

VS63 - "Frugality Too Has A Limit..."

Post by "Cassius" of January 28, 2023 at 9:36 AM

Today we switched the "hero" box on page one of the forum to [VS63](#) -a tremendously important and very clear statement, and a very potent retort against those who advocate a "minimalist" or "ascetic" interpretation of Epicurean philosophy.

Despite its usefulness, I don't think we have done a "deep dive" into the Greek wording or anything else we know about it from the Vatican list. I hope we can remedy that in this thread. For the time being, we have at least the following:

Bailey translation -

LXIII. Frugality too has a limit, and the man who disregards it is in like case with him who errs through excess.

Here is the Bailey version of the Greek -

***LXIII. Ἔστι καὶ ἐν λιτότητι μεθόριος, ἧς δ' ἀνεπιλόγιστος παραπλήσιόν τι πάσχει τῷ δι' ἀοριστίαν ἐκπίπτουσι.**

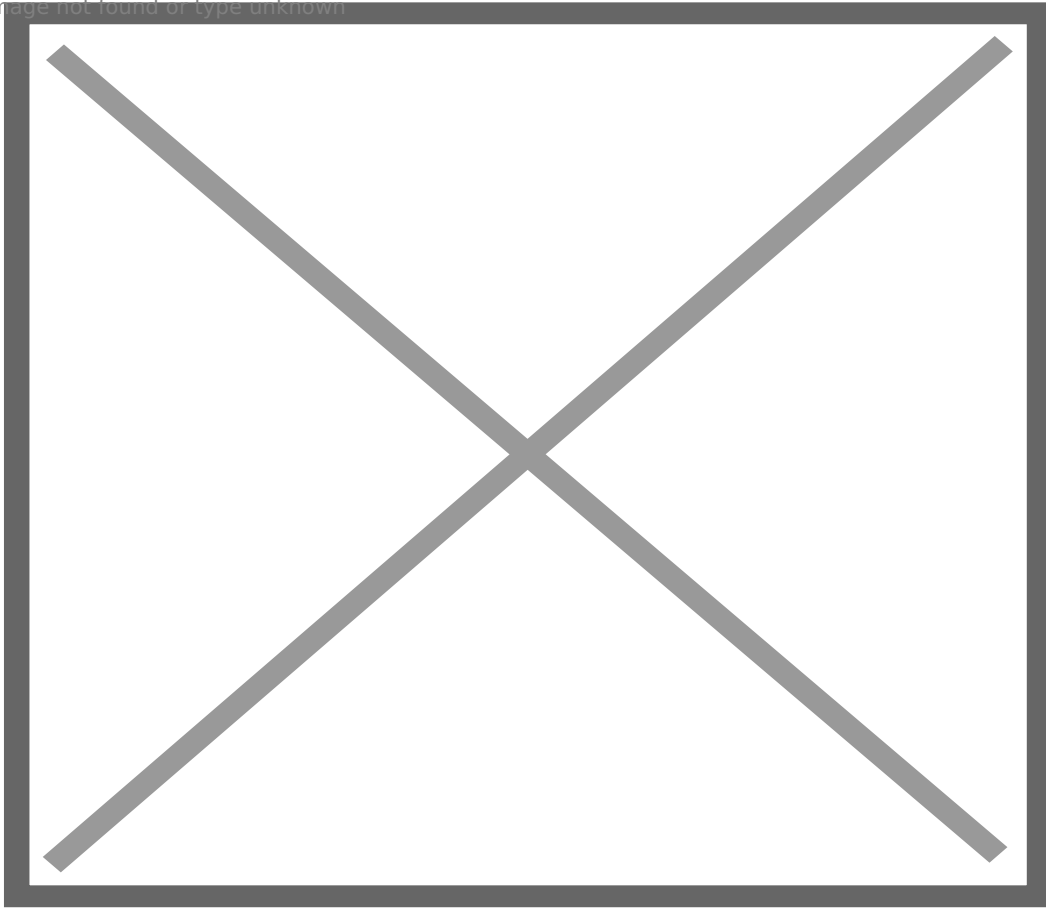
And Bailey's footnote -

LXII 2 ἔγγονα Wotke : ἔγγονα V 4 πάνυ Weil : πᾶν V : πάντως
 Muehl : σιγᾶν Usener προσεκαίειν Weil : πρὸς ἑκκλησίαν V : πρὸς
 ἑκκλησίαν Usener : πρὸς ἑκκαυσίαν Gomperz post ἀλογίαν Usener
 ἄγον inseruit θυμοκατοχοῦντα Crönert : θυμωκατοχοῦντα V : θυμῷ
 κατασχόντα Usener : θυμῷ κατέχοντα Weil 6 εὐγνωμονοῦντα
 Crönert : εὐγνωμονοῦντας V LXIII 1 λιτότητι μεθόριος Usener :
λεπτότητι καθύριος V : λεπτότητι καθαριότης Muehl. LXVII 1 ελεύ-
 θερος] ἐλευθέριος coniecit Usener κτήσασθαι χρήματα Hartel : χρήσα-

From Bailey's "Epicurus - The Extant Remains" [available here](#) - (page 115-116)

If we can develop alternate translations we will add them to the Lexicon here:

Image not found or type unknown



[VS63 - Epicureanfriends.com](http://www.epicureanfriends.com)

www.epicureanfriends.com

Post by "Don" of January 28, 2023 at 10:06 AM

with θυμοκατοχούντα.

LXIII is interesting as showing that Epicurus did not wish to push his idea of the simple life to excess: the ascetic will suffer bodily distress like the glutton and so fail to attain ἀπονία. The text of the first few words is corrupt but has been set right by Usener. Bignone compares Hor. *Sat.* I. i. 102 ff. Von der Muehll reads ἐν λεπτότητι καθαριότης, but I do not understand the meaning of λεπτότης here.

LXIV. The true Epicurean is glad to receive praise (cf. LII) but he

Bailey's Extant Remains commentary.

Post by “Cassius” of January 28, 2023 at 10:17 AM

Don, any hope for your commentary on the reference to Horace? Or on what Von Der Muehll was suggesting?

Post by “Don” of January 28, 2023 at 12:26 PM

Here's Horace's Satire 1.1:

[Horace \(65 BC–8 BC\) - The Satires: Book I Satire I](#)

Post by “Don” of January 28, 2023 at 1:39 PM

I found von der Muehli's work but it'll have to wait until this evening... Consider this a teaser 😊

Post by “Pacatus” of January 28, 2023 at 2:55 PM

On a cursory search, I found a couple of other versions, which I thought might lend some nuance, even if they’re not the best renderings –

63. There is also a limit in simple living, and he who fails to understand this falls into an error as great as that of the man who gives way to extravagance. (This from a Kindle book, with no translator named – also here: <https://epicurus.net/en/vatican.html>. Maybe someone here is familiar with it.)

63. There is an elegance in simplicity, and one who is thoughtless resembles one whose feelings run to excess. (Trans. Peter Saint-Andre, Monadnock Valley Press; this one seems to be somewhat in contradiction to the others.)

(Now an NBA game is calling ...)

Post by “Cassius” of January 28, 2023 at 4:09 PM

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

63. There is an elegance in simplicity, and one who is thoughtless resembles one whose feelings run to excess. (Trans. Peter Saint-Andre, Monadnock Valley Press; this one seems to be somewhat in contradiction to the others.)

Oh no, I hope you copied that wrong from St Andre - but I suspect you did not! 😊

Unless someone comes up with an explanation for that I am going to have to add that to a new list of some of the worst examples of unjustified "projection" onto Epicurus I have seen.

[Don](#) - any thoughts?

Post by “Don” of January 28, 2023 at 4:13 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

63. There is an elegance in simplicity, and one who is thoughtless resembles one whose feelings run to excess. (Trans. Peter Saint-Andre, Monadnock Valley Press; this one seems to be somewhat in contradiction to the others.)

Oh no, I hope you copied that wrong from St Andre - but I suspect you did not! 😊

And *that* , ladies and gentlemen, is why we delve into the Greek. 😊

Post by “Cassius” of January 28, 2023 at 4:17 PM

I just added an edit to my post that now seems superfluous but I will leave it anyway 😊

Post by “Cassius” of January 28, 2023 at 4:21 PM

Pacatus thank you for finding that St. Andre issue!

