

Glossary - What is the Epicurean Definition of "Pleasure?"

Post by "Cassius" of January 18, 2020 at 9:48 AM

Gosling and Taylor are being academically polite in describing current interpretations of the kinetic / katastematic distinction as having some "oddities," and they are being tongue-in-cheek by suggesting that the confusion may have been on the part of Epicurus. That is because, in my own words, it is the modern commentators who are confused, and the prevailing kinetic / katastematic interpretation of Epicurus' views is nothing other than **BS!**

I will break here from posting clips and truthfully the details of this discussion from here below in another subforum set up two years ago. No doubt we'll bounce back and forth between subforums, but if someone wants to start a substantive detailed analysis of this please try to use the main location: [Kinetic and Katastematic Pleasure](#)

This and succeeding sections of the Gosling & Taylor book are what spurred [Nikolsky to write](#)

4. The ancient evidence

19.4.1. So far we have contented ourselves with pointing out some oddities in certain current interpretations of the katastematic/kinetic distinction and describing an alternative interpretation together with a certain amount of evidence for it from the writings of Epicurus. Anyone familiar with the literature on Epicurus might be forgiven for feeling uneasily that the weight of the ancient evidence is nevertheless heavily against such an interpretation, and that one simply has to accept that Epicurus is in a state of some confusion on the subject. We shall now, therefore, turn to the examination of this evidence. For convenience we shall divide the relevant

Norman DeWitt comments on the K / K distinction (or lack thereof) in "Epicurus and His Philosophy" -- **"It makes no difference that some pleasures are static and others kinetic."**

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intense while that associated with other parts is moderate and extended but also observed that certain pleasures, like that of escaping a violent death, affect the whole organism.

The next step in this new analysis was to declare that this fact of extension or intension was of no fundamental importance. The high value assigned to this principle is indicated by its promulgation as Authorized Doctrine 9: "If every pleasure were alike condensed in duration and associated with the whole organism or the dominant parts of it, pleasures would never differ from one another." Positively stated, the meaning would be that pleasure is always pleasure; it is of no consequence that some pleasures are associated with the mind, others with the stomach, and others with other parts, or that some affect the whole organism and others only a part, or that some are brief and intense, others moderate and extended. In other words, it makes no difference that some pleasures are static and others kinetic. Pleasure is a unit. This unity could be expressed in ancient terminology by saying that all pleasure was a kind of motion, *kinesis* or *motio*, the ancient equivalent of reaction.