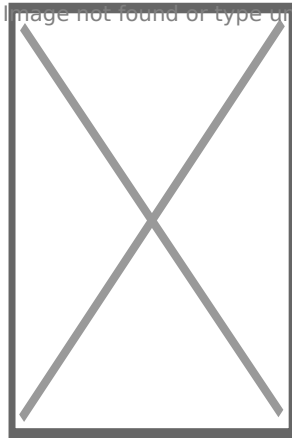


Differences between Epicureanism and Cyrenaicism

Post by "Don" of November 5, 2021 at 5:42 AM

Thanks for all that legwork, [Cassius](#)

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[Epicurus: in outline and in history](#)

<p>This chapter has two aims. First, it provides an overview of the basics of Epicureanism. It therefore reviews the Epicurean adaptation of atomism,...

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Came across this book chapter online and liked the way the author lays it out overall:

Quote

To claim that pleasure is good, then, does not mean imagining that all pleasures are equally good (Jones, 1989: 49-50). Epicureans therefore distinguished between two categories (Mitsis, 1988: 45-51; Preuss, 1994: Ch. 6).

Kinetic pleasures are non-necessary 'pleasures in motion' which depend upon change and process. Sensual pleasures of sight, touch, hearing and so forth seem to fall under this heading. A kinetic pleasure also seems to depend upon pain. If I enjoy reading a novel the enjoyment comes from anxious anticipation about how things will turn out. Will my favourite character die? Will the hero defeat the villain?

Katastematic pleasures are 'pleasures at rest' or in stasis, which implies an absence of disturbance or discomfort. They denote a state of being, involving equilibrium, calm, stability and completeness. Since they can be varied but cannot be quantitatively improved upon (as with the white loaf of bread) these are the highest pleasures and are sometimes known as 'static pleasures' (see *Epic IV.130-32*).

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2245-differences-between-epicureanism-and-cyrenaicism/?postID=14586#post14586>

Though we should be wary of drawing an exact parallel, the *kinetic/katastematic* distinction is presumably what J.S. Mill had in mind when he praised Epicureanism and devised his own distinction between higher and lower pleasures as a way of evolving Utilitarianism beyond Bentham, for whom all pleasures were equally good (Arangno, 2013: 201, 203–204; Wilson, 2009: 280).¹²

But there is an important difference. Mill was more willing to identify the higher with one set of activities and the lower with another set. For Mill, poetry simply was superior to pushpin, as anyone who had experienced and been educated in the former could tell you.

For Epicureanism things are not quite that simple (Rist, 1972: 108–109, 115). Even if the *kinetic* are lower (though this is a proposition we will interrogate in Chapter 2), this does not mean we should disdain them (as Mill seems to disdain pushpin) for three reasons.

Firstly, as materialists Epicureans were receptive to the delights which we experience when the senses are stimulated. A good game of pushpin enjoyed with friends is presumably better than reading bad poetry in solitude.

Secondly, therefore, even if *kinetic* pleasures do invite pain and disturbances, these may be worth experiencing. The short-term anxiety caused by reading my novel may be worthwhile if the result leaves me in a higher, long-term state of *katastematic* pleasure than I would have experienced otherwise.

Finally, the above arguments suggest that *kinetic* pleasures may be valuable for their own sake. Seeking variations in pleasure *is* important if a life is to go well. Epicurus' distinction between adding pleasure and varying pleasure may not hold if and when variation itself constitutes a form of addition. If we can derive simple, untroubling enjoyment from *kinetic* activities then they may add to life's richness. (This is an argument we pursue in the next chapter under *Puzzle 3*.)

The *kinetic* and *katastematic* are therefore intermingled to a degree that does not appear true of Mill's lower/higher distinction. What matters is not just what we do but the reasons why we do what we do (Jones, 1989: 51).

Display More

Here's the pushpin referred to:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Push-pin_...%29?wprov=sfla1