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 28, 2023 at 7:21 PM

[VS63](#): "There is also a limit to frugality. The man unable to consider this suffers a similar end as the man who indulges in excess." --Eugene O'Connor

[VS63](#): "There is also a limit in simple living. He who fails to heed this limit falls into an error as great as that of the man who gives way to extravagance." --Russel M. Greer

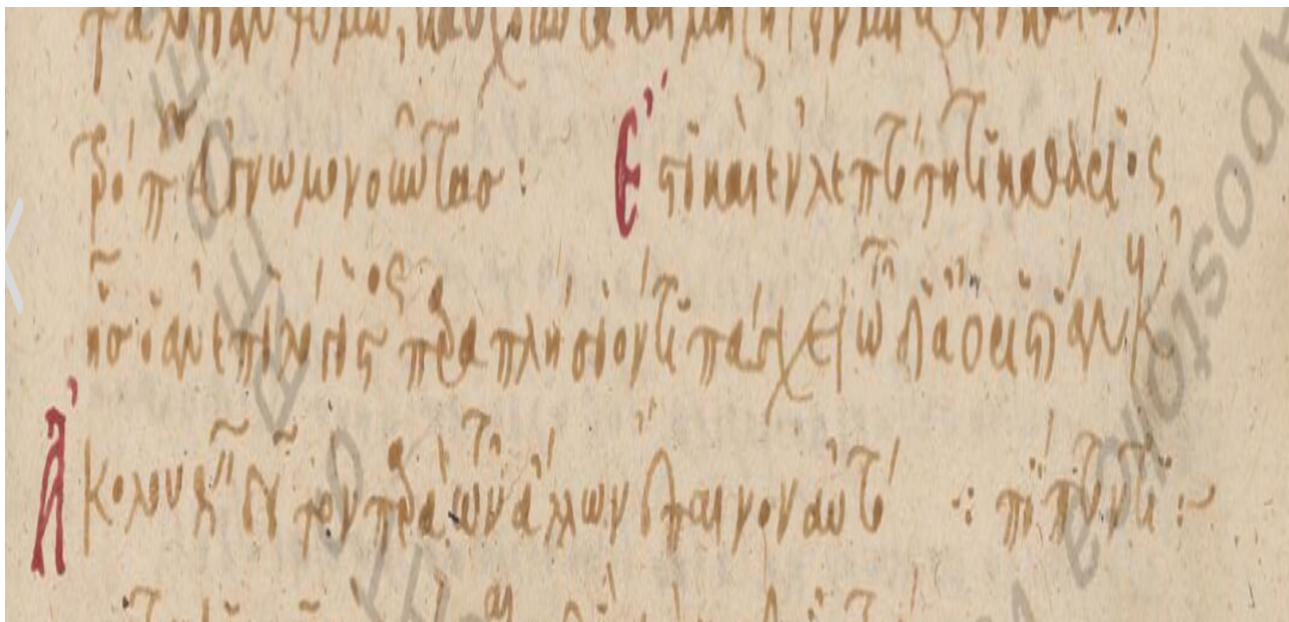
I have (on loan from a friend) "The Essential Epicurus" by O'Connor.

And found "Letters, Principle Doctrines and Vatican Sayings: Epicurus" by Greer -- on Archive.com

Post by "Cassius" of January 28, 2023 at 7:53 PM

Thanks Kalosyni -- I added those to the Lexicon page for V63.

Post by "Don" of January 28, 2023 at 11:32 PM



Here is Vatican Saying 63 as contained in the early 14th century manuscript, Vat.gr.1950.pt.2, folio 404r.

[VS63](#) starts at the red epsilon (Εστι...) and ends at the end of the line before red alpha (Ακολουθεῖν) that starts VS64. This is *the* source of our discussion.

The first controversy seems to have to do with the disagreement between Usener/Bailey/Bignone and von der Muehli.

Bailey (using Usener) transcribes the manuscript as:

3410-pasted-from-clipboard-png

von der Muehli transcribes it as ([click here to link to the book on Hathitrust](#))

63 Ἔστι καὶ ἐν λεπτότητι καθαριότης, ἧς ὁ ἀνεπιλόγιστος 10
παραπλήσιόν τι πάσχει τῷ δι' ἀοριστίαν ἐκπίπτοντι.

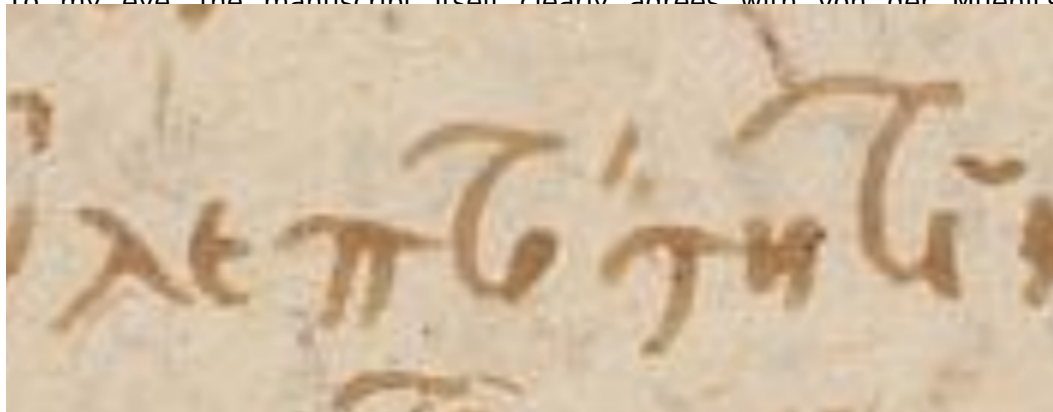
with the following footnote (following the 10):

*LXI (1906) 421 θυμῷ κατέχοντα Weil θυμῷ καταχρίον Go.
9 εὐγνωμονοῦντα Croen.: εὐγνωμονοῦντας Vat. 10 λιτότητι Us.
καθάριος Vat., correxi 16 συμπαθῶ μὲν Vat. 18 <Ο> ἐλεύθε-
ρος Blass Croen cf fr 196 | καθάρσθαι κέρματα Vat corr*

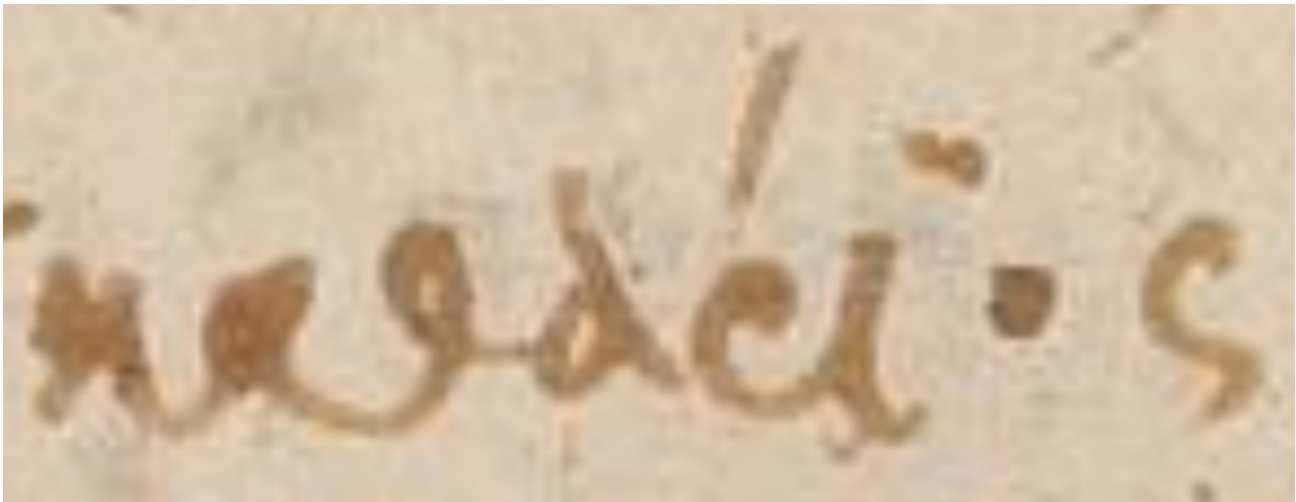
noting that Usener "corrects" the text of the manuscript to **λιτοτητι καθαριος**.

Von der Muehli, on the other hand, transcribes the manuscript as **λεπτοτητι καθαριοτης**.

