

49. Gnomologium Epicureum Vat. 47 Προκατείλημμαί σε ὦ τύχη καὶ πᾶσαν <τὴν>³⁾ σὴν παρείδυσιν ἐνέφραξα. καὶ οὔτε σοὶ οὔτε ἄλλη οὐδεμιᾶ περιστάσει δώσομεν ἑαυτοὺς ἐκδότους· ἀλλ' ὅταν ἡμᾶς τὸ χρέων ἐξάγη, μέγα προσπύσαντες τῷ ζῆν καὶ τοῖς αὐτῷ κενῶς περιπλαττομένοις⁴⁾ ἄπιμεν ἐκ τοῦ ζῆν μετὰ καλοῦ παιῶνος⁵⁾ ἐπιφωνοῦντες ὡς εὔ ἡμῖν βεβίωται.

Plutarchus de tranquill. an. 18 p. 476C ὁ γοῦν εἰπὼν· Προκατείλημμαί σε ὦ τύχη καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν σὴν ἀφήρημαι παρείδυσιν οὐ μοχλοῖς οὐδὲ κλεισίν οὐδὲ τείχεσιν ἐθάρρυνεν ἑαυτὸν ἀλλὰ δόγμασι καὶ λόγοις κτέ.

Cicero Tuscul. V, 9, 27 quod idem melioribus etiam verbis Metrodorus: Occuravi te, inquit, fortuna atque cepi; omnesque aditus tuos interclusi, ut ad me aspirare non posses.

Ad finem sententiae cf. Plut. contra beat. 16 p. 1098B ἀλλ' ἡδέως τε βεβιωκέναι καὶ βρυάζειν καὶ καθυμνεῖν τὸν αὐτῶν βίον ἐκκραυγάζοντες λέγουσι.

1) <κενῆς> φωνῆς Us. 2) ἀλλὰ σοβαροῦς V., ἀλλ' ἀφόβους Us., ἀλλ' ἀθορύβους Gomp. 3) τὴν inser. Us. 4) περιπλεκομένοις Us. 5) πλείονος V., corr. Us.

36*

That famous word "triumph-song" does not appear in the manuscript! It is a "correction" by Usener, clearly shown in the manuscript itself and in Note (5) in Metrodori...: 5) πλειονος V[atican]., corr[ected by] Us[ener]. Usener corrected the manuscript's πλειονος (more, comparative degree of πολὺς (polys)) to the more dramatic παιωνος ([a song of triumph after victory; a choral song addressed to Apollo or Artemis](#))

[Epicurus Wiki has a nice breakdown of the saying](#) (including Usener's "correction") that is helpful in providing context and appreciation of Metrodorus's contribution to our surviving texts.

I'd be curious what [Bryan](#) or @Twentier or others make of the manuscript's πλειονος versus Usener's "correction." If we take the manuscript at its word, something like: we shall depart from life with/in the midst of/along with more beauty/nobility (μετὰ καλοῦ πλειονος), exclaiming/proclaiming that we have lived well.

Or something like: We shall depart from life proclaiming that we have lived with more nobility (than others who didn't pursue pleasure?). ? Thoughts welcomed!

Post by “Cassius” of May 23, 2024 at 8:38 AM

Don can you tell how that proclaiming/exclaiming compares with Martin Ferguson Smith's translation of Diogenes of Oenoanda's "shouting" in fragment 32?

Fr. 32

... [the latter] being as malicious as the former.

I shall discuss folly shortly, the virtues and pleasure now.

If, gentlemen, the point at issue between these people and us involved inquiry into «what is the means of happiness?» and they wanted to say «the virtues» (which would actually be true), it would be unnecessary to take any other step than to agree with them about this, without more ado. But since, as I say, the issue is not «what is the means of happiness?» but «what is happiness and what is the ultimate goal of our nature?», I say both now and always, shouting out loudly to all Greeks and non-Greeks, that pleasure is the end of the best mode of life, while the virtues, which are inopportunately messed about by these people (being transferred from the place of the means to that of the end), are in no way an end, but the means to the end.

