

# What Are The Possible Reasons (And Of These, The Most Likely) Why The List of 40 Principal Doctrines Does Not Feature A Statement Explicitly Stating Pleasure To Be The Goal of Life?

Post by "Cassius" of February 13, 2023 at 6:19 AM

I don't know that we have discussed this before, but I think the long title of the thread states an interesting question worthy of exploration:

"What Are The Possible Reasons (And Of These, The Most Likely) Why The List of 40 [Principal Doctrines](#) Does Not Feature A Statement Explicitly Stating Pleasure To Be The Goal of Life?"

Before we settle on one or more as the most likely, it would be very helpful to see if we can come up with a list of reasonable possibilities. I doubt it makes sense to try to separate "goal" from "greatest good" in this discussion, in part because it's also interesting to note that neither "ataraxia" or "katastematic pleasure" or any other term which some might promote are explicitly stated to be the goal or greatest good either.

1. Was the list not prepared by Epicurus himself? (Was it prepared by later followers as a compilation, much as we think is the origin of the Vatican Sayings?)
2. Was it originally in the form of a letter to which we no longer have the introduction?
3. Was Epicurus opposed to identifying a "greatest good"?
4. Was Epicurus opposed to defining "good" in terms that would imply that the number of goods are limited?
5. Was the view that pleasure is the good so clearly a part of every Epicurean discussion that it became a habit to omit the statement as repetitive and taken for granted?
6. Is [PD01](#) not supposed to refer only to "gods," but to the conception of the goal / greatest good for humans or any other form of life? In other words, was "immortal" not meant to apply only to the gods but to the best life to which we should all aspire, and the "knows no trouble" meant to be a synonym for experiencing nothing but pleasure (since there are only two feelings and the absence of one is the presence of the others, as stated in the second sentence of [PD03](#))? One reason that might support the backhanded way of emphasizing pleasure in this way might be the desire not to identify any single type of pleasure as the most important type. I think this occurs to me because I woke up from sleep thinking about this, and it now strikes me for the first time as a possibility due to comments DeWitt makes about "immortal" sometimes being a term of high praise rather than just a reference to deathlessness - similar to "gods among men" and such.

7. Is [PD08](#) (no pleasure is a bad thing in itself) supposed to be read as an explicit statement that pleasure is the good?

Of these, I have traditionally considered (5) to be among the most likely, but I am not at all sure that I don't favor many of the others in this preliminary list as equally or more possible, and I am sure I have not exhausted the good possibilities.

This is only a very preliminary list intended to spur discussion. We may not have talked about this all that much, but it is certainly a question that a newcomer to Epicurus would ask, and it deserves the best answer we can give to it.

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### Post by “Kalosyni” of February 13, 2023 at 10:27 AM

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Was the view that pleasure is the good so clearly a part of every Epicurean discussion that it became a habit to omit the statement as repetitive and taken for granted?

From [Diogenes Laertius, Book 10](#):

*"It is observed too that in his treatise On the Ethical End he writes in these*

*terms<sup>11</sup> : "I know not how to conceive the good, apart from the pleasures of taste, sexual pleasures, the pleasures of sound and the pleasures of beautiful form."*

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### Post by “Cassius” of February 13, 2023 at 10:39 AM

#### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

It is observed too that in his treatise On the Ethical End he writes in these

terms<sup>11</sup> : "I know not how to conceive the good, apart from the pleasures of taste, sexual pleasures, the pleasures of sound and the pleasures of beautiful form."

Very good observation!

## Post by “Cassius” of February 13, 2023 at 10:41 AM

Also as to the possibility that PDO1 is intended to refer to more than just the [Epicurean gods](#) even though the term "immortal" is used, there is this:

VS78. The noble soul occupies itself with wisdom and friendship; of these, the one is a mortal good, the other immortal.

