

The Closing Paragraph of the Letter to Menoecus

Post by "Kalosyni" of August 5, 2025 at 4:07 PM

Adding a deeper understanding to the closing paragraph: it is more than just poetic words to say "you shall live like a god among men" - philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle also presented their own ideas about "living like the gods" and so Epicurus was using that as a kind of framing to present his system.

Here are some of my notes from last night's Zoom:

The paragraph:

"Meditate therefore on these things and things akin to them night and day by yourself; and with a companion like to yourself, and never shall you be disturbed waking or asleep, but you shall live like a god among men. For a man who lives among immortal blessings is not like unto a mortal being." - Bailey translation

Breaking down the paragraph by some key phrases:

1. "meditate" - contemplate; study and practice
2. "on these things and things akin to them" -- everything in this letter should be contemplated:
 - 1) the importance of loving and practicing wisdom, and knowing what actually brings happiness.
 - 2) the correct understanding of the nature of the gods.
 - 3) the correct understanding of the nature of death.
 - 4) the three kinds of desires.
 - 5) understanding everything that you accept or reject is in terms of health of the body and serenity of the soul. Judge every good thing by the standard of how that thing affects you.
 - 6) not every pleasure is to be chosen and not every pain is always to be shunned. Make your decisions by measuring things side by side and looking at both the advantages and disadvantages.
 - 7) self-reliance is a great good. Those who need luxury the least enjoy it the most, and everything natural is easily obtained whereas everything groundless is hard to get. Training yourself to live without luxury prepares you to more thoroughly enjoy luxury when it does come.
 - 8) not the kind of pleasure of decadent people, but sober reasoning, searching out the cause of everything we accept or reject, and driving out opinions that cause the greatest trouble in the soul.

- 9) thus practical wisdom is more valuable than philosophy and is the source of every other excellence. Prudence is what develops the virtues. And the excellences grow up together with the pleasant life, and the pleasant life is inseparable from them.
- 10) for he holds that we are responsible for what we achieve, even though some things happen by necessity, some by chance, and some by our own power, because although necessity is not accountable he sees that chance is unstable whereas the things that are within our power have no other master.

3. "with a companion like to yourself" - this phrase more than hints at the highest form of friendship as described by Aristotle, which rather than utility or pleasure, is the kind of friendship based on a mutual appreciation of the virtues that the other party holds dear. It's the people themselves and the qualities that they represent that provides the incentive for the two parties to be in each other's lives. For Epicureans, wisdom and prudence are core values, as well as the ability to see and understand that there are natural causes at work in the world, rather than supernatural acts caused by gods. Contemplation, study, and practice must be done together with another person who is earnestly seeking to develop the virtues of wisdom and prudence that Epicurus taught.

4. "never shall you be disturbed waking or asleep" - you will be free from disturbance and confusion and which also is the nature of the gods.

5. "you shall live like a god among men" - for Epicurus this comes about by applying yourself to the contemplation, study, and practice of "these things and things akin to them" (everything in the Letter to Menoeceus) as well as experiencing a complete life which has more pleasures than pains.

6. "immortal blessings" - unending "goods" such as friendship - Vatican Saying 78: "The noble soul is devoted most of all to wisdom and to friendship — one a mortal good, the other immortal."

I will soon add to this thread some clear references to Plato and Aristotle's ideas on the role of contemplation in philosophy as well as "living like the gods".

([Patrikios](#) asked for a chart comparing Plato, Aristotle, and Epicurus and I will also work on that too).