

# Letter to Menoikeus translation by Peter Saint-Andre

Post by "Cassius" of May 30, 2023 at 8:26 AM

This probably doesn't help the discussion much, but I think it is a good idea to look for parallels in other texts, as we have done in [VS63](#) and [VS11](#), and I would add to those this from Torquatus in Book 1 of On Ends. I have underlined below the part that I see these same two errors (which using Elli's terms could be seen as failure to adhere to the limits and go overboard in either luxury or minimalism). So it seems to me that it is reasonable to look for such contrasts being made, even if we don't find it in this particularly phrasing of the letter to Menoecus:

Quote from Torquatus

[32] X. But that I may make plain to you the source of all the mistakes made by those who inveigh against pleasure and eulogize pain, I will unfold the whole system and will set before you the very language held by that great discoverer of truth and that master-builder, if I may style him so, of the life of happiness. Surely no one recoils from or dislikes or avoids pleasure in itself because it is pleasure, but because great pains come upon those who do not know how to follow pleasure rationally. Nor again is there any one who loves or pursues or wishes to win pain on its own account, merely because it is pain, but rather because circumstances sometimes occur which compel him to seek some great pleasure at the cost of exertion and pain. To come down to petty details, who among us ever undertakes any toilsome bodily exercise, except in the hope of gaining some advantage from it? Who again would have any right to reproach either a man who desires to be surrounded by pleasure unaccompanied by any annoyance, or another man who shrinks from any pain which is not productive of pleasure?

[33] But in truth we do blame and deem most deserving of righteous hatred the men who, enervated and depraved by the fascination of momentary pleasures, do not foresee the pains and troubles which are sure to befall them, because they are blinded by desire, and in the same error are involved those who prove traitors to their duties through effeminacy of spirit, I mean because they shun exertions and trouble. Now it is easy and simple to mark the difference between these cases. For at our seasons of ease, when we have untrammelled freedom of choice, and when nothing debars us from the power of following the course that pleases us best, then pleasure is wholly a matter for our selection and pain for our rejection. On certain occasions however either through the inevitable call of duty or through stress of circumstances, it will often come to pass that we must put pleasures from us and must make no protest against annoyance. So in such cases the principle of selection adopted by the wise man is that

he should either by refusing certain pleasures attain to other and greater pleasures or by enduring pains should ward off pains still more severe.