To my eye, the manuscript itself clearly agrees with von der Muehli's transcription of



Usener appears to be "outhinking" the scribe who copied the manuscript on that specific word; however, the second word appears to agree with Usener/Bailey because the ending is clearly ...ριος but the previous letter looks like an theta alpha (...θα...) so it looks like ...θαριος. But what are those first two letter? That's the rub.



It might be handy to have a chart of ancient Greek miniscule. [Click here to go with the handy chart at Wikipedia.](#)

and here is [a link to a collection of ancient Greek ligatures.](#)

Here is where the scholarship above my pay grade comes in!! The reason Usener/Bailey and von der Muehli can disagree on what the manuscript is *supposed* say is that they're trying read into the possible transcription mistakes that the scribe could have done in copying the text from a source to vat.gr.1950.

Let's at least examine those two words that are in disagreement: λιτοτητι and λεπτοτητι.

λιτοτητι the dative of λιτότης "plainness, simplicity"

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

Note that the LSJ definition even gives "for λεπτότης in Epicur.Sent.Vat.63." so it appears they accept that λιτότης is supposed to be λεπτότης in [VS63](#). So...

λεπτότης "thinness: fineness, delicacy, leanness"

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon, λᾶας, λεπιδόμαι, λεπτότης](#)

So, Saint-Andre follows von der Muehli *and*, more importantly to me, the actual text of the source manuscript.

ἔστι καὶ ἐν λεπτότητι καθαριότης, ἧς ὁ ἀνεπιλόγιστος παραπλήσιόν τι πάσχει τῷ δι' ἀοριστίαν ἐκπίπτοντι.

The issue for me lies in the fact that if we follow the manuscript on λεπτότητι, why aren't we following the manuscript text on the second word ending with ...θαριος?

More to come (no doubt), but I want to save here before I lose all this!

Post by “Don” of January 28, 2023 at 11:59 PM

3422-pasted-from-clipboard-png
Image pasted from clipboard

To me, this looks like κ_θαριος but what that second letter is...? According to a search in LSJ for words with that ending, the only word that fits the letters is καθάριος. But according to LSJ, καθάριος refers to "purgative medicine, POxy.116.15 (ii A.D.)" but that appears to be from the 2nd c. AD/CE! So, it appears von der Muehli is trying to correct for grammar and "correcting" to καθαριότης. "

Saint-Andre's note to [VS63](#) reads:

[63] The phrase ἐν λεπτότητι καθαριότης is somewhat obscure; καθαριότης means purity, cleanliness, neatness, scrupulousness, integrity, elegance, refinement, simplicity, frugality, economy, etc., while λεπτότης means thinness, meagreness, fineness, delicacy, subtlety, etc. Can there be a purity in meagreness, a scrupulousness in delicacy, an integrity in fineness, a frugality in subtlety? Translating this phrase as "an elegance in simplicity" ties it to other statements Epicurus makes about both living beautifully (e.g., Vatican Saying #17) and living simply or naturally (e.g., Vatican Saying #21).

Have we brought up the Epicurus Wiki [VS63](#):

[Vatican Saying 63 - Epicurus Wiki](#)

There is [due measure] even in frugality (and) he who (is) thoughtless [about this] suffers [somewhat as badly].

Post by “Cassius” of January 29, 2023 at 5:38 AM

Wow great work Don!

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 29, 2023 at 9:24 AM

Wow, [Don](#) amazing investigation and translation work.

In an above post I quoted a Greer translation, and I should mention what Greer says in his prologue -- that he used the translations of others: Bailey, vod der Muehll, Usner, and Hicks, and that is it "not so much a translation as a paraphrase".

So we probably should be careful with "translations" like this?

Post by “Don” of January 29, 2023 at 9:43 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

So we probably should be careful with "translations" like this?

Not necessarily, but it pays to be cautious. Especially when someone is using only the English and is not comparing those to the original.

There are methods of translation called dynamic and formal equivalence:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dynamic_and_formal_equivalence#%3A%7E%3Atext%3DFormal_equivalence_a

The dynamic tries to convey the sense or meaning, the formal tries to be more word for word. Both are valid, but it's always better to translate from the original and to consciously decide which method you're going to use.

One thing I find annoying about Bailey is that he says outright "I do not understand the meaning of λεπτότης here." So instead trying to understand, he just decides it's the *wrong* word and fits in one he understands that's similar spelling.

Post by “Pacatus” of January 29, 2023 at 12:22 PM

[Don](#) How would you, personally, render V63 in English? Maybe taking a stab at both formal equivalence and a more dynamic rendering?

Post by “Little Rocker” of January 29, 2023 at 2:38 PM

Don, I love how you produce posts like the ones above and then say you're no good at such things.

To add to the hopper, Inwood and Gerson render it as: 'There is also a proper measure for parsimony, and he who does not reason it out is as badly off as he who goes wrong by total neglect of limit.'

Long and Sedley: 'There can be refinement even on slender means, and one who fails to take account of it is in a similar position to someone who goes astray through ignoring limits.'

Post by “Cassius” of January 29, 2023 at 3:13 PM

Oooh - Long and Sedley go in the Monadnock direction - interesting.

Given the apparent contrast that is being set up between the first and second parts of the sentence, seems to me that the direction stated by Bailey and the majority make the most sense.

Of course I readily admit that I am "expecting" to see Epicurus say something like that given his devotion to pleasure in what appears to be the ordinary sense of the word.

With all due respects to the ascetic viewpoint, it will never make sense to me that Epicurus would have held that the most important thing to do in the brief interlude between an eternity of nothingness before birth and an eternity of nothingness after death would be to emulate that same state by denying oneself pleasure in the ordinary sense of the word while alive.

I therefore don't think Epicurus did that, nor do I think he could possibly have taken the Greek and Roman worlds "by storm" if he had. Where texts appear uncertain on the role of pleasure and asceticism, I would accept the more likely as the one that more clearly reflects the shortness of life and the central place of pleasure, given that we are looking at the statements of a man who claimed to value reasonableness and consistency and - above all - clarity of expression in his statements.

Post by “Don” of January 29, 2023 at 4:11 PM

Quote from [Little Rocker](#)

Don, I love how you produce posts like the ones above and then say you're no good at such things.



I am just painfully aware of what I *don't* know when it comes to ancient Greek. I don't want to succumb to the [Dunning-Kruger Effect](#) or to pretend I'm fluent. I often feel like I know just enough to get myself into trouble!! Then the curiosity and enthusiasm take hold, all caution goes out the window, and I end up posting deep dives into manuscripts and paleography... but ask me to conjugate a verb past the present indicative or decline a noun into all its various permutations, and I'm going to have to look it up!

Post by “Cassius” of January 29, 2023 at 4:41 PM

Don: It occurs to me that in my one long past attempt to refer to Usener directly that I realized that he has not been translated directly into English and therefore access to it is barred to me.

Do I recall correctly that Usener wrote in German? I presume that now given our internet reach we have the ability to ask Martin and possibly others as well for assistance in understanding Usener's own notes on these issues?

Or are you already able to consult Usener?

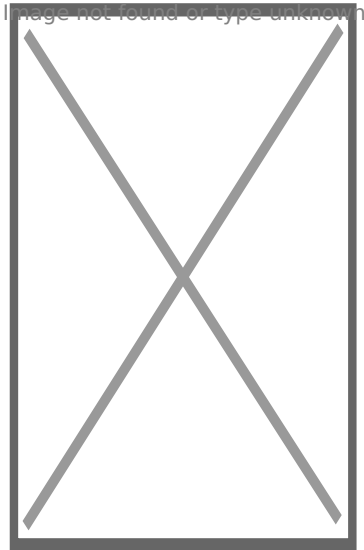
Post by “Don” of January 29, 2023 at 5:03 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Do I recall correctly that Usener wrote in German? I presume that now given our internet reach we have the ability to ask Martin and possibly others as well for assistance in understanding Usener's own notes on these issues?

Or are you already able to consult Usener?

He actually wrote in Latin:



[Hermann Usener Epicurea \(1887\) : Hermann Usener \(editor\) : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

Epicurea is a collection of texts, fragments and testimonies by Epicurus composed by Hermann Usener in 1887
archive.org

I've been using Bailey and Usener interchangeably since I think Bailey was a protege of his?

Post by “Cassius” of January 29, 2023 at 6:59 PM

I never tracked it down further - it has just seemed that everybody who is anybody in the world of Epicurus cites Usener.

