

# Episode 298 - TD26 - Facts And Feelings In Epicurean Philosophy - Part 1"

**Post by "Cassius" of September 5, 2025 at 2:34 PM**

Welcome to Episode 298 of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the most complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world.

**Each week we walk you through the Epicurean texts, and we discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. If you find the Epicurean worldview attractive, we invite you to join us in the study of Epicurus at EpicureanFriends.com, where we discuss this and all of our podcast episodes.**

**This week we return to our series covering Cicero's "Tusculan Disputations" from an Epicurean viewpoint.**

**After two weeks looking at Plutarch, today we are back in Part 3 of Cicero's book, addressing much the same issues within the framework of anger, pity, envy, and other strong emotions. This week we will be following up on last week's discussion about absence of pain as we move forward into [Section XX](#), where Cicero continues to spell out dramatically the difference between the Epicurean goal of life and that of the other "more reputable" schools.**

[media]<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/67739526/media>

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**Post by "Cassius" of September 12, 2025 at 4:41 PM**

Next week we will incorporate this statement from Diogenes Laertius 32 as to the relationship between the feelings of pleasure and pain and Epicurus' view of what is true and real:

[EpicureanFriends Side-By-Side Diogenes Laertius Ten](#)

**32**

Moreover, they are out of the reach of any control; for one sensation cannot judge of another which resembles itself; for they have all an equal value. Nor can one judge of another which is different from itself; since their objects are not identical. In a word, one sensation cannot control another, since the effects of all of them influence us equally. Again, the reason cannot pronounce on the senses; for we have already said that all reasoning has the senses for its foundation. Reality and the evidence of sensation establish the certainty of the senses; for the impressions of sight and hearing are just as real, just as evident, as pain.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of September 12, 2025 at 4:53 PM**

Episode 298 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. Today our episode is entitled: "Facts and Feelings In Epicurean Philosophy - Part 1"

[media]<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/67739526/media>

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### **Post by “DaveT” of September 12, 2025 at 9:28 PM**

[Cassius Joshua](#) I enjoyed your presentation of Episode 298 today. And having listened to the arguments of Cicero as he presents his disputes with Epicurus, I've frequently wondered why he wrote as he did. One foundation of good writing that I learned over time is that as a writer, you must know your audience. You shape your premise and your theme based on the audience who will read the work. So, to whom was Cicero writing? I take it he was not orating. What did he want to accomplish?

As I understand the timing, Epicureanism had been flourishing in pre-Christian times, even before the time of Julius Caesar and Cicero. And I understand that the pagan religions (and other schools of philosophy?) were trying to override Epicureanism as competition. Is this correct that they were religious or philosophical schools, or both?

So, who was Cicero trying to convert to his Platonic belief that eternal virtues are the highest good?

Was he succeeding in his goal? And is that the reason he kept at it, sensing that he was winning the game?

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## Post by "Cassius" of September 13, 2025 at 6:54 AM

Dave that's a great question and I'm not the best to answer it, but there's a lot written about this period in Cicero's life, when he was essentially in forced political retirement (due to opposing Julius Caesar) and in bad personal circumstances (his daughter dying in childbirth). He explains a lot of this himself in his various works as his motivation for wanting to engage in something to help get his mind off his problems, and I've seen it observed that this seems to make sense in that while he was certainly interested in philosophy previously, he hadn't written extensively before that period.

*So, who was Cicero trying to convert to his Platonic belief that eternal virtues are the highest good? Was he succeeding in his goal? And is that the reason he kept at it, sensing that he was winning the game?*

Remember that the form of Platonism Cicero saw himself a part of was arguably more skeptical than Plato's own form, so he may have seen himself not as arguing exactly what the highest good "is" as much as he was opposing the Epicurean (and Stoic) confidence that they themselves held the correct position. But yes he clearly sided more with the Stoics that virtue is the highest good. As for me I am not sure that he thought he was succeeding. He seems to have been very negative about the situation "[Oh the times! Oh the morals!](#)" and he'd already seen many of his friends dead in the loss of Pompeii and the battle of Pharsalia. I'd say at this point he was trying to (1) console himself that he was right despite the bad turn of events, and (2) rally whoever among the Senatorial class was still around to listen to him.

