

# PD01 - Best Translation Of PDO1 To Feature At EpicureanFriends?

Post by "Don" of July 12, 2023 at 10:56 PM

First, may I say that I find Cassius initial efforts at a simple vote extremely endearing. Cassius: You are the eternal optimist. However, it has elicited an excellent discussion.

Now, instead of nitpicking others' valiant attempts at translation, I'll simply offer my own for consideration... and, yes, it's late and I got lazy at the end and just copied Hicks. He'll do as a start, and it's in the scholion anyway. And I don't expect this translation to be The Chosen One, of course. This is primarily to simply illustrate some points.

Original Text: Τὸ μακάριον καὶ ἀφθαρτον οὔτε αὐτὸ πράγματα ἔχει οὔτε ἄλλω παρέχει, ὥστε οὔτε ὀργαῖς οὔτε χάρισι συνέχεται: ἐν ἀσθενεῖ γὰρ πᾶν τὸ τοιοῦτον.

(ἐν ἄλλοις δὲ φησι τοὺς θεοὺς λόγῳ θεωρητοῦς, οὓς μὲν κατ' ἀριθμὸν ὑφ'εστῶτας, οὓς δὲ καθ' ὁμοειδειαν ἐκ τῆς συνεχοῦς ἐπιρρύσεως τῶν ὁμοίων εἰδώλων ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἀποτετελεσμένῳ ἀνθρωποειδῶς.)

Translation: The one who (That which) is blessed and indestructible (or imperishable) neither has troubles oneself nor causes troubles for others, that one is neither annoyed by anything nor troubles others; therefore such a one is constrained by neither anger nor gratitude; for (if that were the case) such a one is lacking in strength.

(Also, in other works he says by means of reason are the gods apprehended through contemplation, "some being numerically distinct, while others result uniformly from the continuous influx of similar images directed to the same spot and in human form.")

We all agree PD1 is describing the blessed/blissful existence of a god. And I use singular "god" deliberately since the words are singular at the beginning. See below for more on that.

Greek regularly turned adjectives into nouns using a definite article: Τὸ μακάριον and (Τὸ) ἀφθαρτον. English typically has to add words; however, we know what we mean if we say something like "The Brave and the Bold." We can also say things like "The Funny One." Here, it's not as easy saying it in English but "The Blessed and the imperishable" gets close. My perspective is that we have to use a "the" or "that which" here, even if it's a circumlocution like "The one who is blissful and imperishable" or "That which is blissful and imperishable."

The juxtaposition of "neither anger nor gratitude" (οὔτε ὀργαῖς οὔτε χάρισι) is interesting, because Philodemus does the same pairing of words in his works when speaking of anger and its opposite, gratitude. He sees these as mirror images or counterparts to each other. Epicurus also pairs these in the letter to Herodotus (DL 10.76-77, gratitude to [Bryan](#) for pointing this

out!): "...any being who at the same time enjoys perfect bliss (μακαριότητα) along with immortality (ἀφθαρσία lit., "no-corruption (unable to experience deterioration)"). [77] For troubles and anxieties and feelings of anger (ὀργαί) and partiality (χάριτες) do not accord with bliss (μακαριότητι), but always imply weakness (ἀσθενεία) and fear (φόβω) and dependence upon one's neighbours. ('οὐ γὰρ συμφωνοῦσιν πραγματεῖαι καὶ φροντίδες καὶ ὀργαὶ καὶ χάριτες μακαριότητι, ἀλλ' ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ καὶ φόβῳ καὶ προσδεῖται τῶν πλησίων ταῦτα γίνεταί)."

Many of these words in the Greek text are the same or close to the same as in PD1. So, that pairing evidently goes back to Epicurus himself.

ἀσθενεία: Definition: weakness, frailty; Usage: want of strength, weakness, illness, suffering, calamity, frailty. negating the root sthenos, "strength."

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, σθένος](#)

As some may know on this forum, I am in favor of the "idealist" position on the gods. The singular use in "That which is blissful and imperishable," to me, could describe an individual's conception of what the god is or should be. We each construct our image of the god in our mind by continually imagining the highest blissful state embodied in human form, imperishable because it has no existence other than our conception, formed of appropriate images. That conception in our mind is also not subject to fear or partiality nor does it trouble anyone.

Okay, that might be pushing it, I admit. That said, Epicurus's explanation within the Letter to Herodotus shows us exactly what the second half of PD1 means. I find it very interesting that troubles, anxieties, and feelings of anger and partiality are plural. The phrase is "feelings of anger and partiality." Keeping that "feelings" in mind is important. The god is not troubled by "feelings of anger and partiality." The primary - maybe only - feeling it has is the highest bliss, and it is unable to experience deterioration.

Lucretius also tells us that such a being does not exist in our world, in our cosmos. They can/could only exist "between worlds," between the pockets of order within the larger universe, within The All (the universe).

I also find the scholion interesting in its use of θεωρητούς which is related to the word used in the "characteristics of the sage": "ἐν ταῖς θεωρίαις" which I have interpreted as "(They shall enjoy themselves more) in contemplation." Yonge is the only one to take this route: "he will find more pleasure than other men in speculations." But if one can contemplate a being that is completely blissful and imperishable, why wouldn't the Epicurean sage enjoy contemplation more than the average member of the hoi polloi. Here is my reasoning for this interpretation:

[Epicurean Sage - ...enjoy themselves more than others in contemplation](#)

Hicks: He will take more delight than other men in state festivals. Yonge: ...and he will find more pleasure than other men in speculations. Yonge appears to...

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That's all for now. I may head over the new PD2 thread now!