

Tetrapharmakos in Philodemus's On Choices and Rejections

Post by “Don” of February 19, 2022 at 8:33 PM

I'm in the process of "Google translating" Philodemus's [On Choices and Rejections] in Les Epicuriens and was excited to find an explanation and endorsement of the Tetrapharmakos! It was unexpected. And, to note, this is not the papyrus from which the 4-fold formula is usually cited. That is PHerc 1005. This is PHerc 1251. I'm working on making the translation more flowing and will share as I'm able. Since this has the Tetrapharmakos, it too has the word ταγαθον.

Post by “Don” of February 22, 2022 at 3:16 PM

I'm still working on the translation from the French but felt I could give an update and some additional resources:

First, here is the link to the actual papyrus of [On Choices and Avoidances]:

[DCLP/Trismegistos 62463 = LDAB 3639](#)

I've been able to use this because the French translation in Les Epicuriens gives the column numbers, and they line up perfectly.

All that being said, there is a translation of this work which appears to be in English:

[Philodemus]: [On Choices and Avoidances]. Giovanni Indelli, Voula Tsouna-McKirahan. (Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici, La Scuola di Epicuro, Collezione di testi ercolanesi diretta da Marcello Gigante, 15.) Pp. 248. Naples: Bibliopolis, 1995. ISBN: 88-7088-343-4.

There is a limited search available at Google books: <https://books.google.com/books?id=Go1fAAAAMAAJ>

Tsouna also cites [On Choices and Avoidances] extensively in her The Ethics of Philodemus.

Hiram Crespo does appear to have access to the Indelli/Tsouna translation or Les Epicuriens or both and has much for facility with French and/or Italian than I do. He wrote several commentaries/reviews of the work at his website. I haven't had a chance to read all of his

commentary yet but here are the links:

[Reasonings About Philodemus' On Choices and Avoidances \(Part I\) | Society of Friends of Epicurus](#)

[Reasonings About Philodemus' On Choices and Avoidances \(Part II\) | Society of Friends of Epicurus](#)

[Reasonings About Philodemus' On Choices and Avoidances \(Part III\) | Society of Friends of Epicurus](#)

Even so, I'm going to continue my translation exercise, especially since I'm getting to compare the papyrus with the French with the snippets online and in Hiram's commentary even though I realize this is a roundabout way of getting at the text! "Why don't you just get a copy of the Indelli/Tsouana book, duh?" I'll probably do that at some point [through interlibrary loan, but there are not a lot of libraries](#) that have it even. Part of my motivation is for the same reason I did [my translation and commentary of the Letter to Menoikeus](#), to make the project more personal and to stretch my linguistic legs. But this is definitely a roundabout way of getting at the text - no question!

Greek papyrus > intermediate translations and copying > French > Google Translate > refining translation into English > compare to Greek papyrus > refine again...repeat.

So, don't expect anything soon... let's say soon-ish.

Post by "Cassius" of February 22, 2022 at 3:47 PM

FWIW I do know Hiram has a copy of Les Epicureans.

When he wrote about them in the past it seemed to me that it wasn't easy to assess the reliability of the fragments (maybe snippets is a good word) so I will be pleased to hear your assessment of how much we can glean from them.

Post by "Don" of February 22, 2022 at 4:45 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

it wasn't easy to assess the reliability of the fragments

That's one of the nice things Les Epicuriens. They do give (lacuna of 10 lines) and (1 word missing) and such. Then you can compare the papyrus transcription and the drawings of the leaves. The papyrus is surprisingly intact over wide sections.

Post by “Don” of February 25, 2022 at 5:13 PM

Okay, so here's my first draft of the translation from the French. I ended up typing large swaths into Google Translate after trying to take a photo and do it "automatically." That worked for part but needed, let's say, tweaking. I'm including the link to the papyrus again as well.

Note! It's not easy to read and there are a lot of "missing" words and lines. But there's enough there to get some inspiration. I especially liked the haven of philosophy and the ending bit as well.

Enjoy!

Philodemus

[DCLP/Trismegistos 62463 = LDAB 3639 \(papyri.info\)](#)

[ON CHOICES AND REJECTIONS]

1. [1] [missing 6 lines] pleasure, [it is right to] reply to those who, among the supporters of contrary doctrines on the questions just mentioned, claim that [even] without philosophy [it is possible] to carry out actions correctly. In fact, as we know, access is easy precisely to the polemical writings in which we see them speaking ill of us. And, if we quote some of them [missing 1 line] briefly [missing about 20 lines].

[2] [missing 3 lines] and in proportion [missing 2 words]. And they postulate that in reality nothing is first, because they are convinced that the [missing 1 word] of the soul relates to the [missing 1 word] and that we [proceed] to our choices and our rejections by such [comparative estimation], considering both at the same time. In fact, we cannot even have good hope that the joys [are born in us] in a similar way (all at once, lest] they engender for themselves disagreeable embarrassments [caused by certain] very great [affections] [missing 2 words] of what has been prepared by nature] with a view to reasoning [missing 2 words] without trouble [missing 20 lines approximately].

[3] [missing 1 line] and some even [claimed] that it is impossible for us to know anything, adding that we should not do everything from [choices] immediately, in the absence of a necessary point of support [for this]. Others, by explaining that the affections of the soul are ends (τέ[λ]η τὰ πάθη τῆς ψυχῆς), precisely without their further need for judgment, which is based on other [criteria], have given everyone full license to say that they derive joy from whatever they want, and from doing what tends towards that goal. Finally, the others have maintained the thesis that the words sorrow and joy -- which we certainly use, for our part -- are totally empty, given the indeterminacy that manifests itself [missing 20 lines]

2. [4] [Epicurus teaches us that good is easy for us to procure] and that evil is [not] only limited by precisely because it is useless to have defined the good (τάγαθόν), if it is difficult, if not impossible, for us to attain, nor to have fixed limits to evil, if it is difficult to bear because of its long duration. This knowledge has the effect of prohibiting both the pursuit of any [good] which is not by nature capable of eliminating pain - such are, most of the time, the [goods] which have motivated a search eager in humans -, and let none be discarded which does not prevent having pleasure -- that is how one must [conceive] most of [those which are acquired] gradually. And, in reverse, for [missing approximately 20 lines]

[5] [missing 3 lines] After that, it is also necessary to take into account the differences that present the desires (ἐπιθυμ[ι]ῶν) relating to the pleasures and to what produces them, since precisely the lack of discernment on this subject gives rise to serious errors concerning the choices and the rejections. It is indeed because they regard as what is most necessary the goods which are most external to them, I mean a sovereign power, a dazzling fame, an exceptional wealth and sources of pleasure of this sort and other similar ones that they are in charge of the most painful evils; and that, conversely, [they remain deaf to their most necessary appetites] (ἀναγκαιοτάτων), because they take them for what is most exterior to them [missing about 20 lines].

[6] [Indeed, for Epicurus], [desires are partly necessary, [and partly unnecessary]]. Among the first, [those which are] necessary, [there are those which are necessary for] life, those which are necessary for the maintenance of the body in good health and those which are necessary for a happy life (τὸ μ[α]καρίως [ζῆ]ν), to take [at least] the cases in their diversity, is not [all at once.]

[There are also] various [cravings]. Some, it seems, provoke in [the soul] terrible hurricanes, and others do not. Some remain unsatisfied because of certain lackings, others result from specific feelings for those who experience joy. There are also some which result from habits, and others which are precisely independent of them. If some find their starting point in us, others [appear] as a result of a kind of injury, inflicted by external objects or even by things that deprivation makes you want to possess, just to think about them. Still others [missing 20 lines approximately]

3. [7] [missing 2 lines] of the gods [missing 2 lines] not only [missing 1 word] fear and trouble [inspired by the gods themselves], but also [missing 1 word] of [appetites], even if they have that too. One must, moreover [to carry out righteous actions], follow good directions, because beings who know supreme bliss eternally are far from [the burden] of these matters.

However, in truth, that opinions of this kind are the causes of thousands of errors, it is easy to observe. And in fact, they indulge themselves to the point of taking advice from no one in the world, in their conviction that nothing depends on man, but that all things are arbitrated by divinity. Subsequently, they experience all of a sudden the misfortunes that a lack of prior advice quite naturally inflicts on them [missing 20 lines approximately] [8] [missing 2 lines] [For it is not] profitable to [missing 2 lines], while others use [missing 1 word]. It should also be emphasized that [not only] they head for irremediable misfortunes, but that sometimes they even precipitate their own city into evils. And even if, in truth, they [are [not] defeated by the logic of facts or even if chance makes the omens agree with what must happen, the idea that they risk committing an act going against the will of the gods leads them in the opposite direction: they procrastinate and postpone their actions until later. And their troubles, effectively insurmountable, make them [neglect] [missing approximately 20 lines] [9] [missing 2 lines] errors [missing 1 word]; in many people misfortunes [many] and sizeable, of course, occur when they follow the harmful assumptions of men [incapable of thoughts/reflection], and are avoided when they follow their [desires]. Besides, each one puts forward different considerations, holding them for what is most important: this is precisely what is sketched out in these discussions.

Moreover, they believe, men will owe what happens to them, through the agency of the gods and other powers, evils [unceasing] after their death, much greater than the goods which they will have had during the time of their life. And it is for this reason that [missing 20 lines approximately] [10] [missing 6 lines] [by] them to the gods. This is why, [in truth], the wretched lament [precisely when they are victims] of evils very similar to those caused by ingratitude towards both individuals and country, and also, for that matter, towards the evils caused by the superstition of the fact that god is supposed to be responsible for both death and life -- even if the other evils, of course, are very great indeed. And the pain that grips them at the idea of dying makes them irascible, never happy or in a good mood [missing 20 ca] 4. [11] [missing 2 lines] and for this reason, it is clear, apart from these misfortunes, they are very [miserable].

