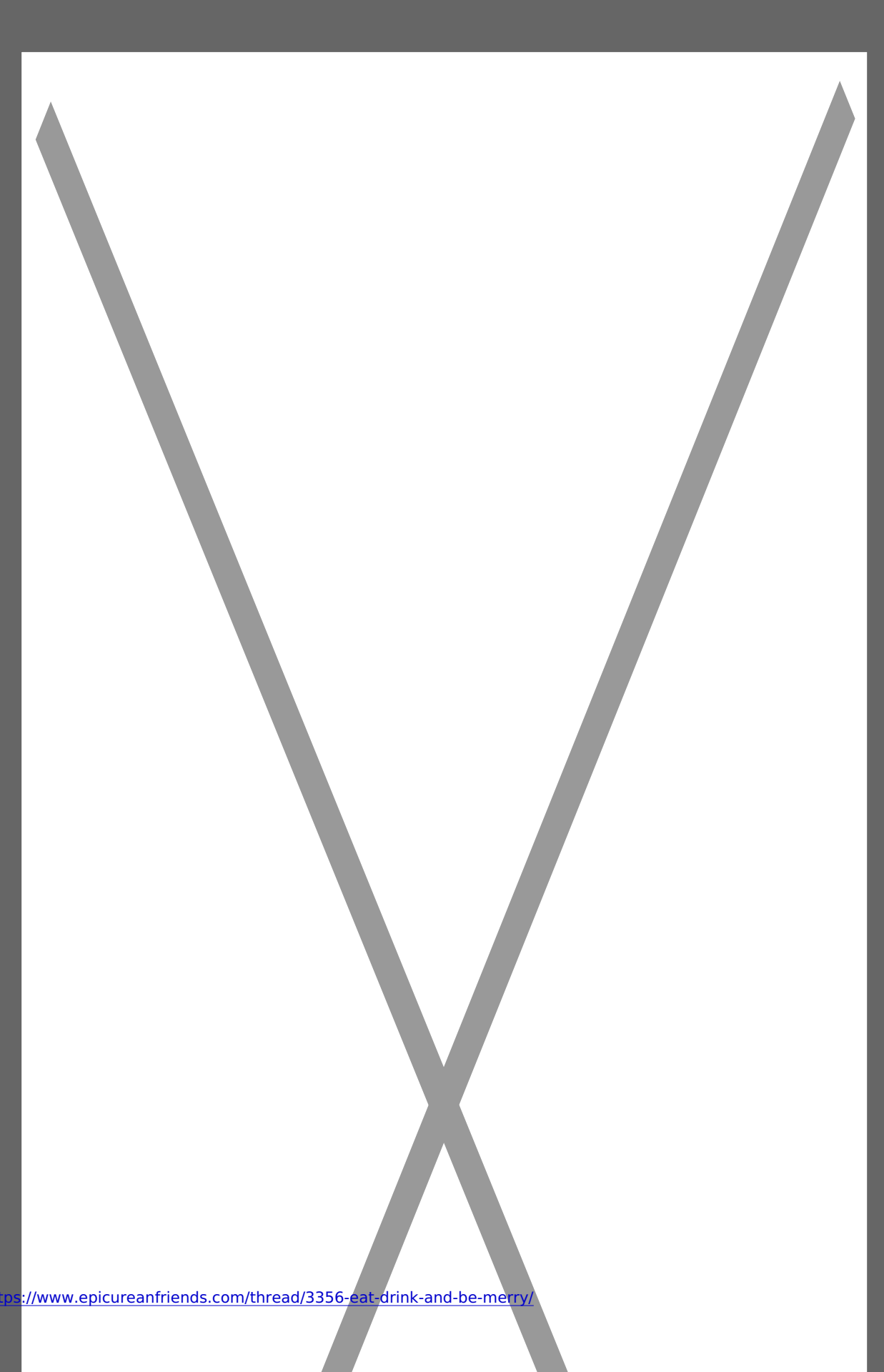
Post by “kochiekoch” of September 27, 2023 at 11:48 PM

Yeah. A quick look at Ecclesiastes and Job seem to indicate they fall into the category of wisdom literature. That would have to have a Greek influence as the Mediterranean world at the time was DRENCHED in Greek culture. Even affecting insular cultures like the Jewish world at the time.

Post by “Don” of September 28, 2023 at 4:55 AM

Fascinating Wikipedia article:

Image not found or type unknown



Post by “Don” of September 28, 2023 at 5:20 AM

8:15 Then I praised mirth, because there is no good for a man under the sun, but to eat, and drink, and be merry: and this shall attend him in his labour all the days of his life, which God has given him under the sun.

(Note: I don't go back to the Hebrew, but below are the Greek Septuagint translation and Jerome's Latin Vulgate translation)

8:15 καὶ ἐπήνεσα ἐγὼ σὺν τὴν εὐφροσύνην, ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἀγαθὸν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ὑπὸ τὸν ἥλιον, ὅτι εἰ μὴ φαγεῖν καὶ τοῦ πιεῖν καὶ τοῦ εὐφρανθῆναι, καὶ αὐτὸ συμπροσέσται αὐτῷ ἐν μόχθῳ αὐτοῦ ἡμέρας ζωῆς αὐτοῦ, ὅσας ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ Θεὸς ὑπὸ τὸν ἥλιον

8:15] laudavi igitur laetitiam quod non esset homini bonum sub sole nisi quod comederet et biberet atque gauderet et hoc solum secum auferret de labore suo in diebus vitae quos dedit ei Deus sub sole.

