

Epicurus on the Telos of the Mind

David Conan Wolfsdorf

αὐτὸν ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ τὰς τέρψιας ἐπιζόμενον λαμβάνειν
(Democr. B146)

Telic Pleasure and the Mental Τέλος

According to hedonistic eudaimonism the τέλος is a life of pleasure.¹ But pleasures vary in kind and do so along several dimensions. For instance most pleasures are fleeting. How then is a life of pleasure to be achieved? Is the τέλος to consist of a set of fleeting pleasures that one strings together? Or is one to seek out a single or small set of perduring pleasures? However a theory of hedonistic eudaimonism is elaborated to include an account of the kind of pleasure or pleasures constitutive of the τέλος, I propose to call such pleasure or pleasures "telic."

The phrase "telic pleasure" may be jarring. Pleasure typically figures as one candidate for the τέλος alongside alternatives such as ἀρετή and σοφία. But within the framework of hedonistic eudaimonism there are various options. Among Hellenistic philosophers the Cyrenaics' account of the pleasure constitutive of the τέλος differs from Epicurus'.² So Epicurus and the Cyrenaics have different views of telic pleasure.

In the *Letter to Menoecus* Epicurus says that "pleasure is the ἀρχή and τέλος of living blessedly."³ "Τέλος" is sometimes here translated as "goal," viz.: "pleasure is the ... goal of living blessedly."⁴ But that sounds odd. Living blessedly is the τέλος; it does not have a τέλος. Rather pleasure, of a kind, is

¹ Cp. the instances of "ἡδέως ζῆν" at *Ep. Men.* 132, *KD* 5.

² For a recent defense of the view that the Cyrenaics are eudaimonists cp. K. Lampe, *The Birth of Hedonism*, Princeton University Press, 2015, 92-100.

³ *Ep. Men.* 128.

⁴ E.g. B. Inwood and L. Gerson, *The Epicurus Reader*, Hackett, 1994, 30, following R. D. Hicks, *Diogenes Laertius II*, Harvard, 1925, 655. Contrast A. Long and D. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Cambridge, 1987, vol. 1, 114: "pleasure is the beginning and end of the blessed life." Cp. "this is the end belonging to the blessed life." (113)

constitutive of a blessed life. So it would be better to render the line as: "pleasure is the starting-point and fulfillment of a blessed life."

In the immediately following passage of the letter Epicurus elaborates this thesis. He begins by saying that pleasure is "our first and kindred good (ἀγαθὸν πρῶτον καὶ συγγενικόν)."⁵ This is a developmental psychological claim. The first object of pro-motivation, in humans as in other animals, is pleasure. But the sort of pleasure to which we are initially drawn is not the sort constitutive of the fullest form of human life. In discussing his predecessors' views of the πρῶτον οἰκεῖον Alexander sheds some light on the point: "The Epicureans say that what is first congenial to us is pleasure simply (ἀπλῶς); but they say that as we develop (προϊόντων) this pleasure becomes more fully articulated (διαρθροῦσθαι)."⁶ Telic pleasure is then the sort of pleasure that is constitutive of human life in its fullest form.

Consider now a third passage from the *Letter to Menoeceus*. This one comes after the preceding passage and follows Epicurus' account of how we come to make rational selections among pleasures, passing over some hedonic opportunities and choosing others:

"When we say that pleasure is the τέλος, we are not speaking of the pleasures of prodigals and those that lie in amusement, as some ignorant, dissenting, or hostile opponents believe. Rather [we are speaking of] not being in corporeal pain (τὸ μήτε ἀλγεῖν κατὰ σῶμα)⁷ and not being mentally disturbed (μήτε ταραττεσθαι κατὰ ψυχὴν)."⁸

⁵ *Ep. Men.* 129.

⁶ *De Anima CIAG Supp.* 150.33-34 (398 U). Cp. Athen *Deipn.* 12, 546f (409 U). Note that this word was originally used in a biological context (e.g. cp. Aristot. *HA* 583b23), although it acquired additional senses especially among the Stoics; cp. T. Tieleman, *Galen and Chrysippus on the Soul*, Brill, 1996, 201, n.24. Epicurus uses the noun at *Ep. Pyth.* 89.

⁷ Throughout the paper I refer to Epicurean "corporeal" and "mental" pleasures. All pleasures for Epicurus are psychological in the sense that they involve the soul (ψυχὴ) in some way. But some pleasures involve the rational part of the soul, which is to say, the mind. I call these "mental" pleasures. Other pleasures involve the body. Those that involve the body also involve the irrational part of the soul. I refer to these pleasures as "corporeal," rather than "bodily" or "somatic," simply in acknowledgement of the fact that Epicurus views the soul itself as a kind of σῶμα. Epicurus in fact sometimes speaks of pleasures of the flesh (ἐν τῇ σαρκί), e.g., in *KD* 4, precisely to avoid speaking of somatic pleasure. However, this is not always the case. For example, consider the phrase "τὸ μήτε ἀλγεῖν κατὰ σῶμα" at *Ep. Men.* 131. Unfortunately, there is no good English adjective corresponding to "flesh." "Carnal" has the wrong connotation, as does "sensual." Strictly, "corporeal" is of course unsatisfactory too since this just means "relating to the body." However, the term is less natural than "bodily," and thus serves to emphasize the special reason for which it is here used.

⁸ *Ep. Men.* 131.

For Epicurus then telic pleasure is a complex of certain mental and corporeal constituents. This paper focuses on Epicurus' account of the mental constituent of telic pleasure. For convenience I will call this "the mental τέλος."