And I'd say his effectiveness is the reason that his works were preserved by the Judeo-Christians, who saw in them justification for their political suppression of dissent.

### [Quote from DaveT](#)

One foundation of good writing that I learned over time is that as a writer, you must know your audience. You shape your premise and your theme based on the audience who will read the work.

As Dewitt wrote, Cicero could not have misrepresented Epicurus so well if he had not understood Epicurus so thoroughly.

In my view, Cicero -- correctly -- identified that to describe "absence of pain" as pleasure is totally unsatisfactory and will never be acceptable to ordinary people who are not aware of the philosophical explanation that the person in "absence of pain" is not engaged in inactive nothingness, but is actually engaging in normal and pleasurable mental and physical activities unaccompanied by any pains.

I would equate this difficulty to the "the sun is the size it appears to be." That phrase appears laughably ridiculous unless attended with the explanation that the point is not to assert a particular size, but to assert that the size is in fact determined by the senses, rather than by abstract calculations which have not been grounded in reality.

To any audience of normally educated people, all you have to do is strip "absence of pain" of its explanation, and Epicurean philosophy becomes ridiculous. Cicero and Plutarch and Seneca and others did exactly that. They gave the Epicurean slogans detached from the Epicurean explanations in physics and canonics, and thereby they wrote the narrative that has prevailed ever since. And the worst part is that many of today's friends of Epicurus continue to do exactly the same thing, burying the philosophy deeper rather than doing anything to recover the explanation.

It is deadly to Epicurean philosophy to interpret "absence of pain" as inactivity.

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## Post by “Kalosyni” of September 13, 2025 at 8:15 AM

### [Quote from DaveT](#)

So, who was Cicero trying to convert to his Platonic belief that eternal virtues are the highest good?

Was he succeeding in his goal? And is that the reason he kept at it, sensing that he was winning the game?

From [an article regarding virtues](#) this, on Plato vs. Aristotle.

### Quote

Even though there were different Greek philosophers following the same moral view of virtue ethics, their interpretation was slightly different. For example, Plato and Aristotle treated virtues differently. Plato viewed virtue as an end to be sought for, where relations such as friendship could be a means. Aristotle, on the other hand, saw virtue as a means for happiness that safeguarded human relations.

Epicurus' stance seems to me to be built upon Aristotle's ideas, but yet adding in that "pleasure" is beneficial, and the ultimate end.

Philodemus wrote on virtues and vices:

## Quote

Philodemus of Gadara wrote extensively about virtues and vices, with surviving fragments from works like *On Vices* and *On Flattery* detailing various vices such as arrogance, envy, greed, flattery, and anger, and contrasting them with their opposite virtues. He discussed how vices stem from false beliefs and habits while virtues arise from true beliefs and connection to Epicurean pleasures. Philodemus also explored the therapeutic methods for dealing with vices, such as the "therapy of vice," and the interconnectedness of vices and emotions within the soul.

Source: Google search, AI summary

Here is a scholarly article by Tsouna:

<https://ancphil.lsa.umich.edu/-/downloads/osap/21-Tsouna.pdf>

I find it interesting the differences in Cicero's "On End" compared to the "Tusculan D."

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## Post by "Cassius" of September 13, 2025 at 11:03 AM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

It is deadly to Epicurean philosophy to interpret "absence of pain" as inactivity.

Which in my mind means that if you're standing on a stage and you say "absence of pain is pleasure" or "absence of pain is the highest pleasure," then you're saying the equivalent of *the sun is the size it appears to be*, or "*for gods there are, since the knowledge of them is by clear vision*."

To a person of ordinary education and intelligence, none of those statements make sense on their face without explanation. Ordinary people will think you are being absurd. And if you aren't willing and don't proceed to immediately provide that explanation in very clear terms, then those ordinary people will conclude that you are a provocateur and laugh or pull you off the stage. And in general you'll deserve that treatment.

Of course if you intend to insult your audience, then saying those underlined statements without explanation will certainly do the trick. But in that case one day you're likely to find yourself drinking Hemlock with Socrates. And most people will think that you won't deserve a lot of sympathy.