I found it interesting that the Septuagint uses εὐφροσύνην euphrosyne and its verb form, the feeling Epicurus identifies as a kinetic pleasure whereas Jerome decided to use two different terms. Although I know Lucretius uses gaude somewhere and possibly laetitia too.

Post by “Cassius” of September 28, 2023 at 6:43 AM

For those who were not there last night we discussed to what extent "eat drink and be merry for tomorrow we die" would be considered Epicurean.

Very different answers can be arrived at depending on whether you take the words of the phrase literally or allegorically.

I personally have no problem taking them allegorically and considering them consistent with Epicurus along the lines of the "live like you are dying" song referenced earlier this week.

However most of us do expect to live past "tomorrow" taken literally as 24 hours, and that requires a different calculation.

Post by “kochiekoch” of September 28, 2023 at 9:17 AM

>>I found it interesting that the Septuagint uses εὐφροσύνην euphrosyne and its verb form, the feeling Epicurus identifies as a kinetic pleasure whereas Jerome decided to use two different terms. Although I know Lucretius uses gaude somewhere and possibly laetitia too.<<

It would seem, the religious scholars didn't have a good understanding of pleasure. Outside of their area of expertise

Post by “Cassius” of September 28, 2023 at 11:28 AM

No one seems to agree on what "pleasure" means, which is why Cicero could take the position that he did and that is currently in our "quote of the week" at the top of the forum.

Torquatus laughed. Come, that is a good joke," he said, "that the author of the doctrine that pleasure is the End of things desirable, the final and ultimate Good, should actually not know what manner of thing pleasure itself is!" "Well," [Cicero] replied, either Epicurus does not know what pleasure is, or the rest of mankind all the world over do not."

- *Torquatus in Cicero's "On Ends" [Book Two III:1 \(Rackham\)](#)*

"What do we mean by pleasure" is the real problem, and I suspect it adds much unnecessary complexity to the issue to have to drill down to decide whether people are talking about "bodily" vs "mental" or "static" vs "kinetic." Those two distinctions strike me as two entirely separate categories of things, and if we aren't clear about what we are talking about at the beginning then we never make any progress. Epicurus seems to be labeling every mental or physical living experience as "pleasure" so long that experience is not explicitly felt to be painful. That labeling right there is the keystone on which everything else stands or falls, and shifting the terminology to whether that should be labeled as kinetic or static just adds confusion.

And as we've discussed, we have only mentions by Cicero and Diogenes Laertius to thank for that terminology shift, which Boris [Nikolsky](#) points out is probably a later overlay and figures not at all in Lucretius or the core material we have from Epicurus himself. Cassius Longinus said to Cicero himself that it is easy to explain how pleasure is the good rather than virtue, and the question that everyone wants to know is how to weigh "sex, drugs, and rock and roll" against

what we can lump together under "mental pleasure."

So I would think that *most* conversations in the surviving texts would be oriented toward comparing "mental" vs "bodily" experiences, as that is the obvious practical and threshold question that confronts everyone. Only after you weigh the bodily vs mental would you start talking about types of mental pleasure and getting technical about whether they are "static" vs changing.

Only once you get past that would I think you start drilling down between "types" of mental pleasure.

Post by "Cassius" of September 28, 2023 at 1:28 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Torquatus laughed. Come, that is a good joke," he said, "that the author of the doctrine that pleasure is the End of things desirable, the final and ultimate Good, should actually not know what manner of thing pleasure itself is!" "Well," [Cicero] replied, either Epicurus does not know what pleasure is, or the rest of mankind all the world over do not."

It is interesting to think about why Cicero could even take this position that Epicurus is unclear as to the meaning of pleasure, and the related accusation that Epicurus did not adhere to standard attitudes toward "definitions," and still remain credible.

Usually someone is concerned enough about their credibility that they don't make claims that are ridiculous on their face, so Cicero must have thought there was a reason that he could get away with accusing Epicurus of being imprecise.

Presumably most of what Epicurus wrote that would have clarified this is lost. It seems that mainly what we have left is the discussion in Menoecus, which seems to presume that we know what pleasure is. Taking that position is consistent with Torquatus' statement that there is no need for logical definition or proof that pleasure is desirable. *[So he says we need no reasoning or debate to shew why pleasure is matter for desire, pain for aversion. These facts he thinks are simply perceived, just as the fact that fire is hot, snow is white, and honey sweet, no one of which facts are we bound to support by elaborate arguments; it is enough merely to draw attention to the fact; and there is a difference between proof and formal argument on the one hand and a slight hint and direction of the attention on the other; the one process reveals to us mysteries and things under a veil, so to speak; the other enables us to pronounce upon*

patent and evident facts.]

The references in Menoeceus to pleasure being "the end" do not explicitly tell us what pleasure is, especially given that Epicurus says that we sometimes avoid certain pleasures in favor of pains. The presumption seems to be as is stated in PD3, that "Wherever pleasure is present, as long as it is there, there is neither pain of body, nor of mind, nor of both at once."

To give Cicero his due, it's a powerful argument to say that someone is using a word in a way very different from the standard definition. I think we have good material in Torquatus from which to construct a proper answer in more detail than Cicero allowed Torquatus to present, and I think that any proper response to Cicero really has to focus on this issue.

