

Preuss - "Epicurean Ethics - Katastematic Hedonism"

Post by "Cassius" of July 12, 2025 at 9:15 PM

This excerpt from the conclusion probably goes to the heart of where Pruess ends up. It's interesting that one could almost take his "in the experience of katestematic pleasure life itself, the existence of the self, is seen to be good" and end up not all that far from DeWitt's argument that the greatest good is life itself.

But my core initial objection stems from the fact that I actually agree with him in calling katastematic pleasure an "evaluation." If I try to glean any specificity at all out of the word "katastematic," which I don't find Pruess to be able to do either, I come back to the conclusion that what people are thinking of as katastematic is itself an "activity." Considering katastematic pleasure to be an "evaluation" describes to me a process or movement of the mind, and as I read the evidence and argument in Gosling and Taylor, and intuitively think about how "motion" implies "kinetic," I read all motion of the mind, and therefore all evaluative processes, to be better described as motion, not something in the nature of "rest."

but, unlike kinetic pleasure, it is not an evaluation of some object or other, rather it is a self-evaluation. Katastematic pleasure is continuous pleasure taken in the continuous object by that object: it is in its nature a positive self-evaluation. In

251

the experience of katastematic pleasure life itself, the existence of the self, is seen to be good. This evaluation is not simply a piece of information, a perceptual or cognitive item of which I am informed in the experience of katastematic pleasure. It is not simply the insight that some object matches some standard of goodness, for it is an experience which is as primordially evaluative as it is cognitive, or, to put it into more Epicurean language, it is an evaluation which is felt directly, not just known about. Pleasure, all pleasure, is self-evidently good. The pursuit of the object of pleasure may sometimes be seen to be bad in the Epicurean prudent deliberation on courses of action, which is why kinetic pleasure is always qualifiedly good, that is, a good to be chosen only if I have no reason to avoid it, which well I may. No such qualification applies to katastematic pleasure, for there is no pursuit of the object of katastematic pleasure.