Post by “Don” of January 29, 2023 at 7:17 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I never tracked it down further - it has just seemed that everybody who is anybody in the world of Epicurus cites Usener.

Yep. He's the U in Usener Fragment 😊

Post by “Don” of January 29, 2023 at 10:14 PM

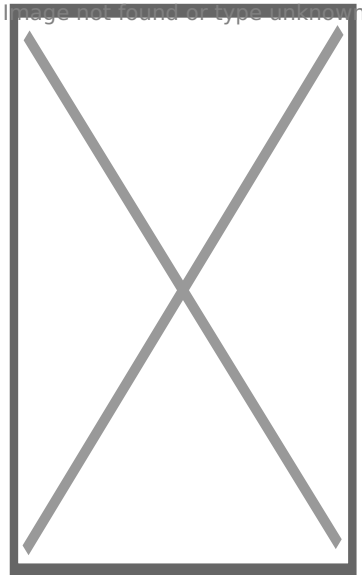
Oh, and Anderson's site is the only English version of Usener's *Epicurea* that I know of...

[Epicurus: Fragments - translation](#)

However, Bailey follows Usener's *Epicurea* format quite closely... although Usener didn't include the Vatican Sayings because they weren't discovered until after *Epicurea*'s publication! Bailey includes this in this preface:

Vatican Gnomologium. This is contained in Codex Vaticanus gr. 1950, a MS. of the fourteenth century. It was first published by C. Wotke, with some notes by Usener and Gomperz in Wiener Studien, vol. x (1888). Von der Muehll has collated the MS. again from photographs and in some cases has corrected the readings reported by Wotke. In the majority of these excerpts the text is fairly sound, but there are some in which it still remains very uncertain.

Here are the *Weiner Studien* papers from 1888 by Wotke, Usner, and Gomperz:

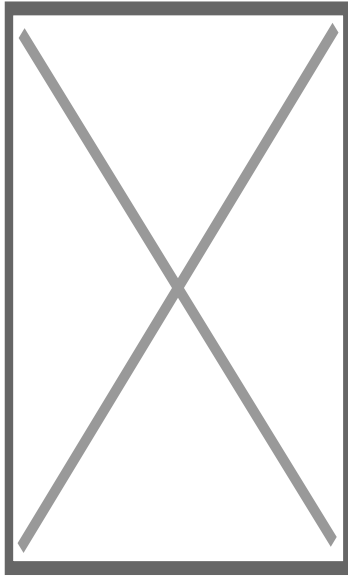


[Wiener Studien : Schenkl, Karl, 1827-1900, ed : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

Book digitized by Google from the library of the University of Michigan and uploaded to the Internet Archive by user tpb.

archive.org

And here is Usener's [VS63](#) and footnotes:



[Wiener Studien : Schenkl, Karl, 1827-1900, ed : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

Book digitized by Google from the library of the University of Michigan and uploaded to the Internet Archive by user tpb.

archive.org

He does state that the manuscript says $\epsilon\nu$ λεπτοτητι καθαριος in the footnote but has his "corrected" text in the body of the paper.

Post by “Don” of February 1, 2023 at 12:04 PM

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

[Don](#) How would you, personally, render V63 in English? Maybe taking a stab at both formal equivalence and a more dynamic rendering?

Be careful what you ask for... 😊

TLDR: Here's my attempt at a translation, a little literal, a little paraphrase:

There is elegance even in simplicity. The one who is unable to consider this is nearly equivalent to the one who falls down because of a lack of limits.

If you're interested in how that was arrived at, feel free to read on:

I realize this post is WAY too much information and far into the weeds; but, as requested, I'm sharing my translation of [VS63](#); however, in deference to observation by [Little Rocker](#) and my response, I'm going to "show my work" so everyone can see what I don't know and what I had to look up.

First, we have to determine the Greek text I'm going to work with.

Muehli:

ἔστι καὶ ἐν λεπτότητι καθαριότης, ἧς ὁ ἀνεπιλόγιστος παραπλήσιόν τι πάσχει τῷ δι' ἀοριστίαν ἐκπίπτοντι.

Usner:

ἔστι καὶ ἐν λιτότητι μεθόριος, ἧς ὁ ἀνεπιλόγιστος παραπλήσιόν τι πάσχει τῷ δι' ἀοριστίαν ἐκπίπτοντι..

Vat.gr.1950 manuscript clearly has:

ἔστι καὶ ἐν λεπτότητι καθάριος, ἧς ὁ ἀνεπιλόγιστος παραπλήσιόν τι πάσχει τῷ δι' ἀοριστίαν ἐκπίπτοντι.

First phrase:

ἔστι καὶ ἐν λεπτότητι καθάριος,...

There is a word καθαρειος (kathareios) which would have been pronounced as, and was later spelled καθαριος (katharios). However, καθάρειος is an adjective per LSJ:

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, κα^θάρ-ειος](#)

With various (although similar) meanings: cleanly, neat, tidy; decent, respectable (men) > οι καθαριοτεροι; daintiness (of food); purity. There's also the connotation of the "economy of movement (in a surgeon's hand)" so there's an idea of economy, of doing what's only necessary only. That kind of elegance or refinement which is an interesting spin.

Muehli used καθαριότης in his transcription to change the adjective to a noun, but that is clearly not what is written in the manuscript. Saint-Andre accepts Muehli's transcription and adds the note "καθαριότης means purity, cleanliness, neatness, scupulousness, integrity, elegance, refinement, simplicity, frugality, economy, etc."

But Greek could turn adjectives into nouns to mean something like "that which is ..." or "one who is..."

So, I could arguably come up with something like:

*There is refinement even in X ... or Elegance is even in...X

Now, the X is the λεπτότητι / λιτότητι issue. I am reluctant to rethink the manuscript. However, my resolve wavered when I read in that definition linked above that καθάρειος is the opposite of λιτότης! This is the word that Usener uses to “correct” the manuscript. This is exactly the kind of wordplay I’d expect from Epicurus, too. But, let’s look at the actual word *in* the manuscript.

λεπτότητι is the dative of λεπτότης “thinness, opp. παχύτης (“thickness”); fineness, delicacy, opp. πάχος (“thickness”), thinness, meagreness, of body; metaphorical, subtlety.”

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

Now, reviewing the Wiktionary entry for Usener’s λιτότης, λιτότητι is the dative singular. The meaning per LSJ is “plainness, simplicity” but LSJ also has that pesky “cj. for λεπτότης in Epicur.Sent.Vat.63.” meaning they thought it was the *wrong* word and that it was substituted for λεπτότης in the manuscript. But I’m not seeing that in Vat.gr.1950, and I’m not aware of any other list or text that includes this exact saying. I’m assuming LSJ is simply taking Usener et al.’s word for it? If anyone has any idea where this saying might show up in the manuscript tradition elsewhere, please share.

So, IF I take the manuscript literally, I get:

*There is elegance even in meagreness...

Paraphrase nominalizing the adjective?? *One who displays elegance even in meagreness...???

Okay, so there are the first five words!

ἧς is (per Wiktionary) the genitive singular for “who, which, that” and with the next two words - ὁ ἀνεπιλόγιστος - I can put together:

*..for the one who is inconsiderate or thoughtless; ...for the one who is unable to consider...

** There is elegance even in simplicity for the one who is unable to consider ...

The next word παραπλήσιόν (according to Wiktionary) can either be an Attic spelling of πᾶρᾰπλήσιος or the accusative of the word. LSJ provides various related meanings, including “coming alongside of : hence, coming near, nearly resembling ; of numbers, nearly equal, about as many ; of size, about as large ; of age, about equal.” So, the general meaning is “nearly equal” or “resembling.”

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

τι “something”

πάσχει is the 3rd person singular active indicative (he/she/it) of πασχω and means “undergoes, experiences (vs. acting), experiences something, has something happen to one.”

τῷ δι' ἄοριστίαν ἐκπίπτοντι. This appears to be a dative phrase with an embedded prepositional phrase inside it: τῷ (δι' ἄοριστίαν) ἐκπίπτοντι. Let's tackle τῷ ἐκπίπτοντι first. Ἐκπίπτοντι is a dative (to be expected from τῷ) present active participle of ἐκπιπτω, meaning "falling out of...; being thrown down..." It is a passive sense opposed to "throwing or casting out" (εκβαλλω).

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

The full LSJ definition has some interesting connotations, including "to be cast ashore" or "fall from a thing, i.e. be deprived of it."