Post by "kochiekoch" of September 28, 2023 at 4:49 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Presumably most of what Epicurus wrote that would have clarified this is lost. It seems that mainly what we have left is the discussion in Menoeceus, which seems to presume that we know what pleasure is. Taking that position is consistent with Torquatus' statement that there is no need for logical definition or proof that pleasure is desirable. [So he says we need no reasoning or debate to shew why pleasure is matter for desire, pain for aversion. These facts he thinks are simply perceived, just as the fact that fire is hot, snow is white, and honey sweet, no one of which facts are we bound to support by elaborate arguments; it is enough merely to draw attention to the fact; and there is a difference between proof and formal argument on the one hand and a slight hint and direction of the attention on the other; the one process reveals to us mysteries and things under a veil, so to speak; the other enables us to pronounce upon patent and evident facts.]

I'm learning the ends and outs of the board here slowly but surly. Like how to insert quotes. 😊

Sounds like pleasure is a feeling, pre-rational and universally desirable rather than concept with a specific definition.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pR9vqpiRD1s>

Post by "Pacatus" of September 28, 2023 at 7:15 PM

Hardcore definition of pleasure may not be possible, but "I know it when I feel it."*

However, I think we can generally identify desires in the Epicurean schema of: 1) natural and necessary, 2) natural but not necessary and 3) neither natural nor necessary (and likely harmful: leading ultimately to pain rather than pleasure).

+++++

* In his concurring opinion in the 1964 [Jacobellis v. Ohio](#) case, Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart delivered what has become the most well-known line related to the detection of "hard-core" pornography: the infamous "I know it when I see it." statement.

"I have reached the conclusion . . . that under the First and Fourteenth Amendments criminal laws in this area are constitutionally limited to hard-core pornography. I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description; and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it, and the motion picture involved in this case is not that."

Post by "Godfrey" of September 28, 2023 at 7:39 PM

[Quote from kochiekoch](#)

Sounds like pleasure is a feeling, pre-rational and universally desirable rather than concept with a specific definition.



[Quote from Cassius](#)

Epicurus seems to be labeling every mental or physical living experience as "pleasure" so long that experience is not explicitly felt to be painful.

Well said. I may have been asleep, but I don't recall hearing it stated quite like that.

When you look at it like this, which is how it should be looked at, I suppose the first concern is to prove that there's no neutral state. This can be done in at least two ways:

- attending to one's experience, and noticing that what was originally thought to be neutral, upon more careful attention, always has an element of either pleasure or pain in it
- examining a circumplex, which shows that 0,0 is the only place where pleasure or pain don't occur. And realizing that 0,0 is so infinitesimally tiny as to be meaningless in practical terms.

Then you need to figure out how to get practical benefit from such a broad range of experience. Epicurus did this by defining the categories of desires. These can then be used to examine one's personal desires. Once one has examined their desires and becomes increasingly aware of their personal pleasures and pains, they can think about prudent ways to increase their pleasure. Epicurus' extant texts give these criteria in that regard, at least to my understanding:

- all pleasures are finite, because one's life is finite
- pleasures and pains can be broken down only into intensity, duration and location. Their magnitudes can be varied in each of these ways.

Only at this juncture and in this context does it make sense to discuss things like mental v physical pleasures or static v kinetic pleasures.

Post by "Cassius" of September 28, 2023 at 9:29 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

When you look at it like this, which is how it should be looked at, I suppose the first concern is to prove that there's no neutral state. This can be done in at least two ways:

Is it clear why it is important that there should be no neutral state? Maybe this is one of those areas where philosophy is "necessary" to happiness. Maybe it's necessary to reflect on things in order to be confident that there isn't a neutral state. Thinking that there is a neutral state might on its face seem harmless, but anyone who doesn't reflect and doesn't identify life in the absence of pain to be pleasurable (as many non-reflective people fail to do), is trapped with a three-category labeling system in which the relationship between the three is undefined.

Is there any harm in such a three category system?

I can identify at least one:

If you think all of life is a mix of pleasure, pain, and neutral, then what is the "limit of pleasure?" Plato asked about that limit in [Philebus](#), and I think a good argument can be made that failing to identify a limit of pleasure was the turning point in [Philebus](#) that eventually led the

proponent of pleasure giving up his argument. The problem is that if you have three categories, you can't say that the limit of pleasure is the absence of pain, because you haven't dealt with the "neutral" experiences. If there are three categories then saying "absence of pain" does not tell you whether what is left is pleasure or neutrality, and as Cicero said to Torquatus there are lots of times that lots of people would say they are in neither pleasure nor pain.

If you're looking for a force of nature to compete with gods or ideal forms as your ultimate end, the argument is that it's got to have that "superlative" quality which cannot be improved by adding anything to it. Otherwise if you could add to it then it can be made better and you haven't reached the top of the mountain.

When you identify all of life's experiences as either painful or pleasurable, and you identify life as a sum from which all painful experiences have been removed, then you have logically identified an end that cannot be made better. A life that is completely free of pain is by definition completely pleasurable, and nothing can make it better - even more pleasure - because the sum you have identified is complete.

A completely wise person is the summit of wisdom, and a completely pleasurable life is the summit of pleasure.

Diogenes Laertius says Epicurus said "One wise man is not wiser than another." I think that helps us illuminate the issue too. Apparently in terms of "wisdom" there are sense in which "wisdom" can be judged to be the same across people even though they have had totally different experiences (and thus knowledge of different experiences) in life.

Maybe Epicurus is saying that this comparison as to wisdom is the same as that for pleasure. Any and all men who are "without pain" are being judged to be in the same condition of maximum pleasure, even though those those men are experiencing totally different mixtures of mental and bodily pleasures based on their individual circumstances. In saying that men who are pain-free are at the height of pleasure, we are saying nothing at all about what those men are actually doing in their bodies or mind, just that their conditions cannot be improved.

