

Wenham - On Cicero's Interpretation of Katastematic Pleasure In Epicurus

Post by "Cassius" of March 11, 2017 at 3:41 PM

The full text of the [Wenham Article \(On Cicero's Interpretation of Katastematic Pleasure\)](#) is here

Every so often I like to remind people of two particularly important articles in our "files" section here. One is Boris [Nikolsky's](#) "Epicurus on Pleasure." The second, which I haven't mentioned recently, is [Mathew Wenham's "On Cicero's Interpretation of Katastematic Pleasure in Epicurus."](#) In all our discussions of details we shouldn't forget the central issue of being able to understand and describe the goal of life with clarity. What does "pleasure" really mean? There are at least two major dueling positions on how to answer that question. If you have read wikipedia or 98% of the internet websites on Epicurus, you know the majority position. Just be aware that there is a minority position (and of course it's the one I favor). Wenham does a good job of laying out the argument. Added on to [Nikolsky's](#) analysis, anyone interested in truly understanding the Epicurean goal of life owes it to themselves to read these two articles.

*** In truth [Nikolsky's](#) is more important, because it argues that the entire katastematic/kinetic distinction is non-Epicurean and should be discarded. But if you choose to accept the distinction, Wenham shows how to interpret it in a way that neatly eliminates the contradictions inherent in talking about (1) a "static" state, in an Epicurean universe of atoms that never come to rest, and (2) a state in which feeling is absent, in an Epicurean universe where the feeling of pleasure is the guide to life.

day. The "standard" contemporary interpretation accepts the rudiments of the Ciceronian account and produces similar inconsistencies in its explication of Epicurean ethics. Epicurean hedonism is therefore most often taken as being of only historical interest. But there is a problem at the heart of the standard interpretation. Its characterisation of *katastematic* pleasure necessitates that its theoretical basis is *attitudinal*. However, when we examine aspects of Epicurus' epistemology, it seems to demand that we attribute to him an account of pleasure that fits the *experiential* framework. This framework refuses any conception of pleasure that locates it extrinsically to its experiential object — yet this is just how the standard interpretation casts *katastematic* pleasures. There are further questions to be answered about conceptual agree-