

# Another Article Insisting On The Importance of the Kinetic / Katestematic Distinction, Despite Citing Nikolsky

Post by "Cassius" of September 28, 2019 at 6:35 PM

Thanks to Hiram for pointing out today an article on the kinetic / katestematic issue. The article is "'Epicurus' "Kinetic" and "Katestematic" Pleasures. A Reappraisal", *Elenchos* xxxvi (2015) fasc. 2: 271-296." I find the conclusion (which includes the assertion that kinetic pleasure is unnecessary) most unpersuasive:

YOSEF Z. LIEBERSOHN

## EPICURUS' "KINETIC" AND "KATESTEMATIC" PLEASURES. A REAPPRAISAL

### *Abstract*

In this paper I shall offer new definitions for what seem to be the most dominant terms in Epicurus' theory of pleasures – "kinetic" and "katestematic". While most of the scholarly literature treats these terms as entirely concerned with states of motion and states of stability, I shall argue that the distinction concerns whether pain is or is not removed by this or that pleasure. As the removal of pain is a necessary condition for the Epicurean goal of *ataraxia* and *aponia*, "katestematic" pleasure, having to do with the removal of pain, is the necessary pleasure pertaining both to the process of removing pain and to its result, namely the absence of pain, while "kinetic" pleasure is an unnecessary pleasure having nothing to do with the removal of pain, e.g. it starts after pain has been removed. If my analysis and interpretation prove correct, the two conventional classifications – "kinetic-katestematic" and "necessary-unnecessary" – turn out to be referring to the same phenomenon and are aspects of one classification. Moreover, this new interpretation resolves some of the main problems arising from our testimonia concerning "kinetic" and "katestematic" pleasures.

On the other hand, the article I think helps bolster the argument that the entire katestematic / kinetic distinction is a dead end. Note here the opening, which alleges that these are "the most

dominant terms in Epicurus' theory of pleasures:

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That's just pure nonsense. Did he not read his own footnotes, which cites [the Nikolsky article I point toward so frequently](#)? This shows that the writer fully understood that the kinetic / katastemtic classification cannot be traced to the founding Epicureans themselves.

<sup>3</sup> I shall mention here one main problem concerning such a reconstruction. Nowhere in our testimonia do all four pairs appear together. In most cases we have only a reference to this or that pair, and only in a few places do we have a mention of two pairs. For example, at *Kyriai Doxai* (= *KD*) 28 and *Menoec.* 127 we find "necessary-unnecessary" and "natural-unnatural", and at *DIOG. LAERT.* X 136 we seem to have "bodily-mental" and "kinetic-katastematic".

So in my view this article does not help in the way the writer intended, but it does help illustrate once again how little evidence there is that this distinction mattered to Epicurus.