

Choice & Avoidance: towards a better translation for avoidance

Post by “Julia” of August 18, 2024 at 10:12 AM

Background: [Young Avestan](#) was originally believed to have been around simultaneously with the Hellenistic period; it is now believed to have been around 1000-500 BCE. (Old Avestan belongs to 500 year period prior to Young Avestan; they're dated as a pair.)

To quote Beekes' Etymological Dictionary Of Greek (published 2009, page 1565) regarding φεύγω (pheugo):

Quote

Less certain (because alternatively derived to *bheug- 'to be useful') is the appurtenance of Young Avestan būjaiamna- '**setting himself free**', Young Avestan būjaṭ '**sets free**'.

Related words in Latin: fuga, fugiō, fūgī (→ to flee)

Related words in [Lithuanian](#): būgstu, būgti, baugùs (→to be frightened)

My commentary:

The connotation of "setting oneself free" is exactly what I miss in words like "to reject / rejection" and also "to avoid / avoidance" (which I had initially chosen myself). It is, in my mind, somewhat present in "evade" (which I chose after). It is strongly present, but also strongly obscured in the modern English "to flee / flight". To translate *the Epicurean sense* of φεύγω (pheugo), "setting oneself free" might actually be the best I've seen so far. It goes along well with the associations of fears and addictions, it has commitment, agency, and a certain urgency without the necessary connotation of immediate danger to life and limb. If I set myself free of something, I also reject it, and If I set myself free of what haunts me, I evade it - but I also do more than that: being free is more than being out of harms way.

This translation seems to have it all! 😊