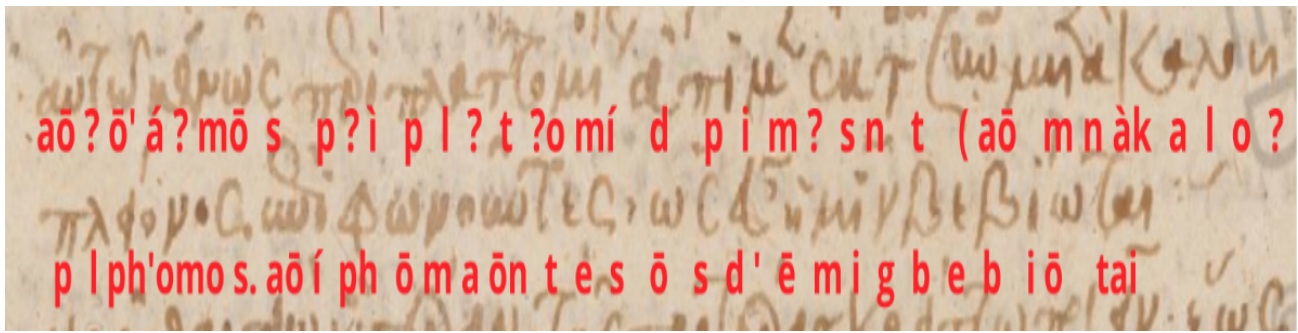
Post by “Eikadistes” of May 23, 2024 at 10:02 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

I'd be curious what [Bryan](#) or @Twentier or others make of the manuscript's πλειονος versus Usener's "correction." If we take the manuscript at its word, something like: we shall depart from life with/in the midst of/along with more beauty/nobility (μετα καλου πλειονος), exclaiming/proclaiming that we have lived well.

I have absolutely no idea. I genuinely can't transpose these fragments.

Here's my best attempt, which is utterly unhelpful:



This may as well be ancient Phoenician because I'm seeing Omegas with too many loops, and I don't understand why Kappas, Betas, and Taus are twice the height of the other letters, or why there seem to be spaces in the middle of words when there shouldn't be any spaces.

I'm curious what everyone else sees.

I clearly see a modern question mark [?] and one-half of a pair of parenthesis [(] in the middle of a sentence with no sibling, and diacritics I've never seen before, and punctuation I cannot identify.

My conclusion is that Usener took **MAJOR** liberties, not only with translations, not only with his personal additions, but in the basic act of assigning symbols the wrong syllable.

Post by “Cassius” of May 23, 2024 at 10:04 AM

[Quote from Twentier](#)

My conclusion is that Usener took MAJOR liberties, not only with translations, not only with his personal additions, but in the basic act of assigning symbols the wrong syllable.

Pretty close to the same conclusion DeWitt reached about Usener.

Post by “Eikadistes” of May 23, 2024 at 10:08 AM

Again, though, I would really like to see anyone else's transpositions and advice about ... anything. Like, which of those symbols represents a Nu, because I am fairly familiar with Nus, and their very basic, ancient Greek miniscule ("v") ... I know they're in there, but none of those

look a lowercase "v" to me, and that lets me know I have no idea what I'm talking about. 😄

Post by “Don” of May 23, 2024 at 10:39 AM

Cursive Greek is not easy to parse!

VS47 begins with the read Π (pi) halfway across the first line. I'll need to go letter for letter, but the transcription in Metrodori looked generally correct... Except for that πλειονος!

I'm primarily curious if anyone can suggest translations using πλειονος instead of Usener's "correction."

Post by “Don” of May 23, 2024 at 11:20 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Don can you tell how that proclaiming/exclaiming compares with Martin Ferguson Smith's translation of Diogenes of Oenoanda's "shouting" in fragment 32?

