

Episode One Hundred Thirty-Nine - The Letter to Menoecus 06 - Pleasure Part Two

Post by "Don" of September 12, 2022 at 9:39 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

A simple meal of hearty, wholesome bread and spring water delivers the most extreme pleasure whenever food and drink have been brought to bear against hunger and thirst

You did a good job summarizing, [Joshua](#) 👍

Good job everyone! A solid episode!

[Joshua](#) also mentioned my aversion to "profligate." Here's that section from my commentary:

131h. οὐ τὰς τῶν ἀσώτων ἡδονὰς καὶ τὰς ἐν ἀπολαύσει κειμένας λέγομεν,

- οὐ ...λέγομεν, "we don't say ..."
- τὰς τῶν ἀσώτων ἡδονὰς "the pleasure of those who are ἀσώτων"
 - ἀσώτων (genitive of ἄσωτος (asōtos))
 - LSJ defines ἄσωτος as "having no hope of safety, in desperate case; abandoned; spendthrift, profligate." The Latin synonym given is *perditus* "squander, dissipate, waste, throw away, lost"

A quick diversion on ἄσωτος is in order. For those readers with a background in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the parable of the Prodigal Son uses this exact word to describe the lifestyle chosen by the wayward son: *And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.* (Luke 15:13, KJV) Here ἄσωτος is translated as "riotous living." The word also occurs in one other place, this time in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures (known to Christians as the "Old" Testament) to describe a sex worker, calling her ἀνεπτρωμένη "inciting" and ἄσωτος "carnal." (Proverbs 7:11) The original connotation of "having no hope" or "lost" gives an extra dimension to the word. The word literally is formed from ἀ- ("not") + σώζω (sōizō "save"): "not saved, lost, desperate." That sense, along with the "extravagant, prodigal, profligate," gives me a much richer sense of what Epicurus's point was.

It needs to also be pointed out that, unlike those Biblical references, there's no moral judgment being passed here. All pleasure is good. It's a question of the consequences. We'll discuss this after we examine how Epicurus describes the pleasure of those who are described as ἄσωτος.