

Glossary - What is the Epicurean Definition of "Pleasure?"

Post by "Cassius" of January 14, 2020 at 9:27 PM

It's probably worth pasting here the summary from [the Nikolsky article](#):

Epicurus on Pleasure

Author(s): Boris Nikolsky

Source:

Phronesis,

Vol. 46, No. 4 (Nov., 2001), pp. 440-465

Epicurus On Pleasure

BORIS NIKOLSKY

ABSTRACT

The paper deals with the question of the attribution to Epicurus of the classification of pleasures into 'kinetic' and 'static'. This classification, usually regarded as authentic, confronts us with a number of problems and contradictions. Besides, it is only mentioned in a few sources that are not the most reliable. Following Gosling and Taylor, I believe that the authenticity of the classification may be called in question.

The analysis of the ancient evidence concerning Epicurus' concept of pleasure is made according to the following principle: first, I consider the sources that do not mention the distinction between 'kinetic' and 'static' pleasures, and only then do I compare them with the other group of texts which comprises reports by Cicero, Diogenes Laertius and Athenaeus. From the former group of texts there emerges a concept of pleasure as a single and not twofold notion, while such terms as 'motion' and 'state' describe not two different phenomena but only two characteristics of the same phenomenon. On the other hand, the reports comprising the latter group appear to derive from one and the same doxographical tradition, and to be connected with the classification of ethical doctrines put forward by the Middle Academy and known as the *divisio Carneadea*. In conclusion, I argue that the idea of Epicurus' classification of pleasures is based on a misinterpretation of Epicurus' concept in Academic doxography, which tended to contrapose it to doctrines of other schools, above all to the Cyrenaics' views.

Practically every modern survey of the Epicurean conception of pleasure begins by saying that Epicurus' concept of pleasure was twofold: in the opinion of researchers, Epicurus distinguished two kinds of pleasure – a 'static' pleasure or a pleasure 'in a state of rest' and a 'kinetic' pleasure or a pleasure 'in motion.' We know about this division mainly from one text – the first two books of Cicero's dialogue *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*. In Book 1 of this work¹ one of its characters, an Epicurean by the name of Lucius Torquatus, gives a definition of two different kinds of pleasure, one of which *suavitate aliqua naturam ipsam movet et iucunditate quadam percipitur sensibus*, thus being a pleasure 'in motion,'² while