And that would be the way Epicurus would defend saying that a wise man in 2023 Athens is no wiser than a wise man in 200 BC Athens, even though their life experiences and practical knowledge is completely different from one another.

These comparisons make perfect sense and are valid, but they do require thought and the capability to figure the problem out.

Post by “Don” of September 28, 2023 at 11:03 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

static v kinetic pleasures.

Don't take this as personal, but I still have issues with thinking of katastematic as "static" while acknowledging that some translations use that term. I really like the idea, that you helped me visualize [Godfrey](#) , of katastematic pleasure being the calm ocean and kinetic pleasure being the surfable waves. I don't see katastematic pleasure as static, which to me implies stagnant, stale, etc. I see it as a "ground of being" or being in a particular state of calm, ease, etc. through which one experiences other pleasure.

I also concur with the circumplex notion. I don't even think there can be a 0,0 point. It's sort of like BCE/CE (or BC/AD if you want). There is no 0 CE or 0 BCE. It's either one or the other. Same way with pleasure or displeasure. You're either experiencing one or the other.

Post by “Godfrey” of September 29, 2023 at 1:19 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

Don't take this as personal, but

Not at all [Don](#) , I was just too lazy to type "katastematic"! Which I've now done. Which just shows that it doesn't pay to be lazy 😊

To show that I don't learn from my mistakes, I'd now like to put a thought which isn't fully formed out there.... If one accepts the assertion that pleasures/pains can vary in intensity, duration and location, can the concept (for that's really all that it is) of katastematic pleasure be clarified in any useful way by examining these categories?

At first blush I don't see intensity as being particularly relevant for katastematic pleasure, so I'll skip over it for now.

It would seem that duration is a key part of the concept: a pleasure that lasts a relatively long time seems to me to be katastematic, whereas a brief pleasure seems to be kinetic.

Location would also seem to be a critical part of the concept. Is it worthwhile to speak of katastematic pleasure in your toe? Or in your hand, as in the infamous Chrysippus quote? Pleasure located in the mind can be katastematic. However, I think that the reason for that is that once you've reasoned something out, the pleasure obtained with the conclusion is of

relatively long duration. What if you define magnitude of location as "breadth" of location? For instance a general sense of physical well-being. Or a pleasure located in several "areas" of the mind? Such as something that you enjoy while you're doing it, but also gives you a sense of lasting connectedness or purpose.

This is leading me to an amorphous thought that katastematic pleasure is something that maximizes an individual's duration and breadth of pleasure. Everybody has a different way of achieving this, but the goal in striving for katastematic pleasure would be to maximize the breadth and duration of the individual's pleasure.

What I'm trying to get at is a reasoned description of katastematic pleasure that not only is useful in daily life, but that also emphasizes that katastematic pleasure is a practical concept and not a "fancy pleasure" or a woo-woo state. Any thoughts?

Post by "Cassius" of September 29, 2023 at 2:09 AM

At this point I would frame a sea / pleasure analogy this way:

The sea cannot feel, but for purposes of considering pleasure the sea can be considered just like Chrysippus' hand. As with the many things that a hand can be doing, the sea can be doing all sorts of things. It can be standing largely in one place, it can have tides, it can have currents, it can have eddies, it can have flows, it can be briny, it can be fresh, it can be hot, it can be cold, it can be full of life or less full, it can be cloudy or it can be clear, and on its surface it can be placid or it can be driven by the wind into waves of greater or lesser extent. Each and every one of those conditions can be considered to be pleasurable, because the sea is doing what seas do naturally without experiencing pain. It is convenient and useful for us to label "doing what a living thing does naturally and without pain" to be "experiencing pleasure." None of those conditions of pleasure for the sea are intrinsically or morally superior to any other, because all are a part of what seas normally do without experiencing pain. The fact that some conditions involve more motion or change than others has no relevance to our labeling those conditions as pleasurable for the sea, any more than whether we are waving our hand or holding it still stops us from considering all nonpainful activities of the hand to be pleasurable, just as Torquatus assumes in his hand illustration. Chryssipus wanted people to think that the hand is not experiencing pleasure unless it is being actively stimulated from the outside. Torquatus correctly explains that this criticism is effective against the Cyreniacs, but not against Epicurus, because Epicurus identifies the normal state of life as pleasurable regardless of whether outside stimulation is present.

For purposes of bringing pain into the picture we could say that it is not normal and natural for the sea to be polluted with a dump of industrial waste, and it is not normal and natural for a hand to be burned. If we collapse all the possible ways the sea can feel pain into "being polluted" and collapse all the ways that a hand can feel pain into "being burned," then we can say that unless the sea is pained by being polluted the sea is in a state of pleasure. The logical deduction that follows is that if the sea is experiencing no pollution whatsoever, then it is in the greatest state of pleasure that it can experience, which is the limit or height of pleasure for the sea. Likewise unless the hand is being burned it is in a state of pleasure, and if it is experiencing no burning at all it is at its height or limit of pleasure. This is exactly the explanation that Torquatus gives to Cicero, but which Cicero proceeds to ignore as if Torquatus had said nothing. Cicero may have ignored this explanation, but we can give him credit for including it, because by doing so he gives us a very valuable illustration as to how Epicurus actually considered pleasure to be viewed as the absence of pain. Pleasure is viewed as the absence of pain because all pain-free mental and bodily activity of life - everything we experience which is not painful - is best and accurately viewed as pleasurable.