[And] we say what we have just said about the four maxims (τῶ[ν] τεττάρω[ν]), because the important contribution made to effective choices and rejections by understanding and remembering the most important points of doctrine, it is considered that it amounts not as some have wanted to understand in their rusticity - to relate some of the choices and rejections to the absence of trouble on these questions, but to operate these latter in a correct way, on the condition of measuring them by nature's ends, and number of [missing about 20 lines].

[12] [missing 1 line] [the multitude] [knows] clearly ..., although they do not have the [fundamental ideas (ἀξιοῦμεν ὑπο[λή][ψ]εις)] that we are talking about. And what leads him

instead to upright behavior are the laws, which brandish threats over his head: death, punishments of divine origin, as well as punishments considered very difficult to endure and deprivation of certain things which are said to be difficult to obtain. This is partly explained by what was discussed at the beginning and, partly, because it is against fools, people whom truthful precepts cannot persuade, that these threats are brandished; because these only have the effect of holding them back for a short time; and because obviously the suppositions [missing about 20 lines].

[13] [missing 1 line] they [remain in mind] the means of getting out of it, [because they have welcomed these [four maxims] as contributing by themselves to the practice. Moreover, these also establish the principles of philosophy - which alone allows for righteous actions - and also, it is clear, the ends attached to our nature, which are of course carriers of the clearest evidence and by the yardstick of which we measure what is to be chosen and rejected. As for ethical reasoning on the choices and rejections, they too must in any case be drawn from the study of nature so that they are complete: if to say that "nothing is accomplished independently of a cause" is nothing (that) "there is no change" [missing about 20 lines] [14] [It is not possible to lead a pleasant life] that is not prudent, beautiful, and just, and still courageous, self-disciplined (French: maitresse de soi - Original papyrus: ἐγκρατῶς > LSJ: master of oneself, self-controlled; self-disciplined), magnanimous, open to friendship, full of humanity and generally [accompanying] others more consequential in terms of choices and rejections when certain people, believing the opposite, are for this reason overwhelmed by their vices in each of their acts.

However, in truth, one must not denounce as a sycophant (συκοφαντητέον; LSJ: common informer, voluntary denouncer (there being no Public Prosecutor)) the transmission of the elements [of the doctrine], saying that it is only a question of the intertwining of some of them with others and of all the ways they have of linking themselves together. In fact, desires sometimes [missing 20 lines approximately] [15] [missing 3 lines] and it is in view of [missing 2 words] that we encourage [missing 2 words], and then in the actions [missing 1 line]. It should [surely] be kept in mind also that if careful study beforehand -- about the things which, in detail, are able to produce the goods which are external to us, such as a luxurious lifestyle, beauty, wealth generally speaking, [marriage] and the like -- of the relationships they have with us no doubt also contributes to aiming straight ("a viser juste"), their contribution is weak, compared to that of the most important [maxims] that we have recalled (οἷον πολυτελείας καὶ μο[ρ]φ[ῆς] καὶ πλούτου κοινῶς καὶ [γά]μου καὶ τῶν ὁμοίων - Note that "marriage" [γά]μου is reconstructed). It is moreover for this reason that in the [Principal Doctrines](#) (Κυρίαις Δόξαις) precisely these have been placed in this order, and at the beginning, even if one can say that [missing approximately 20 lines].

[16] [Lac 1 line] [The unwise assert] rashly: "It is not possible for anyone to know in advance -- the precise moment, at least, no one knows -- what day [death] will come, any more when one is old than in the case of a premature disappearance. Also, instead of it being like when

someone clearly recognizes the imminence of his death, we don't constantly think that we will die (we have time to spare!); and, because it is difficult to set an end to life, we incline sometimes to quickly stretch it out so that it is as long as possible, sometimes not to be unable to leave it, precisely out of reverence towards the gods.

Under these conditions, it is against what is suitable that some [missing 20 lines approximately] 5. [17] [missing 1 line] They are not ready, for insignificant gain, [both] to say goodbye to the only things that can give pleasures, and to bear sorrows in vain -- indeed, they also turn away entirely from philosophy, each saying: "Am I now going to start giving myself endless pain only to then get thrown like a disc halfway through?" -- even to share anything because, they believe, it is up to the immortals to do so, or to those who wait to be thanked. And they show themselves ungrateful in their turn towards everyone, each time exclaiming with a sneer: "Not the slightest gift for those who died!" And indifferent to all [missing approximately 20 lines] [18] [missing 3 lines] they exclaim: "Isn't it true that in life I behave well and [act godly], and respect the laws of men? When I reach the end, I will be immortal." And what concerns everything that would improve their existence they disregard, like those condemned to death. And naturally they also disregard anything related to their health, adding: "Yes, whatever torments I have to endure, I will give myself three hours of good time! ('ἐγὼ πόσα δὲ ὑπομενῶ' προστιθέντες, 'εἰ τὶ ῥυφήσω τρεῖς ὥρας;')"; and here they are again fainting at the thought of illnesses! And as they imagine in advance eternal evils after death, they are prey to limitless troubles. Also, evil [deeds], for precisely these reasons, they [commit many] [missing approximately 20 lines] [19] [missing 4 lines] And as they imagine in advance eternal evils after death, they are prey to limitless troubles. Also, evil [deeds], for precisely these reasons, they [commit many] [missing approximately 20 lines] [19] [missing 4 lines] [some are struck by misfortune, whereas they believed?] to protect themselves from it thanks to their piety, as legends have passed down about a few.

But, as they have this way of seeing things and as, in its suddenness, this unexpected blow knocks them out [in truth], they change their language. They begin, moreover, by depriving themselves of all enjoyment in order, assuredly, to always have enough of what is necessary to subsist, and live in postponement, as if it were possible for them to have their share of goods later; and, thereafter, they pass their existence in total incoherence and impose [numerous] penalties on themselves [lac, 20 lines approximately] [20] [missing 1 line] they have made and will do new things in order to repel the terrible events more quickly which could always everywhere swoop down on them until they die.

And the fear of one day running out of necessities makes them very reluctant to share and they refuse to return benefits. Moreover, when they lose their fortune, they endure the tortures of Tartarus, and enter into angers and hatreds which have nothing human about them; and they become arrogant as much by summons as by orders and threats. Moreover, unable to come to terms with their relatives, and to feel sympathy for them, just as they cannot [missing about 20 lines].

6. [21] [missing 1 line] For his part, [the wise epicurean] does not [need to accumulate [a lot] of money, and “treats the present well”, seeing nothing incongruous in this.

Furthermore, while having come to know well among the [public activities] those which bear fruit, he cultivates them with relative carelessness (“une relative insouciance”), unless it is for friends; and, because he is -- more than anything -- spare his time, whenever necessary, he counts only on himself; and, since his tender childhood, he never neglects the havens of philosophy (φιλοσ[ο]φία[ς] [ὄ]ρμους). moreover, fully reassured by the idea that everything [will be sufficient] for the duration of his life, however long it may be, he goes so far as to share, after having reserved just enough to live on, everything that he has left. [And] [lake. about 20 lines] [22] [missing 2 lines] of men, when he was in charge.

Moreover, as it is without paying attention to it that he [sees his end coming], he is active because of the [doctrine] which goes hand in hand with the notion he has of the preservation of goods (i.e., property, “des biens”). And, Because he does not seek to put an end to his existence when it lasts a long time, he always throws himself into new activities, which attract friends to him, and he is interested in the way in which it will be possible to manage his personal affairs.

Moreover, he cares about what he has known before, because he tells himself that it may concern him in the future; and he is full of attentions for the greatest possible number of human beings, at the same time he is grateful for those who have shown him friendship, precisely because he hopes that he will be able to share certain things with them, and also to receive from them some good treatment in return, although [missing about 20 lines] [23] [missing 1 line] [because of] the long [duration] of its [existence]. And, in seeking out anything that offers some improvement in his health, he spares no effort to restore it because he expects to live again. He provides especially, yes, for his health; and, fully reassured on the subject of problems of health and death, he energetically takes the measures which can keep them at bay.

Post by “Cassius” of February 25, 2022 at 7:26 PM

Don't thank you for all that work!

I have read through it once without finding much that would seem to be controversial from the point of view that we generally discuss here at the forum.

Do you see anything in it that stands out as remarkable and that needs more scrutiny?

Post by “Don” of February 25, 2022 at 7:49 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Do you see anything in it that stands out as remarkable and that needs more scrutiny?

I was pleased, as I said, to see the advocacy of the Tetrpharmakos primarily.

Post by “Don” of February 25, 2022 at 7:53 PM

Oh, plus it strengthens, from my perspective, the importance of Philodemus's works.

Post by “Cassius” of February 25, 2022 at 7:57 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

[And] we say what we have just said about the four maxims (τῶ[ν] τετάρω[ν]), because the important contribution made to effective choices and rejections by understanding and remembering the most important points of doctrine, it is considered that it amounts not as some have wanted to understand in their rusticity - to relate some of the choices and rejections to the absence of trouble on these questions, but to operate these latter in a correct way, on the condition of measuring them by nature's ends, and number of [missing about 20 lines].

Are you talking about this section? Are we clear that the "four maxims" referenced are the tetrapharmakon? Are they quoted nearby in that text?

Post by “Don” of February 25, 2022 at 8:43 PM

Yes, we're definitely clear that's what he's referring to. Go further along, too. He mentions the first four of the [Principal Doctrines](#) at the beginning in that order. That's the Tetracharmakos. As I understand, he mentions it/them in other works. Which means I have to keep working on the other ones of his works in Les Epicuriens.