Privation and the Τέλος

In the preceding *Menoecus* passage Epicurus describes the mental τέλος, as well as the corporeal constituent of telic pleasure, in privative terms: "not being mentally disturbed" and "not being in corporeal pain." More commonly Epicurus refers to the mental τέλος with a single word: "ἀταραξία." This encourages the view that the mental τέλος is a privation, a privation of mental disturbance. Normally we would not think of pleasure as a privative state. But, apparently, Epicurus maintains that pleasure is simply the absence of pain. For convenience let's call such a view of pleasure "analgesic." A privative, specifically analgesic view of pleasure is consistent with the use of the private term "ἀταραξία" to refer to the mental τέλος.

Epicurus also characterizes ataraxia as "καταστηματική," for example in the following portion of a fragment from *On Choice and Avoidance*:

"ἀταραξία and ἀπονία are ... katastematic (καταστηματικαί) pleasures ..."⁹

Doxographical reports contrast katastematic with kinetic pleasure.¹⁰ This has encouraged the interpretation of "ἡδονή καταστηματική" as "pleasure that is perduring or stable," in contrast to "pleasure that involves change." Compare Cicero's rendition of the former as "*voluptas stans*" and the latter as "*voluptas movens*."¹¹ If "perduring" or "stable" is what "καταστηματική" means, then ataraxia qua analgesic and qua katastematic is a perduring absence of mental disturbance. So this interpretation of "καταστηματική" is consistent with a privative account of the mental τέλος.

Granting that Epicurus presents privative descriptions of the mental τέλος and of telic pleasure as a whole, I propose that he also has a non-privative, in

⁹ DL 10.136. (I have presented an abbreviated version of the fragment here. I present and discuss the complete fragment below.)

¹⁰ κινητική, ἐν κίνησει, οἱ κατὰ κίνησιν.

¹¹ Cp. the following passage from Philo, where he is commenting on a passage in *Genesis*: "[Moses (the presumed author of the book)], therefore, does well when he adds: 'You will go upon your breast and belly.' For pleasure is not one of the things that is calm (ἡρεμούντων) and stationary (ἰσταμένων). It is rather a thing that is in motion (κινουμένων) and full of disturbance (ταραχῆς). For as flame is in motion (ἐν κινήσει), so an affection (πάθος), when it is in motion (ἐν κινήσει) in the soul, like a flame, does not permit [the soul] to rest (ἡρεμεῖν). Consequently, [Moses] does not agree with those who say that pleasure is katastematic (καταστηματικήν). For calm (ἡρεμία) is akin to stones and wood and everything that lacks a soul, but it is alien to pleasure; for [pleasure] tends toward tickling and convulsions, and in some cases it requires not calm (ἡρεμίας), but intense and violent motion (κινήσεως)." (*Leg. all.* 3.160)

other words a positive account of the mental τέλος.¹² The aim of this paper is to clarify Epicurus' positive account.

In pursuing this agenda I am also going to reject two theses that I introduced in the preceding remarks. First Epicurus does not in fact maintain that pleasure is merely an absence of pain or lack of disturbance. Second Epicurus does not in fact use the word "καταστηματική" to mean "perduring" or "stable." The former claim is necessary for my interpretation of Epicurus' positive account of the mental τέλος. The latter is not. Nonetheless the rendition of "καταστηματική" I offer corroborates Epicurus' positive account.

Telic Pleasure in *On the Goal*, fr. 68

Consider the following fragment from Epicurus' *On the Goal*:

"For the well-built constitution of the flesh (τὸ εὐσταθὲς σαρκὸς κατάστημα) and the trustworthy expectation concerning this (τὸ περὶ ταύτης πιστὸν ἔλπισμα) hold (ἔχει) the highest and most secure joy (τὴν ἀκροτάτην καὶ βεβαιοτάτην χαρὰν) for those able to reason it out (τοῖς ἐπιλογίζεσθαι δυναμένοις)."¹³

Epicurus here associates the "highest and most secure joy" with a complex of corporeal and mental constituents: a well-built constitution of the flesh and a trustworthy expectation of its persistence. The phrase "highest and most secure joy" encourages the inference that this joy is telic pleasure. I will make the inference. Hence the fragment associates telic pleasure with a well-built constitution of the flesh and a trustworthy expectation of its persistence.

Note that "well-built constitution of the flesh" means and refers to something different from "absence of corporeal pain."¹⁴ I say it also refers to something different from "absence of corporeal pain" because a human corpse may be pain free, but not corporeally well constituted. Similarly "a trustworthy expectation of a well-built constitution of the flesh" means and refers to something different from "absence of mental disturbance."¹⁵ For example we sometimes say of those whose death follows mental distress that they are now free from their troubles.

I have been careful to say that the fragment "associates" the highest and most secure joy with the corporeal and mental entities described. I have not said that it "identifies" such joy with these entities. The reason for care here is that it is

¹² Indeed I believe he has a positive conception of telic pleasure as a whole. But I am focusing on the mental τέλος.

¹³ fr. 68, apud Plut. *non posse*, 1098d.

¹⁴ Absence of corporeal pain may be short-lived. Additionally, given anaesthesia, freedom from corporeal pain may occur although the body is damaged.