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## Post by “Cassius” of February 13, 2023 at 10:53 AM

Principal Doctrine 1

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Τὸ μακάριον καὶ ἀφθαρτον οὔτε αὐτὸ πράγματα ἔχει οὔτε ἄλλω παρέχει, ὥστε  
That which is blessed and indestructible neither → → has (any) [trouble itself] nor → does it cause (trouble) [for anyone else] so that

οὔτε ὀργαῖς οὔτε χάρισι συνέχεται· ἐν ἀσθενεῖ γὰρ πᾶν τὸ τοιοῦτον.   
[it has no part] either in anger or in favors → → because all → such (things are only for) [the weak]

[Don](#), as our resident Greek expert, what is your assessment of the possibility that [PDO1](#) is not a reference to the gods alone, but is intended to be a reference to the best life for humans as well as gods, and thus serves as a reference to pleasure (the opposite of pain as stated in PDO3) being the goal?

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## Post by “Don” of February 13, 2023 at 11:12 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

## Principal Doctrine 1

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It's possible... Maybe. But I'd also reference DL 10.121:

121] Two sorts of happiness (eudaimonia) can be conceived, the one the highest possible, such as the gods enjoy, which cannot be augmented, the other admitting addition and subtraction of pleasures.

121] Τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν διχῆ νοεῖσθαι, τὴν τε ἀκροτάτην, οἷα ἐστὶ περὶ τὸν θεόν, ἐπίτασιν οὐκ ἔχουσιν: καὶ τὴν <κατὰ τὴν> προσθήκην καὶ ἀφαίρεσιν ἡδονῶν.

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### Post by “Cassius” of February 13, 2023 at 12:06 PM

#### [Quote from Don](#)

121] Two sorts of happiness (eudaimonia) can be conceived, the one the highest possible, such as the gods enjoy, which cannot be augmented, the other admitting addition and subtraction of pleasures.

I wonder if that means that the happiness that the gods enjoy is necessarily greater than the top level that can be enjoyed by non-gods. Meaning, just because the happiness of the gods never increases or decreases, does that mean that the top level enjoyable by non-gods is less than that when it is at its top level?

Further and rephrased: I wonder if that passage about competing with the gods for happiness indicates that the changing level available to non-gods, when it is at its highest level, can be equal the unchanging level of the gods, with the only difference being the limitation in time available to the non-gods?

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### **Post by “Don” of February 13, 2023 at 12:26 PM**

The word translated "highest" is the superlative of ἀκρος akros:

- At the edge, extreme, beginning, end: outermost (especially of the top)
- Being the most of any characteristic: best, oldest, first

I get the idea that the sense of well-being of the gods is unchanging and constant and so at the "most extreme edge" of the spectrum of how eudaimonia is experienced. Non-gods experience the addition and subtraction (subtraction of pleasures = pain??) in their lives.

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### **Post by “Don” of February 13, 2023 at 12:56 PM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

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VS 33. The body cries out to not be hungry, not be thirsty, not be cold. Anyone who has these things, and who is confident of continuing to have them, can rival the gods for happiness. σαρκὸς φωνή τὸ μὴ πεινῆν, τὸ μὴ διψῆν, τὸ μὴ ῥιγοῦν· ταῦτα γὰρ ἔχων τις καὶ ἐλπίζων ἔξειν [hope or expect to have] κἂν <διὸ [dative of Zeus]> ὑπὲρ εὐδαιμονίας μαχέσαιτο. [contend/compete]

So, it does say contend or compete. It doesn't say equal.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of February 13, 2023 at 1:01 PM**

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2888-what-are-the-possible-reasons-and-of-these-the-most-likely-why-the-list-of-40-pr/>

So what about the word translated as "blessed?". Does it have connotations so strong that it cannot be applied to humans? If "immortal" can be applied to human activities, then can "blessed" be less flexible?

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## Post by "Don" of February 13, 2023 at 1:22 PM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

So what about the word translated as "blessed?". Does it have connotations so strong that it cannot be applied to humans? If "immortal" can be applied to human activities, then can "blessed" be less flexible?

Τὸ μακάριον is used in connection with humans, too, one example being [PD27](#)

PD1 - blessed, fortunate, wealthy, "well-off". There appears to me no certain etymology of [makar] or the longer form [makarios/on]. It appears to have something to do with being wealthy (both literally and figuratively?).

