

# Episode 199 - Cicero's On Ends - Book Two - Part 08

Post by "Don" of November 4, 2023 at 12:38 AM

Fabulous episode everyone! Very much enjoyed listening to this one.

I wanted to share something I've noted before, but it's appropriate to revisit here.

Various English words are used to describe the person in the texts referenced in this episode: profligate and prodigal and sybarite.

- Ex: Cicero: VIII. What propriety then is there in saying: I should find nothing to blame, if they kept their passions within bounds ? This is as much as to say: I should not blame profligates, if they were not profligates. (Reid)
- Ex. Epicurus: Therefore, whenever we say repeatedly that "pleasure is the goal," we do not say the pleasure of those who are prodigal and those stuck in delighting in pleasures arising from circumstances outside of ourselves like those who are ignorant, those who don't agree with us, or those who believe wrongly; but we mean that which neither pains the body nor troubles the mind. (My translation)

But...What's the Latin and Greek word used for *profligate*?

The Greek in the letter to and [PD10](#) is ἄσωτος (asotos) and Cicero's Latin uses asotus (basically just the Latin spelling for the Greek ἄσωτος). Interestingly, this is the same word (used as an adverb) used to describe the "prodigal son" in the New Testament:

Luke 15:13: "And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. (ζῶν ἄσώτως = living prodigally, living riotously)"

It's the same sort of mode of living that Cicero rails against, over and over and over, ad nauseum, to use a Latin phrase.

However, I find the meaning of ἄσωτος interesting.

ἄσωτος = "having no hope of safety, in desperate case; in moral sense, abandoned; and so spendthrift, profligate"

It's literally ἄ + σωτος = ἄ "no, not, un-" + σωτος "save, rescue, keep safe, heal"

So, ἄσωτος literally means "un-saved, un-healed, un-rescued"

Being that it's the same word that's used in Luke 15:13, it seems to carry the potential of redemption or the ability to be saved from yourself so to speak. Someone un-healed can be healed, someone un-saved can be saved. So, they may be unwisely following pleasures that

lead to more pain, but they can be saved from their "profligate" ways and shown a wiser path.

[Cassius](#) also mentioned in passing whether it was the drinking parties that were strung together or all the list of activities listed in the letter to Menoikeus. It appears that it's specifically the drinking bouts and festivals. Here's an excerpt from my translation:

Pertinent line: 132 - οὐ [γὰρ] πότοι καὶ κῶμοι συνέροντες

- πότοι is plural of πότος "drinking-bout, carousal" (from πίνω "I drink")
- I find it interesting that Epicurus uses the word πότος (potos) and not συμπόσιον (symposium) "symposium, drinking-party." He wrote a book or dialogue entitled *Symposium* in which he wrote "Even when drunk, the wise one will not talk nonsense or act silly." So, Epicurus didn't seem to oppose drinking wine or attending drinking-parties. There seems to be a distinction between πότος and συμπόσιον, possibly with the difference being one of emphasis on drinking versus conviviality.
- κῶμοι (kōmoi) plural of κῶμος "a village festival: a revel, carousal, merry-making, Latin: comissatio." They seem to have involved crowned revelers parading the streets, bearing torches, singing, dancing, and "playing frolics."
- οὐ συνέροντες (ou syneirontes) literally "not stringing together" (as beads on a string)
- "not an endless string of drinking parties and festivals..."
- Note that he doesn't say you can't attend drinking parties or take part in village festivals! He's saying life shouldn't be an "endless string" of them. That's going to lead to more pain than pleasure in the end.

This episode is another good place to advocate for Dr. Pamela Gordon's *The Invention and Gendering of Epicurus*! She does an exquisite job showing how Epicureans came to be associated with gluttony and food and such. Well worth reading!!

I also enjoyed hearing [Kalosyni](#) say, "I'm beginning to dislike Cicero more and more." 😊 I couldn't agree more!