

Dialogue on Katastematic Pleasure

Post by “Cassius” of February 17, 2018 at 6:23 AM

As for Maciej's posts, definitely those passages cited need to be considered in the analysis, and my view of them is the same as the rest. Epicurus has stated as a preliminary observation that death is absence of sensation, which means that all life - especially pleasure - comes through sensation. Given that there are only two "feelings" - pleasure and pain - then when we are not feeling pain we are necessarily feeling pleasures, and there is no neutral state. So under that analysis we are either feeling ordinary pleasures, or we are feeling ordinary pains, and while it would not be necessary for Epicurus to add the word 'ordinary' given his clear statements as to the nature of pleasure, that has now become the battleground, because "absence of pain" means nothing in the modern context except a nullity.

Once we accept that we would not know pleasures except through sensation of them - through the normal feelings of good food, good drink, smooth motion, sex, and all the other innumerable examples - this passage gives us no problem. But leaving those out and refusing to define the state of absence of pain as ordinary pleasure in a way that people can immediately understand it is simply, in my view, to fall over and over again into the trap used by Cicero of isolating a single passage and acting as if it has no relationship to the rest of the philosophy.