

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

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 καθαριος (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 καθαριωτεροι; 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, scrupulousness, 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 παραπλήσιον (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’ ἀοριστίαν ἐκπίπτοντι. This appears to be a dative phrase with an embedded prepositional phrase inside it: τῷ (δι’ ἀοριστίαν) ἐκπίπτοντι. Let’s tackle τῷ ἐκπίπτοντι first. Ἐκπίπτοντι is a dative (to be expected from τῷ) present active participle of εκπιπτω, 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’ ἀοριστίαν which appears to mean “because/for the sake of of illimitability.” LSJ specifically cites “illimitability” as the sense used in [VS63](#). The word ἀοριστίαν 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 ἀνεπιλόγιστος παραπλήσιον τι πάσχει τῷ δι’ ἀοριστίαν 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!