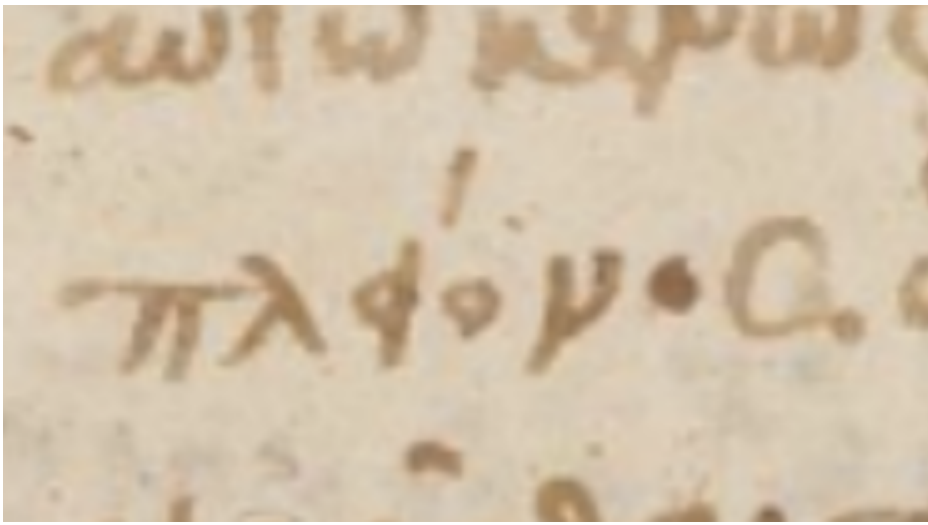
Diogenes uses ενβωων < βοαω "call, shout, roar, howl, etc." No singing implied.

Post by “Don” of May 23, 2024 at 11:28 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

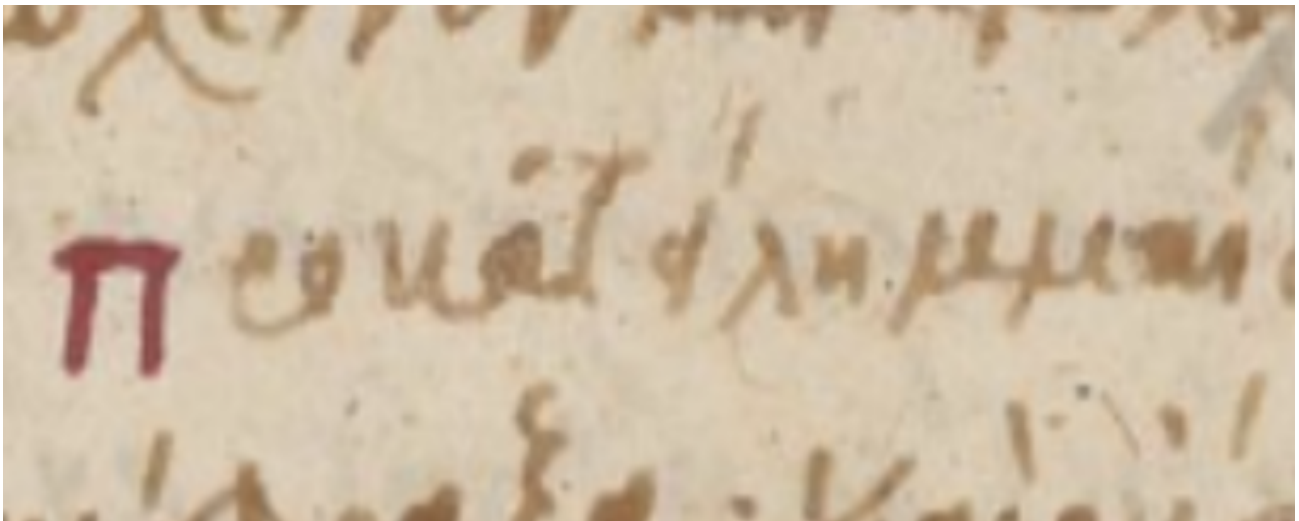
Cursive Greek is not easy to parse!

