

Differences between Epicureanism and Cyrenaicism

Post by "Don" of November 5, 2021 at 11:18 PM

[Cassius](#) : First, your passion is apparent, appreciated, and completely understandable.

I'd like to address your last few posts above in a tangential way and then state why I "liked the way the author lays it out overall" in that article I posted. I don't necessarily expect you to agree with me, but it might at least give you (and any curious readers) a better idea where my head is at.

For me:

- There are obviously different kinds of activities that bring pleasure discerned simply by observation.
- Categorizing two broad categories as *katastematic* and *kinetic* doesn't bother me, especially since Diogenes Laertius quotes both Metrodorus and Epicurus himself in Lives, X:136, that pleasure can be experienced, let's say, *katastematically* and *kinetically*:

Metrodorus in his Timocrates, whose actual words are : "Thus pleasure being conceived both as that species which consists in motion and that which is a state of rest." (κίνησιν καὶ τῆς καταστηματικῆς (kinesin and [tes] katastematikes)) The words of Epicurus in his work On Choice are : "Peace of mind and freedom from pain are pleasures which imply a state of rest ; joy and delight are seen to consist in motion and activity." (ὁ δ' Ἐπίκουρος ἐν τῷ Περὶ αἰρέσεων οὕτω λέγει: "ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀταραξία καὶ ἀπονία (ataraxia and aponia) καταστηματικά (katastematikai) εἰσιν ἡδοναί: ἡ δὲ χαρὰ καὶ ἡ εὐφροσύνη (khara and euphrosune) κατὰ κίνησιν (kinesin) ἐνεργεῖα βλέπονται.")

- Metrodorus and Epicurus are drawing a distinction between the philosophy of the Garden and the philosophy of Cyrenaics who appear to only recognize kinetic pleasures as the goal or the highest good. Epicurus (and Metrodorus) are quoted as saying, "No, pleasures encompass those gained from both kinds of pleasures."

- Ataraxia and aponia are specifically designated by Epicurus in On Choices as *καταστηματικά (katastematikai)*. This appears to mean in a stable state. It is related to [the word meaning 'bring to anchor,' bringing one to his destination.](#)

- [Khara](#) (joy/delight) and [euphrosune](#) (mirth/merriment/good cheer/cheered with glad thoughts) are defined by Epicurus as kinetic pleasure. Why? I don't know other than to say maybe your soul atoms are bouncing around more (they're kinetic) in response to the

pleasure; whereas they are stable (at anchor) while experiencing a *katastematic* pleasure.

- No value judgements that one is better than another.

Where I liked the article was:

Quote

To claim that pleasure is good, then, does not mean imagining that all pleasures are equally good

I interpreted this to mean "good [for you]" as [PD10](#). I realize I'm reading into the article's text, but that's the way I interpreted it.

I'll admit I have some misgivings about their characterization of kinetic pleasures. Going back to Epicurus, he states joy and merriment are kinetic pleasures, not pleasures from sight, touch, hearing, etc. You can get feelings of joy and merriment from any number of activities. Excitement might be a candidate from my perspective of pleasure derived through kinesis. I like their katastematic lines better:

Quote

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.

That's the definition I'm coming around to to try and describe them.

I liked their repudiation of Mill. I also liked this:

Quote

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.

This goes back to the idea that we can only experience pleasure when our senses interact with the external world at least in the kinetic pleasures. Katastematic pleasure can be experienced through internal sensations ([interoception](#) to channel Dr. Lisa Feldman Barrett and others).

Quote

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. ... If we can derive simple, untroubling enjoyment from kinetic activities then they may add to life's richness.

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).

So, kinetic and katastematic are NOT higher/lower, better/worse for Epicurus like they were Mill. They are simply ways of talking about the various ways pleasure is experienced.

Let's take the pleasure derived from intoxication. Epicurus wrote his Symposium (paraphrasing) "Don't act the fool when you're drunk", so I'm going to assume he didn't prohibit drinking. If one goes out drinking with friends to strengthen the bonds of friendship with no responsibilities the next day, I see no reason that's not a valid Epicurean choice. If you go out alone drinking when you have a big social or work commitment the next day, that would not be choice-worthy and would lead to more pain. The pleasure is the same (probably kinetic if we're keeping to the thread) but the *desires* to experience that pleasure are not equally choice-worthy.

So, that's where my head is at right now in regards to kinetic and katastematic.