See also <https://books.google.com/books?id=sPCww...ymology&f=false>

[Notes on MAKARIOS - Blessed](#)

[MENO\\* - Greek Thoughts- Language Studies - StudyLight.org](#)

Also

[PD27](#) Ὡν ἡ σοφία παρασκευάζεται εἰς τὴν τοῦ ὄλου βίου μακαριότητα, πολὺ μέγιστόν ἐστιν ἡ τῆς φιλίας κτῆσις.

DB - That which wisdom provides with regard to the complete/fulfilled blissful life, by far the best is the gaining of friendship.

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## Post by "Cassius" of February 13, 2023 at 2:58 PM

And from the letter to Menoeceus passage translated as Please is the alpha and Omega of the blessed life...". Same word?

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2888-what-are-the-possible-reasons-and-of-these-the-most-likely-why-the-list-of-40-pr/>

And if so that would mean that each of the descriptors if the beings referenced in [PD01](#), which commentators seem to consider as referencing only gods, are also terms that Epicurus uses when discussing humans?

Combine these comments with those we have repeatedly made that the numbering is later addition and induces an artificial sense of separation between the lines and the possibilities for deeper interpretation of [PD01](#) are intriguing.

We don't talk about it often, maybe in part because it seems "over the top," but that "live as a god among men" reference surely could be related to this too.

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### Post by “Don” of February 13, 2023 at 3:24 PM

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

And from the letter to Menoecus passage translated as Please is the alpha and Omega of the blessed life...". Same word?

τοῦ μακαρίως ζῆν. Yep. It's used there. "pleasure is the foundation and fulfillment of the blessed life." But there's the blessed life open to mortals which has pleasure and pain and the blessed life of the gods with no pain.

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

And if so that would mean that each of the descriptors if the beings referenced in [PD01](#),

Is immortal/incorruptible used to refer to humans? Or to "goods" like friendship? That's a difference that seems significant to me.

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### Post by “Godfrey” of February 13, 2023 at 3:26 PM

I like where this is going, and it brings to mind the "idealist" interpretation of the gods. I'm curious if any of the articles on that subject mention [PD01](#) or any other PDs that might be relevant.

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## Post by “Cassius” of February 13, 2023 at 4:11 PM

Surely there are articles out there that make this comparison so I will see what I can find.

I would certainly not suggest that PDO1 is not of relevance to the gods, but if it in fact has wider application, then the aspect that relates to the gods would be only a part of the intended meaning, and maybe not the most important part.

Do not in fact every one of the other [principal doctrines](#) refer to human affairs? Maybe the primary Epicurean contentions about the gods are as stated in Herodotus and Pythocles as a matter of physics, the important aspect of which is that the gods are not supernatural and did not create the universe. If one sees PDO1 as only a statement about the nature of the gods alone, that would make it an exception to the subject of all the rest. Epicurus shows in the letter to Menoeceus that he very capable of being clear about the nature of the gods being different from what we think of them.

And I would relate this to another opinion that I think a lot of people here would share, especially when we consider Lucian's "True Story."

Can anyone here see Epicurus as being the kind of person who would say: "Humans do not have wings so they will never fly?" Lucian thought of humans going to the moon, so why would Epicurus lock himself into a position of declaring that it is "impossible" for beings elsewhere in the universe, even in other "worlds" to travel between them? We know that he accepting the idea that we receive images of the gods, apparently from the intermundia. I would say that the central important theme of Epicurean philosophy is that the gods are not supernatural and did not create the universe, and that Epicurus would not lock himself into stating flatly that beings on other planets/worlds, like Lucian envisioned as to the moon, might not be capable of traveling around between them.

So there are numerous ways of coming at this, but the bottom line is I see no reason not to interpret [PD01](#) as applicable to all life everywhere, of which both we and the gods are but natural parts, and not just a reference for not "fearing" the gods -- especially since the reverse - benefiting from their images - seems to be an important part of Epicurean philosophy but is not mentioned in [PD01](#).

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## Post by “Kalosyni” of February 13, 2023 at 4:57 PM

Going back to the original question: What are the possible reasons why the list of 40 [Principal Doctrines](#) does not feature a statement explicitly stating pleasure to be the goal of life?

It is possible that there were more Doctrines than just 40? So that what we have from Diogenes Laetius is incomplete?