The prepositional phrase is δι' ἄοριστίαν which appears to mean "because/for the sake of of illimitability." LSJ specifically cites "illimitability" as the sense used in [VS63](#). The word ἄοριστίαν has the sense of lack of limit or even indefiniteness or even indecision. So, the whole phrase appears to be something like:

***...for the one who is falling down because of lack of limits"

That is REALLY bad English, but if you've stuck with me this far, hold tight.

Review:

ἔστι καὶ ἐν λεπτότητι καθάριος, ἧς ὁ ἀνεπιλόγιτος παραπλήσιόν τι πάσχει τῷ δι' ἄοριστίαν ἐκπίπτοντι.

Here's my attempt at a translation, a little literal, a little paraphrase:

There is elegance even in simplicity. The one who is unable to consider this is nearly equivalent to the who falls down because of a lack of limits.

With that, I'm bringing in the scholarly translations to compare results and refine my own. In light of ALL that above, I'm inclined to agree with the direction of Saint-Andre and Long & Sedley:

Saint-Andre: There is an elegance in simplicity, and one who is thoughtless resembles one whose feelings run to excess.

Long and Sedley: There can be refinement even on slender means, and one who fails to take account of it is in a similar position to someone who goes astray through ignoring limits.

I hope this all helps others to see how Long & Sedley and Saint-Andre arrived at their translations. One big change in theirs compared to others is acceptance or not of Usener's change to λιτότητι which means "austerity, frugality, frugality, thrift." Whether one accepts what's easily read in the manuscript or whether one want to "correct" the manuscript is going to change [VS63](#) dramatically!

Post by "Cassius" of February 1, 2023 at 1:31 PM

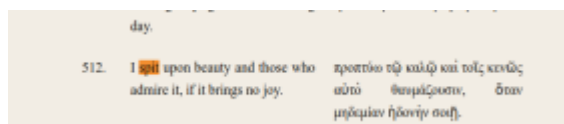
Outstanding work Don.

I presume that where we end up depends in large part on the connotations of the English word "elegance," which carries a positive connotation. The standard / Bailey translation, which as you state would fit a pattern of Epicurus to use contrasts, would be to use a word like "limit" to imply that exceeding or approaching a negative floor "on the bottom" is being contrasted with a negative ceiling "on the top." So what it comes down to me is whether the first part of the balance is best served by a word with positive connotations, such as "elegance" or one that is more implicitly negative, or at least realistic, like limit.

So you've proved to at least my own personal satisfaction that there is no "horror" in what St. Andre for example proposes. However the strain being put on general usage by the word "elegance" would not cause me to change from the Bailey/Usener version, in that a negative assessment seems more clear and consistent with the overall tone of the passage and the philosophy. Epicurus talks a lot about limits in his philosophy, but not so much - as I recall - about "elegance." If there were other instances in which Epicurus praises "elegance" I would see more of a chance of that being an acceptable word here. However we know that Epicurus spits upon beauty unless it bring pleasure, and I would think he would do the same with "elegance," at least in the way we use that word today:



St Andre on fragment 512:



So to me this ends up like "marriage" -- the relevant text appears clearly awkward so as to indicate corruption, but one translation seems to be more consistent with the most general perspective as stated in other places. To me, that overall and overriding general perspective seems to be [VS71](#): "Every desire must be confronted by this question: What will happen to me if the object of my desire is accomplished, and what if it is not?"

And that means to me that the implication is that there is a time for luxury and a time for simplicity depending on circumstances. Menoecus: [130] "Yet by a scale of comparison and by the consideration of advantages and disadvantages we must form our judgment on all these matters. For the good on certain occasions we treat as bad, and conversely the bad as good.

And again independence of desire we think a great good — not that we may at all times enjoy but a few things, but that, if we do not possess many, we may enjoy the few in the genuine persuasion that those have the sweetest pleasure in luxury who least need it, and that all that is natural is easy to be obtained, but that which is superfluous is hard. And so plain savours bring us a pleasure equal to a luxurious diet, when all the pain due to want is removed; and bread and water produce the highest pleasure, when one who needs them puts them to his lips."

Has anyone suggested that [VS71](#) is corrupted or open to question?

Post by “Don” of February 1, 2023 at 2:17 PM

Well, it comes down to where you decide if you're going to trust the manuscript and use λεπτότητα "elegance" or whether you're going to correct the scribe like Bailey and Usener and substitute λιτότης "limit".

And it's not elegant as in fancy. It's elegant as in not fussy. I like the connotation of the economy of movement or elegance of the surgeons hands.

Post by “Don” of February 1, 2023 at 2:22 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

the relevant text appears clearly awkward so as to indicate corruption

That's a slippery slope. Where does one just ignore the manuscripts and substitute whatever, one wants to be there?

Post by “Cassius” of February 1, 2023 at 2:37 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

That's a slippery slope. Where does one just ignore the manuscripts and substitute whatever, one wants to be there?

Very definitely a big question. And I think the answer has to be something like taking some texts as more certain than others, and then holding those where there is a question to a test of "Is it something that is consistent with the rest of Epicurus said?" and "Did other ancient critics (of whom there were many who had lots to say) point out an alleged inconsistency?" But in the end there is no way to be omnisciently "certain" on these questions than any other, and we all have to do the best we can.

Post by "Cassius" of February 1, 2023 at 2:57 PM

This issue of checking the meaning of a passage, even where text does not appear corrupt, against the wider scope of the philosophy is huge:

For example if someone reads this passage from Menoecus without any reference to the rest of what Epicurus said, then the entire philosophy is pure minimalism and asceticism:

Quote from Letter to Menoecus

[128] The right understanding of these facts enables us to refer all choice and avoidance to the health of the body and (the soul's) freedom from disturbance, since this is the aim of the life of blessedness. For it is to obtain this end that we always act, namely, to avoid pain and fear. And when this is once secured for us, all the tempest of the soul is dispersed, since the living creature has not to wander as though in search of something that is missing, and to look for some other thing by which he can fulfill the good of the soul and the good of the body. For it is then that we have need of pleasure, when we feel pain owing to the absence of pleasure; (but when we do not feel pain), we no longer need pleasure.

Because standing alone this would appear to mean at least these two things:

1. Escape from pain is the prime and overriding directive. You would never choose any course of action that produces any pain at all. (*"For it is to obtain this end that we always act, namely, to avoid pain and fear."*)
2. You don't need pleasure at all for its own sake, just to escape pain.

But if someone were to reach those conclusions then they would not only miss the heart of the philosophy, they would in fact stand it on its head.

Epicurus said that words should be clear, but words mean something only in context, and have to use reasonable rules of construction in everything we interpret.

This is a difficulty of language that is just unavoidable, just as waterholic is talking about [in a nearby thread as to "friendship."](#) The work can't stop with our choice of the most common usage of a word in a dictionary. I wish it could!

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 1, 2023 at 2:58 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

Well, it comes down to where you decide if you're going to trust the manuscript and use λεπτότητα "elegance" or whether you're going to correct the scribe like Bailey and Usener and substitute λιτότης "limit".

This got me wondering about the history of the manuscript, and I found this on Wikipedia:

Quote

There are many extant [manuscripts](#) of the *Lives*, although none of them are especially old, and they all descend from a common ancestor, because they all lack the end of Book VII.[25] The three most useful manuscripts are known as B, P, and F. Manuscript B (*Codex Borbonicus*) dates from the 12th century, and is in the [National Library of Naples](#).^[a] Manuscript P (*Paris*) is dated to the 11th/12th century, and is in the [Bibliothèque nationale de France](#).^[27] Manuscript F (*Florence*) is dated to the 13th century, and is in the [Laurentian Library](#).^[28] The titles for the individual biographies used in modern editions are absent from these earliest manuscripts, however they can be found inserted into the blank spaces and margins of manuscript P by a later hand.^[29]

There seem to have been some early [Latin](#) translations, but they no longer survive. A 10th-century work entitled *Tractatus de dictis philosophorum* shows some knowledge of Diogenes.^[30] [Henry Aristippus](#), in the 12th century, is known to have translated at least some of the work into Latin, and in the 14th century an unknown author made use of a Latin translation for his [De vita et moribus philosophorum](#)^[30] (attributed erroneously to [Walter Burley](#)).

