

Episode 290 - TD20 - TipToeing Around All Disturbance Is Not Living

Post by "Don" of July 13, 2025 at 12:15 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

why a basic formulation such as "...we call pleasure the beginning and end of the happy life) might occur in the letter to Menoeceus

From my Menoikeus paper:

A short digression is now in order to examine that phrase ἀρχὴν καὶ τέλος "the foundation and fulfillment, the beginning and end." Often, this is simply translated as "the beginning and the end" as if there's a starting line and a finish line. This is much deeper than that, although the running of a race could be one metaphor that could be used. Let's first look at the word ἀρχὴν (accusative of ἀρχή).

ἀρχή (arkhē)

English archeology "study of beginnings/origins" but also the -archy in monarchy, patriarchy, etc.

ἀρχή carries the meaning of beginning, origin, foundation, the farthest point. It even took on the meaning of "the corners of a sheet" by the time the New Testament was being written (Acts 10:11). It also had the connotation of the "beginning of power" residing in a ruler, the "most important person" in a kingdom. It carries the idea of a foundational element or first principle. The alpha (first letter of the Greek alphabet) to τέλος's omega (the last letter of the Greek alphabet) which is how Hicks translated them.

τέλος (telos) carries the meaning of endings, the goal, completion, maturity, result, fulfillment, consummation. Where ἀρχή is the foundation, τέλος is the highest point. The definition of τέλος in LSJ is extensive!

Ἀρχή is not quite as long but gives the nuance we're working with.

Therefore, to translate ἀρχὴν καὶ τέλος as "beginning and end" (every other translation I've seen except Hicks) misses a lot of deeper meaning. This phrase is one that I highly recommend giving more attention to in one's personal translation or at least being aware of when reading. We miss so much by not examining Epicurus's words. Always go back to the texts!