So taking the modern position that the term "absence of pain" speaks for itself is absurd. Cicero saw that it doesn't speak for itself. Plutarch saw that it doesn't speak for itself. And the educated Greeks of Epicurus' time weren't stupid either, and they would have demanded and gotten an explanation from Epicurus. But I don't think they would have had to demand anything, because what they had, and what we don't have, was all of Epicurus' *other* works beyond the letter to Menoeceus, and from which Cicero and Plutarch are quoting. And these quotations combined with common sense point to the conclusion that when Epicurus was referring to "absence of pain," what he meant was that *the reason you're not in pain* is that *you're completely engaged in mental and physical activities that are pleasurable*.

[Quote from Cicero - In Defense of Publius Sestius 10:23 \(Perseus Link\)](#)

He added that these same men were quite right in saying that the wise do everything for their own interests; that no sane man should engage in public affairs; that nothing was preferable to a life of tranquility cramped full of pleasures.

(nihil esse praestabilius otiosa vita, plena et conferta voluptatibus.)

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## Post by "DaveT" of September 13, 2025 at 1:13 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

To any audience of normally educated people, all you have to do is strip "absence of pain" of its explanation, and Epicurean philosophy becomes ridiculous.

Not sure I can agree that normally educated people would view those three words as ridiculous. While keeping in mind we are discussing a small aspect of avoiding pain by pleasurable sensations/thoughts, I think even poorly educated people who hear (rather than read) as well as anyone educated can understand that putting your feet up at the end of a rough day can diminish pain. It simply feels good, to chill. So, whether they think the good thoughts or just go blank, it doesn't seem ridiculous to me.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Cicero and Plutarch and Seneca and others did exactly that. They gave the Epicurean slogans detached from the Epicurean explanations in physics and canonics, and thereby they wrote the narrative that has prevailed ever since.

I understand that, but of course educated individuals who, on their own time or professionally, understand the nature of things by reading and studying can see through adversarial attacks. Those individuals, since the Enlightenment had, and continue to have, out sized influence on the modern world.

I'm thinking that there will never be a popular understanding or adoption of Epicureanism as "Epicureanism". Rather, the influence on the Western world will continue to be indirectly felt by the progress of Epicurean principles, at the very least in overcoming superstition and religious doctrine about life after death.

So, can we say that Epicureanism, though a personal guide to happiness, has little direct influence on individuals, but its greatest influence, ironically, is through the impact on the modern world's science, art, and governance of societies?

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

And the worst part is that many of today's friends of Epicurus continue to do exactly the same thing, burying the philosophy deeper rather than doing anything to recover the explanation.

Can you discuss specifics here? And individuals?

What negative impact do you think those "friends" have on any understanding of the Epicurean pursuit of happiness? I'm thinking of the common behavior of people in seeking pleasure over pain by living prudently, but the value of keeping friendships, of understanding natural laws, avoiding superstition, etc.

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### **Post by "Cassius" of September 13, 2025 at 3:07 PM**

#### [Quote from DaveT](#)

I think even poorly educated people who hear (rather than read) as well as anyone educated can understand that putting your feet up at the end of a rough day can diminish pain. It simply feels good, to chill. So, whether they think the good thoughts or just go blank, it doesn't seem ridiculous to me.

And of course I agree with that, and I would call that the activity of resting, or of relaxing. That is something that you do consciously to take a break from something else, like eating when you are hungry or drinking when you are thirsty. You aren't literally "closing your eyes and clearing

your mind from any conscious thought" except in the case of sleep where you intend to do exactly that. The bottom line of my position is referring back to the common situation today where viewpoints and attitudes toward the world are corrupted and perverted, as Torquatus references when he explains that Epicurus looks to the young of all species before they are corrupted as his standard for proving nature's guidance. If your default manner of thinking is that gods control your life and that you are going to be punished or rewarded for your actions after death, then clearing your mind from conscious attention to other things is simply going to allow those erroneous thoughts to take over whatever attention is left.

As Lucretius says repeatedly in his poem, you can't just look at the rays of light and understand from just looking the implications of what you are seeing. You need a scheme of systematic understanding - Epicurean philosophy - to see that what the senses are bringing to you are not things to worry about but instead can be dealt with successfully to live a happy life. The most basic example after gods and death is pain, and that's why the attitude required in [PD03](#) that pain is short if intense and manageable if long is important. Every aspect of epicurean philosophy requires action of the mind to attain it, not just "breathing" or "getting out of the way" or "clearing your mind" in order to appreciate it.