Post by “Don” of February 1, 2023 at 10:15 PM

[Kalosyni](#) : You bring up a good point about manuscripts. I tried to dig up everything I could find on Vat.gr.1950 that contains the Vatican Sayings:

[DigiVatLib](#)

The manuscript is contained in (and was found in) Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (the Vatican Library) at shelfmark Vat.gr.1950.pt.2 (Vatican, Greek manuscript No. 1950, part 2).

Manuscript content is dated between 1301-1350 CE.

Height: 243

Width: 165

The binding: The paper boards are covered with brown leather and are marked with straight lines. On the back are printed in gold the shields of Pope Paul VI and Eugenius Tisserant cardinal librarian.

Codex was among those who were rescued by the French in 1797 and restored in 1815 (v. seal of Bibl. Nat. Paris in ff. 1r and 545v).

Codices Vaticani Graeci. Codices 1745-1962, recensuit P. Canart, t. I, Codicum enarrationes, in Bibliotheca Vaticana 1970 (Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae codices manu scripti recensiti), pp. 762-766.

Contents (with folio/page numbers):280r-340v: Xenophon, 427/26-c. 353 a.C. Xenophontis Memorabilia

341r-392v: Aurelius Antoninus, Marcus, imperatore romano, 121-180 <Marci Aurelii Antonini imperatoris in semetipsum libri XII>

392v-399r: Epictetus, sec. I-II Epicteti enchiridii paraphrasis christiana

401r-v: Epictetus, sec. I-II <Excerpta rhetorica>

401v-404v: Epictetus, sec. I-II <Florilegium seu gnomologium Epicureum>

408r-518v: Maximus Tyrius, sec. II <Maximi Tyrii dissertationes>

518v-540v: Albinus Smyrnaeus, sec. II Albini (Alcinoi cod.) epitome doctrinarum Platonis

542r-545v: Aristoteles, 384-322 a.C. Aristotelis de motu animalium

PS. I noticed that folios/pages 401v-404v has "Epictetus, sec. I-II <Florilegium seu gnomologium Epicureum>" which seems to be a misprint because it's corrected to Epicurus in parentheses. Not sure what's going on there, because those are the Vatican Sayings pages.

Post by "Don" of February 2, 2023 at 12:03 AM

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

The LSJ accepts Usener 's corrections (see link), but I'm becoming more skeptical. I need to emphasize that the word "limit" in Usener/ Bailey comes from their "correcting" the clearly legible manuscript word καθαριος (katharios) to μεθόριος (methorios).

So, Usener is "correcting" TWO words out of the initial five. They're swapping out 40% of the first five words to make it say what they want!

Manuscript: ἔστι καὶ ἐν λεπτότητι καθάριος

Usener: ἔστι καὶ ἐν λιτότητι μεθόριος

Manuscript: There is elegance (καθάριος) even in meagerness (λεπτότητι)...

Usener: There is a limit (μεθόριος) even in frugality (λιτότητι)...

So even if I accepted frugality instead of thinness/meagerness, I have a hard time accepting the word limit. If I accepted λιτοτητι "frugality" I'd still come up with "There is elegance/refinement even in frugality..."

Plus, καθαρειος "refinement, elegance" is the opposite of λιτοτης "frugality, simplicity". And that sounds to me like something Epicurus would write, with using opposites to make some wordplay. Which is inadvertently what I wrote instead of sticking to meagerness!

There is elegance even in simplicity. The one who is unable to consider this is nearly equivalent to the who falls down because of a lack of limits.

My paraphrase would be something like: There is nothing wrong with frugal, simple living. In fact, it has its own sense of elegance and refinement. If one doesn't grasp this, that person is nearly the same as one who gets cast down in life for having no limits to his desires.

Post by “Cassius” of February 2, 2023 at 7:56 AM

Thanks - it is good to know the issues involved with the phrase.

I can see the possibility of "elegance in simplicity" being stretched to have a similar meaning as "limit of frugality" but I do not see Epicurus praising "elegance" elsewhere .

In fact if we were sure the word were elegance I would be inclined to see a negative implication, such as a variation of Lucretius' embroidered blanket, which we have no need of because it does not keep us any warmer than the rough one.

Without context or another example of it I guess we will always have to keep this limit in mind on the translation.

Post by “Don” of February 2, 2023 at 8:09 AM

"Elegance" is probably not the best translation of καθαριος so I should stop using it. Here is the LSJ entry:

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, κα^θάρ-ειος](#)

Here's Saint-Andres note to his translation:

Quote

Translating this phrase as "an elegance in simplicity" ties it to other statements Epicurus makes about both living beautifully (e.g., Vatican Saying #17) and living simply or naturally (e.g., Vatican Saying #21).

For reference, here are those two. They don't use καθαριος but hint at that sentiment:

VS17. It is not the young man who is most happy, but the old man who has lived beautifully; for despite being at his very peak the young man stumbles around as if he were of many minds, whereas the old man has settled into old age as if in a harbor, secure in his gratitude for the good things he was once unsure of.

VS21. Nature must be persuaded, not forced. And we will persuade nature by fulfilling the necessary desires, and the natural desires too if they cause no harm, but sharply rejecting the harmful desires.

PS: I'd encourage anyone who's interested to take a look at the καθαρειος definition above and the two below and post how they would translate this opening phrase:

"There is (καθαρειος) even in (choose 1: A. λεπτότης or B.λιτοτης)..."

A. λεπτότης

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, λ , λεπτό-ρρυ^τος , λεπτότης](#)

B. λιτοτης

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, λ , λι?ταργ-ος , λι τότης](#)

I'd be particularly interested if [Joshua](#) or some of our other poets wanted to take a stab at it.

Post by "Bryan" of August 21, 2025 at 5:32 PM

Thank you Don, for all the excellent work above.

I agree that it would be best to follow the manuscript and make ή λεπτότης work. I wanted to look at the other instances of ή λεπτότης by Epicurus.

Epicurus, On Nature, Book 2, P.Herc. 1149 col. 7 (column 116sup):

...πρ[ὸς τοῖς στε]ρεμνίοις καὶ τὰς αὐτὰς διαστάσεις εἰς βάθος εἰληφός, πλὴν οὐχὶ τῶι ἐκ σωμάτων πολλῶν εἰς] βάθος πε[ποιήσ]θα[ι, ἀλλὰ τῶι [τὴν] τοῦ [ἐνδ]οθεν [κενο]ῦ διά[στ]ασιν τὴν [α]ύτην ἔχειν, λέγειν τολμῶσιν ἀλόγως πως ὡς διὰ τὴν λεπτότητα ῥαδίως δι[ὰ π]αντ[ὸς] πόρου [περ]αι[οῦν ἔδει], οὐδ' ἐν[θ]υ[μούμενοι...

...while [the film] even acquired the same dimensions in depth in relation to the hard objects [that were its source] → except with [the film] having been made deeply not by many bodies – but by having the same dimensions of the inner void. They unreasonably dare to say that, somehow, because of the subtlety [of the films], it would be necessary [for the films] to easily pass through every passageway, without [those who say this] reflecting that...

Epicurus, On Nature, Book 2, P.Herc. 993 col. 10 (column 111inf) | P.Herc. 1149 col. 5 (column 112sup)

...[ἀέ]ρα ἐξω[θεῖ]ν [δυνα]τὸν περαιοῖ, φα[ν]ερὸν ὡς καὶ τοῖς εἰδώλοις ὑπάρχει καὶ [α]ύτη ἡ δύναμις· εἰ μὲν γὰρ τὸ στερέμνιον μόνον ἠδύνατο τὰς | ἐξώσεις π[οιεῖσ]θαί, τὸ δ' εἶδωλο[ν μή], ἦν ἂν κατὰ τὸν

ἐξωστικὸν τρόπον τὰ στερέμνια μόνον ταχέως δύνασθαι φέρεσθαι, [τ]ὰ δὲ εἶδωλα μὴ, κατὰ γε τὸν ἐξωστ[ι]κό[ν], κα[τ]ὰ μέντοι τὸ περιλαμβανόμενον εὐθὺς ἐξ] ἐτ[ο]ίμου κενοῦ διὰ τ[ὰς] συνιζήσεις τὰς εἰς σ[τ]ενότητα καὶ λεπτ[ό]τητα καὶ μι[κρ]ότη[τ]α...

...It has the force to eject air, [while] carrying [the air] over – and It is evident that this same Force also exists even in the films: for if only a hard Object had the force to produce ejections – but a Film did not [have the force to produce ejections] – then only hard Objects would have the force to be quickly carried in the ejecting way – but the films would not [have the force to be quickly carried], at least [not] in the ejecting [way]: however, in what is completely encompassed around immediately from the ready void, through the settlements into narrowness, subtlety, and minuteness...