PS: I'm also going through Tsouna's The Ethics of Philodemus and checking her translations of excerpts from [On Choices and Avoidances], comparing against PHerc.1251, and sizing up my translations from French to English, and I'm finding the French (if my English ones are right) seems to be more literal in matching up to the papyrus while Tsouna's is more paraphrased or colloquial English. This is turning into a fascinating exercise, *and* shedding light on authentic, ancient Epicurean texts not generally available to us... at least not to me 😊

Post by “Cassius” of February 26, 2022 at 4:44 AM

Thanks Don!

The way you say that makes me want to be clear that I have never had any issue whatsoever with the first four Doctrines in full. My issue has always been that their "abbreviated" form is deceptively brief and ends up being misleading, and that it is generally better to refer to them in their full original form. The abbreviated form ends up to me suggesting compromises and ambiguities that I doubt Epicurus himself would have wanted to create.

So long as those ambiguities are cleared up quickly no harm is done, but I bet in the ancient world there were some Epicureans who viewed them with a similar negative light.

Don has seen this before, but for those who haven't read [the discussion in the past](#), it boils down to:

- 1 it's not OK to Don't fear the gods because you think they like you;
- 2 It's not OK to Don't fear death because you think you are going to heaven;
- 3 It's not OK to think the good is easy to get if you think the good is salvation:
- 4 It's not OK to think the bad is easy to endure if you think the way to do so is stoicism.

None of those errors are possible with the full form of Doctrines 1 through 4, but they are not ruled out by the abbreviated version.

In abbreviated form they aren't just generic forms of the original medicines, they are more like a placebo when what you need is the full original strength dose. The original versions contain

the observations that make them work; the abbreviated versions are simple assertions without any evidence or reasoning. Worse, their form ("Don't.....") implies that one should accept them "on authority," which is a terrible way to approach these issues. They sound more like something that has been influenced by the Abrahamic Ten Commandments than something Epicurus would say.

Or if i were being an alarmist, i might say that rather than being a full strength vaccine, they can tend to rewire ones thinking in a way (overbroad generalizing) that could actually produce more harm than good.

I don't think anyone here would have that problem, because we go to great lengths to avoid it. But I would wager a good number of casual readers who come across the abbreviated version on the internet think that it is sufficient for their understanding of Epicurean teachings, when that is far from the case. Even here, when people are new, I worry that they encourage stopping too early in deciding what is important in Epicurus and what is not. It would be a big mistake to think that all you need to accept is these four abbreviations and then you're a "full Epicurean."

So it is good to bring out all the discussion we can find on this in Philodemus and elsewhere. Even the quote above indicates that the abbreviation was controversial in the ancient world. Personally, I strongly doubt Epicurus himself would have used the abbreviation as a summary of his views, and I can easily imagine that if a word like "rustic" was in play then the criticism was that they amount to an unwarranted "dumbing down" of the original forms.

Sorry for the tangent; I look forward to reading more of what you get from the book!

Post by “Don” of February 26, 2022 at 7:37 AM

Ἄφοβον ὁ θεός,

ἀνύποπτον ὁ θάνατος

καὶ τάγαθὸν μὲν εὐκτῆτον,

τὸ δὲ δεινὸν εὐεκκαρτέρητον

The 4 lines of the Tetrpharmakos are statements of fact, not commands or commandments. I can't help that some translate them that way. Ἄφοβον is an accusative noun not an imperative verb. If the creator of the Tetrpharmakos epitome wanted to command people to "Don't fear the gods!" or say "I will not fear the gods", they could have used the imperative of φοβέομαι, δειδω, or ὀκνέω, but they didn't

Literally, the first line reads something more like:

The god causes no fear.

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, ἄφοβος](#)

Same for line 2:

Death is free from risk. (i.e., there is no afterlife)

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, Α α, , ἀνυπ-εξαίρέτως, ἀνύποπτος](#)

The Tetrpharmakos is nothing more than an epitome or summary of the first four [Principal Doctrines](#). They are no more a full presentation of the whole philosophy than are the Letters to Herodotus or Menoikeus or the [Principal Doctrines](#) themselves. Just as those summaries are meant to keep the key points of the philosophy ready in one's mind, so the Tetrpharmakos keeps the first four Doctrines ready for application in one's mind. There's a reason Epicurus placed those first four Doctrines first, and, as far as I know, we can't say definitively that Epicurus himself didn't write the Tetrpharmakos. We know it from the writings of Philodemus, but there's nothing stating who actually composed it as far as I know. People seem to have asked Epicurus on multiple occasions for summaries of his philosophy. I see no reason to think the Tetrpharmakos might not be another one.

Saying a reason to ignore or downplay or dismiss the Tetrpharmakos is that some may misconstrue or misinterpret it is the the wrong way to handle it. This is an epitome gleaned from an authentic ancient Epicurean text (multiple texts!) that exemplifies the kernels of the philosophy. Philodemus goes to great pains to expand those four maxims, using the first four Doctrines, and expanding beyond those summaries in [On Choices and Avoidances]. Philodemus himself urged people to return to the books and that the summaries weren't sufficient in themselves. They are reminders and outlines, and always point back to the texts.

An understanding that, to paraphrase...

The gods provide no reason to fear them... because they're not motivated by anger or gratitude.

Death is to be approached with no suspicion... because we don't exist after we die.

The Good is easily obtained... because of the reasons laid out in various texts.

The Terrible is easily endured... because ditto.

These are fundamental to the whole philosophy. It's not dumbed down. It's to make it crystal clear that the philosophy as a whole is eminently able to be grasped by everyone. It's not open to a select few but is appropriate to everyone. That's one reason Diogenes had his wall carved in Oenoanda. You get benefit in your life *starting* at the beginning with the summaries but

you can also go as deep as you want to or are able to with the volumes of texts. We are at a disadvantage because all we have had for a long time are summaries.

I will continue to defend the Tetrpharmakos, especially because I don't know who wrote it and I don't see any reason to think it may not have been Epicurus or one of the other early scholars of the Garden. Plus any kernel from authentically Epicurean sources not filtered through a Cicero or Plutarch is a precious gem.

Post by "Cassius" of February 26, 2022 at 8:08 AM

Debates like this are good because they bring out things to think about even when we can't reach final agreement.

Unfortunately the version I am citing is all over the Internet - it's the Epicurus reader version: <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tetrpharmakos>.

But when I want someone to defend it I know where to go! 😊 I hope one day Don's version will be the accepted one, but I like my summaries to be accurate, and I don't find these to be accurate enough to be relied on - so I stick to the full versions which stand alone.

But again - having added this as if a footnote - we can proceed having our positions more clear than before. No one who reads Don's interpretation is going to have any problem.

Post by "Cassius" of February 26, 2022 at 9:26 AM

Oh you know one more thing that I think points up the benefit of the forum method of study.

When we had the prior discussion of the Tetrpharmakon mentioned above, I don't remember being focused on the issue of how closely we should follow the "Greatest Good" formulation in Torquatus.

Now that we've been through that, and discussed issues like Scott raised in the last AFDIA book review, I think my issues with the Tetrpharmakon are very similar to those which I have with the "greatest good" formulation:

It's possible to summarize or to abstract too strongly to the point where essential details get left out, and that's what I think is defective in both of these two formulations.

I am a big fan of outlining and I love to do it, but part of the trick of doing it right is to distill the elements down to the essentials without cutting too much, or without cutting too little.

We've discussed my issues with the Tetrpharmakon above, but those are pretty exactly my issues with the "Greatest good" --- those two words themselves are full of ambiguities and questions, and the statement "the greatest good is pleasure" can be handy but is dangerously thin on specifics. Taken out of context of Epicurean philosophy as a whole the slogan "the greatest good is pleasure" is dangerously incomplete and would lead to a very incorrect interpretation of the philosophy.

While we have formulations that are somewhat similar from Epicurus and Lucretius, we don't have those exact formulations, and probably for good reason. Neither the Tetrpharmakon or the "greatest good is pleasure" seems to have been written directly by either one of them, and I think this current discussion points out reasons why that might be the case.

But at any rate, the point of this post is that it is an essential point in "summaries" to include all the important aspects.

Quote

But those also who have made considerable progress in the survey of the main principles ought to bear in mind the scheme of the whole system set forth in its essentials. For we have frequent need of the general view, but not so often of the detailed exposition. [36] Indeed it is necessary to go back on the main principles, and constantly to fix in one's memory enough to give one the most essential comprehension of the truth. And in fact the accurate knowledge of details will be fully discovered, if the general principles in the various departments are thoroughly grasped and borne in mind; for even in the case of one fully initiated the most essential feature in all accurate knowledge is the capacity to make a rapid use of observation and mental apprehension, and this can be done if everything is summed up in elementary principles and formulae. For it is not possible for anyone to abbreviate the complete course through the whole system, if he cannot embrace in his own mind by means of short formulae all that might be set out with accuracy in detail.

Post by "Kalosyni" of February 26, 2022 at 1:43 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

The gods provide no reason to fear them... because they're not motivated by anger or gratitude.

Death is to be approached with no suspicion... because we don't exist after we die.

The Good is easily obtained... because of the reasons laid out in various texts.

The Terrible is easily endured... because ditto.

The first two are easy (in my mind) but the last two are difficult.

Are there threads that we can cross reference to the "the good is easily obtained" and "the terrible is easily endured"? At times it seems that these last two depend on using stoic "mind over matter"?

Post by “Cassius” of February 26, 2022 at 2:03 PM

What you are asking for (in my view) is the complete version of [PD03](#) and [PD04](#), which are at the links. To me, it is much easier to see from the full original [PD03](#) and [PD04](#) that Stoicism is not at all called for and is the worst possible answer. And for a full discussion of how [PD03](#) and [PD04](#) work together, you will want to check Chapter 12 ("The New Hedonism") of DeWitt's Book.

Even then, there are layers and layers of issues to be unraveled in "the good is easily obtained" and "the terrible is easily endured," not only superficially with the words used, but again in responses to Platonic arguments against Pleasure as the "highest good."