¹⁵ For example, one might have a reliable expectation of bodily health, but also a reliable expectation of dementia, and this might cause mental disturbance.

consistent with the literal meaning of the fragment that such joy is caused by, rather than identified with, these entities. Epicurus says – vaguely – that the entities "hold" (ἔχει) the joy. By this he could mean "contain" the joy, but he could also mean "provide" the joy.

I propose that Epicurus means "contain" the joy and thus that the corporeal and mental entities are collectively identified with telic pleasure. Consider the following passage from the *Letter to Menoeceus*:

"Corporeal health (τὴν τοῦ σώματος ὑγίειαν) and absence of mental disturbance (τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀταραξίαν) ... is (ἐστὶ) the goal of living blessedly (τοῦ μακαρίως ζῆν τέλος)."¹⁶

Here Epicurus offers a mixture of positive and privative descriptions of the corporeal and mental constituents of telic pleasure respectively. The positive description of the corporeal constituent "corporeal health" is similar to that in the fragment from *On the Goal*.¹⁷ But the use of "ἐστὶ" here strongly suggests that Epicurus is making an identity claim. I propose then that in the fragment from *On the Goal* Epicurus is identifying, not merely associating, telic pleasure with a well-built constitution of the flesh and a trustworthy expectation of its persistence.¹⁸

In sum the main point to draw from these considerations is that Epicurus sometimes uses positive descriptions for the components of telic pleasure, and in particular that in a fragment from *On the Goal* he so describes the mental τέλος.

Positive Conditions of the Mental Τέλος

In this section I advance a stronger thesis than that Epicurus characterizes telic pleasure in positive as well as privative and specifically analgesic terms. I claim that Epicurus does not hold the view that telic pleasure is simply an absence of pain or disturbance.

First Epicurus is committed to the thesis that pleasure (as well as pain) requires consciousness (αἴσθησις). Consider the following passage from the *Letter to Menoeceus*:

"Accustom yourself to believe that death is nothing to us. For all good and bad lies in consciousness (ἐν αἰσθήσει), and death is the privation (στέρησις) of consciousness (αἰσθήσεως)."¹⁹

¹⁶ 128.

¹⁷ The description of the corporeal constituent of telic pleasure as health also encourages the view that Epicurus also conceives of the mental constituent of telic pleasure as health of a kind.

¹⁸ Below I will argue, more precisely, that these are partial not complete constituents of telic pleasure.

¹⁹ *Ep. Men.* 124.

Conjoining the thesis that value requires consciousness with Epicurus' hedonism, I conclude that pleasure requires consciousness.²⁰ Since consciousness is a condition on pleasure tout court, it is a condition on the mental τέλος.

Given the consciousness condition, my earlier proposal – that corporeal health and a trustworthy expectation of its persistence are collectively to be identified, not merely associated, with telic pleasure – can be further clarified as follows: consciousness is a constituent of corporeal health and of the trustworthy expectation of its persistence.

Another reason to think that Epicurus does not view the mental τέλος as a merely analgesic state is that the trustworthy expectation of persisting corporeal health is, at least in part, a cognitive state involving reliable belief about the future of one's body. Such cognition is not merely a state of consciousness of absence of mental disturbance. Hence the mental τέλος requires a complex cognitive condition.

The cognitive condition that the mental τέλος requires is still more complex. Recall that the fragment from *On the Goal* claims that the well-built constitution of the flesh and the trustworthy expectation of its persistence hold the greatest joy "for those who are able to reason it out." This phrase admits both epistemological and metaphysical readings. According to the epistemological reading the aspirant can come to know what constitutes the highest joy if he reasons things out properly. According to the metaphysical reading attainment of the highest joy requires proper reasoning. The correct interpretation of the phrase may be underdetermined by the fragment's lack of context. But there is strong evidence that Epicurus maintains that telic pleasure, hence the mental τέλος, requires proper reasoning. A passage in the *Letter to Menoeceus* literally identifies sober reasoning with telic pleasure. Note that this passage concludes Epicurus' account of hedonic psychological development:

"[The pleasure (ἡδονή) that is the goal (τέλος)]²¹ is sober reasoning (λογισμός), searching out the grounds of every choice and avoidance, and banishing those beliefs from which the greatest tumult seizes the soul."²²

²⁰ I add, in passing, that Epicurus does not conceive of consciousness and wakefulness as coextensive. For example at the end of the *Letter to Menoeceus* he writes: "Exercise yourself in these and related precepts day and night ... Then, never, neither in waking nor in a dream (οὔθ' ὕπαρ οὔτ' ὄναρ), will you be disturbed (διαταραχθήση) ..." (135) Absence of mental disturbance is thus supposed to characterize one's dreams as well as waking states. So insofar as consciousness is a condition on pleasure, we must understand dreams to be states of consciousness. This is consistent with Epicurus' perceptual theory of dreams.

²¹ The content in brackets derives from "Ὅταν οὖν λέγωμεν ἡδονὴν τέλος ὑπαρχειν ..."
(*Ep. Men.* 131)

²² 132. This passage might be used in support of the constitutive interpretation, but again I remain agnostic.

Some may want to resist the literal interpretation of this passage in favor of the view that proper reasoning stands in a merely causal relation to telic pleasure and hence to the mental τέλος. But such resistance is, I suggest, confused. In the fragment from *On the Goal* Epicurus claims that the expectation, hence belief constitutive of the mental τέλος is trustworthy (πιστόν). The condition of trustworthiness here entails that the belief is well justified. For Epicurus the empiricist, justification has externalist as well as internalist features. One grasps reasons supporting one's belief, hence the belief is based on proper reasoning; but one's rational state is also reliably related to the world. In short, in contrast to mere pleasure, the pleasure constitutive of telic pleasure and in particular the mental τέλος is rooted in a robust cognitive state, indeed in a form of life embedded in the world.