It looks to me that Diogenes Laetius lists two goals -- and this excerpt shows a conflict. On one hand there is "health of the body and tranquility of the mind" but further down "pleasure is the alpha and omega".

Letter from Menoeceus ([R.D Hicks](#)):

Quote

We must also reflect that of desires some are natural, others are groundless ; and that of the natural some are necessary as well as natural, and some natural only. And of the necessary desires some are necessary if we are to be happy, some if the body is to be rid of uneasiness, some if we are even to live.

[128]

He who has a clear and certain understanding of these things will direct every preference and aversion toward **securing health of body and tranquillity of mind, seeing that this is the sum and end of a blessed life.** For the end of all our actions is to be free from pain and fear, and, when once we have attained all this, the tempest of the soul is laid ; seeing that the living creature has no need to go in search of something that is lacking, nor to look for anything else by which the good of the soul and of the body will be fulfilled. When we are pained because of the absence of pleasure, then, and then only, do we feel the need of pleasure. **Wherefore we call pleasure the alpha and omega of a blessed life.**

[129]

**Pleasure is our first and kindred good. It is the starting-point of every choice and of every aversion, and to it we come back, inasmuch as we make feeling the rule by which to judge of every good thing. And since pleasure is our first and native good,**

for that reason we do not choose every pleasure whatsoever, but oftentimes pass over many pleasures when a greater annoyance ensues from them.

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## Post by "Don" of February 13, 2023 at 5:09 PM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

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My reservation on that would be the latter part of [PD01](#) where neither anger nor favor/gratitude affects the one who is blessed and incorruptible. Epicurus is clear that gratitude is important for humans to live a pleasurable life.

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## Post by "Don" of February 13, 2023 at 5:43 PM

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For what it's worth, here are my verses 128-9 from that section of the letter to Menoikeus:

Quote

[128] The steady contemplation of these things equips one to know how to decide all choice and rejection for the health of the body and for the tranquillity of the mind (<τῆς ψυχῆς> ἀταραξίαν ataraxia), that is for our physical and our mental existence, since this is the goal of a blessed life. For the sake of this, we do everything in order to neither be in bodily or mental pain nor to be in fear or dread; and so, when once this has come into being around us, it sets free all of the calamity, distress, and suffering of the mind, seeing that the living being has no need to go in search of something that is lacking for the good of our mental and physical existence. For it is then that we need pleasure, if we were to be in pain from the pleasure not being present; but if we were to not be in pain, we no longer desire or beg for pleasure. And this is why we say pleasure is the foundation and fulfillment of the blessed life. [129] Because we perceived pleasure as a fundamental good and common to our nature, and so, as a result of this, we begin every choice and rejection against this, judging every good thing by the standard of how that pleasure affects us or how we react to considering experiencing that pleasure. And because pleasure is the fundamental and inborn good, this is why not every pleasure is seized and we pass by many pleasures when greater

unpleasant things were to result for us as a result: and we think many pains better than pleasures whenever greater pleasure were to follow for a longer time by patiently abiding the pain.

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## Post by “Cassius” of February 13, 2023 at 6:02 PM

### [Quote from Don](#)

My reservation on that would be the latter part of [PD01](#) where neither anger nor favor/gratitude affects the one who is blessed and incorruptible. Epicurus is clear that gratitude is important for humans to live a pleasurable life.

That's a very good point, Don. That would mean that the subtlety would have to extend to the observation that because men are not gods, they are subject to anger and favor, both of which are necessary to sustain their lives at times given that we do not live in the intermundia.

Perhaps related to this is that I have always found it interesting that Diskin Clay, in his article on Epicurus' last will and testament, suggested that this PD01 was really one of the Twelve Fundamentals (in which he agreed with many of DeWitt's suggestions but not all). I can definitely see an analogy to atoms in that an atom has no possibility of being "weak" and breaking apart, and there therefore self-sufficient, but on the other hand atoms are not gods - there's just that analogy that they are not weak.

So in pointing out correctly that gratitude (and I would say anger/ability to use force against at least some types of enemies too as per [PD06](#)) is in fact a necessary part of human life, this is perhaps the offsetting balance against the first assertion that a perfect being knows no trouble and give no trouble (why "trouble" and not "pain"?), like many of the other doctrines seem to start with an assertion and then finish with a second "offsetting" assertion.

