

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

ARENSON (K.E.) **Health and Hedonism in Plato and Epicurus**. London: Bloomsbury, 2019.
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Epicurean pleasure is typically considered in terms of absence: *ataraxia* is the lack of mental disturbance, *aponia* the lack of physical disturbance. In this important book, Kelly Arenson mounts a convincing case for the sensory presence of Epicurus' highest good, arguing that 'non-restorative' pleasures such as taste and sex are *katastematic* rather than *kinetic*. In other words, positive sensory pleasures that do not restore an individual to health (pleasures most scholars would consider *kinetic*, or ancillary to the highest goods of *ataraxia* and *aponia*) are in the same category of *katastematic* pleasure as these neutral states of painlessness. Arenson's major contribution is to decentre Cicero's *De finibus* as the primary source for understanding Epicurean hedonism. While Arenson is not the first to question Cicero's account of Epicurean pleasure (see J.C.B. Gosling and C.C.W. Taylor, *The Greeks on Pleasure* (Oxford 1984), 365–96, and B. Nikolsky, 'Epicurus on Pleasure', *Phronesis* 46.4 (2001), 440–65), her book offers the most compelling criticism to date by situating Epicurus within Plato's earlier discussions of pleasure and health. This framing allows Arenson to redefine *katastematic* and *kinetic* pleasure as (1) non-restorative and (2) restorative rather than the widely accepted Ciceronian classification of (1) painless state and (2) sensory activity.

A series of carefully scaffolded chapters establishes the connection between pleasure and healthy bodily function, first in Plato and then in Epicurus, building to Arenson's dynamite conclusion on the *katastematic* value of non-restorative sensory pleasures. Chapters 1–3 draw on evidence from Plato's *Republic* and *Philebus* as well as Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Nicomachean Ethics* to establish that Epicurus' immediate predecessors, while disagreeing on pleasure's nature and value, each framed their discussions within a twofold conception of pleasure as (1) a condition of health (for example, a state of satisfaction and fulfilment, 28) and (2) the process of restoring health (for example, drinking to quench one's thirst, 35). Chapter 1 establishes the Platonic background for understanding Epicurean hedonism as a holistic experience of mental and bodily health, while Chapter 2 shifts from Socrates' focus in the *Republic* on primarily psychic contentment to his discussion of physical pleasure and bodily health in the *Philebus*. Here, Socrates poses a question familiar to students of Epicureanism: is lack of disturbance a pleasure? Socrates responds with a firm 'no'. Painlessness is a state of health, which is not itself pleasurable; pleasure is found instead in the perceptible process of restoring health. Socrates concludes that pleasure is a means rather than an end, an argument detailed in Chapter 3. As a restorative process, pleasure is always seeking something else (like health) and cannot be considered the highest good. A discussion of Aristotle's criticism of this 'process argument' both confirms Arenson's reading of Plato and looks forward to her correction of current understandings of Epicurean pleasure, demonstrating that the pleasurable nature of health was an open question in the fourth century BC.

Before turning in chapters 5–7 to Epicurus' response to this question, Arenson must first deal with Cicero's classification of Epicurean pleasure in *De finibus* (Chapter 4). Arenson argues that Cicero erroneously identifies *kinetic* pleasure with all sensory experiences, falsely opposing sensory stimulation and painlessness. When read within an existing philosophical debate that considers pleasure a process of returning to health, the absence of pain

does not rule out the presence of sensory experience. In Chapter 5, Arenson defends the existence of the two types of Epicurean pleasure that Cicero describes while correcting his particular definitions. Epicurus refines Plato's language of process-as-restoration (*katastasis*), altering it 'to describe a condition of painless functioning' (*katastēmatikē*, 85). This includes the pleasure of both mental and physical health, since mental health is 'unstable without [a corresponding] confidence' in one's long-term physical health (103). Arenson next turns to kinetic pleasure (Chapter 6), which she distinguishes from *katastematic* pleasure by restoration rather than sensory stimulation. Kinetic pleasures include eating when hungry, drinking when thirsty and reflecting on previous joys when in pain. In Chapter 7, Arenson uses her carefully refined framework of kinetic and *katastematic* pleasures to argue that Epicurus' highest good entails not merely the lack of pain but also sensory luxuries or non-restorative pleasures. Pleasures like dessert are not additions to the *summum bonum*, which would contradict Epicurus' claim that pleasure cannot be increased beyond the removal of pain (*KD* 18), but variations. Arenson categorizes non-restorative pleasures as *katastematic* realizations of an enjoyable state of painlessness, also understood as a fully functioning, healthy body: eating dessert requires that a person be well enough to enjoy it. A brief conclusion (Chapter 8) sums up the benefits of reading Epicurean hedonism in response to Plato and Aristotle.

Arenson's book is an excellent addition to studies of Epicureanism, the ancient senses and intellectual history; while many will disagree with her arguments, she has convinced at least me of the sensory quality of Epicurus' highest good.

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ARFT (J.) **Arete and the *Odyssey's* Poetics of Interrogation: The Queen and Her Question.** Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. xii + 362. £90. 9780192847805.
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Although scholarly debates about the peculiarities surrounding Arete, her question to Odysseus (left unanswered for so long) at *Od.* 7.238 and the nature of her role in the hero's *nostos* have filled many books, the queen of the Phaeacians has not previously been the subject of a monograph of her own. Justin Arft's rich, densely argued monograph changes that, and in doing so raises the stakes of making sense of Arete: on Arft's reading, this enigmatic figure is essential not only to Odysseus' *nostos*, but to the *Odyssey's* conception of *kleos* and its larger meaning-making strategies.

The book has two parts. Part I, comprising chapters 1 and 2, addresses the core of Arete's question, the phrase *τίς πόθεν εἰς ἀνδρῶν*; ('Who and from where are you among men?'), which Arft refers to as 'the stranger's interrogation'. Chapter 1 explores 'the stranger's interrogation' as an Indo-European formula in texts ranging from the *Mahābhārata* to late Graeco-Roman antiquity (a detailed appendix provides further analysis). Arft concludes that the essential features of this question across the texts surveyed include: (i) a demand that the person interrogated declare their fundamental worth (ii) to an interrogator who has power over them (iii) in a charged situation characterized by deep transformational potential; in the ancient Greek context specifically, (i) involves 'a performance of *kleos*' (22). Chapter 2 surveys instances of the 'stranger's interrogation' and its variants in the *Odyssey*, arguing that it should be understood as part of a 'poetics of interrogation' that structures the *Odyssey* at various levels. This 'poetics of interrogation' is also