#### [Quote from DaveT](#)

Can you discuss specifics here? And individuals?

What negative impact do you think those "friends" have on any understanding of the Epicurean pursuit of happiness?

I'd like to organize examples further but many of them already exist in the subforum on absence of pain. Here's one example:

Thread

### [\*\*An Unfortunate Article Suggesting That Katastematic Pleasure is "Necessary" and Kinetic Pleasure is "Unnecessary"\*\*](#)

I haven't had time to read this article by Yosef Liebersohn, and I am not sure if or when I will, but this abstract that came across my email just reminded me for the 500th time of this issue. I'll skip over the fact that the author suggests that kinetic and katastematic are "the most dominant terms in Epicurus' theory of the pleasures (despite the fact that this comes from Cicero and Diogenes Laertius and isn't a significant factor at all in Epicurus' or Lucretius' work, as explained by Boris...



Cassius

April 14, 2021 at 11:23 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/wcf/attachment/1785-pasted-from-clipboard-png/>

And then there's wikipedia:

While Wikipedia is not a "friend" of Epicurus, the problem is all over the main entry on Epicurus, which I freely admit is amply justified by most modern writing:

#### Quote

Epicurus was a [hedonist](#), meaning he taught that what is pleasurable is morally good and what is painful is morally evil. For his ethical system he redefined "pleasure" as the absence of suffering and taught that all humans should seek to attain the state of [ataraxia](#), meaning "untroubledness", a state in which the person is completely free from all pain or suffering.<sup>[1]</sup>

Epicureans had a very specific understanding of what the greatest pleasure was, and the focus of their ethics was on the avoidance of pain rather than seeking out pleasure.<sup>[27]</sup> As evidence for this, Epicureans say that nature seems to command us to avoid pain, and they point out that all animals try to avoid pain as much as possible.<sup>[28]</sup>

And this is just atrocious:

#### Quote

In order to do this an Epicurean had to control their desires, because desire itself was seen as painful. Not only will controlling one's desires bring about *aponia*, as one will rarely suffer from not being physically satisfied, but controlling one's desires will also help to bring about *ataraxia* because one will not be anxious about becoming discomforted since one would have so few desires anyway. The Epicureans divide desires into three classes: natural and necessary, natural but not necessary, and vain and empty:<sup>[30]</sup>

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**Post by "Cassius" of September 13, 2025 at 3:19 PM**

for now one more example:

### [Epicurus](#)

Epicurus was a major figure in this history of science and philosophy. He is famous for his theory of hedonism: that pleasure is the only intrinsic value.

[www.pursuit-of-happiness.org](http://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org)

#### Quote

Epicurus makes an important distinction between necessary and unnecessary desires. Necessary desires are those which are necessary to produce happiness, such as desiring to get rid of bodily pain, or desiring a state of inner tranquility. He writes that "the end of all our actions is to be free from pain and fear, and once this is obtained the tempest of the soul is quelled." Only when we are in pain do we feel the need to seek pleasure, a need which inevitably only produces greater pain. In order to get rid of this pain-pleasure-pain cycle, we need to cultivate a mindset in which there is no pain. Thus the aim is not the positive pursuit of pleasure, as it was for Aristippus. The aim is rather the attaining of a neutral state which is best described as "peace of mind" or even "emptiness," to use a Buddhist expression. The Greek word Epicurus uses for this state is *ataraxia*, which literally means "freedom from worry."

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## Post by "Don" of September 15, 2025 at 10:52 PM

I thought it might be interesting to listeners to see what other quotes exist from Epicurus' "On the End-Goal" (Περὶ Τέλους): <https://www.attalus.org/translate/epicurus.html#k45>

As is also my wont, I want to \*briefly\* address the "pleasures of the profligate" mentioned in this episode. If you want to go even more into the weeds on this, most of this below is copied from my translation and commentary of the *Letter to Menoikeus*.

