

If Death Is Nothing To Us, Then Life Is Everything to Us

Post by “Don” of October 7, 2023 at 11:55 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

42. At the very same time, the greatest good is created and the greatest evil is removed.

I think we need to throw out any translations that add "the greatest evil." That's not in the manuscript and adding things just to make a convenient translation seems disingenuous to me. The manuscript has:

ὁ αὐτὸς χρόνος καὶ γενέσεως τοῦ μεγίστου ἀγαθοῦ καὶ ἀπολύσεως

with that last word being open to discussion.

Something like:

(At) the same time the greatest good (is) both created and ἀπολύσεως/ἀπολαύσεως.

If we go with ἀπολύσεως, we have to go with a meaning like to do away with, to remove, to set free, to release from.

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

If we accept ἀπολαύσεως, we get to take pleasure in, enjoyment, delight. It's literally one letter difference!

The HUGE issue here is that the saying is completely divorced from its original textual context. Was Epicurus arguing against a specific point? Was he speaking generally? Here's an out of the box: if we take ἀπολαύσεως, was he using it as an argument against a virtue argument that you can't say you're only doing the act of virtue for itself; you do the virtuous act (create) and immediately enjoy it, you get satisfaction and joy the moment it is created. You can't separate the two.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Bailey: “The greatest blessing is created and enjoyed at the same moment.”

I agree with DeWitt that this statement is counterintuitive, not true, and therefore in

DeWitt's word nonsensical.

I don't agree, other than to say Bailey's unfortunate choice of "blessing" for ἀγαθοῦ agathou "good" is unfortunate. And I think you know my position on Dewitt calling something nonsensical 😊 I think the meaning of Bailey's translation is almost too obvious. We enjoy pleasure "the greatest good" at the moment we feel it. There is no intermediate step. There is no intervening rational intrusion. Pleasure feels good at the moment it is created.