[PD08](#). No pleasure is a bad thing in itself; but the means which produce some pleasures bring with them disturbances many times greater than the pleasures.

[PD09](#). If every pleasure could be intensified so that it lasted, and influenced the whole organism or the most essential parts of our nature, pleasures would never differ from one another.

And as Kalosyni mentioned in terms of "getting back to the original question" there is something odd about the way the list is written. Epicurus obviously could string together a

narrative such as in his letters. How did this document end up being so disjointed? And as per the original question too, it would have been so easy to lift from the letter the Meneouceus or presumably many other places as statement like: "We recognize pleasure as the first good innate in us, and from pleasure we begin every act of choice and avoidance, and to pleasure we return again, using the feeling as the standard by which we judge every good."

Even if [PD01](#) is dual purpose as per this recent exchange, why is that ethical point not stated more explicitly? Would Epicurus himself likely have left it out?

It's almost like Kalosyni said that the document has been lifted from some other context without an introduction (such as Torquatus gave when he started talking about the best life) .

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### **Post by "Titus" of February 13, 2023 at 6:03 PM**

I have to think of "St. Paul and Epicurus" where DeWitt indirectly suggests St. Paul is opening a path to the heavens. Consequently, the gods would experience something more valuable than our current pleasures. I personally think it has to do with their physics, being made of a different kind/quality of atoms.

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### **Post by "Cassius" of February 13, 2023 at 6:05 PM**

Titus could you elaborate on what you mean?

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### **Post by "Titus" of February 13, 2023 at 6:35 PM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Titus could you elaborate on what you mean?

According to my reading of DeWitt, it seems St. Paul is able to offer something greater than the fullness of pleasure to the former Epicureans. He is offering the fullness of the life of immortal beings. These are just some thoughts that touched me while reading your comments on Lucian.

Concerning your initial question, I personally would see pleasure as part of the epistemology rather than something to be treated in the quite ethically centred [principal doctrines](#).

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### **Post by “Don” of February 13, 2023 at 6:58 PM**

I also want to emphasize that the "40" is superimposed on the text. There is no indication in the manuscripts that they were numbered in any way. There are breaks or spaces in the text, but not in any way indicating each of these "40." They are paragraphs or sections, but not 40 individual doctrines.

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### **Post by “Joshua” of February 13, 2023 at 7:11 PM**

Yeah, I think Lucian refers to the Principle Doctrines as "that book".

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### **Post by “Joshua” of February 13, 2023 at 8:39 PM**

Now that I think about, I wonder if the Principle Doctrines themselves were the "synoptic" overview of a longer and more detailed text, where he lays out the main points in the introductory material and then explicates each main point in more detail after. The surviving material by itself would make for a very short scroll--although it's possible that was the point.

I suppose the counterargument to that theory would be the Vatican Sayings, culled from many other works, where brevity was the whole point.

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### **Post by “Don” of February 13, 2023 at 8:44 PM**

I think the [Principal Doctrines](#) reads much more coherently if you don't split it into 40 discrete pieces.

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**Post by “Cassius” of February 13, 2023 at 8:47 PM**

Do we also think that the Vatican sayings numberings were added later?

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**Post by “Don” of February 13, 2023 at 8:48 PM**

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Do we also think that the Vatican sayings numberings were added later?

They weren't numbered, but they're definitely an anthology.

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**Post by “Don” of February 13, 2023 at 8:51 PM**

[DigiVatLib](#)

Vatican Sayings on folio numbers 401v-404v (401v & 402r shown below, VS1 / PD1 is at the bottom of the left page: Το μακαριον και αφθ... etc.)



And here is a link to a previous post of mine that had links to the [Principal Doctrines](#) as given in DL, Book 10. You'll see the continuous text as opposed to the red letter initial letters of the Vatican Sayings above:

Post

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2888-what-are-the-possible-reasons-and-of-these-the-most-likely-why-the-list-of-40-pr/>

## [RE: Presenting the Principal Doctrines in Narrative Form](#)

Okay, as promised, here are the best digitized manuscripts I can find online of Diogenes Laertius with citations and images of where the [Principal Doctrines](#) start. I have not begun to go through the various texts to see where gaps appear to be, but the Oxford Arundel MS531 seems to be the most promising for that exercise; however, the others definitely need to be examined.