That's why at best I see the Tetrpharmakon as a memory device for those who take the time to study the details. At worst (and I expect this happens far too often) the third and fourth make the eyes glaze over, or act as turnoffs for people who see them as hopelessly unrealistic.

So I would say that you provide a good test! The discussion of the Tetrpharmakon can either (1) serve what I would say is its only real usefulness, that of reminding of the topics and spurring the reader to seek out the details and work understand them, or (2) turn the reader off to the work involved in finding out what they really mean, and encourage him or her to move on to an easier-to-follow philosophy.

Let's be sure to (1) answer all your questions, but also (2) let's keep in mind (since you are thinking a lot about how to jump-start Epicurean communities) the hazards involved in teaching from the Tetrpharmakon. I would like to see as much discussion as possible of both.

Post by “Titus” of February 26, 2022 at 6:17 PM

It's amazing to read a first hand analysis of an Epicurean, actively propagating the philosophy. For myself it feels "in motion", like reading a living voice. Reminds me of the importance to keep the philosophy breathing. There's a lot of space for interpretation, but I'd only like to emphasize on the practical issues Philodemus is concerning. I can draw direct connections to my personal experiences from Philodemus' advices. He tells us to keep our health in a good condition, to stay connected with our friends etc. Personally, I too often forget to stay on the grounds of Epicurean philosophy, disturbed by the impressions of my surroundings and driven by unreflected emotions. That is why it is good to read this kind of devotional literature.

Philodemus is an example to others and it would be great just to become a fraction of his brilliance.

Post by “Cassius” of February 26, 2022 at 7:12 PM

Seems like it has been a while - good to hear from you Titus!

Post by “Kalosyni” of October 3, 2024 at 3:23 PM

[Don](#) I was just re-reading through post number 5 above, and pondering that there is a lot there - if only we had the full text - there are so many lines and words missing...(if we had it things would be so much clearer).

And wondering...for the 4th on the list, perhaps instead of "easy to endure" it should say "easy to avoid"?

And also recalling in what [Cassius](#) wrote above, about avoiding the over-simplified version of the Tetrpharmakos.

Perhaps needing to revisit the best way to state the four points to their fullest 🤔

Post by “Don” of October 4, 2024 at 12:21 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

And wondering...for the 4th on the list, perhaps instead of "easy to endure" it should say "easy to avoid"?

The word in the fourth line is εὐεκαρτέρητον.

[https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...57%3Aentry%3Deu\)ekkarte%2Frhtos](https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...57%3Aentry%3Deu)ekkarte%2Frhtos)

Based directly on [ἐγκαρτερέω](#) ,

A. *persevere or persist in a thing*, **2.** *c. acc., await steadfastly*, **3.** *abs., hold out, remain firm under*

The prefix ευ- (eu-) conveys the "easy to do ..."

I get the sense that "the terrible" is "easily endured" precisely in light of PD4: Pain does not last continuously in the flesh; instead, the sharpest pain lasts the shortest time, a pain that exceeds bodily pleasure lasts only a few days, and diseases that last a long time involve delights that exceed their pains.

PS. But I think I understand what you're saying; however, I would respond to that by saying pain isn't easy to avoid. We can avoid some pain by choosing certain paths. But there are some pains that happen by chance and some that just happen by virtue of our being mortal creatures. PD4 and the 4th line (τὸ δὲ δεινὸν εὐεκαρτέρητον) provide encouragement to see "the terrible" in context. And it's not just "pain" or ἄλγος in line 4. It's literally "the terrible" τὸ δεινὸν (to deionon) the same word used in our word "dino-saur" terrible lizard. PD4 does use ἄλγος "pain (of either mind or body), sorrow, trouble, grief, distress, woe" The tetrapharmakos ups the ante with "the terrible".

Post by “Kalosyni” of October 4, 2024 at 9:09 AM

Thank you! [Don](#) for explaining the ancient Greek words used, very helpful.

Reason I was asking was that I thought that perhaps "terrible" was referring to "unnatural and unnecessary" - and that came out of my idea that "the pains from the unnatural and unnecessary are easy to avoid" - but looks like I was way off on that.

And as you are saying, **the correct translation is: "the terrible is easily endured"**.

Post by “Eikadistes” of October 4, 2024 at 9:16 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Thank you! [Don](#) for explaining the ancient Greek words used, very helpful.

Reason I was asking was that I thought that perhaps "terrible" was referring to "unnatural and unnecessary" - and that came out of my idea that "the pains from the unnatural and unnecessary are easy to avoid" - but looks like I was way off on that.

And as you are saying, **the correct translation is: "the terrible is easily endured"**.

One thing I'll note is that EYEKKAPTEPHTON is used in opposition to TAGATHON (which, as [Don](#) has demonstrated in the past, can appropriately be expressed as "The Good", which is *Pleasure*), so in this case, "the terrible" or "bad", I think, is referring to the general feeling of *Pain*.

Post by “Don” of October 4, 2024 at 10:26 AM

[Quote from Eikadistes](#)

in this case, "the terrible" or "bad", I think, is referring to the general feeling of Pain.

Agreed. I've always found it interesting that "to deinon" is used. With tagathon literally being a contraction of the definite article (the) with agathon (good), to deinon simply can't be contracted since there *aren't* two vowels together: to deinon. And note what the usual algos refers to "pain (of either mind or body), sorrow, trouble, grief, distress, woe." That's a pretty wide net!

Post by “Cassius” of October 4, 2024 at 11:43 AM

[Quote from Eikadistes](#)

One thing I'll note is that ΕΥΕΚΚΑΡΤΕΡΗΤΟΝ is used in opposition to ΤΑΓΑΘΟΝ (which, as Don has demonstrated in the past, can appropriately be expressed as "The Good", which is Pleasure), so in this case, "the terrible" or "bad", I think, is referring to the general feeling of Pain.

Thanks to you guys for pointing this out. The common discussion across the internet as "the terrible is easy to endure" is probably in my view the most damaging aspect of talking loosely about it.

The point of PD3 and PD4 from which these are derivations seems to me to be almost certainly, as you are stating, to be directed at "the good" or "what is good in life" and "the bad" or "what is bad in life," in a generic and philosophical way. Give the wide net that is included with Epicurus' view of "pleasure" then there's a corresponding wide net regarding "pain." The thrust of Epicurus' views on pleasure and pain are completely defensible and persuasive when put placed in its full philosophic context. In the form it's trumpeted widely, as for example in today's [Wikipedia](#), I continue to see its use as an abomination.

No need to go through all this again, but we continuously have new people, so might as well link
As expressed by [Philodemus](#), and preserved in a [Herculaneum Papyrus](#) (1005, 5.9-14), the *tetrapharmakos* reads:^[7]

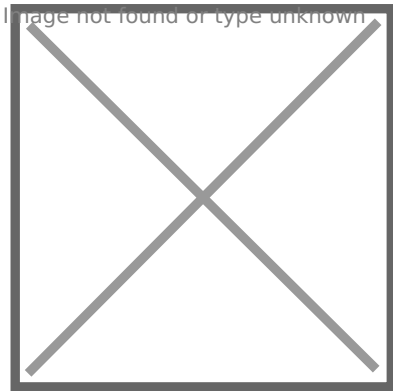
Don't fear god,	Ἄφοβον ὁ θεός,
Don't worry about death;	ἀνύποπτον ὁ θάνατος
What is good is easy to get,	καὶ τὰγαθὸν μὲν εὐκτητόν,
What is terrible is easy to endure	τὸ δὲ δεινὸν εὐεκκαρτέρητον

Post by “Don” of October 4, 2024 at 11:53 AM

I need to find a better translation and change that WP article.

Post by “Don” of October 4, 2024 at 12:11 PM

Have NOT read yet. Posting for reference:



[The Tetrpharmakos \(Fourfold Cure\) and the Sober Reasoning in Epicurus: A Critical Philosophical Paradigm against the Politicization of Medical Truth?](#)

The Tetrpharmakos (Fourfold Cure) and the Sober Reasoning in Epicurus: A Critical Philosophical Paradigm against the Politicization of Medical Truth?

www.academia.edu

Post by “Cassius” of October 4, 2024 at 12:16 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

I need to find a better translation and change that WP article

If you can that would be great!

Post by “Cassius” of October 4, 2024 at 1:14 PM

Don I noticed that in my prior thread [here \(from several years ago\)](#) I don't think you added any comment. I think several of my links came from or through you, but since you are one of the most-well-versed on the text issues, if you have anything new to add to bring that thread up to date, please do.

In addition to the translation issue I think it is almost or more an issue that we do not have the immediate before or after context of these lines. This lack of context accentuates what I

personally think is the ultimate issue, that the work in largest context appears to concern a dispute among Epicureans in which over-simplification and not paying sufficient attention to reading the original texts is a criticism being leveled by Philodemus against others.

Without the before or after context we have no way of knowing whether this formulation was being cited approvingly or disparagingly. It's for that reason that I don't "blame" Philodemus for the confusion that we now have to deal with. If more context is discovered at some point we may find out the truth someday, but in the meantime this excerpt is the **only** statement of this formulation in the ancient texts, and it is a shame that it is being presented to the world as being as worthy of respect as if it were a well-attested statement of Epicurus himself.

Not saying that you have any new input on these issues but for others reading along intermittently maybe at some point someone will make new connections that help us with it, once they are aware of the issues.

Post by “Bryan” of October 4, 2024 at 2:35 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I think it is almost or more an issue that we do not have the immediate before or after context of these lines.

The Tetrphármakos is in P.Herc. 1005 column five, and we do have most of columns 2 - 7, but the context is still difficult to work out.