Consider now the reasoning that Epicurus requires for telic pleasure. I suggest that this rational component comprises an understanding of Epicurus' physical, epistemological, and ethical-psychological doctrines. These doctrines principally serve to securely allay fear and to govern natural and necessary desire. These points pervade Epicurus' writings. Here are some salient examples from the *Letter to Herodotus*, *Pythocles*, and *Menoceus* respectively:

"I recommend constant engagement (ἐνέργημα) in the study of nature; and with this above all I bring calm (ἐγγαληνίζων) to my life. That is why I have composed for you this summary of the basic principles of the entire set of doctrines."²³

"ἀταραξία is a release from all of these [false opinions and emotions] and a constant remembrance of the general and most important points [of Epicurean physics]."²⁴

"First of all, do not believe that there is any other goal to be achieved by the knowledge (γνώσεως) of meteorological and astronomical phenomena ... than ἀταραξία and a secure conviction (πίστιν βέβαιον), just as with the rest [of the study of nature]."²⁵

"We must also reason through (ἀναλογιστέον) the fact that among desires, some are natural, others are empty. And among natural desires, some are necessary, while others are merely natural ... An unwavering comprehension (ἀπλανῆς θεωρία) of these things can direct every choice

²³ *Ep. Hdt.* 37. Cp. "Moreover, one must believe that it is the task of physics to work out precisely the cause of the most important things, and that blessedness (τὸ μακάριον) lies in this and in knowing the natures that are observed in the meteorological and astronomical phenomena ..." (*Ep. Hdt.* 78)

²⁴ *Ep. Hdt.* 82.

²⁵ *Ep. Pyth.* 85.

and avoidance toward the health of the body (τὴν τοῦ σώματος ὑγίειαν) and ἀταραξία of the soul (τῆς ψυχῆς), since this is the τέλος of living blessedly."²⁶

For convenience I'll say that constant engagement with, including remembrance of and reflection upon, the central doctrines that constitute Epicurean physics, including the meteorology and astronomy and the empirical epistemology on which the former are based, as well as the ethical-psychological doctrines constitute "practical wisdom."²⁷

In sum I suggest that Epicurus maintains that the mental τέλος requires consciousness, but also trustworthy expectation of the persistence of one's corporeal health. Moreover the trustworthiness of expectation requires proper reasoning; and this proper reasoning consists of practical wisdom. The relation between practical wisdom and the mental τέλος is constitutive.

We have come a long way from the thesis that the mental τέλος is simply an absence of mental disturbance.

"Καταστηματική"

I turn to the meaning of "καταστηματική." There is no compelling evidence that the noun "κατάστημα" was used before Epicurus. A *TLG* search purportedly yields six prior instances. But all of these actually derive from post-Epicurean, mainly Late Antique, texts. Consequently either "κατάστημα" was used before Epicurus, but no instances survive, or Epicurus coined the noun "κατάστημα." It is not crucial to my argument that Epicurus coined the noun. However if the noun was used prior to Epicurus, he appropriated a rare expression.

Recall that in the fragment from *On Choice and Avoidance* Epicurus speaks of ataraxia and ἀπονία as "ἡδοναὶ καταστηματικάι." This encourages the view that Epicurus deployed the noun "κατάστημα" specifically for the purpose of hedonic theorizing and precisely in order to distinguish telic pleasure from pleasures not constitutive of the goal of human life.

The noun "κατάστημα" is cognate with the noun "κατάστασις." Moreover *LSJ* claims that there are senses of "κατάστασις" equivalent to senses of "κατάστημα." So we may ask: Why did Epicurus not avail himself of the term "κατάστασις" and speak of "katastatic" pleasures?

My suggestion is that certain of Epicurus' prominent philosophical predecessors used the word "κατάστασις" within the context of hedonic theorizing and did so in a manner from which Epicurus sought to distinguish himself. Precisely Plato uses "κατάστασις" and forms of the verb "καθίστημι" to refer to the idea that pleasures are processes by which the body or mind is constituted in one way or another. For example in *Philebus* Socrates says:

²⁶ *Ep. Men.* 127-8. Cp. "Through love of true philosophy, every troubling and vexatious desire is dissolved." (fr. 66 Bailey, apud Porphy. *ad Marc.* 31)

²⁷ Observe the terms "ἐνέργημα" and "θεωρία" at *Ep. Hdt.* 37 and *Ep. Men.* 128.

"We have agreed that when we undergo constitution (καθιστῆται) toward our nature (εἰς τὴν αὐτῶν φύσιν), this constituting process (κατάστασιν) is pleasure."²⁸

Socrates here characterizes the constituting process that is pleasure as one in which we are brought "toward our nature." Basically by "our nature" Socrates means a state of corporeal or mental integrity and wellbeing. Socrates' use of the phrase "εἰς τὴν αὐτῶν φύσιν" is significant since there are constituting processes that yield unnatural states.