Oh, and this isn't intended to be just for people who read Greek. I would be curious for anyone to take a look at the...



Don

August 15, 2022 at 11:00 PM

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### **Post by “Don” of February 14, 2023 at 6:55 AM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Also as to the possibility that PDO1 is intended to refer to more than just the [Epicurean gods](#) even though the term "immortal" is used, there is this:

VS78. The noble soul occupies itself with wisdom and friendship; of these, the one is a mortal good, the other immortal.

Going back to this ...

ὁ γενναῖος περὶ σοφίαν καὶ φιλίαν μάλιστα γίγνεται, ὧν τὸ μὲν ἐστὶ θνητὸν ἀγαθόν, τὸ δὲ ἀθάνατον.

There are two different words used that are translated "immortal" in PD1 and VS78.

PD1 uses ἀφθαρτος aphthartos which is more like uncorrupted, undecaying, which can be translated as immortal or eternal but places more emphasis on an unchanging nature.

VS78 uses θνητός thnētos for the "mortal" and ἀθάνατος athanatos "not mortal; not dying" but the former can mean literally "(of things) befitting mortals." ἀθάνατον is "immortal" but better thought of as undying, everlasting, perpetual. So, for me, the emphasis is on the persistence in time in VS78. The wisdom we acquire in our lives dies with us. But friendship lasts in our memories even after the friend dies, as does the memory of ourselves in our friends.

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## Post by “Kalosyni” of February 14, 2023 at 8:46 AM

I am still back on Diogenes Laertius, *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, and found this eyebrow raising quote in [Wikipedia](#):

Quote

He is criticized primarily for being overly concerned with superficial details of the philosophers' lives and lacking the intellectual capacity to explore their actual philosophical works with any penetration. However, **according to statements of the 14th-century monk [Walter Burley](#) in his *De vita et moribus philosophorum*, the text of Diogenes seems to have been much fuller than that which we now possess.**

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Do we know what Burley said specifically?

