

VS11 - VS11 and Kinetic / Katastematic Pleasure

Post by "Cassius" of February 5, 2020 at 1:26 PM

[Quote from Hiram](#)

Why is this an established doctrine? Why would the Epicureans make this worthy of memorization?

Ok on this, point number one would be that we do **not** know that this was an "established doctrine" or that "The Epicureans made this worthy of memorization." This list is from the "Vatican Collection," the history of which is absolutely unknown as to who collected it or why. It is not in the list of the 40 Authorized Doctrines which would presumably be the list that people talk about as being memorized (also somewhat speculation). And to add to that, I've never seen any real documentation even of the Vatican list itself, in terms of where this original document now resides, what the Greek text was, etc. Hopefully it is out there somewhere but I've never been able to establish where -- maybe at some point we can find out and list that info here. But in the meantime, we really don't know who collected this list, what criteria they used, or why they collected it.

[Quote from Hiram](#)

The saying does not say or imply that abiding pleasures are "superior" to dynamic ones, or anything of that sort.

Yes I agree, this statement does not say that katastematic (the word I see used by the translators) pleasure is superior, so we must look to see if anyone of Epicurean credibility made that argument. That's where I see an absence of evidence.

[Quote from Hiram](#)

If this is being said by anyone, we should consider that a SEPARATE argument and put it in a thought bubble and address it separately, without losing the point being presented here, which is that there is a need to remedy both ethical problems.

The only people I am aware of who make such an argument, explicitly or implicitly, are those modern commentators (probably the majority of them) who are trying to bootstrap this to support the idea that "ataraxia" rather than "pleasure" is the goal of living. So to repeat I am not aware of any credible ancient Epicurean making that argument, which is the point made by Nikoslky and Gosling and Taylor in attacking that suggestion.

[Quote from Hiram](#)

I think VS 11 is pointing the finger at ailments / dis-eases that require medicin

Well yes ---- people who are engaged in stagnation or madness need to stop and do better - no doubt about that!

[Quote from Hiram](#)

"For most men rest is stagnation and activity is madness"? What teaching was being imparted? And WHY did this matter enough for our happiness that it needed to be included in the VS?

What teaching is being imparted? The observation that most men are hopelessly confused about how they should spend their time. Why was this statement preserved in the Vatican Sayings? Probably not much reason other than that it shows how radical Epicurus was in dismissing the lifestyles of so many people, because in pointing out the widespread nature of the error, he emphasizes that he has a better suggestion.

[Quote from Hiram](#)

The reason why this matters is that the doctrine is being offered here as an alternative to concrete ethical problems (boredom, stagnation, existential ennui, stress, madness, etc.).

Are you saying that some doctrine is being suggested here other than simply pointing out that most men waste both their free and their active time? Well if you are pointing to Epicurean philosophy as the therapy, then sure, but the issue of looking for a category of "resting pleasure" vs "active pleasure" is a prescription for undermining the entire philosophy, because pleasure is pleasure and the assertion that there is some intrinsic difference between the two types of pleasures is a direct road to Platonism, because such a distinction would require some authority higher than pleasure itself as a measure of choosing between the two. That's the entire point raised by Gosling and Taylor, [Nikolsky](#), and Wenham in disputing that this category game has any Epicurean basis whatsoever.

But may the most important thing to observe here is that what you appear to be doing is looking to take this statement, isolated by someone whom we know not, nor for what purpose, to bootstrap an argument that katastematic pleasure is somehow the highest good of life. That is explicitly the argument of Okeefe and others who opine about "ataraxia" as if it is something different from pleasure.

So while I am not saying at all that [VS11](#) is useless, I am pointing out that we have virtually no context for it. Without more context, it seems to me to make little sense to try to tease out of it

support for a doctrine (katastematic pleasure as the true end) that would undermine the fundamental "unity of pleasure" ("Every pleasure then because of its natural kinship to us is good...")