The specific section of the *Letter* is:

Ὅταν οὖν λέγωμεν ἡδονὴν τέλος ὑπάρχειν<sup>1</sup>, οὐ τὰς τῶν ἀσώτων ἡδονὰς καὶ τὰς ἐν ἀπολαύσει κειμένας λέγομεν, ὡς τινες ἀγνοοῦντες καὶ οὐχ ὁμολογοῦντες ἢ κακῶς ἐκδεχόμενοι νομίζουσιν, ἀλλὰ τὸ μήτε ἀλγεῖν κατὰ σῶμα μήτε ταράττεσθαι κατὰ ψυχὴν.

Therefore, whenever we say repeatedly that "pleasure is the goal (τέλος)," we do not say the pleasure of those who are prodigal and those stuck in delighting in pleasures arising from circumstances outside of ourselves like those who are ignorant, those who don't agree with us,

or those who believe wrongly; but we mean that which neither pains the body nor troubles the mind. (*My translation*)

A. τὰς τῶν ἀσώτων ἡδονὰς = "the pleasures of those who are past recovery with no hope of safety!" My discovery, several years ago now, that ἀσώτων (genitive of ἄσωτος (*asōtos*)) is the exact same word used in the [Parable of the Prodigal Son](#) in the *New Testament* gave this line a new resonance. I grew up on stories of the wanton ways of the prodigal son:

"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living ( ζῶν ἀσώτως). After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything."

Hmm, pigs? Coincidence?? In any case, I digress...

ἄσωτος = having no hope of safety, in desperate case; to be past recovery; in moral sense, abandoned, profligate. The Latin synonym given is *perditus* "squander, dissipate, waste, throw away, lost" (from which we get "perdition.")

So, when Epicurus says "we don't say" he's talking about that kind of behavior that leads to loss, desperation, and to be beyond recovery.

B. τὰς ἐν ἀπολαύσει κειμένας = "those stuck in delighting in pleasures arising from circumstances outside of ourselves" I'll admit my translation could be controversial.

There was [an extensive discussion on ἀπολαύσει on the forum a couple years ago](#).

I brought up that ἀπολαύσει and its variants convey the idea of enjoyment, specifically "to have enjoyment of a thing, have the benefit of it." It can also convey "enjoy an advantage from some source." This also implies enjoyment of something external to oneself. One source from 1572 stated that the word could also be translated into Latin by *oblectationem* or *delectationem*. These also imply enjoyment of physical or sensual pleasures:

- *oblectatio* "a delighting, delight (a favorite word of Cicero)"
- *delectatio* "a delighting, delight, pleasure, amusement"

ἀπολαύσει, at its most basic meaning, is the "act of enjoying, fruition" or the "result of enjoying, pleasure." Again, this implies enjoying the benefit of something with the additional meaning of "advantage got from a thing."

This sense is very clear in the use of ἀπόλαυσις in Vatican Saying 27, where the "fruit" is explicitly included in the connotation:

*Whereas other pursuits yield their fruit only to those who have practiced them to perfection, in the love and practice of wisdom knowledge is accompanied by delight; for here enjoying comes along with learning, not afterward.*

ἐπὶ μὲν τῶν ἄλλων ἐπιτηδευμάτων μόλις τελειωθεῖσιν ὁ καρπὸς ἔρχεται, ἐπὶ δὲ φιλοσοφίας συντρέχει τῇ γνώσει τὸ τερπνόν· οὐ γὰρ μετὰ μάθησιν ἀπόλαυσις, ἀλλὰ ἅμα μάθησις καὶ ἀπόλαυσις.

One is literally here taking delight in the fruit of the love and practice of wisdom.

To cut to the chase:

I am now of the opinion that **τὰς ἐν ἀπολαύσει κειμένας** should be interpreted as "those who are *stuck* in enjoying (only) those things which provide enjoyment from outside themselves." To me, this is a direct reference to the "incorrect" beliefs of the Cyrenaics and others in relation to pleasure. And, yes, the reader is correct that I'm referring to the kinetic and katastematic pleasures that Epicurus mentions. I realize this will be considered controversial by some, but I believe this best explains Epicurus's being able to use **ἀπολαύσει** in both positive and negative senses.

