

Festivals or Contemplation??

Post by "Don" of January 27, 2023 at 10:30 PM

That's a good find, [Todd](#) ! I had to look up the Greek from U20:

Quote

Quote from Usener

U20

Plutarch, That Epicurus actually makes a pleasant life impossible, 13, p. 1095C: The absurdity of what Epicurus says! On the one hand, he declares in his Problems that the Sage is a lover of spectacles and yields to none in the enjoyment of theatrical recitals and shows; but on the other, he allows no place, even over wine, for questions about music and the inquires of critics and scholars and actually advises a cultivated monarch to put up with recitals of stratagems and with vulgar buffooneries at his drinking parties sooner than with the discussion of problems in music and poetry.

δι' ἀτοπίαν ὧν Ἐπίκουρος λέγει φιλοθέωρον μὲν ἀποφαίνων τὸν σοφὸν ἐν ταῖς Διαφορίαις καὶ χαίροντα παρ' ὄντιν' ἕτερον ἀκροάμασι καὶ θεάμασι Διονυσιακοῖς, προβλήμασι δὲ μουσικοῖς καὶ κριτικῶν φιλολόγοις ζητήμασιν οὐδὲ παρὰ πότον διδοὺς χώραν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς φιλομούσοις τῶν βασιλέων παραινῶν στρατιωτικὰ διηγήματα καὶ φορτικὰς βωμολοχίας ὑπομένειν μᾶλλον ἐν τοῖς συμποσίοις ἢ λόγους περὶ μουσικῶν καὶ ποιητικῶν προβλημάτων περαιομένους.'

So, the word used for "spectacle" here is θεάμασι Διονυσιακοῖς (dative of θέαμα):

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

along with the Dionysia

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, Δι^ονυ σ-ιακός](#)

Plus Epicurus's book Problems is cited: ἐν ταῖς Διαφορίαις

So, θεωρίας doesn't actually appear in Plutarch's passage. So, technically, both can be true: taking pleasure in festivals and contemplation. The whole ambassador connotation of θεωρία still inclines me against reading that as festival since "contemplation" seems to be such a common translation elsewhere.

The Perseus translation of the patch Plutarch passage gives:

[Quote from Plutarch](#)

by reason of the inconsistency of what Epicurus saith, when he pronounceth in his book called his Doubts that his wise man ought to be a lover of public spectacles and to delight above any other man in the music and shows of the Bacchanals; and yet he will not admit of music problems or of the critical enquiries of [p. 177] philologists, no, not so much as at a computation. Yea, he advises such princes as are lovers of the Muses rather to entertain themselves at their feasts either with some narration of military adventures or with the importune scurrilities of drolls and buffoons, than to engage in disputes about music or in questions of poetry.

I'll say that "some narration of military adventures or ...the importune scurrilities of drolls and buffoons" sounds like more fun at a symposium than disputes about music or poetry. 😊