

Letter to Menoikeus translation by Peter Saint-Andre

Post by "Elli" of June 3, 2023 at 6:56 AM

Hello and Joy to all epicurean friends! 😊

For interpreting the greek word "απολαύω" that means: "I enjoy", and giving meanings as "I took advantage" or "I fight for" or "taking benefit" from someone (women, and boys) or something (fish and luxurious food), it is not proper to go straight to paragraph LTM. 131-132 without seeing first the paragraph 130 in which the same word "απολαύω" is used by Epicurus. For this, I repeat again that that great Norman DeWitt gave the right translation and meaning in the phrase "τας εν απολαύσει κειμένας" is the high living/luxurious living and nothing more. Since DeWitt understood deeply all the structure that exists in the LTM.

In the LTM from the paragraph 130 we read : Καὶ τὴν αὐτάρκειαν δὲ ἀγαθὸν μέγα νομίζομεν, οὐχ ἵνα πάντως τοῖς ὀλίγοις χρώμεθα, ἀλλ' ὅπως ἐὰν μὴ ἔχωμεν τὰ πολλὰ, τοῖς ὀλίγοις χρώμεθα, πεπεισμένοι γνησίως ὅτι ἥδιστα πολυτελείας ἀπολαύουσιν οἱ ἥκιστα ταύτης δεόμενοι,

Translation by DeWitt: And self-sufficiency we believe to be a great good, not that we may live on little under all circumstances but that we may be content with little when we do not have plenty, being genuinely convinced that they enjoy luxury most who feel the least need of it;

That is imo: I am self-sufficient, I practice to be self-sufficient when I have not plenty. I do not go after as a maniac for the luxurious living if I have not the money to have luxury in my life; and that is because this will bring me PAIN. But when it happens I do not deny it, I ENJOY luxury to the fullest! And it happens: long live the father in law of Ceasar, that was named Peison, who offered a luxurious living to Philodemus in the villa of Papyri. And long live Diogenis of Oinoanda who gave such a huge amount for the construction of the huge (100 m2) inscription in Oinoanda. And long live Epicurus and his last Will in which we read that had plenty of money for the marriages, the pensions of the old friends etc etc. So, that famous phrase that was by Epicurus/Metrodorus "τον σοφόν πλούτου μελητέον" [ton sofon plouton meliteon] means the wise man has to care/interest to asquire and maintaining estate and wealth, as long as it does not bring to him pain, since this is a harmonious strategy, as Metrodorus said, i.e. the wise man has not to be obliged for being hired as a servant for working under someone else in the future.



PS1. The word "**απολαύω**" [apolávo] "I enjoy" has AND this meaning, as we use this word in greek vocabulary in nowadays:

e.g. I enjoy special privileges. ~ I enjoy of great esteem / I enjoy trust - I am well esteemed, I am highly respected.

Thus, there is no need "to fight" to enjoy of being trusted and well esteemed!

The fact is that : Epicurus enjoyed trust, respect and was well esteemed among his friends. 😎

Moreover, we have the VS 27 that Epicurus uses the same word "απολαύω" for philosophy !!

XXVII.(27) Ἐπὶ μὲν τῶν ἄλλων ἐπιτηδευμάτων μόλις τελειωθεῖσιν ὁ καρπὸς ἔρχεται, ἐπὶ δὲ φιλοσοφίας συντρέχει τῇ γνώσει τὸ τερπνὸν οὐ γὰρ μετὰ μάθησιν ἀπόλαυσις, ἀλλὰ ἅμα μάθησις καὶ ἀπόλαυσις.

Translation : In the case of other occupations the fruit (of one's labors) comes upon completion of a task while (in the case) of philosophy pleasure is concurrent with knowledge because enjoyment does not come after learning but at the same time with learning.

P.S.2 When Epicurus speaks about "boys" does not mean "slaves" actually. He means literally "to have company and sleeping with boys". Sleeping with boys was the Socratic/Platonean tactic as well as the tactic of the powers, and the wealthy elite with which, both Socrates and Plato had company with them! So Epicurus with this "sleeping with boys" is attacking Plato et.al. 😏

Moreover, on the issue with boys and women, Epicurus saw how the choice of luxurious living and IF this was reaching the extravagance, it was something that brought PAIN. From historical facts: "Demetrius I of Macedon or the "Poliorcetes" - the Besieger, among his outrages was his courtship of a young boy named Democles the Handsome. The youth kept on refusing his attention but one day found himself cornered at the baths. Having no way out and being unable to physically resist his suitor, he took the lid off the hot water cauldron and jumped in. His death was seen as a mark of honor for himself and his country. In another instance, Demetrius waived a fine of 50 talents imposed on a citizen in exchange for the favors of Cleaenetus, that man's son. He also sought the attention of Lamia, a Greek courtesan. He demanded 250 talents from the Athenians, which he then gave to Lamia and other courtesans to buy soap and cosmetics". 😞