Epicurus is on record for including *both* kinetic and katastematic pleasures within his definition of "pleasure." I have now come to understand kinetic pleasures as those arising from factors and circumstances and that "stand out" from our "background" state of katastematic pleasures within ourselves. A metaphor discussed at the *EpicureanFriends* forum for this was that katastematic pleasures are the calm ocean while kinetic pleasures are the waves which we can surf. We can enjoy both floating on the calm water as well as the catching of the waves and "shooting the curl." While Epicurus conveys (along with Metrodorus and Philodemus) that we can be more confident in katastematic pleasures, we 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 κειμένας.**

**1 Footnote on ἡδονὴν τέλος ὑπάρχειν.** When Epicurus writes this phrase, he's not just saying "Pleasure is the end-goal." It's more emphatic than that. ὑπάρχειν expresses a more integral, intimate relationship. It's more than just "is." It's more like "The telos/the end-goal has its being from the very beginning of the universe in pleasure." Granted, that may be pushing it to limit, but that gets closer than just "is" from how I can interpret it.

See also <https://philarchive.org/rec/GHOWDU>

[Preexistence before Socrates – Research Bulletin](#)

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**Post by “Cassius” of September 16, 2025 at 8:48 AM**

[Quote from Don](#)

Epicurus is on record for including both kinetic and katastematic pleasures within his definition of "pleasure." I have now come to understand kinetic pleasures as those arising from factors and circumstances and that "stand out" from our "background" state of katastematic pleasures within ourselves. A metaphor discussed at the EpicureanFriends forum for this was that katastematic pleasures are the calm ocean while kinetic pleasures are the waves which we can surf. We can enjoy both floating on the calm water as well as the catching of the waves and "shooting the curl." While Epicurus conveys (along with Metrodorus and Philodemus) that we can be more confident in katastematic pleasures, we 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 κειμένας.

Don:

Would you say that the first and primary meaning that should be associated with the term "kinetic " is "something that arises from factors and circumstances that 'stand out,'" and that the term "katastematic" should be associated with "a background state within ourselves about which we can be more confident?"

If not, what would you say is the first and primary meaning that should be associated with the terms "kinetic" and "katastematic"?

Asked another way, if you are lecturing to a group of students who are new to Greek, what is the first and most important thing you would tell them that makes up the essence of the terms "kinetic" and "katastematic? Would you say that "foreground vs. background" and "less available vs. more available" and "calm vs wavey" would convey the essential meaning of kinetic vs katastematic?

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## Post by “Cassius” of September 16, 2025 at 8:53 AM

As a comparison for testing a "generic" response, I posed the exact same question to Grok. At this point I am just thinking out loud and not saying that Grok has it right by any means:

Quote

The Greek terms "kinetic" (κινητικός, kinetikos) and "katastematic" (καταστηματικός, katastematikos) can be understood through their etymological roots and usage in

broader Greek contexts, drawing on general Greek authorities such as lexicographers (e.g., Liddell-Scott-Jones) and philosophical or scientific texts (e.g., Aristotle, Plato, or Hellenistic sources). Below, I provide the primary, generic meanings of these terms and how I would explain them to students new to Greek, focusing on their essential linguistic and conceptual significance. Primary Generic Meanings

1. Kinetic (κινετικός):

- Etymology: Derived from κίνηση (kinesis), meaning "motion," "movement," or "change."
- Primary Meaning: Pertaining to motion, activity, or change. In Greek texts, it often describes anything that involves physical or metaphorical movement, such as the motion of bodies (e.g., in Aristotle's physics) or active processes.
- Context: Used in natural philosophy (e.g., Aristotle's Physics) to describe things that are in motion or capable of causing motion. For example, kinetic energy or force is associated with change or activity, as opposed to stasis.
- Essence: Something that is dynamic, active, or in a state of change.

2. Katastematic (καταστηματικός):

- Etymology: Derived from κατάστημα (katastema), meaning "state," "condition," or "establishment," which itself comes from καθίστημι (kathistemi), meaning "to set in place," "to establish," or "to bring into a certain state."
- Primary Meaning: Pertaining to a settled, stable, or fixed state or condition. It implies something that is steady, enduring, or in a state of rest or equilibrium.
- Context: Found in contexts like Hellenistic philosophy or technical writings to denote a stable condition or structure, often contrasted with change or flux. For example, in Stoic or Aristotelian discussions, it might refer to a state of being or a fixed disposition.
- Essence: Something that is stable, settled, or enduring.

