

Letter to Menoikeus translation by Peter Saint-Andre

Post by "Don" of May 27, 2023 at 12:36 PM

I'm taking a closer look at κειμένας (now that I'm *consciously* aware of its existence!) Thinking out loud and working on a draft of my revision ...

There is the embedded prepositional phrase ἐν ἀπολαύσει "in enjoying; in taking pleasure; in enjoyment"

The whole phrase τὰς ἐν ἀπολαύσει κειμένας could be interpreted as something like "the κειμένας in enjoying; the κειμένας in enjoyment" So, the meaning hinges on κειμένας

I see EpicurusWiki translates that as "we do not mean the pleasure of debauchery or sensuality,"

Bailey has "When, therefore, we maintain that pleasure is the end, we do not mean the pleasures of profligates and those that consist in sensuality,"

I don't see where they're getting "sensuality"

κειμένας is the feminine accusative plural of κείμενος (because of the fem. acc. pl. definite article τὰς in the phrase). κείμενος is the present middle participle of κείμαι (...-ing)

As linked above for κείμαι, [LSJ has](#) (changing the verbs to participles with -ing)

- lying down to rest, reposing; lying idle; lying still
- lying sick or wounded (Note: This one doesn't seem to fit)
- lying dead; lying buried; freq. of a corpse
- being laid up, in store, of goods, property

For discussion purposes, I'm going to try replacing those participles literally in our phrase. So, Epicureans, per Epicurus, when they say pleasure, "they don't say the pleasures of the prodigal nor..."

- the lying down to rest or sleep, reposing, in enjoyment
- the lying idle in enjoyment
- the lying dead in enjoyment
- the being laid up, in store, of goods, property, in enjoyment

I don't get "sensuality" from any of that nor from the LSJ's extensive definitions. The one I find most intriguing is "the lying buried in enjoyment." Is this a reference to those who take pleasure in imagining a pleasure in the afterlife? Is that also a potential crack at the Cyrenaics who called "calm" like being dead?

I'm going to use Saint-Andre's translation to provide context around that phrase:

Quote from Epicurus' Letter to Menoikeus via Saint-Andre (emphasis added)

So when we say that pleasure is the goal, we do not mean the pleasures of decadent people or [the enjoyment of sleep], as is believed by those who are ignorant or who don't understand us or who are ill-disposed to us, but to be free from bodily pain and mental disturbance.

He does bring up rivals and enemies who are ignorant, don't understand, and are ill-disposed to the Epicurean school. My uncontroversial contention would be that those two phrases - τὰς τῶν ἀσώτων ἡδονὰς and τὰς ἐν ἀπολαύσει κειμένας - are direct references to the positions of those rivals and enemies. That "being dead" connotation continues to intrigue me. I'm not saying that's correct - due to my rudimentary Greek and that no one else seems to pick up on it. However, if we can see translations as diverse as "sensuality" and "the enjoyment of sleep," I'm going to throw my hat in the ring with a "being dead" connotation! However, the last possibility of laying up a lot of goods and property has some potential, too.

Thanks again, [Kalosyni](#) , for jump-starting this discussion!!