Post by “Cassius” of October 4, 2024 at 2:57 PM

Bryan do you know if there is a translation of what exists most closely before and after this passage? I don't think I have been able to piece together anything coherent about that, much less any indication of how much is lost between anything that remains and this particular passage.

Post by “Joshua” of October 4, 2024 at 3:32 PM

Quote

With tagathon literally being a contraction of the definite article (the) with agathon (good), to deinon simply can't be contracted since there are two vowels together: to deinon.

Do you mean *aren't two vowels* here, [Don](#)? I don't know the rules in Greek. Latin often uses verbal elision when two vowels adjoin; *genus omne animantum* from Lucretius, for instance. Spoken as omnanimantum.

Post by “Bryan” of October 4, 2024 at 3:46 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

do you know if there is a translation of what exists most closely before and after this passage?

I have never seen it translated anywhere. I have the next column, number 6, in Epicurea -- it is where Philodemus mentions the rumors that "Leóntion and another <companion> are mentioned in the treatise - and that the lover of Idomeneús was Nikídion, and of Leonteús was Mammáron, and of Hérmarchos was Dēmétría - and such a kind also was Polýaenus, tutor of Pythoclês."

Post by “Cassius” of October 4, 2024 at 5:33 PM

You know Bryan (and Don et al), whether as part of the Epicurea or otherwise, I think it would be a major contribution if we could combine our efforts and come up with a complete version of whatever is left of the scroll on which the Tetrpharmakos is taken. We don't even seem to have an agreed upon title, and I gather all it is referred to is P. Herc. 1005

It would be a major contribution if we could put together a page on

"Translation Of The Surviving Text of P. Herc. 1005" and begin to put all that we know about this scroll in context.

Is any of it of substance translated in a Sedley or other text? Where would we begin?

Post by “Don” of October 4, 2024 at 5:56 PM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

Quote

With tagathon literally being a contraction of the definite article (the) with agathon (good), to deinon simply can't be contracted since there are two vowels together: to deinon.

Do you mean *aren't two vowels* here, [Don](#)? I don't know the rules in Greek. Latin often uses verbal elision when two vowels adjoin; *genus omne animantum* from Lucretius, for instance. Spoken as omnanimantum.

Thanks! Corrected!

Post by “Don” of October 4, 2024 at 6:01 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

We don't even seem to have an agreed upon title, and I gather all it is referred to is P. Herc. 1005

There isn't one. The title at the end of the scroll is just fragmented: ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ... which is open to interpretation. Is it Against the ... Or For the... or Concerning the... No way to know. P. Herc. 1005 is the safest designation.

Post by “TauPhi” of October 4, 2024 at 6:17 PM

Relevant to the above discussion (with translation of the tetrapharmakos I personally like much better than the common 'wikipedia' one).

[Laudator Temporis Acti: The Epicurean Tetrapharmakos](#)

Post by “Don” of October 4, 2024 at 6:20 PM

I have a VERY clunky translation I did of 1005 from French w help from Google translate. Here's the section sans any editing or attempt to clean up:

[5] ... remembering what [you have been taught] and the happiness (that you experienced), take this into account again: [have high hopes] concerning the future and [believe that] the fourfold remedy is powerful precisely in all circumstances: "Nothing to fear from the divinity, nothing to apprehend from death! And it is easy to procure what is good, easy to bear what is dreadful!" As for the reasonings by analogy that he draws, he says, from books, you will know that these formulas are correspondences of twelve or fifteen... [6] ... [on] the questions to be explored, he has provided the most luminous explanations possible, and thinks the same thing [in] all [cases; and] it is in this way, that we can draw [from books] a very great wisdom.

Post by “Pacatus” of October 4, 2024 at 6:36 PM

I have always had the most difficulty with that final line of the tetrapharmakos. Not *all* pain is “easy” to bear – not for me, or likely anyone. The comments about context are, I think, on the mark. And the context, for me, is Epicurean practices (therapies) to alleviate that pain as much as possible – to make it *bearable*. Epicurus on his death bed provides an example. And that, I think, is the superiority of Epicurean philosophy (therapy) over the Cyrenaics: recognition that mental pleasures (e.g., focus on memories) can be called upon to alleviate physical pain. And that is something that I have been able to do.

Post by “Eikadistes” of October 4, 2024 at 7:11 PM

I just wanted to throw in this rhyme for the sake of preference (its origin is unknown to me).

But, if we're gonna end with "*easily endured*" ...

... it's **begging** to be rhymed with "*easily procured*". 🤪

Post by “Don” of October 4, 2024 at 7:47 PM

Nothing to fear from gods.

Stories of hell are frauds.

Good feelings are easily procured.

Pains and woes are easily endured.

REALLY quick attempt.

Post by “Don” of October 4, 2024 at 9:59 PM

I thought I posted my translation of PHerc. 1005. [Cassius](#) , feel free to move this elsewhere. I have not read this through, so I am not vouching for the fluidity or readability of this. Consider this a rough draft for others to work on . Here you go...

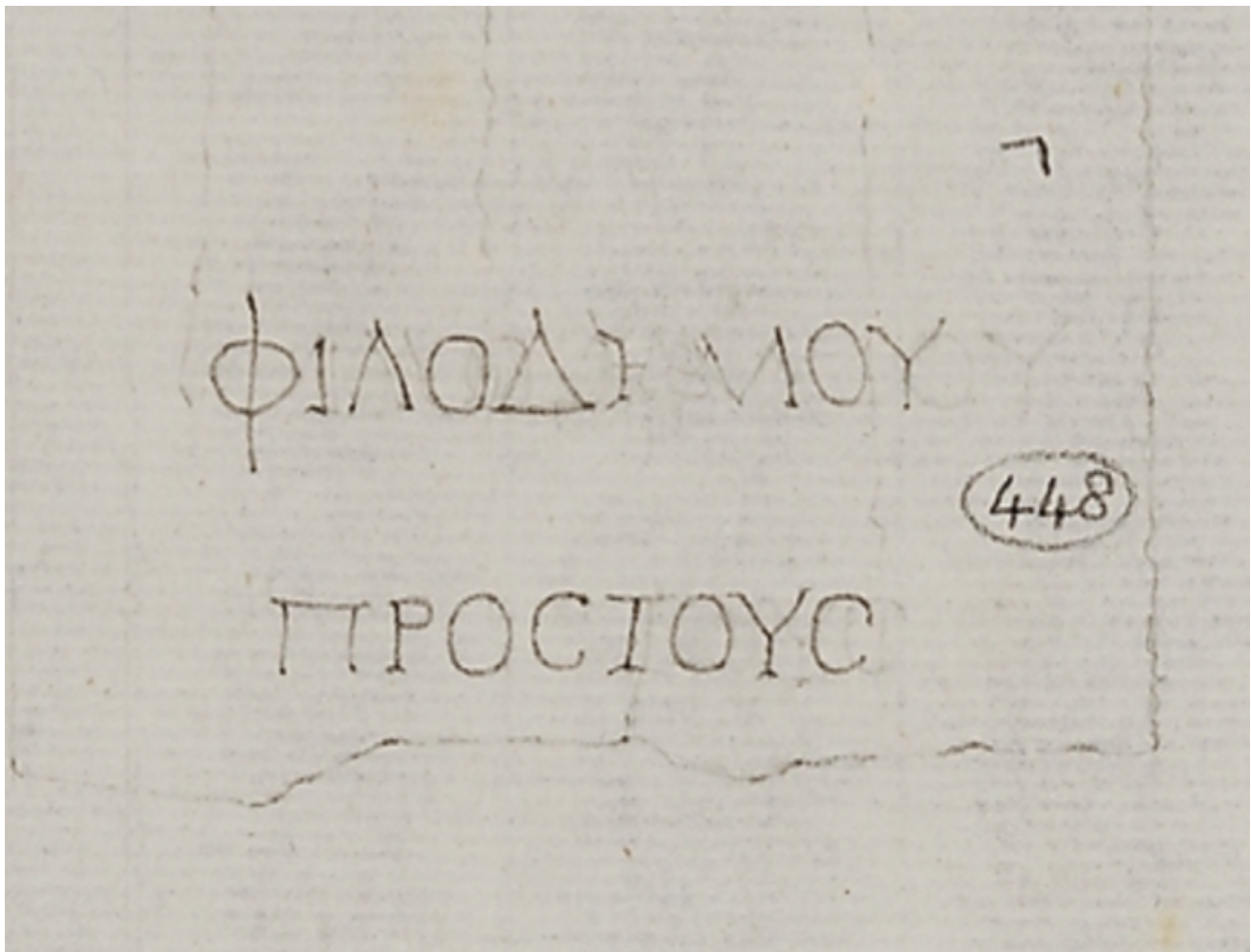
Philodemus: Against [?]; Addressed to [?]* ...

<https://papyri.info/dclp/62437> (P.Herc. 1005)

The title (see the end off the translation where titles were affixed on the papyri) is mostly missing. The only surviving text is:

Φιλοδήμου

Πρὸς τοὺς



Which is merely:

Philodemou (the author's name, Philodemus in the genitive case, so "(a work) Of Philodemus")

And ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ which is the preposition προς and the accusative definite article. The preposition followed by the accusative case article (which, in turn, would be followed by an accusative case noun) implies "Against" or "Towards"

See <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...057:entry=pro/s>

Various scholars have suggested reconstructions of what word comes after the article, but they are all just that: reconstructions and conjectures. There is NO way of knowing what word is missing. It is, at best, reasonable to argue that Philodemus is arguing against someone or some group, presumably those who are not attending to the study of the Epicurean texts.

In any case, the text is instructive, at the very least, for encouraging those who call themselves "Epicurean" to attend to the extant texts.

[Fragments 1 to 80 inconsistent]

[Frg. 81]... Under the archonship of A - - : “However, concerning [books], these books, it is for your health that I have sent them for you through their intermediary.” How can one [not] see precisely that it is necessary, when discussing, to express absolutely everything, [while in] books sometimes...?

