

# Epicurus' Favorite Insults

Post by "Don" of May 28, 2022 at 7:55 AM

Okay, done! That was fun! I didn't do Plato since [Joshua](#) did a good job above.

Enjoy!

Nausiphanes:

'The mollusk,' πλεύμονά (pleumona "lung-fish, jellyfish"> related etymologically to English "pleurisy")

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

Hicks note: Cf. Sext. Emp. Adv. math. i. 3 νῦν πλεύμον α καλῶν τὸν Ναυσιφ ἀνην ὡς ἀναίσθητον; Plato, Phil. 21 c ζῆν δὲ οὐκ ἀνθρώπου βίον ἀλλὰ τινος πλεύμονος; Hesychius, s.v. ; whence it appears that obtuseness and insensibility, not weakness or pliability, were the qualities imputed by this term.

'The illiterate,' ἀγράμματον (agrammaton)

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, ἀγράμμα-α^τος](#)

Don note: It's an even better insult than simply "illiterate" because one connotation is "of animals, unable to utter articulate sounds."

'The cheat,' ἀπατεῶνα (apateōna "a cheat, rogue, quack.")

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, ἀπα^τ-εών](#)

Don note: Follow that LSJ link for some other uses of the term in Hippocrates, Plato, and Xenophon

'The harlot,' πόρνην (pornēn, related to English "pornography.")

Don note: The pornai were at the bottom of the ancient Greek social structure, always slaves living at the whim of pimps. There is a solid article on "[Prostitution in ancient Greece](#)" on Wikipedia that is heartbreaking (and graphic, NSFW). The recent fiction book "The Wolf Den" by Elodie Harper does an excellent job in portraying the lives of the women enslaved in the (excavated) brothel in Pompeii.

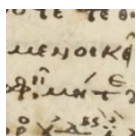
Aristotle:

'The debauchee,' ἄσωτον (asōton)

Don note: It's very important to realize that this is the \*exact\* same word Epicurus used in describing the pleasure of the \*profligate/prodigious\* in the letter to Menoikeus: "Therefore, whenever we say repeatedly that "pleasure is the τέλος," we do not say the pleasure of those who are prodigious..." I highly recommend people taking a look at verse 131 in my Letter to Menoikeus translation at

File

## [Epicurus's Letter to Menoikeus - A New Translation with Commentary](#)



An in-depth translation and commentary of Epicurus's Letter to Menoikeus.



Don

July 19, 2023 at 11:25 PM

he devoured his inheritance and then enlisted and sold drugs.

καταφαγόντα τὴν πατρῶαν οὐσίαν (kataphagonta "eat up, devour" the last part is the English suffix "-phage")

στρατεύεσθαι (strateuesthai "serve/enlist/enlist in the army")

φαρμακοπωλεῖν (pharmakopōlein LSJ "to be druggist"; a dealer in drugs)

Protagoras:

‘Porter’ φορμοφόρον (phormorphoron "porter", also name of a play by Hermippus)

[Hermippus - Wikipedia](#)

Related <https://kaikki.org/dictionary/Anc...F%8C%CF%82.html>

‘Copier of Democritus,’ γραφέα (graphea, "private secretary, copyist, scribe") Δημοκρίτου (Demokritou)

he taught in the village schools. ἐν κώμαις γράμματα διδάσκειν

Heraclitus:

‘The Muddler,’ κυκητήν (kykētēn, LSJ "stirrer, agitator") from κύκᾱω "to stir up, mix; to stir up, throw into confusion, confound"

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

Democritus:

Lerocritus ('judge of nonsense')

Ληρόκριτον (Lērokriton, kriton "judge, see English "critic")

λῆρος "silly talk, nonsense, trumpery, Ar.:—of persons, nonsense, a trifler, Plat.; λῆροι λεπτότατοι, of sophists, Ar.; as an exclamation, λῆρος, nonsense! humbug! id=Ar."

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

Don note: I'm curious of the context of this one. Is Democritus "judging nonsense" or is he a "silly-talking judge". I could see Lerocritus being positive under one context and an insult under another. Context is everything here. Hicks translates it "the nonsense-monger". I don't see the sense of monger or dealer or trader in nonsense in the -kriton part

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, κρι^τ-ής](#)

So I wish we knew from where Diogenes got that reference.

Antidorus: Ἀντίδωρον

Sannidorus ('Maniac') Σαννίδωρον (Sannidorōn .. Sannidorus)

Don note: My bet is that the name is a play on Antidorus' name itself: Ἀντίδωρον so Σαννίδωρον. His name itself literally means return-gift "anti-gift" so the job would be what does Σαννί- refer to. What kind of "gift" is Epicurus word-playing here? σᾶννᾶς is "zany, fool, buffoon" but also σάννιον "membrum virile, Eup.440" which reminds me in this context of a now-classic Saturday Night Live skit with Justin Timberlake. Enough said on that.

This Antidorus must be:

[Antidorus of Cyme - Wikipedia](#)

the Cynics:

'Enemies of Hellas,' ἐχθροὺς τῆς Ἑλλάδος (ekhthrouς tēs Hellados ("Greece/Hellas"))

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

Don note: I found this connotation interesting in that definition: "ἐχθρός is one who has been φίλος ("friend"), but is alienated." It's still "enemies" but provides a shade of meaning.

the Logicians: διαλεκτικούς (dialektikous, specifically those skilled in dialectic)

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

'The destroyers,' πολυφθόρους (polyphthorous, "destroying many (poly-), fraught with death"

Pyrrho:

'The uneducated fool.'

Don note: It's actually two words: ἀμαθῆ καὶ (&) ἀπαίδευτον. Hicks: "ignorant boor"

ἀμαθῆ (amathē, "ignorant, stupid") but see LSJ for some intriguing alternative connotations

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

ἀπαίδευτον apaideuton, literally means uneducated (paidea)

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