

What "Live Unknown" means to me (Lathe Biosas)

Post by "Don" of March 8, 2020 at 8:55 AM

EXCELLENT points, [Cassius](#) ! Fragments are just that: fragments devoid of context, tantalizing though they may be. And I firmly agree we shouldn't get too hung up on them. They're so tempting, though, since we have so little of Epicurus' texts to dig into. Alas!

I had also forgotten before writing this that the source for this fragment is [Plutarch's diatribe against this very Fragment itself](#). So, already in that respect, we're at a disadvantage! The very source of the (let's say) "infamous" saying of Epicurus is a polemic against that very "infamous" saying of Epicurus taken out of context to attack him! That's a vicious circle if I ever saw one.



And these lines from Plutarch lead me to believe I *may* be on the right track (or I have enough to cover myself), emphasis added:

*And in fine, to what purpose, Epicurus, did you **keep a public table**? Why that **concourse of friends**, that resort of fair young men, **at your doors**? Why so many thousand lines so elaborately **composed and writ** upon Metrodorus, Aristobulus, and Chaeredemus, that death itself might not rob us of them; if virtue must be doomed to oblivion, art to idleness and inactivity, philosophy to silence, and all a man's happiness must be forgotten?*

Again, I freely admit we do not have Epicurus' context, merely the disgruntled ramblings of a fierce critic. But from my perspective as an aspiring Epicurean, I see that Epicurus invited people in to his public table. He greeted people at his door. He wrote but didn't see the need to pontificate in the agora. One may say he lived, let's say at most, unobtrusively but was NOT disengaged from society, his friends, and those that sought him out. He most likely said/wrote the words *látē biōsas* since Plutarch is so worked up about it in ancient times, but we have no surviving text of his. Plutarch simply takes *látē biōsas* out of context and runs with it... And HE gets to be the last word on it for posterity! That's aggravating.

[Note: I've also found [Attalus' website helpful for the sources](#), U551 in our current case here.]