

Annotated Menoikeus Project: First Draft

Post by “Don” of October 6, 2020 at 7:28 PM

Attached is the first draft of my Annotated Menoikeus project containing verses 121-123. Feel free to take a look and share your thoughts.

Post by “Cassius” of October 6, 2020 at 8:07 PM

Wow that's a lot of work already. I will go through it as soon as I can.

Post by “Don” of October 7, 2020 at 8:44 AM

FYI I did just revise this section in 123b.ii. on my copy. It won't show up on the pdf posted here, so consider this an errata:

ἡ κοινὴ τοῦ θεοῦ νόησις = hē koinē "the common, the general understanding of gods" Note that this is also why we speak of the later evolution of the Greek language as "koine Greek" "the common Greek, the Greek spoken by a wide population across the Greek-speaking world." Is Epicurus talking here about the general understanding of Greeks among the general population? Or is he talking about the common understanding of the gods among Epicureans? He does specifically talk about the wrong understanding of the "hoi polloi" below. Epicurus is writing to a fellow Epicurean. So, if he's referring to just ἡ κοινὴ τοῦ θεοῦ νόησις among Epicureans, how are we then to take that word ζῶον?

Same for 123c:

ἀνοίκειον literally means "not of the family" or "not of the household" where οἶκος is the house or domestic sphere. Related to 123b.ii and the "common" understanding, ἀνοίκειον *could* refer to the "house/family" of Epicurus.

Post by “Don” of October 11, 2020 at 10:35 AM

I've come up with a first draft of verse 124. I'm convinced that pleasure and pain are the best translations of the "good things" (ἀγαθοί) and "the bad things" (κακοί) in the first part of the second section. I've included reasons in my text. I also found it interesting that the actual phrase used for the masses is literally "hoi polloi." 😊

I'm sharing the rough literal first draft of a translation below and I'll try and work up a pdf of all the steps soon:

Quote

"For they are not prolepses, but the judgements of the hoi polloi concerning the gods [are] false hasty assumptions. Thence, the greatest evils are brought to the wicked from the gods as well as the greatest aid to the good. Because they (the hoi polloi) are believing that those who are familiar with each other through all excellences and goodness (the gods) accept those who resemble themselves; all those not of their sort (are) strange and alien."

"So, accustom yourself in believing that, for us, death is nothing; since all pleasure and pain are in perception of the senses and the mind; and death is the absolute negation of perception. So, correct understanding is that death is nothing for us, and this is what makes the mortality of life enjoyable, not gaining an endless lifetime for oneself but taking away the yearning for immortality."

Post by "Don" of October 14, 2020 at 7:36 AM

Made an interesting discovery in verse 126 this morning:

126c and 126d exemplify 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 brings the greatest pleasure." Both of these use the word ἥδιστον = hēdiston which is the superlative of ἡδύς = hēdus "pleasant" 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 goal. When Epicurus says pleasure, he means

pleasure. Translators should not equivocate or obfuscate. They should strive to illuminate and communicate.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=h%28%2Fdiston&la=greek&can=h%28%2Fdiston1&prior=to>

Post by “Cassius” of October 14, 2020 at 8:17 AM

Great point Don and I draw exactly the same conclusion from your observation. Surely he was trying to be precise because he was aware of exactly the same kind of motivation to obscure the point - there is always the temptation to "soften" the impact by playing over to other schools such as with the generic "happiness". Using the same word in two close locations was very likely intentional.