

Letter to Menoikeus translation by Peter Saint-Andre

Post by "Don" of June 3, 2023 at 7:40 PM

All of these use some form of ἀπολαύσεις, and, from my perspective, have to have similar connotations among themselves. I've used the English gloss "enjoy" but am not satisfied with that as any kind of best solution. I've also added some inline commentary, basically thinking out loud...

Letter to Menoikeus 124

A correct understanding that [death is nothing to us](#) makes the mortality of life ἀπολαυστὸν (enjoyable).

(We enjoy all that life has to offer, we are grateful for the benefit we gain from being alive.)

Letter to Menoikeus 130

firmly persuaded that those who need luxury the least ἀπολαύουσιν (they enjoy) it the most,

(They can get enjoyment from having the benefit of partaking in luxuries)

Letter to Menoikeus 131

So when we say that pleasure is the goal, we do not mean the pleasures of decadent people and those in ἀπολαύσει κειμένως (lit., those lying in enjoying),

(I find the 'lying in repose in enjoyment' intriguing, but I'm still not entirely sold. Especially now in light of the other uses. "those embedded in enjoying..." I don't know.)

Letter to Menoikeus 132

and ἀπολαύσεις (enjoying) boys/slaves and women

(enjoying the benefits of boys/slaves and women??)

VS27

Whereas other pursuits yield their fruit only to those who have practiced them to perfection; in the love and practice of wisdom, knowledge is accompanied by delight; for here ἀπόλαυσις (enjoyment) does not follow learning; but learning and ἀπόλαυσις (enjoyment) occur at the same time. (A more literal translation)

It's also instructive to see where Epicurus uses the word positively and where he gives it a negative connotation:

LM124, 130, and VS27 are positive statements (i.e., απολαυσις should be pursued)

LM131 and 132 are negative statements (i.e., απολαυσις should be avoided)

Why is απολαυσις not what Epicurus means by pleasure when it's paired with κειμενας?

What is negative about ἀπολαύσεις with boys/slaves and women?

Per LSJ: απολαυω has the connotation of "enjoy," but more specifically "have enjoyment of a thing, have the benefit of it"

Also, I remain unconvinced that παίδων necessarily refers to "boys." In the plural, it can mean "children" in general but is also a common word for "slave." Enslaved people and women were members of Epicurus's school, in contrast to other philosophical schools. I need to resolve the ambiguity of ἀπολαύσεις before I'll be satisfied with simply accepting the translation sense of "having sex with boys and women." That sounds anti-sex, and Epicurus couldn't comprehend "The Good" without the pleasures of sex, etc.

P.S.: I may have to accept the ambiguity... but I'm not willing to throw in the towel quite yet. Although, I recognize this has taken on a slight tinge of obsession here. 😊