It causes no harm for us to personally favor either surfing the waves or floating on a calm surface, so long as we recognize that both experiences are pleasurable in their own ways and have their own benefits. What does cause harm is to suggest that, as a general rule for everyone, one type of pleasure is more worthy or noble or meaningful than the other, or that only one type of pleasure is authentic, or that one type of pleasure is desirable only so we can experience another. Pitting one pleasure against another causes us to lose sight that the true importance of the analogy is to affirm that all nonpainful experiences of existence for a living being should be considered pleasurable. Once we identify that all experience in the absence of pain is pleasurable we are free to choose from the banquet, and if we do so wisely we will choose not those pleasures that are the most numerous or those that last the longest, but those we feel to be "most pleasant." (*And just as with food he does not seek simply the larger share and nothing else, but rather the most pleasant, so he seeks to enjoy not the longest period of time, but the most pleasant.*)

Cicero pits the bodily pleasures against the mental pleasures and thereby convinces everyone to take their eye off Epicurus' key insight. When you split the mind and body, and pit "calm" versus "intense" pleasures, and consider all the various types of pleasure to be at war with each other, you forget the big picture, and you're forced back into thinking that god or virtue or logic or idealism has to be consulted to determine which pleasures to pursue. The big picture is that in an eternity of nothingness, all of the nonpainful experiences of life should be prized as pleasurable. You yourself choose which to pursue, and you should pursue them energetically and prudently and without procrastination unless and until you confront pain that is truly unbearable and without relief. Further, you can be confident that even in the face of unbearable and unrelievable pain you will not be without resources, because you then have the option taking the situation in your own hands and exiting the theatre.

This may not be how most people normally think, but that does not change the fact that people would be better off if they did think this way, and that there is no logical reason why they should not think this way. [1]

I would say appreciation for this insight shows how so many smart people could legitimately consider Epicurus to be "godlike" and "master builder of human happiness" - even a figurative "savior." Epicurus identifies a clear and straightforward path to cleanse the jar of life. Considering all of life unpolluted by pain to be pleasurable is an attitude that removes the corruption, seals the cracks, and allows us to fill life with pleasure. The result is identification of the best possible life in a way that is understandable, achievable, and compelling to most everyone who is not corrupted or manipulated by false religions and philosophies.

[1]

Quote from "Epicurus And His Philosophy" page 240 - Norman DeWitt (emphasis added)

"The extension of the name of pleasure to this normal state of being was the major innovation of the new hedonism. It was in the negative form, freedom from pain of body and distress of mind, that it drew the most persistent and vigorous condemnation from adversaries. The contention was that the application of the name of pleasure to this state was unjustified on the ground that two different things were thereby being denominated by one name. Cicero made a great to-do over this argument, but it is really superficial and captious. The fact that the name of pleasure was not customarily applied to the normal or static state did not alter the fact that the name ought to be applied to it; nor that reason justified the application; nor that human beings would be the happier for so reasoning and believing."

Post by "Cassius" of September 29, 2023 at 8:20 AM

FYI and FWIW, when I wrote my long post 16 I had not seen Godfrey's 15 - we crossposted.

I would say that in looking for a definition of *katastematic* this would be a very good time for anyone who has not read it to re-read what Boris [Nikolsky](#) has to say, including:

"Besides all these problems and contradictions there is yet another, quite remarkable fact. As it happens, most sources make no mention whatever of any differentiation between kinetic and static pleasures but rather convey Epicurus' doctrine in such a way as to suggest that pleasure was to him a unified and unambiguous concept. This group comprises sources that are rightly

considered to be the most reliable: these are texts by Epicurus himself, as well as by Lucretius and Plutarch. On the other side, besides Cicero, only Diogenes Laertius and Athenaeus mention two kinds of pleasure."

Gosling and Taylor make the same points in much more detail, but [Nikolsky](#) states it concisely and traces the issue of how this came to be a question in the first place. The full article is available wherever [Nikolsky](#) is clickable here at the forum, or directly [here](#).

So my current view is I think we have some separate things going on here:

1 - It is critically important to extent the label of pleasure to the normal non-painful state of being alive and doing and thinking whatever is not painful. And "whatever is not painful" includes every kind of mental or bodily pleasure you can name, whether kinetic or katestematic or any Greek word starting with "k" you prefer to use.

2 - It is critically important for the mind to go through the process of understanding how life in the absence of pain is pleasurable, and how the gods and death and the prospect of pain do not prevent us from leading happy lives.

3 - Once 1 and 2 are established, then people can choose among "kinetic / active" or "resting / static / katestematic" pleasures as fits their personal situations and as various activities and pursuits are available to them. But they need to understand that contrary to those who argue that katestematic pleasures are the ultimate goal, there is no "authentic" or "higher" or "noble" or "worthy" ranking that makes one pleasure intrinsically and for all people at all times "better" than another. No such ranking exists that tells everyone to target "katestematic" pleasure as the ultimate goal of life. If you play with definitions and divide up "Pleasure" into types, and pit one type against the other as better for everyone at all times, then you create a war among pleasures and you imply that god or idealism or virtue or geometry or numerology is needed to tell you which is the "best." And we all know what happens to a house divided against itself.