[Frg. 82 to 85 inconsistent]

[Frg.86]...[standing] away from obscurity and counterfeiting, so as to expose all things with measure, without neglecting anything that rises to the level of the whole nor, despite everything, having [never] abandoned the detail [precisely]. On the other hand, with regard to utility, a very similar [reputation] also attaches, in a different way to wealth, to works which offer utility by the [pattern (French: schema)] of what is therein. [exposed]. [And] it is by this means indeed that ...

[Frg. 87 to 89 inconsistent]

[Frg. 90] ... Compare to this what [we learn from] Epicurus' listeners, and [which is characterized] by power and, if not at least, by will and ardor (French: une volonté et une ardeur; καὶ βουλήσει [will, volition] καὶ προθυμία [properly, "before-passion" referring to someone who is already being willing, i.e. an eager disposition which is pre-inclined (already "ready and willing").]) (these are one and the same thing for Epicurus) that manifest themselves both in word and in deed, and deploy your efforts in this direction. For besides, if you don't aim for that and don't harm it,...

[Frg. 91 to 106 inconsistent].

[Frg. 107] ... [if] we compare the styles of those who edited treatises after the death of Hermarchus and even, if you will, after the disappearance of all direct disciples of Epicurus, in order to ... [Frg. 108] ... from Pythocles [missing 3 lines] of Zeno...

[Frg, 109 inconsistent]

[Frg. 110] a copy of the Physicist of Antisthenes ...

[Frg. 111]... the Socrates of Aristippus, the Praise [Elegy] of Plato of Speusippus, the Analytics and the Nature of Aristotle, all works that we [missing 1 word] And again, under the archonship of Euboule: “The letter ...”

[Frg, 112 and 113 inconsistent]

[Fr. 114]. And again: “Don't worry, [missing 1 proper name?], neither surveys nor other sophisticated [treatises], but come right away [join me], from which you will have [collected] all these books.” Then, under the archonate of Isée (Ἰσαΐου; Don: possibly Isaeus, 285 BCE), [this is what he writes] to the sons of Menoikeus: “... “

[Frg. 115 inconsistent]

[Frg. 116] "overwhelmed by the [feasts] which at Teos last all day, before playing the sophist while the one who reads the books of Anaxagoras and Empedocles also indulges in endless subtleties on these texts." And again: "He who in Teos gathered the 'Hermocopids' (Ἑρμοκοπίδας) [to] study Democritus and Leucippus..." [Don note: Strabo said Epicurus grew up in Samos and then Teos <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...us-eng1:14.1.18> ; Hermocopids were those who vandalized the Herms around the Athens. Unsure if there was a similar incident in Teos.]

[Frg. 117]. If they [did not question] each of our institutions orally and in writing, would we address [strong] reprimands to those who do not [hold] [on the grounds that] familiars of our Guides saw fit at the time, to praise people devoid of knowledge? Moreover, this is rather today, certainly the fact of people who have benefited from a teaching... [1 column illegible] [2] ... without addressing, once again, reproaches to those who advance some good argument and know a very large number of things in a way convincingly, [then in truth] we will gently back off.

I therefore recognize, as I rightly said at the beginning, that among those who pride themselves on the title of Epicureans, there are those who produce, both orally and in writing, many compilations, of statements of their own which do not agree with the body of our doctrine, and certain assertions which they have extracted from it in a superficial and in a rushed manner/hastily (French: à la va-vite), regardless of ... [3] the exactness which characterizes us, us and the people who [missing 2 lines]. But the thing will be possible, [on the condition that this] and the activities exercised by [all those who], after Hermarchus, joined our school, it is shown that the latter wanted them and carried them out in the same way - - which I don't think will happen until all humans are black, short and deformed. (πάντας ἀνθρώπους μέλανα[ς] εἶναι καὶ μικροὺς καὶ δι[εσ]τραμμένους) [Book footnote suggests a reference to "Pygmies"]

Besides, if they had not named themselves by analogy with those who do not [reject] the books... [4] of those who call themselves [Epicureans]. In fact, one of his characters, whom we have known, on whom we have even made an in-depth investigation and who is precisely (this is what he affirms) "the authentic reader" because he [collects a multitude] of treatise titles, despite having [large] numbers of anthologies! He has not the slightest knowledge of the detailed contents of the thoughts, and, as for the prescriptions to follow, he [transforms] them into headings, like the one who is said to have learned to pilot a ship (κυβ[ερνήτ]η) from a book. And in all circumstances...

[5] ... remembering what [you have been taught] and the happiness (that you experienced), take this into account again: [have high hopes] concerning the future and [believe that] the fourfold remedy is powerful precisely in all circumstances: "Nothing to fear from the divinity, nothing to apprehend from death! And it is easy to procure what is good, easy to bear what is dreadful!" As for the reasonings by analogy that he draws, he says, from books, you will know that these formulas are correspondences of twelve or fifteen... [6] ... [on] the questions to be explored, he has provided the most luminous explanations possible, and thinks the same thing

[in] all [cases; and] it is in this way, that we can draw [from books] a very great wisdom.

He also shows the memory he retains [of the disturbing facts contained in] books, repeating over and over again that in our doctrine there is mention of Leontion and company, that Nicidion was the beloved of Idomeneus, Mammarrion that of Leonteus, Deme[tri]a that of Hermarchus, and that the pedagogue of Pythocles, Polyaeus, was such [that] ... [7] ... [If] we, who give [to our Guides the names [of] [missing 1 word] and, in a word, of [wise men], are not under the authority, assuredly, of men who have deserved to be remembered and to benefit from the recognition not of one person, but of everyone, and if we do not flatter ourselves with this authority with one of our friends, let us turn away, as they say, misfortune on the wild goats! And if we designate by these names, or very similar names, the one who has learned to understand in a methodical way the content of the books of our Guides so as to say out loud, precisely, that... [columns 8 and 9 illegible]

[10] ... [In his book] On The Dissemblance of Atoms, [Zeno treated] of their declension as well as of the primary origin of the aggregate, and of [supreme] fulfillment and happiness in his books On the Ends. ([Πε]ρ[ι] τῆς τῶν ἀ[τ]ό[μων] ἀ[γ]νομοι[ό]τητος καὶ περὶ παρεγκλίσεως καὶ τῆς τοῦ ἀθροῦ προκαταρχῆς, καὶ περὶ τελειώσεως [ἄκρας] καὶ τ[ῆ]ς [εὐδαιμ]ον[ί]ας ἐν τοῖς Περιτελῶν. Zeno's name doesn't appear in the manuscript, so I'd suggest looking at Epicurus's titles, too. Note that there are at least two titles mentioned here: the one on the atoms covered "their declension as well as of the primary origin of the aggregate" and On the Telos covered "supreme] fulfillment and happiness.")

And, in truth, to answer the accusations brought against the discourse and of Epicurus and his entourage, he made use of the very contents of their books, from which he quotes innumerable passages on each subject: such as On Grammar, On Systematic Inquiry (Περὶ ἱστορίας), On Proverbs and the like (Περὶ παροιμιῶν καὶ τῶν ὁμοίων), On Speaking Style/Diction (Περὶ λέξεως), On [Useful] Poems (Περὶ ποιημάτων χρήσεως), On Piety (Περὶ εὐσεβείας) [one line missing]...

[11] [However, Zeno had good reason to ?] consider, in connection with many [writings of our school], that a doubt hung over the opinions which were those of our great men at the origins [of the Garden]; thus [he designated for Epicurus] certain letters, the summary on celestial phenomena To Pythocles ([Πρὸς Πυ]θοκλέα περὶ μ[ε]τεώρων ἐπιτομῆς) and On The Virtues (Περὶ ἀρ[ε]τῶν) (Footnote in book: These are the works of Epicurus, although his name is not mentioned and the last title is not otherwise attested.), as well as those writings attributed to Metrodorus which are The Rules of Conduct, the Testimonies and, more certainly, the second book of Against Plato's "Gorgias"; the books Against the Rhetoricians and The Moon attributed to Polyaeus, and those attributed to Hermarchus. Moreover, he made a selection precisely [missing 1 word] [from the] writings ... [12] ... of his own expressions both elsewhere and in the [sixth book] of The Aristaia, the man who was very proud of having compared what we read in Epicurus and among these people, from the [strong] observation that, immediately after him, the expressions of the recent [Epicureans] are precisely quite different, even believed that it

was a very great injustice, or rather even a sacrilege, to report to him, to him, [such expressions], since, to put it in a nutshell, ... [13] ... Driven out of Athens at the time of the capture of the city [Book footnote: circa 87/86 BCE; Don: by Roman general Sulla], [Zéno] precisely addressed a letter in a copy to our sympathizers, in which he ordered them to save Demaratos [who had become] an Epicurean; and each of them did what necessity demanded.

He who, in truth, has presented these facts and many others as characteristic marks of a veneration close to that which fools devote to the gods, by posing as being the truth even something (je ne sais quoi) simplistic, ... [14] ... things deserving of recognition, but not ... Of this, indeed, other Epicureans [have been able to experience; it is besides it was in their company that I became one of the most faithful devotees of Apo[llodo]rus and Zeno, as long as the latter survived him, and, after the death of Zeno, a tireless laudator, so are all his virtues and, I will add, the divine delirium and transports inspired in him by Epicurus. [καύχαις τε καὶ θεοφ[ο]ρίαις, both boasts and inspirations]

Well, the most lamentable thing about the majority of Epicureans [and] their inexcusable refusal to work on the books is this: ... [15] ... [they listen to the calumnies peddled ?] commonly on the account of our great men too --- even to the point of making all kinds of remarks, and the worst, on their way of life as well as on the bonds of friendship, hugs/embraces, and conversations they had with each one — as if they had not read the body of the doctrine. Our great men must, at the same time, be taken for public enemies and see themselves reproached for their morals, since they had precisely all the vices! And since, among people who are absolutely not philosophers, there are hardly any who are conciliatory and good, although there are some among those who devote themselves to philosophy according to other schools, or else ...