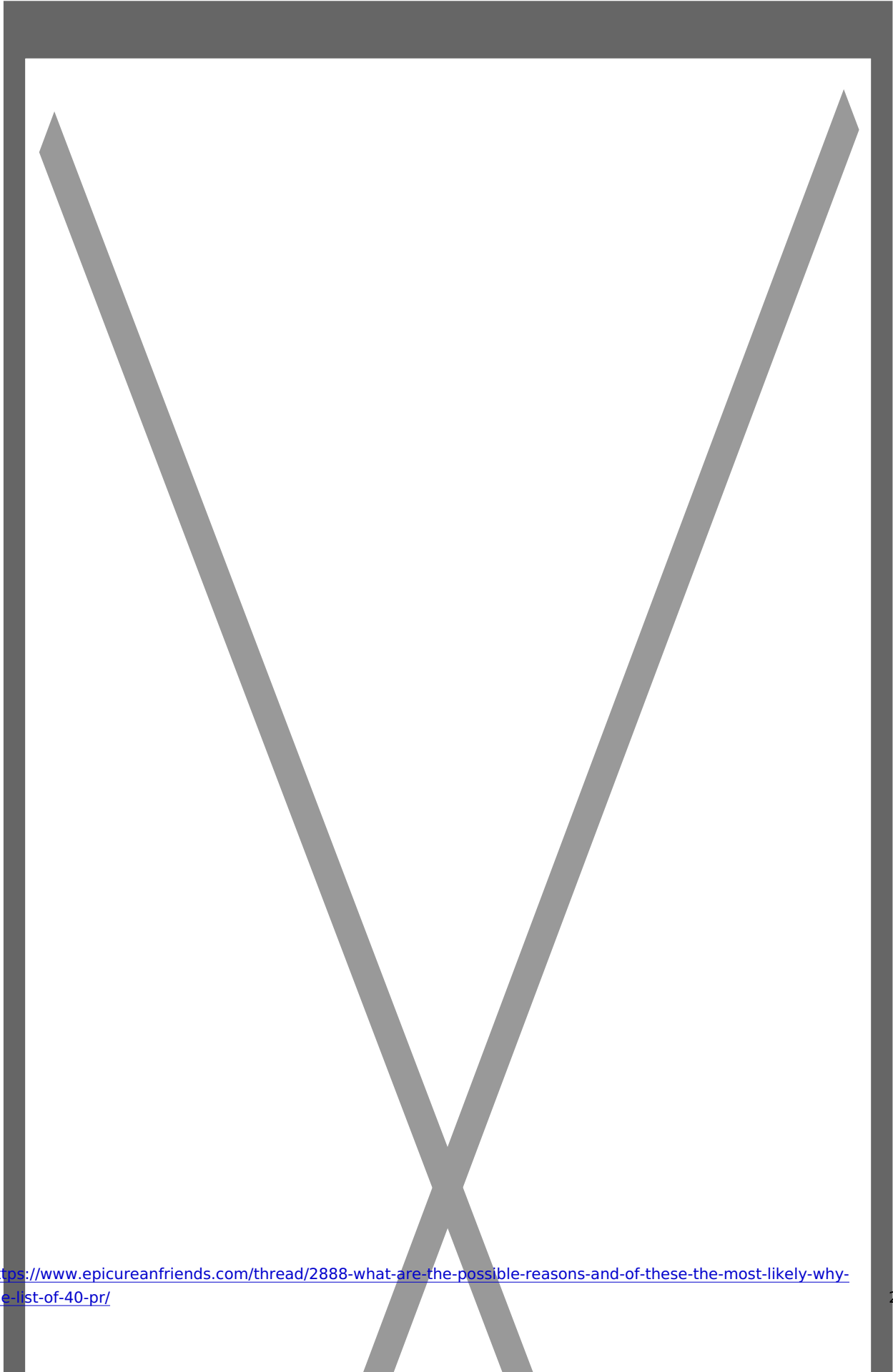
## Post by “Kalosyni” of February 14, 2023 at 9:02 AM

### [Quote from Don](#)

Do we know what Burley said specifically?

No, and now I see he may not have been the author of the particular book *De vita et moribus philosophorum*, (Wikipedia says: "It was formerly attributed to [Walter Burley](#), but is now recognized as anonymous. Its author may be known as "Pseudo-Walter Burley".<sup>[3]</sup>) Though it would be interesting to see if we can find out more:

Image not found or type unknown



<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2888-what-are-the-possible-reasons-and-of-these-the-most-likely-why-the-list-of-40-pr/>

**Post by “Kalosyni” of February 14, 2023 at 9:23 AM**

Found this:

Since Burley's purpose in the *De vita* was didactic and his approach moralistic, an important part of each biography lists the man's notable sayings. These may be precepts, definitions, maxims, or memorable dicta, and are for the most part non-controversial statements of universal application and general admonitions suitable for all civilized persons. If doctrines antipathetic to Christian teaching are included, they are accompanied by words of warning. Thus, after praising several maxims of Epicurus, Burley adds:

Nevertheless he was in error on more points than most philosophers, for he thought that God has no concern for human affairs, and he said that pleasure is the highest good and that men's souls perish with their bodies.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40858433>

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**Post by “Kalosyni” of February 14, 2023 at 9:31 AM**

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2888-what-are-the-possible-reasons-and-of-these-the-most-likely-why-the-list-of-40-pr/>

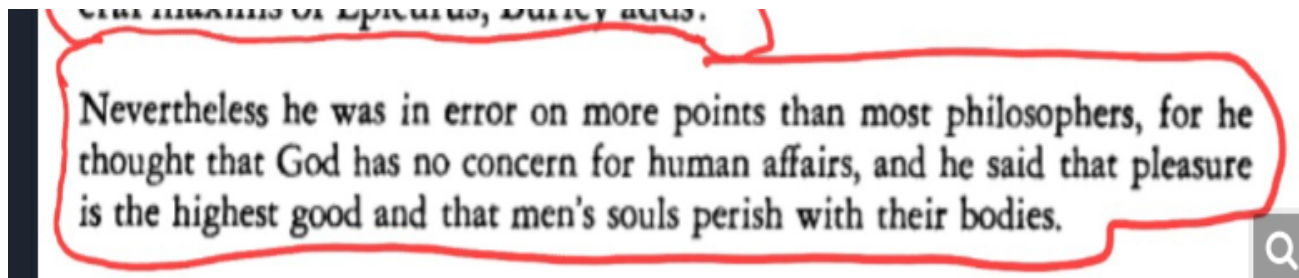
[Don](#) do you have a JPASS?