Epicurus, On Nature, Book 2, P.Herc. 1149 col. 1 (column 93sup)

...περὶ δὲ τῆς κατὰ τὴν φορὰν ὑπαρχούσης ταχυτή[τος] νῦν λέγειν ἐπιχ[ειρ]ήσομεν· πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ ἢ λεπτότης μακρὰν τῆς ἀπὸ τῶν αἰσθήσεων λεπτότητος ἀπέ[χο]υσα, ταχυτήτα τῶν εἰδώλων κατὰ τ[ῆ]ν [φ]ο[ρ]ὰν ἀνυπέβλ[η]τον [ἐ]νδε[ί]κνυται...

...but We will venture to speak now about the speed that exists in the transmission [*of the films*]: first, their Subtleness – because it is far different than the subtlety [derived] from the senses – is indicated in the unsurpassable speed of the films in regards to their transmission...

Epicurus, On Nature, Book 2, P.Herc. 1010 columns 26, 27sup

...δὴ, φημί, β[λ]έ[π]οντες καὶ τῶν εἰδώλ[ω]ν ταῦτὸ τοῦτο ἐγχειροῦσιν [κ]ατ[α]δο[ξ]άζε[ιν] [διὰ τὴν ὁμ[ω]ν[υ]μίαν τὴν δὲ τῆς λεπτότητος, {τὴν διαφορὰν αὐτῶν οὐ προσθεωρ[ο]ῦντες [missing word] μ[ή]τε αὐτὰ μᾶλλο[ν] τὰς διαδύσει[ς] δ]ύνασθαι ποιεῖσθαι διὰ τῶν στερεμν[υ]ν φύσεω[ν] συνβέβη[κ]εν ἤπ[ερ] τὰς ἀντιτυπεῖς διὰ τῶν [χειρῶ]ν συγκρίσεις, ἂν μὴ [τ]ις τὸν τρόπον [τ]ῆς δ[ια]δύσεω[ς] [δ]ὲν ἡμ[εῖς] εἰρήκαμεν, δ[ει]κνύη δυ[νατὸ]ν αὐτοῖς [ὑπάρ]χ[ειν] ὄντα·}

Indeed, I say to these [people]: while they are still observing the films, they attempt to thoroughly judge this very thing [*i.e., transfer of temperature*] through the sameness of names – in fact, They are not also envisioning the difference in the subtlety of these things. These [hot and cold particles] are not more able to make penetrations through the nature of hard objects than they [are able to] endure their rebounding through the compounds of [our] hands. unless Someone proves that this way of penetration, which We ourselves have described, is able to exist for those [films].

Lives 10.47b

εἶθ' ὅτι τὰ Εἶδωλα ταῖς λεπτότησιν ἀνυπερβλήτοις κέχρηται Οὐθὲν ἀντιμαρτυρεῖ τῶν φαινομένων

accordingly, Nothing among visible things contests that Films are endowed with unsurpassable subtlety

Lives 10.46a

καὶ μὴν καὶ, Τύποι ὁμοιοσχήμενεςτοις στερεμνίοις εἰσί - λεπτότησιν ἀπέχοντες μακρὰν τῶν φαινομένων:

and indeed, impressions exist in a similar shape as solid objects - although they are far different from what is apparent in [their] subtlety:

Plato (fl.c. 388 BCE), Republic, 7.523E

καὶ ὡσαύτως, πάχος καὶ λεπτότητα, ἢ μαλακότητα καὶ σκληρότητα, ἢ Ἄφή;

and likewise, does Touch [perceive] thickness and subtlety - or softness and hardness?

ἢ λεπτομέρεια is also worth considering:

Epicurus, On Nature, Book 14, P.Herc. 1148 col. 4 (column 37)

...ἐξέφευ[γε] τὴν ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀέρος στο[λ]ήν, λεπτομερές πα[ν]τελῶς αὐτὸ ὄν καὶ οὐ δυνάμενου ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀέρος ἐν ἄθροισμῶι λαμβάνεσθαι συναγωγὴν ἐπιδεχομένωι· οὔτε γὰρ ἐμβρεΐθεια ποσὴ τις στολὴν ἐπιδέχεται οὔτ[ε] λεπτομέρεια, ἀλλὰ συμμετρία τις ποσὴ καὶ τοῦ τοιούτου συντελεστικὴ γί[ν]εται· ἀλλὰ γὰρ καὶ τοῦτο γελοίως ἐκ τῆς φαντασίας ἀναελόγισται καὶ οὐκ ἐπισταμένως τάφανές διὰ τοῦ φαινομένου συλλογί[ζ]εσθαι· καὶ ἡ γῆ δὲ π[ά]λι οὐ[κ] ἐ[κ] τοῦ αὐτ[οῦ] τρόπου δύν[αται]...

...[flowing upwards, the Form of flames] flows out from the pressure beneath the air, being absolutely of a subtle composition itself, and not having the force beneath the air to be taken into an aggregation that permits a gathering. for neither does any measurable Density [on its own] permit pressure [to form] - nor does its subtle composition [on its own, permit pressure to form]: but some measurable Symmetry [of density and subtlety] does become contributive to such a [formation of pressure as seen in flames].

Epicurus, On Nature, Book 2, P.Herc. 1010 (columns 24fin, 25),
P.Herc. 993 col. 14 (column 117inf), P.Herc. 1149 col. 9 (column 118sup).

{φύ[κ ἔστι] συμ[φυῆ] τα[ῦτα] δὴ, φημί, τοῦ[του, ἀ]λλὰ [μόν]ον τῶν [ἐ]πιτηδ[ε]ίων μὴ ἐχόντων μορφοειδῆ
σηματισμὸν ἕνα τ[ι]νὰ φύσε[ι], ἀλλὰ π[ολ]λοὺς καὶ [ἄ]λλο[υ]ς ἄλλως,} [λέ]γω δ' οἶον [πυρὸς καὶ]
πνεύμα[τος καὶ τ]ῶν τοιούτο[τρόπων]. ταῦτα γάρ, ἐν ἄλλωι τρόπωι | τὴν λεπτομέρειαν ἔχ[ο]ντα ἥπερ ἐν
ῶι αἱ ἕξωθεν μὲν [ἀ]λλη[λοῦ]χοι φύσεις, [ἔ]νδοθε[ν δὲ] πολύκενοι, δύ[να]νται τὰς [διεκδύσεις διὰ τῶν
στερεμνί[ων] φύσε[ων] λαμβάνειν.

I say, these [abilities of traveling through hard objects] are not inherent to [film], but only [inherent] to suitable things not having a certain singular shaped configuration by nature – rather, [these abilities are inherent to things having] many other [shapes] also. I mean, for instance, [particles] of fire and of [cool] wind and such types of things: for These [hot and cold particles], because they have a subtle composition in a different manner than that in which [their] external interconnected Natures [exist], but [with their nature also being] porous within, have the force to acquire their emergence through the natures of hard objects.

Post by “Don” of August 21, 2025 at 7:14 PM

You're very kind, [Bryan](#). Thanks for reminding me the fun one can have digging into these issues! I may her back into the mix. There's still a number of VSs that need looked at.