[16] ... The people able to pay attention to books are those who, because they have been lucky enough to attend a school that befits Greeks, not [missing 1 word], and are trained in academic disciplines, precisely explain the words of men who have taken care to elucidate what is obscure. Having studied like philosophers - at least from childhood to old age - similar considerations at least, for lack of anything else, they composed very numerous writings which are very interesting for their precision. On the other hand, those who are slaves and do hard work, or who are deprived of education, and who have not learned to read and write, ... [17] ... [when] they invoke, as [applying to people from among us] (I do not speak of those who have withdrawn from the world, but of those who are immersed in it), a letter addressed by our Guides to unwary sympathizers. (Besides, if the accusations we make against them are false, who'll they deny us by doing even one of the things we just talked about! But [they will say:] "We can, but we don't want it," as someone said of me, perhaps in mockery.)

And, in a way, what Epicurus says is, from our point of view a reality, it is inconceivable that the goods according to nature are [difficult] to procure. [18] [5 lines illegible] ... And, indeed, in order to prevent our first writing from exceeding the right measure, it is in three main headings that we will conclude the first act of resistance to which you have led us.

In fact, since -- as you know -- they don't allow everything to be repelled altogether (they are indeed, for the most part, invulnerable to the arrows fired at them), but only those who have no little intelligence and reactivity... [19]

...; and if, of course, we defend ourselves by [applying ourselves to compose] writings addressed to them, in the case of [our] comments we [discover] that it is not [isolated individuals] who are the subject of the writings that we compose.

Because, surely, the first move of the first was not such and when they converse with people who are misleading themselves or who are misleading collectively, they do not pursue the discussion with that people, nor either, for sure, when it is with those people from outside who are incapable of [reaching an agreement]... [20] ... [when one has a solid formation?] precisely in reading and [writing, one] is able to take an interest in [a large number] of books about which, together, we [proceed has a] thorough review. Therefore, whoever oversteps the proper measure or falls short of it will, because he engages in inappropriate behavior, be cataloged (in accordance with the whole school) as not being [admitted], justly, among the competent interlocutors.

Those to whom, for my part, I address themselves, they are people like those whom I have caught red-handed and whom I am at the moment trying to unmask, because they are of this sort [missing some lines].

Φιλοδήμου [Of Philodemus]

Πρὸς τοὺς [Directed against ...?]

Post by “Cassius” of October 4, 2024 at 10:08 PM

Thank you Don! That is a great start toward what we ought to set up as a special page!

Considering it as you said a rough draft from which to work further, I hope we can combine our efforts and work on turning this into something that will be an important resource.

Is there any way beyond ellipsis that we can indicate how much of gap exists before and after the Tet?

Post by “Cassius” of October 4, 2024 at 10:13 PM

Also, on the "dreadful" -

That's a word that to me tends to emphasize the excruciatingly painful, which - going along with Nate's earlier comment - might not be so much the intimation as is "good" vs "bad" or even "evil".

"good" is a very generic word that both sounds philosophical and doesn't emphasize some kind of pointed state of ecstasy. Does the original greek bear a "bad" that corresponds to what is translated as "good" so that the entire passage sounds more philosophical than referring to "terrible" or "dreadful?"

Post by “Don” of October 4, 2024 at 10:41 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Is there any way beyond ellipsis that we can indicate how much of gap exists before and after the Text?

You could indicate how many Greek letters or lines are missing, but that would not indicate how much "English" is missing. That seems to be the most usual way to do it: 2 missing lines, brackets to indicate missing text. There's no optimal way in my mind to indicate exactly "how much" is missing.

Follow the link to papyri.info. That shows the transcription and links to the drawn images from the 1800s. For example, here's column 5:

ΜΝΗ
ΓΛΙΕΡΝΚΑΙΤΩΝ
ΠΝΟΩΝ ΤΟΔΕΓΑ
ΕΠΙΛΟΓΖΟΥΚΑΙΚ
ΠΕΡΙΤΟΥΜΕΛΛΟΝΤΟ
ΙΖΕΚΑΙ
ΚΑΙΠΝΤΑΧΗΠΑΡΕ
ΜΕΝΟΠΤΕΤΡΑΦΑΡ
ΚΟΣΑΦΟΒΟΝΟΘΕΟΣΑΝ
ΠΟΗΤΟΝΟΘΑΝΑΤΟΣΚΑ
ΤΑΓΑΘΟΝΜΕΝΕΥΚΤΗ
ΤΟΔΕΔΕΙΝΟΝΕΥΕΚΚ
ΤΕΡΗΤΟΝ ΟΥΣΔΕΚΤΩΝ
ΒΥΒΛΙΩΝ ΦΗΣΙΝΕΚΦΕ
ΙΝΑΙ ΛΟΓΙΣΜΟΥΣ
ΥΤΑΣΕΙΣΙΤΑΣΛΕΞΕΑΣ
ΙΤΑΤΟΔΟΣΕΙΕΔΩΔ
ΚΑΙΔΕΚΑΜ

Yellow is the word tetrapharmakos. Blue are the four lines of it. It's fairly intact right before and after, but you can clearly see the rips and holes.

Post by “Don” of October 4, 2024 at 11:05 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

"good" is a very generic word that both sounds philosophical and doesn't emphasize some kind of pointed state of ecstasy. Does the original greek bear a "bad" that corresponds to what is translated as "good" so that the entire passage sounds more philosophical than referring to "terrible" or "dreadful?"

The tetrapharmakos uses tagathon "The Good" and to deinon "The Terrible". That's the literal translation. But tagathon is the accepted word used in many texts for The Good, the telos, the highest good, including Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics: <https://sites.google.com/view/epicurean...ok-1?authuser=0>

Post by “Godfrey” of October 5, 2024 at 12:20 AM

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

Relevant to the above discussion (with translation of the tetrapharmakos I personally like much better than the common 'wikipedia' one).

Laudator Temporis Acti: The Epicurean Tetrapharmakos

The translation in the link in [TauPhi](#) 's post #36 has a nice treatment of the last two lines, which seems to be in line with Epicurus' manner of phrasing: "on the one hand, the good - easily acquired/ on the other hand, the terrible - easily endured."

I'm referring to "on the one hand... one the other hand" which may be taken to correspond to pleasure and pain. But I'm totally out of my depth in discussing translation of the Greek, so I'm just putting this out there 🤔

Post by "Don" of October 5, 2024 at 5:59 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

I'm referring to "on the one hand... one the other hand"

καὶ τὰγαθὸν μὲν εὐκρητον,
τὸ δὲ δεινὸν εὐεκαρτέρητον.

μὲν - - - δὲ - - - "on the one hand - - - on the other hand - - -"

Those two little one-syllable words do a lot of work in ancient Greek and are used all the time to link two phrases/ideas together. They can often be let out of translations and replaced with "but" or even with a semi-colon. But the main idea when they are used is you have this first idea and then, on the other hand, you have this other idea. For complicated grammatical reasons, they cannot come first in a phrase which is why they show up here where they do. But anytime you see μεν in a sentence, look ahead and see if there's a δε that links the two ideas together.

Post by "Don" of October 5, 2024 at 8:37 AM

We all have issues with that "easily..." in the translations. So, this morning before work I took a stroll through the LSJ dictionary to look at other words with the eu- prefix. The prefix usually carries the idea of well or good, and not all eu- words are "easily" but first here's the small selection I pulled out:

ευκριτος easy to decide

ευκρυπτος easy to hide

εὐλέπιστος easily peeled or shelled

ευλυρος skilled in the lyre (easy with the lyre?)

ευλυσια suppleness, ease of movement

εὐρητος easy to tell

εὐρίπιστος easily fanned into flame

εὐροπος easy sliding, easy slipping (as in a noose)

εὐρύθμιστος easily shaped

εὐλαβής Pass., easy to get hold of, but also metaph., undertaking prudently, discreet, cautious

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, ε , εὐκρα τό-μελι , εὐλαβ-ής](#)

To me, the common idea is "without undue effort" or going smoothly or being able to accomplish something without any impediments or burdens. Maybe an option is to think about those last two lines as these paths need not be seen as being something to be worried about. We will endure pain. We endure it with the help of friends. We endure it by keeping it in perspective. Don't add undue mental suffering and worry to physical pain. We can find pleasure The Good if we're just open to it.

First thoughts. Responses welcomed.

Post by "Bryan" of October 5, 2024 at 10:44 AM

Thank you all for this discussion! It inspired me to spend the night working on the text. Here are the surrounding columns. Please let me know if you see any errors.

Post by "Cassius" of October 5, 2024 at 4:36 PM

Would "readily" work?

However there is definitely a possibility of an "in-your-face" intention once, or especially when, the full picture of the Epicurean position is brought into focus.

I will add a cite....

