

Epicurus' teaching on marriage

Post by "Cassius" of August 27, 2019 at 4:48 AM

It may be of help for me to say that I do not perceive this to be a view I have personally developed myself. I don't claim any creativity on my own. I attribute the line of thought mainly to Norman DeWitt having started in the 30's his "Epicurus and His Philosophy" (where he himself gives credit to some non-English works). Then the line is developed in Gosling & Taylor's more recent "The Greeks on Pleasure," to which Boris [Nikolsky](#) gives credit in his article "Epicurus on Pleasure" which alleges that the katastematic/kinetic distinction is not even Epicurean at all. The same conclusions are reached from a somewhat other direction in Wenham's article "On Cicero's Interpretation of Katastematic Pleasure in Epicurus." And to a lesser extent similar views are implicit or explicit in Frances Wright's "A Few Days In Athens" as endorsed by Thomas Jefferson. All of these are linked at various places here on the forum but if you have any trouble finding them I can provide direct links in this thread.

The problem I see over and over is that people who start their education in Epicurus with Okeefe or many of the internet articles or frankly almost any of the British authorities (I exempt Sedley from this). Those who read that group naturally end up obsessing on the contention that "pleasure doesn't mean pleasure but katastemic pleasure / absence of pain," which I think is close to the root of the problem. Going off in that direction most of that group then give slight attention to the physics and the epistemology, which would have made their error impossible if they had started off with those, as does Lucretius.

Had I not started my study of Epicurus with Norman Dewitt when I started ten years ago, I would have given up on Epicurus as a hopeless ascetic/quietist almost immediately. I think this line of thought best represent what the ancient Greeks and Romans saw in Epicurus, and explains why it became so popular in the ancient world. On the contrary its the emergence of the "modern" academic consensus following Cicero rather than correct Epicurean principles that explains why Epicurean interest has been in the doldrums for many many years. And to paint with a very broad brush, I sense that the problem has been developed and located geographically more in Britain, where Stoicism seems to be in the water, than anywhere else.