Compare Timaeus' description of pleasure in the eponymous dialogue:

"Pains [occur] when [bodies] are alienated from [their natural condition], and pleasures [occur] when they undergo constitution (καθιστάμενα) back to the same condition (εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ πάλιν)."²⁹

And compare Aristotle's description of pleasure in *Rhetoric*, which draws on Plato's views in *Philebus* and *Timaeus*:

"Let us submit that pleasure is a certain change (κίνησις) of the soul and a swift and perceived process of constituting (κατάστασιν) [the soul] toward its prevailing nature (εἰς τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν φύσιν), and pain is the opposite. And if this is what pleasure is, it is clear that what is productive of the condition described is pleasant, while what is destructive of it or productive of the opposite constituting process (τῆς ἐναντίας καταστάσεως) is painful."³⁰

Aristotle's use of the phrase "τῆς ἐναντίας καταστάσεως" corroborates the point that "κατάστασις" itself cannot be taken to entail a constructive or positive constituting process. Thus, again, prepositional phrases such as "toward our nature" or "toward the prevailing nature" significantly clarify the kind of constituting process that Plato and Aristotle (at least in this *Rhetoric* passage) claim that pleasure is.

Morphologically the "-σις" ending on nominal roots typically serves to mean "process" or "activity," while the "-μα" ending serves to mean "product" or "result." Accordingly the "-μα" ending in "κατάστημα" should convey the product or result of the process characterized by the idea of the root "καθιστα-" (or "κατα + ιστα-"). Consequently if Epicurus deliberately employed "κατάστημα" in contrast to "κατάστασις" within the context of hedonic theorizing, it is reasonable to infer that his intention was to convey the product or result of the constituting

²⁸ *Phlb.* 42d5-7. Cf. 46c6.

²⁹ *Ti.* 64e6-65a1.

³⁰ *Rh.* 1369b33-38. Cp. *MM* 2.7.16.1, 17.1.

process, that is, constitution qua product of that process. I therefore propose to render "κατάστημα" as "constitution" and to interpret it in this sense.

Consequently I suggest that Epicurus uses "ἡδονὴ καταστηματική" to mean "constitutional pleasure." That is, Epicurus treats *katastematic* pleasure as pleasure due to the corporeal or mental constitution, where such constitutions are states or products rather than processes of change or constituting processes.

Now body and mind can be variously constituted. Hence the adjective "εὐσταθής" in *On the Goal* fragment 68 is significant in indicating that the corporeal constitution constitutive of the corporeal component of telic pleasure is well built. In this case a well-built corporeal constitution is a state of corporeal health. I infer that Epicurus maintains that the mental constitution constitutive of telic pleasure is also well built. Compare Epicurus' expression "mental health" (τὸ κατὰ ψυχὴν ὑγιαῖνον) in the *Letter to Menoecus*.³¹ Accordingly Epicurus maintains that the mental state constitutive of the mental τέλος is a well-built or healthy constitution.

Consider now the following fragment, which contains the one other instance of "κατάστημα" among Epicurus' extant writings. Arrighetti assigns the fragment to an unspecified letter from Epicurus to Metrodorus, but more recently Adele Guerra has argued that it belongs to *On the Goal*. The textual source of the fragment is not crucial for my argument. For convenience I will simply refer to the text as the "fragment to Metrodorus." But in light of the use I have been making of *On the Goal* fragment 68 Guerra's proposal is particularly appealing:

"When the opportunity for expectation (ἐλπίδος) has been stripped away and [the opportunity] for pleasure in the flesh and for gratitude at the preservation [in memory] of things past has been removed, what sort of constitution of the soul (κατάστημα ψυχῆς)³² would I still retain, Metrodorus?"^{33,34}

³¹ *Ep. Men.* 122.

³² "ψυχῆς" is Guerra's new reading. Arrighetti has "φυσικόν." As Guerra notes, the papyrus shows only a vertical mark under the line, which could be either a "φ" or a "ψ." And the Neapolitan apograph has a "φ," while the Oxford one has a "ψ." The main argument for "ψ" then is that "ψυχῆς" would make better sense here. But Guerra also compares Soranus, *Gyn.* 1.39 where one finds mention of "τὸ ποιὸν τῆς ψυχῆς κατάστημα." Both readings are in fact compatible with my argument. (Adele Tepedino Guerra, "PHerc. 1232, fr. 6: una testimonianza del libro 'Sul Fine' de Epicuro?" *CErc* 17 (1987) 85-88) Cp. Jeffrey S. Purinton, "Epicurus on the Telos," *Phronesis* 38 (1993) 281-320, at n.30.

³³ *PHerc.* 1232 = fr. 73.10-17 Arrighetti.

³⁴ The security of the reconstruction may also be questioned in the following respect. This is the only instance of the noun "ἐπιμονή" in Epicurus' surviving writings. However, the verb "ἐπιμιμησκομαι" occurs once elsewhere: "καὶ γὰρ τῶ[ν θεῶν] ἐπιμνηστῆ[ρον ὡς αἰ]τ(ί)ων πολλῶν [ἀγαθῶν] [ᾗ]ντω[ν]." (*Letter to Polyainos*, fr. 86 Arrighetti). Moreover, the

Here Epicurus indicates that the following three constituents are necessary for a certain sort of psychic constitution: expectation, corporeal pleasure, and gratitude at the memory of certain things past. The first two constituents are closely akin to the two constituents of telic pleasure in *On the Goal* fragment 68.³⁵

Momentarily I will return to the third member of the triad in the fragment to Metrodorus. Presently let me draw the following conclusion from the preceding considerations. Well-built corporeal and mental constitutions are stable or at least relatively stable. Hence katastematic pleasures are stable or at least relatively stable. But the stability of katastematic pleasure is a function of the pleasure being due to a well-built constitution; it is not due to the meaning of the word "καταστηματική."