Post by “Cassius” of September 29, 2023 at 9:40 AM

I bet if we looked hard enough we could find evidence that Cicero spoke in terms of the military strategy of "divide and conquer." I can't find anything immediately but we know this [about Cicero's military career](#):

Besides his activity in ameliorating the hard pecuniary situation of the province, Cicero was also creditably active in the military sphere. Early in his governorship he received information that prince [Pacorus](#), son of [Orodes II](#) the king of the Parthians, had crossed the [Euphrates](#), and was ravaging the Syrian countryside and had even besieged [Cassius](#) (the interim Roman

commander in Syria) in [Antioch](#).^[100] Cicero eventually marched with two understrength legions and a large contingent of auxiliary cavalry to Cassius's relief. Pacorus and his army had already given up on besieging Antioch and were heading south through Syria, ravaging the countryside again. Cassius and his legions followed them, harrying them wherever they went, eventually ambushing and defeating them near Antigonea.^[101]

Another large troop of Parthian horsemen was defeated by Cicero's cavalry who happened to run into them while scouting ahead of the main army. Cicero next defeated some robbers who were based on [Mount Amanus](#) and was hailed as [imperator](#) by his troops. Afterwards he led his army against the independent Cilician mountain tribes, besieging their fortress of [Pindenissum](#). It took him 47 days to reduce the place, which fell in December.^[102] On 30 July 50 BC Cicero left the province^[103] to his brother [Quintus](#), who had accompanied him on his governorship as his [legate](#).^[104] On his way back to Rome he stopped in [Rhodes](#) and then went to [Athens](#), where he caught up with his old friend [Titus Pomponius Atticus](#) and met men of great learning.^[105]

Post by “Godfrey” of September 29, 2023 at 9:53 AM

This is all true as far as it goes. But, to my understanding, Epicurus didn't stop there. He realized that opponents would ridicule this for being too broad, and that adherents might need a more systematic approach to living a life of pleasure. This is one reason why he discussed the categories of desires. It's also why he didn't stop at [PD03](#), but continued with PDs 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25 and 27, as well as the extant letters and further writings which no longer exist.

Far from being a ranking of pleasures, these texts of Epicurus' are, to me, practical descriptions and instructions for living a pleasurable life. I'm currently interpreting [PD09](#) in particular in this way. Regardless of what words Cicero put into the mouth of Torquatus, as individuals we each need to find a more personal, targeted approach to the goal than "a life crammed full of pleasures" (or whatever the exact words were that Cicero used). (As an aside, this is one reason that so many people new to the forum ask about "exercises".) Epicurus gives us these tools, if we reason them out.

"A life crammed full of pleasures", while technically correct to some degree, smacks of snark and sarcasm, and is totally useless in refining an ethics of pleasure. Distinctions such as intensity, duration and location aren't categories of pleasure, but are components of pleasures. I understand that this may be a controversial interpretation, but I think that it's a correct one. Or at least one worth giving more thought to.

You don't learn to play the flute by producing the most sounds, but by understanding the components of the flute and reasoning out how to produce the sweetest and/or most

expressive sounds. You don't live a life of pleasure by cramming in the most pleasures or pursuing illusory, infinite pleasures. You live a life of pleasure by pursuing what, for you, are the sweetest pleasures. To this end Epicurus gives us means to subtle understanding. To undermine this end, Cicero gives us snark that gets us to argue among ourselves.

Post by "Cassius" of September 29, 2023 at 11:33 AM

Godfrey:

I think that you and DeWitt are saying something very similar, with this from the paragraphs just before the one I quoted above:

for promoting the happiness of mankind. They were rather in the position of men who give themselves to the study of anatomy without contemplating the practice of medicine. The attitude of Epicurus, on the contrary, was pragmatic from the beginning. The declaration that "Vain is the word of that philosopher by which no malady of mankind is healed" has already been quoted.⁵¹

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

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

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

The extension of the name of pleasure to this normal state of being was the major innovation of the new hedonism. It was in the negative

Post by "Godfrey" of September 29, 2023 at 1:00 PM

One quick thought regarding the location of a pleasure.... Once it has been established that pleasure is a feeling, location gives it a degree of specificity that is useful in debating the

subject. For any pleasure to be real and, further, to be evaluated, it needs to be *felt*. In order for me to evaluate pleasures, they need to be (or have been) located in *my* body and/or mind. Furthermore, ranking "universal pleasures" is meaningless, as these are nothing but concepts which aren't actually felt by anyone. And the feelings that these concepts refer to can be experienced differently by everyone.

This brings to mind duration, which can also be expressed as "time". If I've never experienced a particular pleasure, then I can't accurately compare it to another pleasure through some abstract ranking.

All this is not to say that I can't plan ahead by imagining how a particular pleasure will feel to me if and when I were to experience it, and compare that to how another imagined pleasure will feel to me. This is pretty much a necessary exercise in all sorts of situations. But the appropriateness of my comparison can only be accurately assessed during and after actually experiencing the pleasure. There needs to be a feeling, which occurs with a particular intensity, at and for a particular time, and at a particular location in my body and/or mind.

Post by “Cassius” of September 29, 2023 at 1:46 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

For any pleasure to be real and, further, to be evaluated, it needs to be felt. In order for me to evaluate pleasures, they need to be (or have been) located in my body and/or mind. Furthermore, ranking "universal pleasures" is meaningless, as these are nothing but concepts which aren't actually felt by anyone. And the feelings that these concepts refer to can be experienced differently by everyone.

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

There needs to be a feeling, which occurs with a particular intensity, at and for a particular time, and at a particular location in my body and/or mind.

I think both of those positions make a lot of sense. We can make generalized statements about how most people experience feelings but in the end if you don't experience them yourself you can't understand them.

