

An Unfortunate Article Suggesting That Katastematic Pleasure is "Necessary" and Kinetic Pleasure is "Unnecessary"

Post by "Cassius" of April 14, 2021 at 11:23 AM

I haven't had time to read this article by Yosef Liebersohn, and I am not sure if or when I will, but this abstract that came across my email just reminded me for the 500th time of this issue. I'll skip over the fact that the author suggests that kinetic and katastematic are "the most dominant terms in Epicurus' theory of the pleasures (despite the fact that this comes from Cicero and Diogenes Laertius and isn't a significant factor at all in Epicurus' or Lucretius' work, as explained by Boris [Nikolsky](#)).

What's significant to me is that I have to hand it to this writer for creativity in taking the katastematic/kinetic argument that modern commentators love to discuss to what may be its logical extreme conclusion.

Once you identify "katastematic pleasure" as the ultimate goal that makes life worth living, it's easy and enticing to conclude that this "resting" or "static" type of pleasure is what is "necessary" in life, and that kinetic pleasure ("joy and delight" in Diogenes Laertius) is "unnecessary."

People who take this approach have always seemed to me to be intent on draining every last aspect of "joy and delight" out of Epicurean philosophy. Possibly this writer shows the most creative way to do that. So if you're of the persuasion to drain joy and delight out of Epicurean philosophy, by all means pursue the katastematic/kinetic distinction that leads to this form of analysis.

My own suggestion is - "**Don't!**"

"Epicurus' "Kinetic" and "Katastematic" Pleasures. A Reappraisal",
Elenchos xxxvi (2015) fasc. 2: 271-296.

Yosef E. Liebersohn

4/11/2021, 2:27 PM

In this paper I shall offer new definitions for what seem to be the most dominant terms in Epicurus' theory of pleasures: "kinetic" and "katastematic". While most of the scholarly literature treats these terms as entirely concerned with states of motion and states of stability, I shall argue that the distinction concerns whether pain is or is not removed by this or that pleasure. As the removal of pain is a necessary condition for the Epicurean goal of ataraxia and apatheia, "katastematic" pleasures, having to do with the removal of pain, is the necessary pleasure pertaining both to the process of removing pain and to its result, namely the absence of pain, while "kinetic" pleasures is an unnecessary pleasure pertaining to do with the removal of pain, e.g. it exists after pain has been removed. If my analysis and interpretation prove correct, the two conventional classifications – "katastematic" and "necessary-unnecessary" – turn out to be referring to the same phenomenon and are aspects of one classification. Moreover, this new interpretation resolves some of the main problems arising from our textbooks concerning "kinetic" and "katastematic" pleasures.