

Confidence in Katastematic Pleasure

Post by "Don" of February 11, 2023 at 4:08 PM

I'm putting this here primarily as an interesting tidbit but also partly in reference to numbers 7 & 8 on my initial list.

From Philodemus, On Choices and Avoidances, columns 4 and 5:

[4] [Epicurus teaches us that good is easy for us to procure] and that evil is [not] only limited precisely because it is useless to have defined the good (τὰγαθόν), if it is difficult, if not impossible, for us to attain, nor to have fixed limits to evil, if it is difficult to bear because of its long duration. This knowledge has the effect of prohibiting both the pursuit of any [good] which is not by nature capable of eliminating pain - such are, most of the time, the [goods] which have motivated a search eager in humans -, and let none be discarded which does not prevent having pleasure -- that is how one must [conceive] most of [those which are acquired] gradually. And, in reverse, for [missing approximately 20 lines]

[5] [missing 3 lines] After that, it is also necessary to take into account the differences that present the desires (ἐπιθυμ[ιῶ]ν) relating to the pleasures and to what produces them, since precisely the lack of discernment on this subject gives rise to serious errors concerning the choices and the rejections. It is indeed because they regard as what is most necessary the goods which are most external to them, I mean a sovereign power, a dazzling fame, an exceptional wealth and sources of pleasure of this sort and other similar ones that they are in charge of the most painful evils; and that, conversely, [they remain deaf to their most necessary appetites] (ἀναγκαιοτάτων), because they take them for what is most exterior to them [missing about 20 lines].

Notes:

The "external" in the middle of column 5 is: External; alien; ξενοτάτων

II. c. gen. rei, strange to a thing, unacquainted with, ignorant of it; III. strange, unusual.

A related word appears in Epicurus fragment 266:

From the perspective of the infinite time that has passed, nothing novel occurs in the universe.

οὐδὲν ξένον ἐν τῷ παντι ἀποτελεῖται παρὰ τὸν ἤδη γεγενημένον χρόνον ἄπειρον.

The idea of ξένος is the strange, foreign, something or someone from "outside". There's a whole cultural thing about xenia but I don't think that's relevant in the current context.