

Preuss - "Epicurean Ethics - Katastematic Hedonism"

Post by "Cassius" of July 12, 2025 at 8:54 PM

That katastematic pleasure is the good, Epicurus states in a fragment preserved for us by Plutarch:

Unsurpassable joy (anuperblēton gēthos) is produced by comparison with a great evil which one has escaped; and this is the nature of the good if one applies [one's intellect] properly and takes a firm stand, but does not stroll around babbling emptily about the good.³⁰⁰

We are not interested now in the impatient gesture in this fragment. We have already discussed that in our second chapter. What interests us here is the joy of escaping a great evil. Shortly before giving us this fragment Plutarch lists examples of the sort of evil Epicurus might have had in mind from his own experience, examples such as the fury of mobs and the savagery of bandits. To have escaped an evil of that magnitude leaves one unscathed and it is difficult not to become aware of one's unscathed existence as such. This awareness is, according to Epicurus, a pleasure of the highest order if one is capable of apprehending it, a pleasure of such a high order that it deserves to be called the good. It is katastematic pleasure, the quasi-object of which is what has been there continuously the whole time, but is rarely apprehended as clearly as at such time of avoided catastrophe. We note here that katastematic pleasure too has degrees of intensity and anuperblēton gēthos is Epicurus' expression for what appears to be

construing the well known
ance, which he admits is

³⁰⁰Non posse 1091b = US. 423.