

Boris Nikolsky: "Epicurus On Pleasure" - Re-examining the Katastematic / Kinetic Question

Post by "Cassius" of January 27, 2018 at 2:16 AM

Here is another conclusion from the same source (Purinton) that seems equally absurd to me, and which also results from the fixation on katastematic as the goal. Purinton suggests that even though Epicurus held katastematic pleasure to be the primary aim, we do so "with the understanding that we will also sometimes enjoy kinetic pleasures as well." If you find this kind of conclusion satisfying then more power to you, but the better course in my view is to accept

This, then, I believe, is how Epicurus would reconcile his claim that katastematic pleasure is the *telos* with his claim that the good cannot be conceived if all kinetic pleasures are removed: the key is to see that one makes katastematic pleasure one's end only on the assumption that doing so will also allow one to enjoy kinetic pleasures – and, indeed, purer kinetic pleasures, and more of them, at least in the long term. For the good life must certainly include kinetic pleasures, since, as Lucretius puts it, "our nature cries out for nothing but that pain be absent from the body *and* that the mind enjoy pleasant sensation, free of care and fear (*mensque⁶² fruatur iucundo sensu cura semota metuque*)."⁶³ Our nature cries out, i.e., not only for painlessness and fearlessness, but also for the pleasant sensation of kinetic pleasure. And these things, Lucretius adds, are easy to procure. For our bodily nature needs few things, "just whatever remove (*demant*) pain in such a way that (*uti*) they are also sometimes able (*possint*) to provide gratifyingly many delights."⁶⁴ We need, i.e., only the things which rid our bodies of pain but which also provide kinetic pleasures sometimes. We ought, then, to make katastematic pleasure our primary aim, but with the understanding that we will also sometimes enjoy kinetic pleasures as well.