

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

Post by "Cassius" of February 1, 2023 at 2:57 PM

This issue of checking the meaning of a passage, even where text does not appear corrupt, against the wider scope of the philosophy is huge:

For example if someone reads this passage from Menoecus without any reference to the rest of what Epicurus said, then the entire philosophy is pure minimalism and asceticism:

Quote from Letter to Menoecus

[128] The right understanding of these facts enables us to refer all choice and avoidance to the health of the body and (the soul's) freedom from disturbance, since this is the aim of the life of blessedness. For it is to obtain this end that we always act, namely, to avoid pain and fear. And when this is once secured for us, all the tempest of the soul is dispersed, since the living creature has not to wander as though in search of something that is missing, and to look for some other thing by which he can fulfill the good of the soul and the good of the body. For it is then that we have need of pleasure, when we feel pain owing to the absence of pleasure; (but when we do not feel pain), we no longer need pleasure.

Because standing alone this would appear to mean at least these two things:

1. Escape from pain is the prime and overriding directive. You would never choose any course of action that produces any pain at all. (*"For it is to obtain this end that we always act, namely, to avoid pain and fear."*)
2. You don't need pleasure at all for its own sake, just to escape pain.

But if someone were to reach those conclusions then they would not only miss the heart of the philosophy, they would in fact stand it on its head.

Epicurus said that words should be clear, but words mean something only in context, and have to use reasonable rules of construction in everything we interpret.

This is a difficulty of language that is just unavoidable, just as waterholic is talking about [in a nearby thread as to "friendship."](#) The work can't stop with our choice of the most common usage of a word in a dictionary. I wish it could!