Gratitude

I return now to the third constituent mentioned in the Metrodorus fragment: "gratitude at the preservation [in memory] of things past (ἐπιμ[ονῆς] τ[ῆς τῶν γεγονότων] χάριτος)." In his catalogue of Epicurus' writings Diogenes Laertius lists a treatise *On Gifts and Gratitude* (Περὶ δώρων καὶ χάριτος).³⁶ Unfortunately the only testimony regarding this treatise casts no light on the topic of gratitude.³⁷ Hence we also cannot securely attribute any unspecified fragments to the treatise, even though we have some whose content fits the title. Nonetheless since the theme of gratitude is expressed in a number of texts, we have means to reflect on Epicurus' view of the topic and its significance. Consider the following passage from the *Letter to Menoecus*:

"Therefore, both old and young ought to philosophize, the former in order that, as age comes over him, he may be young in good things through his gratitude at things past (διὰ τὴν χάριν τῶν γεγονότων) ... So we must practice (μελετᾶν) those things that bring εὐδαιμονία, since if that is present, we have everything ..."³⁸

phrase "χάριν τῶν γεγονότων" occurs in the *Letter to Menoecus* 122. And compare the phrase "χάριτι τῶν ἀπολλυμένων" in *SV* 55.

³⁵ Cp. "The cry of the flesh is not to be hungry, not to be thirsty, not to be cold. If one has these things and expects that he will have them (ἐλπίζων ἔξειν), he would rival Zeus for happiness." (*SV* 33)

³⁶ DL 10.128. Cp. Norman W. DeWitt, "The Epicurean Doctrine of Gratitude," *American Journal of Philology* 58 (1937) 320-8.

³⁷ Sext. *Adv. math.* 1.49: "In his book *On Gifts and Gratitude* Epicurus definitely tries to prove that it is necessary for the wise to learn letters, necessary moreover, as we should say, not only for the wise but for all men."

³⁸ 122.

The passage suggests that gratitude at things past is partly constitutive of eudaimonia. Hence gratitude is constitutive of telic pleasure. Furthermore since gratitude is a mental rather than corporeal state, we can infer that gratitude is precisely a constituent of the mental τέλος. Indeed the fragment to Metrodorus suggests the same conclusion: "gratitude at the preservation (in memory) of things past" along with expectation and corporeal health are necessary for a certain "constitution of the soul" (κατάστημα ψυχῆς). The psychic constitution in question appears to be telic pleasure.

The objects of gratitude are not restricted to the past. Indeed Epicurus recognizes what may be called "non-memorial" as well as "memorial" gratitude. For example Diogenes Laertius transmits a *doxa* suggesting that the Epicurean sage experiences gratitude toward "friends, present and absent ..."39 In addition consider the following maxim from an unspecified Epicurean text preserved in Stobaeus:

"Let there be gratitude (χάρις) to blessed nature, because she has made what is necessary easy to acquire and what is difficult to acquire unnecessary."⁴⁰

The fragment itself does not indicate whether Epicurus held such gratitude to be a constituent of the mental τέλος, but there is a passage from the *Letter to Menoeceus* with very similar content that more closely connects the maxim to the goal of a life of pleasure:

"We hold that self-sufficiency is a great good, not so that in all cases we should make use of little, but so that if we do not have much, we are contented with little, since we are genuinely persuaded that those have the greatest enjoyment of luxury who have least need of it, and that whatever is natural is easy to acquire, while what is empty is difficult to acquire."⁴¹

In sum gratitude qua constituent of the mental τέλος has non-memorial as well as memorial aspects.

Granting this, memorial gratitude plays a particularly prominent role among those Epicurean passages that mention gratitude. One reason is simply that, in general, gratitude is directed toward past benefits or goods. But there is a further, perhaps more significant reason. Observe the following opposition between memorial gratitude and the trustworthy expectation of persisting bodily health: the latter is prospective, the former retrospective. Given Epicurus' view of the expansive cognitive powers of the mind, in contrast to those of the body whose awareness is limited to the present, we might think that the wide-ranging

³⁹ DL 10.118.

⁴⁰ fr. 66 Bailey, apud Stob. 17.23.

⁴¹ 130.

temporal scope of the mental τέλος is central to its psychological and in turn ethical importance. This is true, so far as it goes. Compare Diogenes Laertius' *doxa*:

"The flesh endorses the storms of the present alone, the soul (ψυχήν) those of the past, present, and future. Likewise Epicurus holds that the pleasures of the soul are greater [than those of the flesh]."⁴²

On the other hand trustworthy expectation and memorial gratitude do not seem to operate conjunctively so much as to play complementary roles. To appreciate this point consider *Sententia Vaticana* 17:

"It is not the young man who is to be viewed as blessed (μακαριστός), but the old man who has lived well. ... The old man has set anchor as though in a harbor; and the goods about which he previously lacked confident expectation (τὰ πρότερον δυσελπιστούμενα) he has fastened (κατακλείσας) with a secure sense of gratitude (ἀσφαλεῖ χάριτι)."⁴³

I presume that the goods here mentioned are whatever the young man thought would *de re* constitute a well-lived life.⁴⁴ These, the old man has achieved. Hence the old man has achieved telic pleasure.⁴⁵

In addition to connecting memorial gratitude with old age, a number of the passages suggest that such gratitude may play a special auxiliary role. In considering this role, observe that while practical wisdom, particularly practical wisdom pertaining to desire, can raise the probability of enduring corporeal health, it cannot ensure ἀπονία. This is true throughout life, but especially as one ages. The physical maladies that Epicurus suffered in old age attest to his appreciation of this point. Epicurus maintains that memory has value in the face of such difficulties. For example consider the following fragment from the *Letter to Idomeneus*:

⁴² DL 10.137.

