

VS11 - VS11 and Kinetic / Katastematic Pleasure

Post by "Cassius" of February 5, 2020 at 10:34 AM

Interesting question; here are my comments:

(1) For reference, the definitive disassembly of the katastematic/kinetic assertion is [Boris Nikolsky's "Epicurus on Pleasure"](#) (abstract below)

(2) I am not sure I really understand why you would take the phrase in the direction you are taking it: "VS 11 seems to be implying that philosophers should educate themselves to experience rest as pleasure rather than stagnation / ennui / boredom, and to experience action as pleasure rather than madness / stress."

Why not simply take it at face value? Which is something like "most people do not intelligently use either their periods of rest or their periods of activity in a way that maximizes their pleasure."

So maybe the way to pursue the question would be "In what way do the kinetic/katastematic categories relate to or help resolve the imprudent use of time?"

It seems to me that the main way in which the kinetic/katastematic distinction is used by those who promote them is to argue that "katastematic" (rest) pleasures are superior to pleasures of action. In fact the argument often goes so far as to allege that we should dispense entirely with pleasures of action, and that pleasures of action are only needed in order to bring about conditions satisfactory for the so-called "katastematic" pleasure. Those assertions seem to me to be both (1) incorrect, and (2) not at all what [VS11](#) is saying, which is that most men would profit from more intelligent pursuit of BOTH action and rest.

So to restate that, if [VS11](#) were intended as a statement of endorsement of the katastematic/kinetic distinction that some what to promote, it fails to promote that because it does not promote rest over action (it considers them equally).

It is probably presumable that Epicurus was aware that some philosophers were debating issues of rest and action long before his own time, as traced in the background given by Gosling & Taylor in their "Greeks on Pleasure." So in considering rest and action equally, if [VS11](#) relates to the katastematic/kinetic distinction at all, it supports the argument of [Nikolsky](#) that the categories were largely irrelevant to Epicurus, and Epicurus never intended to promote one type of pleasure over the other. In fact, viewed that way, the most likely use of [VS11](#) as written is to emphasize the **equality** of pleasures from rest and pleasures from action, not to promote pleasures of "rest" as superior.

In fact it's probably easier to construe this as an "attack on" or an "undermining of" the distinction than it is to use the reference in support of it. So from that point of view, maybe [VS11](#) IS relevant to the katastematic/kinetic distinction.

And finally, asked another way, is there really any purpose in discussing katastematic/kinetic distinctions other than as a way to promote "pleasures of rest" as superior to any other kind? I really can't think of any other purpose behind the distinction, and that seems to be how it developed and how it is used both then and now. And since elevation of one type of pleasure as intrinsically superior to other types of pleasure would violate core Epicurean principles, I can

an Epicurean argument against (intrinsically superior).

Epicurus On Pleasure

BORIS NIKOLSKY

ABSTRACT

The paper deals with the question of the attribution to Epicurus of the classification of pleasures into 'kinetic' and 'static'. This classification, usually regarded as authentic, confronts us with a number of problems and contradictions. Besides, it is only mentioned in a few sources that are not the most reliable. Following Gosling and Taylor, I believe that the authenticity of the classification may be called in question.

The analysis of the ancient evidence concerning Epicurus' concept of pleasure is made according to the following principle: first, I consider the sources that do not mention the distinction between 'kinetic' and 'static' pleasures, and only then do I compare them with the other group of texts which comprises reports by Cicero, Diogenes Laertius and Athenaeus. From the former group of texts there emerges a concept of pleasure as a single and not twofold notion, while such terms as 'motion' and 'state' describe not two different phenomena but only two characteristics of the same phenomenon. On the other hand, the reports comprising the latter group appear to derive from one and the same doxographical tradition, and to be connected with the classification of ethical doctrines put forward by the Middle Academy and known as the *divisio Carneadea*. In conclusion, I argue that the idea of Epicurus' classification of pleasures is based on a misinterpretation of Epicurus' concept in Academic doxography, which tended to contrapose it to doctrines of other schools, above all to the Cyrenaics' views.