

Happy Thanksgiving Thread

Post by “Don” of November 23, 2022 at 7:51 AM

Happy Thanksgiving Eve. [Kalosyni](#) inspired me to go back and pull out some more favorite "gratitude" quotes:

χάρις

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

Remember that Epicurus wrote a whole book entitled Περὶ δώρων καὶ χάριτος "Concerning Gifts and Gratitude"

VS 17 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.

οὐ νέος μακαριστὸς ἀλλὰ γέρων βεβιωκῶς καλῶς· ὁ γὰρ νέος ἀκμῇ πολὺς ὑπὸ τῆς τύχης ἕτεροφρονῶν πλάζεται· ὁ δὲ γέρων καθάπερ ἐν λιμένι τῷ γήρα καθώρμικεν, τὰ πρότερον δυσελπιστούμενα τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἀσφαλεῖ κατακλείσας χάριτι.

VS 19 He who forgets the good things he had yesterday becomes an old man today.

τοῦ γεγονότος ἀμνήμων ἀγαθοῦ γέρων τήμερον γεγένηται.

VS35 (My paraphrase) Don't spoil your enjoyment of the things you presently have by craving things that are absent, but remember that what you have here and now were also things you were once devoted to getting.

VS69 (My paraphrase) The ingratitude of the soul makes a creature gluttonous for limitless variation in one's lifestyle.

τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀχάριστον λίχνον ἐποίησε τὸ ζῶον εἰς ἄπειρον τῶν ἐν διαίτη ποικιλιμάτων.

Note: ποικιλιμάτων refers literally to fancy embroidery or needlework, and so the colloquial meaning of "variety, diversity" comes from the intricate patterns and ornaments of that craft. To me, this VS again gets at not being able to take pleasure in or to be grateful for what's right in front of you.

Plutarch, Against Colotes, 17, p. 1117A: But what epithet do they deserve – with your “roars” of ecstasy and “cries of thanksgiving” and tumultuous “bursts of applause” and “reverential demonstrations,” and the whole apparatus of adoration that you people resort to in supplicating and hymning the man who summons you to sustained and frequent pleasures?

U183 Plutarch, That Epicurus actually makes a pleasant life impossible, 15, p. 1097C: One cannot ignore the man's absurd inconsistency: he treads under foot and belittles the actions of Themistocles and Miltiades and yet writes this to his friends about himself: "The way in which you have provided for me in the matter of sending the grain was godlike and magnificent, and you have given tokens of your regard from me that reach to high heaven." So if someone had taken that corn ration of his bread-stuff from our philosopher's letter, the expressions of gratitude would have conveyed the impression that it was written in thanksgiving for the freedom or deliverance of the whole Greek nation or of the Athenian state.

In light of all this emphasis on the importance of gratitude χάρις, PD1 appears problematic:

PD1 Τὸ μακάριον καὶ ἄφθαρτον οὔτε αὐτὸ πράγματα ἔχει οὔτε ἄλλω παρέχει· ὥστε οὔτε ὀργαῖς οὔτε χάρισι συνέχεται· ἐν ἀσθενεῖ γὰρ πᾶν τὸ τοιοῦτον.

One who is blissful and incorruptible has no troubles oneself nor causes troubles for others; as a consequence, they are affected by neither anger nor *gratitude*; because all this would be an indication of weakness.

Woodhouse's (1910) English-Greek Dictionary: A Vocabulary of the Attic Language (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1910) provides a long list of synonyms for χάρις that includes:

attraction, benefaction, bias, boon, elegance, fascination, favour, grace, gratefulness, gratitude, kindness, niceness, obligation, offering, pleasantness, and more than two dozen more!

With all those shades of meaning, I would offer this translation/paraphrase of PD1:

One who is incorruptible and is feeling undiluted bliss is self-sufficient, secure in themselves, and has no troubles oneself nor feels any need to cause trouble for others. So, they are affected by neither anger nor obligation because all that comes about through frailty.

I think the idea of "obligation" better conveys the self-sufficiency and self-assuredness of a completely blissful, indestructible being.

Happy Thanksgiving to all my Epicurean friends! Εὐχᾶριστέω! I am grateful!