

Article: "Lucretian Pleasures" by Sedley

Post by "Cassius" of October 17, 2023 at 6:37 AM

Ok as much as I like Sedley let me comment on one of the early paragraphs:

Quote

In Epicurean doctrine pleasures are divided into two kinds, the bodily and the mental; and within each of those two domains there are short-term "kinetic" pleasures, which lie primarily in hedonic processes such as eating or learning, and static (or "katastematic") pleasures, which consist in the longer-term state of painlessness. Counter-intuitively, and notoriously, Epicureans insist that when all pain has gone and static pleasure has replaced it, the height of pleasure has already been reached. The added kinetic pleasures typically associated with luxurious living can, as they put it, 'vary' the static pleasure, but cannot increase it.

As Lucretius says in his second proem (2.16-19), "there is nothing else that nature barks out for than that pain should be absent from the body, and that the mind should enjoy pleasurable sensation while insulated from anxiety and fear."

The heart of our recent discussions is the probability that "pleasure" and "painlessness" are being used by the Epicureans interchangeably, with no difference in meaning other than when referencing the situation that when all pain is gone then you are at 100% pleasure. The second sentence of [PD03](#) confirms the basic point that when you have "absence of one" you have "presence of the other," and Torquatus hammers this point unmistakably.

If so there is no reason to switch words from pleasure to painlessness in the first sentence quoted above. Even under Sedley's terms, kinetic refers to short-term pleasures, while katastematic refers to long-term pleasures, and the issue is duration, not a difference between "pleasure" and "something else."

Then Sedley uses "static" which most all of us agree is a poor choice of words to refer to normal healthy operation of body and mind.

It's this switching of words without being absolutely clear about the context that creates the ambiguity and resulting confusion.

I would suggest the paragraph would be more clear and correct worded this way:

In Epicurean doctrine pleasures are divided into two kinds, the bodily and the mental; and within each of those two domains there are short-term "kinetic" pleasures, which lie primarily in

processes of stimulation such as eating or learning, and longer-term (or “katastematic”) pleasures which lie primarily in operation of the organism not involving short-term stimulation, such as regular healthy operation of body or mind. In a very logical and common sense way, Epicureans insist that when all pain has gone and been replaced by pleasure, the full and complete pleasure of the organism (the height of pleasure) has been reached. The added kinetic pleasures typically associated with luxurious living can, as they put it, ‘vary’ the condition of full and complete pleasure, but cannot increase it.