Post by “Cassius” of August 21, 2025 at 7:57 PM

Just thought I would add here too that since this thread started we've come across a long discussion of "frugality" by Cicero in Tusculan Disputations giving the word "frugality" a much more expansive meaning than we probably would today:

[III-VIII.¶](#)

And from these considerations we may get at a very probable definition of the temperate man, whom the Greeks call σώφρων, and they call that virtue σωφροσύνην, which I at one time call temperance, at another time moderation, and sometimes even modesty; but I do not know whether that virtue may not be properly called frugality, which has a more confined meaning with the Greeks; for they call frugal men χρησίμους, which implies only that they are useful: but our name has a more extensive meaning; for all abstinence, all innocency, (which the Greeks

have no ordinary name for, though they might use the word ἀβλάβεια, for innocency is that disposition of mind which would offend no one,) and several other virtues, are comprehended under frugality; but, if this quality were of less importance, and confined in as small a compass as some imagine, the surname of Piso would not have been in so great esteem. But as we allow him not the name of a frugal man (frugi), who either quits his post through fear, which is cowardice; or who reserves to his own use what was privately committed to his keeping, which is injustice; or who fails in his military undertakings through rashness, which is folly; for that reason the word frugality takes in these three virtues of fortitude, justice, and prudence, though it is indeed common to all virtues, for they are all connected and knit together. Let us allow, then, frugality itself to be another and fourth virtue; for its peculiar property seems to be, to govern and appease all tendencies to too eager a desire after anything, to restrain lust, and to preserve a decent steadiness in everything. The vice in contrast to this is called prodigality (nequitia). Frugality, I imagine, is derived from the word fruge, the best thing which the earth produces; nequitia is derived (though this is perhaps rather more strained, still let us try it; we shall only be thought to have been trifling if there is nothing in what we say) from the fact of everything being to no purpose (nequicquam) in such a man; from which circumstance he is called also Nihil, nothing. Whoever is frugal, then, or, if it is more agreeable to you, whoever is moderate and temperate, such a one must of course be consistent; whoever is consistent, must be quiet; the quiet man must be free from all perturbation, therefore from grief likewise: and these are the properties of a wise man; therefore a wise man must be free from grief.

Post by “Eikadistes” of August 22, 2025 at 1:15 AM

I think there's a subtle, nautical metaphor Epíkouros encrypted here.

I'm looking at the active participle (in the dative singular) τῷ **ἐκπίπτοντι** (*tōi ekpíptonti*), which Bailey translates as "*him who errs*". The phrase is referring to "the one doing the *ekpíptō*-ing", or "*the one falling out of...*", as in "...out of a boat", for example, "[*being cast ashore*](#)".

With this in mind, consider the second part of the prepositional phrase δι' ἀοριστίαν (*di' aoristían*) that Bailey translates as "through excess". The word ἀοριστίαν (*aoristían*) comes from ἀ- ("not") and οριστικός ("definite"), which is the root word from which we receive "horizon" and "horizontal".

So, "the one doing the *ekpíptō*-ing" is doing so διὰ (*diá*) "by way of", "on account of", or "due to" something being "indefinite" (for example, a boundary, limit, or horizon). If there aren't any lighthouses, and the captain views an indefinite horizon, the boat is likely to crash.

I think he's calling someone who can't "live simply" a *trainwreck*, or in this case, a "*ship-wreck*".

Post by "Bryan" of August 22, 2025 at 2:44 AM

[Quote from Eikadistes](#)

is doing so διὰ (diá) "by way of", "on account of", or "due to" something being "indefinite"

Here I think we have the feminine abstract noun "**ἡ ἀοριστία, indefiniteness**" itself -- but it *is* an odd one, and I only have examples of the adjective being used elsewhere.

For example (of the adjective):

Porphyry of Tyre (fl. 275 CE), Letter to Marcella, 29.459-461

"ἐφ' ὅσον δ' ἂν Ἀμηχανῆς: Λήθη τῆς φύσεως Ἀμηχανεῖς· σαυτῷ γὰρ ἀορίστους φόβους καὶ ἐπιθυμίας Προσβάλλεις"

"to the extent that you have no means: you have no means because you fail to notice nature -- for you apply undefined fears and desires upon yourself"

Epicurus, On Nature, Book 25, P.Herc. 1056 col. 15 (fr. B 37) et alia

...{[μ]νήμη ἢ τὸ τῆι [μνή]μηι πά}θος ἀνάλογον ὧν ἔδει μᾶλλον ἐνεγείνεται πρὸς τὸ ὠρισμένον καὶ τὰ πάντα {ἐξελέγχον τῆς ἀναφορᾶς γινομένης καὶ οὐ πρὸς ἀόριστα καὶ κρίσεως προσδεόμενα -- αὕτη δ' αὖ πάλιν ἢ {τούτου μνήμη ἢ ἀνάλογος μνήμηι κίνησις τὰ μὲν συνεγε γέν[νη]το εὐθύς, τὰ δ' ἠύξητο τὴν [ἀρχή]ν ἔχουσα καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν.

...Memory, or the Experience of those [*movements*] analogous to memory. It would have been more necessary that [*the memory*] was implanted in relation to what [*experience*] was being defined -- even with Everything refuting out the reference [*to the definition*] as it was being produced -- and not in relation to the undefined things, that are also in need of distinction. but again, this Memory of [*an experience*] or a Movement analogous to memory: with Some [*aspect of memory*] having been generated together directly [*from experiences*] -- while Other [*aspects of memory*] had increased, although they have a foundation and a cause [*from former experiences*].

For **ἐκπίπτειν** of course we also have:

ΚΔ 15. ὁ τῆς φύσεως Πλοῦτος καὶ ὠρισταὶ καὶ εὐπόριστός ἐστιν -- ὁ δὲ τῶν κενῶν δοξῶν εἰς ἄπειρον ἐκπίπτει.

The wealth of nature is limited and well acquirable – but the [*wealth*] of empty judgments falls out into infinity.

Post by “Bryan” of August 27, 2025 at 10:45 PM

As my post above on ἡ λεπτότης shows, "subtlety" is a word used by Epicurus in discussing physics -- but not (*except for this example of the manuscript's version of VS 63*) when discussing morals.

Among the examples, this quote below must be the best, because Epicurus stacks near synonyms, and in doing better shows us what he thought of the word:

"...It has the force to eject air, [while] carrying [the air] over – and It is evident that this same Force also exists even in the films: for if only a hard Object had the force to produce ejections – but a Film did not [have the force to produce ejections] – then only hard Objects would have the force to be quickly carried in the ejecting way – but the films would not [have the force to be quickly carried], at least [not] in the ejecting [way]: however, in what is completely encompassed around immediately from the ready void, through the settlements into narrowness, subtlety, and minuteness....."

[Epicurus, On Nature, Book 2, P.Herc. 993 col. 10 (column 111inf) | P.Herc. 1149 col. 5 (column 112sup)] "...[ἀέ]ρα ἐξω[θεῖ]ν [δυνα]τὸν περαιοῖ, φα[ν]ερὸν ὡς καὶ τοῖς εἰδώλοις ὑπάρχει καὶ [α]ὔτη ἡ δύναμις· εἰ μὲν γὰρ τὸ στερέμνιον μόνον ἠδύνατο τὰς | ἐξώσεις π[οιεῖσθ]αι, τὸ δ' εἶδωλο[ν μή], ἦν ἂν κατὰ τὸν ἐξ[ωστικὸν] τρόπον τὰ στερέμνια μόνον ταχέως δύνασθαι φέρεσ[θ]αι, [τ]ᾶ δὲ εἶδωλα μή, κατὰ γε τὸν ἐξωστ[ι]κό[ν], κα[τ]ᾶ μέντοι τὸ περιλαμβανόμενον εὐθύ[ς] ἐξ[ε] ἐτ[ο]ίμου κενοῦ διὰ τ[ᾶς] συνιζήσεις τὰς εἰς σ[τε]νότητα καὶ λεπτ[ό]τητα καὶ μι[κρ]ότητα[τ]α..."

We could draw a line from "subtlety" to "simple living" if it was otherwise established, but I do not see that it is.

The closest I have is in *The Double Indictment* (section 2) Lucian has Zeus complain "I myself have to do any number of tasks that are almost impossible to carry out on account of their subtlety (ὕπο λεπτότητος)" -- which *may* be enough to draw it all together and preserve the manuscripts reading.

Post by "Don" of August 27, 2025 at 11:28 PM

This is great work, [Bryan](#) .

[Quote from Bryan](#)

We could draw a line from "subtlety" to "simple living" if it was otherwise established, but I do not see that it is.

The closest I have is in The Double Indictment (section 2) Lucian has Zeus complain "I myself have to do any number of tasks that are almost impossible to carry out on account of their subtlety (ὕπὸ λεπτότητος)" -- which may be enough to draw it all together and preserve the manuscripts reading.

I see LSJ cites Plato, Laws, in their definition, so maybe applicable:

[Plato, Laws, section 646b](#)

Ἀθηναῖος: τί δέ; σώματος, ὃ ἐταῖρε, εἰς πονηρίαν, λεπτότητα τε καὶ αἴσχος καὶ ἀδυναμίαν, θαυμάζοιμεν ἂν εἴ ποτέ τις

Athenian: And how about plunging into a bad state of body, such as *leanness* or ugliness or impotence? Should we be surprised if a man of his own free will ever

LSJ defines that use as "thinness, meagreness, of body"