⁴³ It is difficult to know whether "ἀσφαλεῖ χάριτι" is a dative of instrument or accompaniment. This is the only instance of "κατακλείω" in Epicurus. The verb "κλείω" occurs at *Ep. Hdt.* 43. There the accompanying dative is instrumental. But there are different senses of instrumentality. Compare fastening two pieces of wood with glue using a vice. Both the vice and glue are instrumental.

⁴⁴ I say that the young man conceives of these goods *de re*. This interpretation is corroborated by the fact that the old man has achieved these goods and what the old man has achieved are genuine goods.

⁴⁵ Incidentally the maxim also further confirms that memorial gratitude is constitutive of telic pleasure. Cp. also Theon's statement in Plutarch: "Epicurus says that the nature of the good is begotten from the very escape from what is bad and from the memory of, reasoning through, and gratitude for (τῆς μνήμης καὶ ἐπιλογίσεως καὶ χάριτος) the fact that this has come into being for oneself." (*non posse* 1091b)

"On this blessed day of my life, as I am at the point of death, I write this to you. The disease in my bladder and stomach are pursuing their course, lacking nothing of their natural severity. But against all this is the joy in my soul at the memory of my past conversations with you (ἐπὶ τῆ τῶν γεγονότων ἡμῖν διαλογισμῶν μνήμη) ..."⁴⁶

Epicurus speaks here of pleasure derived from memory. He does not speak, more precisely, of memorial gratitude. But in *Sententia Vaticana* 55 memorial gratitude is invoked to play a similar therapeutic role:

"Misfortunes must be cured by a sense of gratitude (χάριτι) for the things that have perished (τῶν ἀπολλυμένων) and the knowledge (τῶι γινώσκειν) that the past (τὸ γεγονός) cannot be undone."

When he writes here of gratitude for "the knowledge that the past cannot be undone," I understand Epicurus to mean that the goods from our past are secure achievements of our life. Compare the phrase from *Sententia Vaticana* 17: the goods that the old man has "fastened with a secure sense of gratitude."

I conclude that gratitude is a constituent of the mental τέλος and that memorial gratitude in particular plays a therapeutic role in preserving the mental τέλος.

Conclusion

I have argued that Epicurus characterizes the mental τέλος in positive as well as privative terms. Positively speaking the mental τέλος consists of a state of consciousness, a trustworthy expectation of the persistence of one's corporeal health, and gratitude. The trustworthiness of the expectation is itself constituted by practical wisdom, which is the name I have applied to Epicurus' physical, epistemological, and ethical-psychological doctrines. A significant feature of Epicurean gratitude is that in its memorial aspect it may serve a therapeutic role. In addition I have argued that "κατασθηματική" means "constitutional." Hence the mental τέλος is a constitutional pleasure. The mental τέλος is also a stable pleasure, however "κατασθηματική" itself does not entail stability.

These conclusions raise many questions. Three that I find particularly intriguing pertain specifically to gratitude. In its therapeutic role gratitude is supposed to alleviate corporeal suffering, by focusing the mind on available hedonic objects. But this suggests that corporeal health, allegedly a constituent of the τέλος, is not required.⁴⁷ Second, allegedly and strangely Epicurus has a

⁴⁶ fr. 30 Bailey (= DL 10.22).

⁴⁷ On this subject, cp. Anna Angeli, "Compendi, Eklogai, Tetrpharmakos: Due Capitoli de Dissenso nell' Epicureismo," *CErc* 16 (1986) 53-66, at 61-66. On the role of memory in combating pain, see DL 10.22, 137; *Men.* 122. Angeli cites a number of other passages at n.100.

perceptualist theory of memory. If so, then how is such a conception to be squared with gratitude as a constituent of the mental τέλος insofar as the mental τέλος is a katastematic, that is, constitutional pleasure? If one were to argue that a certain constitution disposes one to certain perceptual experience, then how would katastematic pleasure be distinguished from kinetic pleasure? Third, gratitude seems to be a non-selfish (if not specifically moral) emotion. This introduces a further consideration in the persistent debate over Epicurus' egoistic versus altruistic psychology. I note these questions, but will not attempt to answer them here.

Returning to my central conclusion, a fundamental question is why Epicurus' surviving texts include both positive and privative characterizations of telic pleasure and specifically the mental τέλος? One idea relates to the locus of these characterizations. The clearest positive characterization derives from *On the Goal*. If the Metrodorus fragment derives from that work as well, it strengthens the claim that *On the Goal* is a principal site of Epicurus' positive characterization of the τέλος. In contrast the privative characterizations mainly occur in the *Letter to Menoeceus*, *Principal Doctrines*, and *Vatican Sayings*. Otherwise— that is, among the surviving fragments— privative conceptions are rare. In fact the term "ἀταραξία" and its cognates occur only once among the fragments.⁴⁸ "Ταραχή" and its cognates do not occur among the fragments at all. This encourages the following hypothesis. The works that are summaries, above all the *Letter to Menoeceus*, *Principal Doctrines*, and *Vatican Sayings*, have a salient therapeutic agenda. They focus on ridding the souls of aspirants of false beliefs and empty desires. In therapy we tend to focus on eradication of disease. A work such as *On the Goal* perhaps had a different objective, namely to defend a certain hedonic conception of the τέλος against rival theories. Such an objective might be more conducive to a positive characterization of the τέλος.