Addressing Your Proposed Metaphors - Your suggested metaphors ("foreground vs. background," "less available vs. more available," and "calm vs. wavy") do not fully align with the generic Greek meanings:

- Foreground vs. Background: This implies a perceptual or attentional distinction, which isn't central to the Greek terms. Kinetic refers to motion, not necessarily something that "stands out," and katastematic refers to a stable state, not a "background" condition.
- Less Available vs. More Available: This suggests accessibility or availability, which isn't relevant to the core meanings. Both terms describe qualities of phenomena (motion vs. stability), not their availability.

- Calm vs. Wavy: This is closer but imprecise. "Wavy" implies fluctuation, which is only one aspect of kinetic (motion can be steady or purposeful, not just wavy). "Calm" fits katastematic better, as it suggests stability, but it's not the full picture, as katastematic can apply to any fixed state, not just calmness.

A Better Metaphor for Students - To convey the essence to beginners, I'd use the metaphor of a moving car vs. a parked car:

- Kinetic: Like a car driving down the road—active, moving, changing position.
- Katastematic: Like a car parked in a garage—still, stable, in a fixed state.

This metaphor captures the contrast between motion (kinetic) and rest/stability (katastematic) in a clear, relatable way, grounded in the terms' etymological and generic Greek usage.

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### Post by "Cassius" of September 16, 2025 at 9:01 AM

Quote

Epicurus is on record for including both kinetic and katastematic pleasures within his definition of "pleasure." ... It is the exclusivity of "getting stuck in" only seeing kinetic pleasures as pleasure that Epicurus is objecting to here with τὰς ἐν ἀπολαύσει κειμένας.

These two sentences here I think are beyond dispute and are definitely among the first things that anyone should take away from this subject.

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### Post by "Don" of September 16, 2025 at 1:30 PM

I'm going to ignore the Grokkery above.

To answer your question, I see katastematic pleasure as that which results, at least in part, from the weeding out of fear of the gods and death. Once those are truly rooted out - not just intellectually but viscerally - they don't come back. Without those fears and anxieties, the mind can remain untroubled. That's katastematic pleasure. A firm *state of being*.

Kinetic pleasure are all the pleasures that arise in the moment, from pleasant memories to drinking with friends to eating food.

That's the nutshell.

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## Post by “Cassius” of September 16, 2025 at 3:35 PM

### [Quote from Don](#)

To answer your question, I see *katastematic* pleasure as that which results, at least in part, from the weeding out of fear of the gods and death. Once those are truly rooted out - not just intellectually but viscerally - they don't come back. Without those fears and anxieties, the mind can remain untroubled. That's *katastematic* pleasure. A firm state of being.

Kinetic pleasure are all the pleasures that arise in the moment, from pleasant memories to drinking with friends to eating food.

That's the nutshell.

Yes, in this case I worded the question the way I did for a purpose, and added what seems to me to be the very understandable, and in this case likely correct interpretation of the specific phrases.

You're describing in your answer *kinetic pleasure* and *katastematic pleasure* but to my mind it's more important first to convey what kinetic and *katastematic* mean, so that there is no implication that the entire term is some kind of made up jargon that only Epicurus understood.

Kinetic is a word that has meaning in Greek just like *katastematic*. Is it not of first importance to understand what they mean separately before combining them with pleasure?

That's what the proposed summary does, and it seems to me that it's likely correct. Starting at that point would avoid the ambiguity that arises in talking about which attributes of a thing are primary, which are secondary, etc.

In this case, I do agree that "a firm state of being" is probably the primary sense of *katastematic*, and something surrounding "motion" is probably the primary sense of kinetic.

And I also agree that "*that which results, at least in part, from the weeding out of fear of the gods and death*" makes up a major component of what's being referenced as *katastematic*.

But with the word *katastematic*, in contrast with *kinetic*, we're using a word that has no clear English analog. With *kinetic* we can grasp intuitively why Cicero describes the pleasures as those that "move" us. But there's no equivalent point of reference with "*katastematic*" to keep people from going off into any wild tangent that they might personally want to entertain as to what it means.

