

PD10 - Interpretations of PD 10 Discussion

Post by "Don" of January 8, 2022 at 4:56 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Just to refresh my memory Don do you have a preferred interpretation of what is translated as "the greatest pleasure"?

126c. ὡςπερ δὲ σιτίον οὐ τὸ πλεῖον πάντως ἀλλὰ τὸν ἥδιστον αἰρεῖται,

τὸ ἥδιστον "the most pleasant"

αἰρεῖται "is chosen/choosing"

126d. οὕτω καὶ χρόνον οὐ τὸν μήκιστον ἀλλὰ τὸν ἥδιστον καρπίζεται.

126c and 126d exemplify again why it's important to look at the words Epicurus used and not just modern English translations. Take a look at the final phrases of each:

126c. ...ἀλλὰ τὸ ἥδιστον αἰρεῖται,

"choosing that which brings the greatest pleasure"

126d. ...ἀλλὰ τὸν ἥδιστον καρπίζεται.

"enjoying the fruits of that which bring the greatest pleasure."

Both of these use the word ἥδιστον (hēdiston) which is the superlative of ἡδύς (hēdus) "pleasant, sweet" which is related to ἡδονή (hēdonē) "pleasure". By variously translating these two occurrences of the same exact word as "most pleasing/brings the greatest joy," "most delicious/happiest," "nicest/most agreeable," or "most enjoyable" (for both), the fact that Epicurus used the same word is lost. Only Yonge uses "most pleasant" for both. Epicurus teaches that pleasure is the greatest good and by refusing to translate words like ἥδιστον more literally as "(that which) brings the most pleasure" it would appear that translators are consciously shying away from acknowledging that pleasure was Epicurus's North Star. When Epicurus says pleasure, he means pleasure. Translators should not equivocate or obfuscate. They should strive to illuminate and communicate.

For more, check out my translation of the Letter to Menoikeus [Epicurus's Letter to Menoikeus - A New Translation with Commentary](#) 😊