In the easily or readily in the sense of straightforward I am reminded of this from the opening of Lucretius Book 6:

[09] For when he saw that mortals had by now attained well-nigh all things which their needs crave for subsistence, and that, as far as they could, their life was established in safety, that men abounded in power through wealth and honours and renown, and were haughty in the good name of their children, and yet not one of them for all that had at home a heart less anguished, but with torture of mind lived a fretful life without any respite, and was constrained to rage with savage complaining, he then did understand that it was the vessel itself which wrought the disease, and that by its disease all things were corrupted within, whatsoever came into it gathered from without, yea even blessings; in part because he saw that it was leaking and full of holes, so that by no means could it ever be filled; in part because he perceived that it tainted as with a foul savor all things within it, which it had taken in. And so with his discourse of truthful words he purged the heart and set a limit to its desire and fear, and set forth what is

the highest good, towards which we all strive, and pointed out the path, whereby along a narrow track we may strain on towards it in a straight course;

Post by “Godfrey” of October 5, 2024 at 6:14 PM

I highly recommend the article that [Don](#) posted in #26; the link is copied here:

[\(31\) The Tetrpharmakos \(Fourfold Cure\) and the Sober Reasoning in Epicurus: A Critical Philosophical Paradigm against the Politicization of Medical Truth? | ANNA MARKOPOULOU - Academia.edu](#)

I can't say that I agree with everything in the article, but it brings up some interesting points for discussion. For starters, it posits that each of the fourfold remedies corresponds to one of the criteria of truth. So, the author is presenting a case for four, not three, canonic criteria.

I've got to reread this and let it percolate for a while, but I definitely recommend reading it. Only 5 short pages, for those of us who are time and/or attention crunched 😊

Post by “Eikadistes” of October 5, 2024 at 6:51 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Would "readily" work?

I sense unease with the adverb "easily" ... and I share that unease.

As a haiku, I tried to chew on "boldly" as a meaningful tweak:

*Fear not God nor death;
The good is easy to get,
The bad, **boldly** met.*

That's not a correct translation, but it rings to me because the Epicurean capacity to endure pain goes part and parcel with fearlessness (of *boldness*, or *courage*). It is definitely *not* easy to mechanically lessen the physical intensity of the sensation of severe, unmanageable pain, but it is relatively *easy* (by comparison) to embolden an internal spirit of confidence through reflection.

Post by “Don” of October 5, 2024 at 11:14 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Would "readily" work?

No.

Seriously though, "readily" conveys to me something immediately available: "without hesitating; ex., *They readily accepted her advice.*" It can be used for "easily" but, to me, it doesn't have the right connotation.

[Quote from Eikadistes](#)

Fear not God nor death;
The good is easy to get,
The bad, boldly met.

I like the direction that heads. We don't have to run from pain or hide from pain or try to convince ourselves that pain isn't there. But boldly strikes me as leaning Stoic: teeth-gritting, "virtuously" standing up to show how one sees oneself as being indifferent to pain.

That said, some synonyms/uses of "boldy" are possible: fearless before danger; (obsolete) assured, confident.

We can be "emboldened" by putting "the terrible" in context. If the pain is acknowledged and dealt with, we need not pile mental suffering on top of physical pain or on mental pain, grief, sorrow, etc. I'm NOT saying that chronic pain is "easily" dealt with, as in "it's no big deal, be stoically indifferent to it." Investigate it, how can you gain perspective on it? How can you put it into context within the larger experience of your life. By Zeus, I count myself fortunate that I do not have any type of chronic pain, but I am convinced that if we belittle anyone who does or say "Pain is easily endured," Epicurus's philosophy loses credibility.

That said, I still contend boldly that the tetrapharmakos is a useful shorthand for those who want to explore the philosophy and a useful shorthand for "veteran Epicureans" to keep the MOST basic tenets of the philosophy at hand.

So, how to deal with the English translation "easily..."? We don't seem to have a problem with the εὐκτῆτον "easy to get". We don't like the εὐεκκατέρητον "easily endured."

I keep coming back to my options in #48 above: "*without undue effort*" or *going smoothly or being able to accomplish something without any impediments or burdens*. In keeping with eu-'s usual "well/good" connotation.

εὖ-κτητον "well/good - acquired, procured" Interestingly, LSJ gives εὖκτητος the [definition of "honestly acquired."](#) One can acquire pleasure *without effort*. It is literally all around you, every minute of the day, if you are willing to recognize it (i.e., everything that does not cause pain). It can be "easily" acquired. There are no impediments to acquiring The Good, only the impediments you put in your own way.

εὖ-εκκατέρητον "well/good" > ἐγκατερῶ "persevere or persist in a thing" To me, persevere or persist has a different feel/connotation than "endure." It's a subtle shade of meaning, but it's there - nagging at my neurons. Endure has a teeth-gritting quality to it. If one "perseveres well" or "persists well"... what could that mean? To me, the word is still saying that we can persevere in the presence of pain IF we don't throw up impediments that are unnecessary. Worrying about worrying. Being anxious about something that has not happened yet. And so on. Keeping PD4 in mind.

NONE of this is "easy" in the sense of "trivial." "Oh, that's SO easy. La de da." No, maybe effortlessly? One synonym is "uncomplicated" for effortless. *Don't complicate* the pursuit of pleasure or the perseverance of pain! Take it easy. Don't fight against the waves. Let the waves of pleasure wash over you. Enjoy them. Don't fight against the waves of pain. Acknowledge them. Embrace the help of friends and family. Accept emotional and medical help for chronic disease pain. Pick your battles. Don't fight needlessly.

So, in the end, I guess there's not a perfect one-word English modifier for a translation of εὖκτητον and εὖεκκατέρητον. Easily, effortlessly, boldly, readily, prudently?? Sensibly, wisely?

καὶ τὰγαθὸν μὲν εὖκτητον, - and The Good, on the one hand, is effortlessly acquired

τὸ δὲ δεινὸν εὖεκκατέρητον - while on the other hand, we prudently persevere against The Terrible

Those are convoluted paraphrases, taking the dynamic equivalence approach to translation to a fare-the-well! But that's how I'm beginning to understand those two lines and to make peace with εὖκτητον and εὖεκκατέρητον.

Post by "Godfrey" of October 6, 2024 at 1:27 AM

Understanding that it's a paraphrase, I like "boldly met." The big criticism of [PD04](#) is that it takes severe circumstances too lightly. Chronic long-term illness, terminal illness: these *must* be boldly met.

Epicurus doesn't shy away from bold language. Two phrases that immediately come to mind are "live like a god" and "I spit on...." And I don't see boldness as Stoic: one has to be rather bold to be an Epicurean and to go against the prevailing Platonic/Aristotlean/monotheistic worldview.

Even everyday pains can benefit from a bit of boldness, from being bold in living the philosophy. They tend to quietly build up, and don't just disappear on their own.

Having said this, "boldly met" and the complete haiku *is* a paraphrase. Of a paraphrase.

Post by "Don" of October 6, 2024 at 8:29 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

The big criticism of [PD04](#) is that it takes severe circumstances too lightly. Chronic long-term illness, terminal illness: these must be boldly met.

I've tried to rationalize [PD04](#) in the past as "Epicurus was writing in a different time. Wounds or illnesses that would be curable now were fatal back then. PD just needs updating to our time.... Etc." But if I remember correctly, even Cicero had the same criticism we do of the sentiments of [PD04](#):

2.29.94 On Ends: As for your maxim that severe pain is short and prolonged pain light, I cannot make out what it may mean. For I see pains that are at once severe and considerably prolonged; and the truer way to endure them is the other method, which you who do not love moral worth for its own sake are not able to employ. Courage has its precepts and its rules, rules of constraining force, that forbid a man to show womanish weakness in pain. Hence it must be considered a disgrace, I do not say to feel pain (that is sometimes inevitable), but that 'rock of Lemnos to outrage' with the cries of a Philoctetes,

Till the dumb stones utter a voice of weeping,

Echoing his wails and plaints, his sighs and groanings.

Let Epicurus soothe with his spells, if he can, the man whose

Veins and vitals, from the viper's fang

Envenom'd, throb with pangs of anguish dire

in this way: 'Philoctetes! If pain is severe, it is short.' Oh, but he has been languishing in his cave for these ten years past. "If it is long, it is light: for it grants intervals of respite.' In the first place, this is not often the case; and secondly, what is the good of a respite embittered by recent pain still fresh in memory, and tormented by fear of pain impending in the future? Let him die, says Epicurus. Perhaps that were the best course, but what becomes of the maxim about 'a constant preponderance of pleasure'? If that be true, are you not guilty of a crime in advising him to end his life? Well, then, let us rather tell him that it is base and unmanly to let pain demoralize, crush and conquer one. As for the formula of your sect, 'Short if it's strong, light if it's long,' it is a tag for copybooks. Virtue, magnanimity, endurance, courage — it is these that have balm to assuage pain.

I'll have to go back and listen to the podcast episode(s) that tackle those sections.

Thread

[Episode 219 - Cicero's On Ends - Book Two - Part 26 -Cicero Continues His Attack On Epicurus' Position On Pain](#)

Welcome to Episode 219 of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the most complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world. Each week we walk you through the Epicurean texts, and we discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. If you find the Epicurean worldview attractive, we invite you to join us in the study of Epicurus at EpicureanFriends.com, where you will find a discussion thread...



Cassius

March 10, 2024 at 2:30 PM

However, even Cicero's last line - *Virtue, magnanimity, endurance, courage — it is these that have balm to assuage pain.* - I don't know if Epicurus would disagree. Can pain be endured boldly by leaning on courage and being generous and kind to others who genuinely want to help, living virtuously? Does that path eventually lead to a "preponderance of pleasure"?

Post by “Don” of October 6, 2024 at 9:51 AM

I wanted to add, after my lengthy digressions, a short appreciation of the chance to discuss this. I assume most people will read "easily" and dismiss Epicurus as out of touch and irrelevant. Here we have the opportunity to wrestle with, discuss, bounce ideas off each other.

So, thank you to the community, to the existence of the forum, to [Cassius](#) for being the "founder of this feast".

Post by "Don" of October 6, 2024 at 11:46 AM

I also want to say that I don't think we're trying to rationalize or water down or make excuses for Epicurus on this. I'm including both the 4th line of the tetrapharmakos AND [PD04](#) in this. Epicurus was neither stupid nor naive. But if even Cicero can give criticism that makes one go "Hmmm, he's not entirely wrong here" it deserves some digging into the meaning.