I'd say Grok's proposal of an analogy makes considerable sense. *A car in motion versus a car parked in a garage*. That's a down to earth example that - if valid - makes clear that we're talking about easily understandable concepts, and not just using a term that makes "absence of pain" even more difficult to understand.

And with that as background, I'd say that there's no direct and necessary relationship between absence of pain and "*katastematic pleasure*." I'd say the relationship that's important is that pleasure is the opposite of pain, so there's either pleasure or pain, not one of the other. *Katastematic* and *kinetic* are two types of pleasure, but "absence of pain" can arise from the presence of any kind of moving or continuous pleasures.

Right now, as 90%+ of the world is talking about it, they are saying or implying that absence of pain according to Epicurus is *katastematic pleasure*, when they should be saying simply that absence of pain is *pleasure*.

*I know you're not doing that yourself*, Don, I'm just pointing out that this confusion has very damaging consequences, and we need better ways to clear up this confusion. And probably that better way involves finding ways to de-mystify the word "*katastematic*."

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### **Post by "Cassius" of September 16, 2025 at 3:49 PM**

Also, if the car analogy works, that would suggest that a "ship at sea" vs a "ship in port" analogy would also work. If that one works, I'd say (or hope) that people would be less likely to think that "a ship in port" is superior to or could take the place of "a ship at sea" because most people would intuitively understand that sailing at sea is the real reason for having a ship in in the first place, and therefore at least as important as being in port, though *both* are natural parts of the life of a ship.

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### **Post by "Don" of September 16, 2025 at 5:26 PM**

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Is it not of first importance to understand what they mean separately before combining them with pleasure?

I don't think so. It's the phrase "+ pleasure" that's important.

But I've never liked the *static* or *rest* analogies. Off the top of my head, I'd be more readily drawn to a clear blue sky, free of clouds, and the night sky awash with various stars, planets, the moon. Still workshopping this. 😊

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### Post by “Cassius” of September 16, 2025 at 5:37 PM

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

But I've never liked the static or rest analogies. Off the top of my head, I'd be more readily drawn to a clear blue sky, free of clouds, and the night sky awash with various stars, planets, the moon. Still workshopping this

I agree that eventually the goal is to state specific examples of the type of pleasure that is meant. And I think the examples you are giving are correct. But I'm concerned that you and I reach the same conclusions but only after years of looking at the question, and I think that it would be desirable to put some meat on the bones of "katastematic" that would make that journey easier for people who first approach the question. Right now we might as well call it 'abracadabra pleasure' or "gibberish pleasura" instead of katastematic pleasure and extremely few would be any less confused by the term. And that seems to me a large part of the reason that so many are getting away with describing katastematic pleasure as the "real pleasure" that is what Epicurus was really after, instead of only one slice of a larger pie that constitutes the full meaning of "pleasure."

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### Post by “Cassius” of September 16, 2025 at 5:42 PM

One of the things I included in both episodes 298 and 299 was that I thought that Lucretius' description of the pleasure that comes from knowing that we are free from the ills that so many

others are subject to is probably a good example of this "non-moving" type of pleasure, and that seems consistent with what you've suggested above. But I don't know anything about how to explain "katastematic" so that this type of pleasure jumps easily to mind as being associated with that word. It's a mental viewpoint that you can hold unshakeably and isn't subject to being shaken very easily (or at all) but I'd like to see a word picture that can be associated with "katastematic" that serves as a better analogy as to why this is so.

I can see why kinetic gets tagged easily with motion, and the intuitive opposite of motion is "at rest" or "not moving" but as you say there's work to be done on making this more clear.

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### **Post by “Don” of September 16, 2025 at 6:38 PM**

I get why some translators use static, but I feel they want it to connote "a state - ic" and not necessarily frozen. That's what I get about static.

καταστηματικός; κᾶτᾶστημα = a state, condition (e.g., weather conditions); pertaining to a state or condition

Kinetic is effervescent, momentary, ..

So...?

Pleasure found in a state of being, pleasure coming from a stable condition

Pleasure found in the momentary experience

Like I said, workshopping it. I just don't like any connotation of katastematic as frozen or stuck or static or ... Like that.