

# Confidence in Katastematic Pleasure

Post by "Don" of February 12, 2023 at 11:27 PM

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Metrodorus stresses the importance of both kinds of pleasures, but he also wrote a book entitled "On the Source of Happiness in Ourselves being greater than that which arises from Objects."

Hi, Don!

I think I have another possible interpretation of Metrodorus' book title. This is the idea: who is "ourselves" referring to? The first and obvious interpretation is "each one of us, internally". Another possible interpretation is "us, as a community of epicurean friends".

What I mean is that we can derive two very different ideas from the title of the book. The first one is, I think, in some sense ascetic, or individualistic: "I can be happy and have pleasure by myself. I don't need the objects around me" (I'm exaggerating for clearness). The second one is more social: "the greatest pleasures are not in wine, banquets, money, etc. The greatest pleasures are in ourselves, people, in the moments we have in our community with our friends".

All this depends, of course, on the ambiguity of the "ourselves" in English, so if it doesn't exist in Greek, just ignore my comment ☐☐

In any case, my own opinion about katastematic pleasures is that I think they don't derive from epicurean physics, so the only reason we can have to defend them must be a practical reason. So, if we accept the distinction between kinetic and katastematic pleasures, it must be because is useful for having a joyful life.

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I think you raise a very interesting interpretation. As you said, it depends on the Greek. So, let's see what we can find:

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

Περι του μειζονα εινα την παρ' ημας αιτιαν προς ευδαιμονιαν της εκ των πραγματων αγαθων

Let's break this down...which I should have done at the beginning! I should know better than to take any translation at face value.

Περι just introduces the book title like "On.." "About..." "Concerning..."

μειζονα is the "greater, larger"

την παρ' ημας αιτιαν has an embedded phrase is something like "the cause for us"

The "in Ourselves" in the original translation appears to come from παρ' ημας appears to be stock phrase in the language meaning "resulting from us"

ημας is the accusative of ἡμεῖς (hēmeîs): us (1st person plural)

προς ευδαιμονιαν toward happiness (lit. eudaimonia)

της εκ των πραγματων αγαθον that which is good from things (pragmaton)

πρᾶγμα (prâgma) n (genitive πρᾶγματος); third declension

- deed, act, fact
- occurrence, matter, affair
- thing
- (in the plural) circumstances, affairs

So, I'm not sure that solves the question, but there's some information to add to the discussion.

Another translation now could be "Concerning that cause resulting from us that leads to eudaimonia is greater than that which is good from things." Clunky, I know, but as literal as I can make it.

PS. My main hesitation in ascribing a community meaning to "resulting from ourselves" is that the quote from the book describes an internal state: "What else is the good of the soul but the sound state of the flesh, and the sure hope of its continuance?"