I signed in but looks like I can only read the introduction and not the full book.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40858433?seq=1>

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**Post by “Cassius” of February 14, 2023 at 10:11 AM**

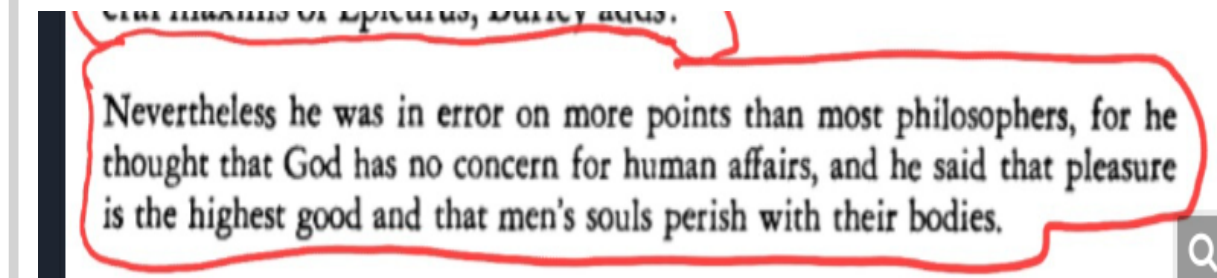


Interesting that Burley says "he said that pleasure is the highest good." Does Diogenes Laertius' commentary state it that way aside from including the letter to Menoecus? almost sounds like there his quoting Torquatus' formulation.

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**Post by “Don” of February 14, 2023 at 1:10 PM**

[Quote from Cassius](#)



Interesting that Burley says "he said that pleasure is the highest good." Does Diogenes Laertius' commentary state it that way aside from including the letter to Menoecus? almost sounds like there his quoting Torquatus' formulation.

I think Burley is just responding to the general consensus of Epicurus at the time.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2888-what-are-the-possible-reasons-and-of-these-the-most-likely-why-the-list-of-40-pr/>

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## Post by “Don” of February 14, 2023 at 1:18 PM

The JSTOR paper doesn't have much else. It does say that if Burley was using Diogenes Laertius that it would have to be a Latin translation since he didn't read Greek. Burleys sources were primarily medieval not ancient. The chief source was the *Speculum Maius* by the friar Vincent of Beauvais. And also the *Compendiloquium* by John of Wales.

Burleys work included poets and philosophers and playwrights from after Diogenes' time. Diogenes also didn't include poets or playwrights in his work.

Two manuscripts erroneously attributed to Laertius were found to be other editions of Burley.

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## Post by “Cassius” of February 14, 2023 at 2:15 PM

Obviously not a super priority but it would be very interesting over time to trace down these medial documents, in all the different languages, to see what they were saying.

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## Post by “Kalosyni” of February 14, 2023 at 3:15 PM

This was interesting from the Wikipedia article on Diogenes Laertius:

Quote

### English translations

Thomas Stanley's 1656 *History of Philosophy* adapts the format and content of Laertius' work into English, but Stanley compiled his book from a number of classical biographies of philosophers.[36] The first complete English translation was a late 17th-century translation by ten different persons.[37] A better translation was made by [Charles Duke Yonge](#) (1853),[38] but although this was more literal, it still contained many inaccuracies.[39] The next translation was by [Robert Drew Hicks](#) (1925) for the [Loeb Classical Library](#),[40] although it is slightly [bowdlerized](#). A new translation by [Pamela Mensch](#) was published by [Oxford University Press](#) in 2018.[41]

And before these translations, there is the question of how earlier manuscripts might have been affected (or altered) during the medieval ages.