

Letter to Menoikeus translation by Peter Saint-Andre

Post by "Don" of June 2, 2023 at 3:28 PM

I'm using my translation with addition of "those situated in sensual pleasures" but I'm not 100% sold on that phrasing. I just had to get it in there. Still working on a revision of the full document before uploading a new version.

I wanted to break this down into its embedded phrases to see, and I am proposing this is how the argument goes when its all disentangled and re-arranged:

"Therefore, whenever we say repeatedly that "pleasure is the τέλος," we do not say (1) the pleasure of those who are prodigal and (2) those situated in sensual pleasures like (A) those who are ignorant, (B) those who don't agree with us, or (C) those who believe wrongly; but we mean that which neither pains the body nor troubles the mind. [132] For it is not (i) an endless string of drinking parties and festivals, and (ii) not taking advantage of slaves and women, (iii) nor does an extravagant table of fish and other things bring forth a sweet life but self-controlled reasoning and examining the cause of every choice and rejection and driving out the greatest number of opinions that take hold of the mind and bring confusion and trouble."

Breaking it down:

Those ignorant or opposed to the philosophy of Epicurus:

(1) those who are prodigal

(A) (are) those who are ignorant

(2) those situated in sensual pleasures

(B) (are) those who don't agree with us

(C) (and) those who believe wrongly

Activities of those ignorant or opposed:

(i) endless strings of drinking parties and festivals

(ii) taking advantage of slaves and women

(iii) extravagant tables of fish and other things

What does Epicurus mean when he says "Pleasure is the telos"?

...whenever we say repeatedly that "pleasure is the τέλος," we mean that which neither pains the body nor troubles the mind, bringing forth a sweet life, and self-controlled reasoning and

examining the cause of every choice and rejection and driving out the greatest number of opinions that take hold of the mind and bring confusion and trouble.