Our evidence for Epicurus' theory of the τέλος is fragmentary; and the main surviving evidence comes from works that are summaries. Moreover if my hypothesis is correct, these summaries have a salient therapeutic agenda that motivates a distinct sort of characterization of the τέλος. Accordingly Epicurus' surviving characterizations of the mental τέλος should not be regarded as complete.⁴⁹

In fact the claim of incomplete characterization holds for the privative as well as the positive characterizations. Strictly speaking ἀταραξία does not entail a perduring mental state. One may be free of mental disturbance, but just briefly. Epicurus is sensitive to this point. In the *Letter to Pythocles* he writes: "if one is at

⁴⁸ In *On Choice and Avoidance*.

⁴⁹ Summaries statements and statements geared to a particular textual objective are apt to mislead. For example— return to our first text: "When we say that pleasure is the τέλος ..." This statement is misleading in the following way. The τέλος is a certain kind of life, not merely a psychological state, even though psychological states are crucial constituents of the life that is the τέλος. So what Epicurus really means in this passage is that a certain kind of pleasure is constitutive of the living well.

odds with clear evidence, one will never be able to achieve genuine ataraxia (ἀταραξίας γνήσιου).⁵⁰ Note the adjective "γνήσιου." At some point in their lives most people experience some absence of mental disturbance. But Epicurus maintains that without practical wisdom such ataraxia is unstable. By "genuine" ataraxia then Epicurus means freedom from mental disturbance constituted in such a way so as to ensure its stability.

Compare *Vatican Saying* 14:

"Even though security through [the support of] other men comes to some extent (μέχρι τινός) by means of the power to repel [attacks] and by means of prosperity, the security that comes from a quiet life and withdrawal from the many is the purest (εὐλικρινεστάτη)."

"Εὐλικρινεστάτη" here conveys that the security in question is not sequentially mixed, that is, interspersed and riddled, with periods of insecurity. In other words the security is continuous.⁵¹

I conclude with one further question. How is Epicurus' positive characterization of the τέλος or mental τέλος to be squared with the familiar thesis that Epicurus is a hedonist? The question is in fact ambiguous between two. One is: To what extent is the mental τέλος, as Epicurus positively characterizes it, a hedonic state? I will not attempt to answer this question here, save to say that the positive characterization of the τέλος makes Epicurus' claim that the τέλος is a hedonic state much more plausible than it has sometimes been thought to be. Indeed I suggest that we will find Epicurus' conception of telic pleasure as a whole much more intuitive if we recognize it as answering to the following question: In the natural and cultural world in which we (fourth century Greeks) live, what do we need in order to live a life of pleasure? Epicurus' answer is: practical wisdom, corporeal health, a trustworthy expectation of the persistence of corporeal health, and gratitude for the benefits

⁵⁰ 96.

⁵¹ Again compare *Principal Doctrine* 12: "It is impossible for someone ignorant about the nature of the cosmos but still suspicious about the subjects of myths to dissolve (λύειν) his fear about the most important matters. So it is impossible, without knowing natural science, to attain pleasures that are unmixed (ἀκεραίους τὰς ἡδονάς)." I presume that Epicurus here intends that the pleasures that a person who is ignorant of Epicurus' physical doctrines experiences will be short-lived. That is, these pleasures will be brief respites from the pains engendered by empty fears. Such a person will then not "dissolve" (λύειν) his mental disturbances, but merely temporarily distract himself from them. Cp. "If the things productive of profligates' pleasures really freed them from fears of the mind ... if, further, they taught them to limit their desires, we should never have any fault to find with such persons, for they would then be filled with pleasures to overflowing on all sides and would be free from all pain ..." (*KD* 10); "No pleasure is bad by itself. But things productive of some pleasures bring troubles greater than the pleasures." (*KD* 8) Cp. also the use of "ἀταρακτότας" in connection with justice at *KD* 12 (= *SV* 12).

we have received and continue to receive from our own efforts, from our friends, and from the provisions of nature itself.

The second disambiguation of the question is this: Assuming the τέλος is a hedonic state, in what sense is Epicurus a hedonist? The answer to this question may seem self-evident and trivial. But in fact it requires clarification. "Hedonism" is typically understood as elliptical for "ethical hedonism"; and ethical hedonism is typically understood as the claim that pleasure is the only intrinsic good. I fear that the phrase "intrinsic good" may be theoretically unsalvageable. But in any case I would prefer to call hedonism so construed "intrinsic evaluative hedonism." Epicurus is an intrinsic evaluative hedonist of a kind. But the focus of this paper has been on Epicurus' eudaimonistic hedonism; and there are important differences between intrinsic evaluative hedonism and eudaimonistic hedonism. A key difference comes out in the following points: Epicurus holds that pleasure qua pleasure is intrinsically good.⁵² But he holds that telic pleasure and more specifically the mental τέλος is constituted by pleasure of a very special kind.

⁵² It seems that Epicurus identifies pleasure as intrinsic good insofar as it only is the intrinsic object of present desire or preference. That is, among entities that may be present to one, it is pleasure alone that is preferred. But our motivations are not merely concerned with the present, but with the temporal scope of our lives as a whole. Hence our practical orientation is not simply what is best for the moment, but for life overall. The answer to the former question is pleasure simpliciter; the answer to the latter question is telic pleasure.