I would bolster that by one of my favorite quotes:

[Quote from Jackson Barwis, Dialogue on Innate Principles](#)

When we are told that benevolence is pleasing; that malevolence is painful; we are not convinced of these truths by reasoning, nor by forming them into propositions: but by an appeal to the innate internal affections of our souls: and if on such an appeal, we could not feel within the sentiment of benevolence, and the peculiar pleasure attending it; and that of malevolence and its concomitant pain, not all the reasoning in the world could ever make us sensible of them, or enable us to understand their nature.

Post by “Don” of September 29, 2023 at 10:55 PM

Okay, so here is my revised nautical analogy for pleasure of the katastematic and kinetic varieties. Since I am still of the opinion that katastematic pleasures (especially ataraxia) are necessary **but not sufficient** for the pleasant life.

I'll use the sea as a metaphor for the mind which, in the end, senses all pleasurable sensations.. in fact, all sensations.

Imagine a sea that is polluted, churned up with mud, silt, and waste, with a surface whipped into whitecaps by winds and rains and storms.

The muddy, polluted, windswept, inhospitable waters are a metaphor for a mind under the influence of fears and anxieties of death, divine retribution, fear of one's neighbors, and all manner of ill-considered and false beliefs.

Cleaning the water and calming the storms brings calm, clear waters readily sailed in safety.

Only then does the clear calm water allows one to see with pleasure the bountiful life, colorful fish and other animals, the underwater corals, and the amazing sights under the water as well as to view, on the horizon, other shores that hold pleasurable experiences for one to sail to.

However, one must first achieve the calming of the storms and having clean water (katastematic pleasures) before all those other pleasures (kinetic pleasures) can be fully experienced.

I'm not saying you can't have some pleasure while rocking on a filthy, stormy sea if you batten down your hatches and sit in your cabin on your boat. But there is so much more available if you sail out of the storm and find clear waters.

Some of those storms - once you know the winds and can read the charts - can be avoided entirely. The Winds of the Fear of Death can be avoided. The Winds of the Fear of the Gods can

be sailed around with assurance.

Some pain - winds, waves, etc. - is unavoidable living a human life, but one will also know the sea *will* calm and the waters *will* clear eventually.

This isn't a perfect analogy by any measure, but I think this might convey what's in my mind slightly better than the ocean and waves metaphor I've been sharing recently.

PS. I'm also going to refer back to the discussion from Summer 2022 on katastematic and kinetic (specifically my posts no. 149 and 150 at this link:

Post

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

@Cassius asked me:

"what would you say are the implications of your position"

Well, I was going to read all the papers, synthesize all the points, convey my agreements and objections, pull in modern and ancient citations and quotes, and...

But that seemed like way too much work and pain!!

So, what I'll do is try to summarize my thinking into some bullet points and see how far we get.

From what I read in the classical and modern sources:

- The katastematic and kinetic pleasure distinction was...



Don

July 17, 2022 at 6:51 PM

Post by “Godfrey” of September 30, 2023 at 1:40 AM

One thing that strikes me about this picture, [Don](#) , is that it seems very similar to descriptions of the effects of meditation that I've read. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but it seems to me to be somewhat limiting when it comes to pursuing pleasure.

I've been attempting to complement this picture of katastematic pleasure by looking at the components of pleasures/pains as I've described in my above posts. Also, katastematic pleasure involves both a durable presence of pleasure and a durable absence of pain. On the one hand these are by definition the same thing. On the other hand, they provide two different viewpoints for maximizing pleasure.

Katastematic and kinetic seem to me to be relative concepts for describing the duration (durability?) of a pleasure or pain, and perhaps to describe the extent of location (breadth?) of a pleasure or pain.

I'm leaning toward the idea that katastematic/kinetic is really just a description of durability. Breadth is important, but not katastematic or kinetic. Breadth would be something like "does this thing bring me both physical and mental pleasure? Does it affect one part of my body, or is it a more widely distributed feeling? Does it give me mental satisfaction in one way or in a variety of ways?"

What I'm thinking is that looking at feelings in terms of the particular components of intensity, duration and location gives us a practical set of tools. Katastematic/kinetic is just a way of talking about the tool of duration. This line of reasoning was prompted by the texts, but I haven't yet gone back through the existing texts (studiously excluding Cicero) to see how fully it's supported.

Post by “Cassius” of September 30, 2023 at 6:08 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

What I'm thinking is that looking at feelings in terms of the particular components of intensity, duration and location gives us a practical set of tools. Katastematic/kinetic is just a way of talking about the tool of duration. This line of reasoning was prompted by the texts, but I haven't yet gone back through the existing texts (studiously excluding Cicero) to see how fully it's supported.

I generally agree with this perspective. Specific pleasures obviously differ from one another in their unique qualities, and intensity, duration, and location are practical ways of distinguishing them for purposes of discussion.

It makes sense also to focus on what Epicurus and Lucretius and Diogenes Laertius and any other self-proclaimed advocates wrote. However I would not exclude Cicero for too long, because when he records an advocate of Epicurus (Torquatus or Velleius, I am not sure if there

are any others) speaking, I think a lot of stock can be put in those words. I can't cite an example at the moment but it seems I have read that commentators think that Cicero had before him texts from the various schools when he was writing, and it seems to me that the extended presentations by Torquatus and Velleius deserve a lot of consideration.

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

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I'm not sure I follow what you are saying here. I see why you are saying that breadth is important but why is "duration" not important?

Post by "Don" of September 30, 2023 at 7:28 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

One thing that strikes me about this picture, Don , is that it seems very similar to descriptions of the effects of meditation that I've read. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but it seems to me to be somewhat limiting when it comes to pursuing pleasure.

I could see that similarity, but it seems to me that meditation (especially mindfulness meditation) is sometimes seen as an end in itself instead of a tool in a toolbox. However, whereas I see meditation as a tool to quiet one's busy mind (which is not a bad thing in itself), the Epicurean context is the necessary elimination of false and damaging beliefs and mental habits and similar impediments to well-being. Studying, meditating on the teachings "by yourself and with similar people," is a necessary step in freeing one's mind from unnecessary fears, anxieties, and negative mental habits, ripping these "empty" beliefs and habits out by the roots so they don't come back. If one wants to engage in meditation as a tool to help with day to day overthinking or being anxious, I think that has value. But the big storms and pollution that need to be eradicated in my (admittedly off the cuff) analogy are the existential fears of death, divine retribution, feelings of "I am a worm in the eyes of God," etc.

Without eliminating those, we might experience pleasures but there's going to always be a sea serpent ready to rear its ugly head out of the water and capsize our boat.

Post by “Don” of September 30, 2023 at 8:17 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

All this is not to say that I can't plan ahead by imagining how a particular pleasure will feel to me if and when I were to experience it, and compare that to how another imagined pleasure will feel to me. This is pretty much a necessary exercise in all sorts of situations. But the appropriateness of my comparison can only be accurately assessed during and after actually experiencing the pleasure.

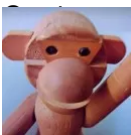
Hmmm...I may be misinterpreting what you're saying. Your saying that you "can't plan ahead by imagining how a particular pleasure will feel" seems to negate the idea of choosing and rejecting which pleasure to follow and which pains to reject. Can you expand on what you're saying there?

Post by “Godfrey” of September 30, 2023 at 3:29 PM

Re post 27, I'm saying that we plan ahead by imagining how a particular pleasure will feel, but that we can only confirm our "hypothesis" by actually experiencing the pleasure. Basically just a common sense statement, but poorly worded. I began the statement with a double negative: "All this is *not* to say that I *can't* plan ahead..." meaning "this is how I plan ahead". Kind of like some of Epicurus' wording 😊

Post by “Godfrey” of September 30, 2023 at 4:15 PM

Quote from Cassius



[Quote from Godfrey](#) *I'm leaning toward the idea that katastematic/kinetic is really just a description of durability. Breadth is*

important, but not katastematic or kinetic. Breadth would be something like "does this thing bring me both physical and mental pleasure? Does it affect one part of my body, or is it a more widely distributed feeling? Does it give me mental satisfaction in one way or in a variety of ways?"

I'm not sure I follow what you are saying here. I see why you are saying that breadth is important but why is "duration" not important

What I'm saying is that katastematic/kinetic (k/k) involves duration but that I don't think that k/k involves breadth. Both duration and breadth are important in order to maximize one's pleasure. The combination of the two, to my current way of thinking, is more important, both practically and theoretically, than the concept of k/k pleasures.

Basically I'm toying with the idea that k/k may not deserve the amount of attention that it gets. My thinking is that k/k is really just a way of describing duration, and we don't have any existing texts from Epicurus to which would give it any more importance.

An existing text that we do have is [PD09](#). I'm currently interpreting it as defining the three components of pleasure as intensity, duration and location. The more I think on it, the more useful these seem to be for working with maximizing one's pleasure. And if I'm interpreting [PD09](#) correctly, which is open to debate, then to my mind it has more relevance than the texts dealing with k/k, as it is directly attributed to Epicurus.

So I'm suggesting that the three components of pleasure as described in [PD09](#) are a more valuable topic of study than katastematic and kinetic pleasure. As far as I can tell, [PD09](#) has been pretty much ignored, possibly due to its confusing wording, while k/k is the subject of endless, and endlessly open-ended, discussion. And I'm wondering if the focus on k/k is more useful to opponents of Epicurus than to practicing Epicureans.

(Note that I'm not in any way disparaging Epicurean discussion of k/k! I'm just thinking that, once again, opponents such as Cicero and his ilk have cynically sent us off on a wild goose chase!)

Post by "Cassius" of September 30, 2023 at 4:24 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

An existing text that we do have is [PD09](#). I'm currently interpreting it as defining the three components of pleasure as intensity, duration and location. The more I think on it, the more useful these seem to be for working with maximizing one's pleasure. And if

I'm interpreting [PD09](#) correctly, which is open to debate, then to my mind it has more relevance than the texts dealing with k/k, as it is directly attributed to Epicurus.

Your analysis of [PD09](#) seems on target to me. I think most of the time that people pick up this subject the first places they intuitively go are (1) time /duration, (2) intensity, and (3) part of the body or mind being affected (location). It's hard for me to think of what additional classifications would deserve the same level in the hierarchy as those three. They apply to every kind of experience I can imagine, and all the other ways you can categorize pleasure seem to fit within those.

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

opponents such as Cicero and his ilk have cynically sent us off on a wild goose chase!)

And my current favorite explanation for that is that everyone in a competition knows the strategy of "divide and conquer." Suggesting that some "pleasures" are abstractly better than others creates a competition between the advocates of pleasure. Maybe someone needs to play the game against the other side and suggest that the virtue of courage is MUCH better than the virtue of wisdom, or piety to the gods is MUCH better than virtue. But then again those games have always been played too, and most everyone is as confused as ever even though 2000 years have gone by.