For example...



That's πλειονος... And that's a relatively straightforward one!

PS... And...



Προκατείλημμαί ... This one has a few more ligatures just for fun. I particularly like the connected ρο rho-omicron with the loop near the beginning.

Post by “Bryan” of May 23, 2024 at 11:59 PM

It is an interesting difference.

Here is Bailey's comment, calling Usener's change from πλείονος to παιῶνος "brilliant."

6. παιῶνος a brilliant emendation of Usener's for the MS. πλείονος. The metaphor here may be, as Usener suggests, from the comic chorus leaving the stage with a τήνελλα καλλίνικος at the end of the play . cf. Aristoph. *Ach.* 1232.

So as we know, he keeps παιῶνος:

[Bailey] ...ἄπιμεν ἐκ τοῦ ζῆν μετὰ καλοῦ παιῶνος ἐπιφωνοῦντες ὡς [εὔ] ἡμῖν βεβίωται.

[Bailey] ...we will leave life crying aloud in a glorious triumph-song that we have lived well.

As you said, if we keep πλείονος, we have something like:

...ἄπιμεν ἐκ τοῦ ζῆν μετὰ καλοῦ πλείονος ἐπιφωνοῦντες ὡς εὔ ἡμῖν βεβίωται.

...we shall depart from life with more [of] good, proclaiming that we have lived well.

I think the phrase "μετὰ καλοῦ πλείονος" is somewhat unusual because "καλοῦ" is an adjective, and "πλείονος" is a comparative adjective, typically modifying a noun. We might expect "μετὰ πλείονος τοῦ καλοῦ" for "with more of the good." But I agree this may not be sufficient reason to divert from the manuscript.

Post by "Cassius" of May 24, 2024 at 5:17 AM

Anyone familiar with the reference to Aristophanes? The suggestion that there was an intentional reference to what happens at the end of it does seem something that is possible, so worth considering, if it is famous enough to be considered a common cultural reference.

Maybe in this case Usener is suggesting a reasonable possibility. At least it is good to know a potential basis for the suggestion.

Post by "Don" of May 24, 2024 at 11:57 AM

I did a Google search for "μετά πλειονος" alone and came up with numerous examples from numerous texts. For example, "μετὰ πλείονος ἡδονῆς, μετὰ πλείονος εὐφροσύνης" "More happily and comfortably" just with the other genitive after and not before, but Greek word order was flexible to a degree.

πλειονος is a neuter singular genitive of πλειον (Attic form of πλειων). As such, it looks like it usually means something like "more"

καλού is neuter singular of καλος with all its various connotations: beauty, nobility, good, etc.

So, I guess I'm leaning toward something like "more nobly; more beautifully; more honorably, etc" with the "more than those who don't follow pleasure as their guide" implied.

Post by "Don" of May 24, 2024 at 11:58 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Anyone familiar with the reference to Aristophanes?

Assuming it's referring to the cast of the play singing and dancing their way off the stage at the end of his plays.

But επιφωνουντες doesn't imply singing or dancing, just "call out, proclaim, exclaim"

Post by "Don" of May 24, 2024 at 1:44 PM

[Quote from Bryan](#)

.ἄπιμεν ἐκ τοῦ ζῆν μετὰ καλοῦ πλείονος ἐπιφωνοῦντες ὡς εἶ ἡμῖν βεβίωται.

...we shall depart from life with more [of] good, proclaiming that we have lived well.

Yes. With the "more nobly" going with the departing?

Post by “Bryan” of May 24, 2024 at 3:02 PM

Yes, if we take καλος substantively without an article it makes good sense. I also do not see what has led to so much agreement to throw out πλείονος. I feel like we are missing something.

For the quote referenced above by Bailey:

Aristophanes, Acharnians 1227:

CHORUS: You triumph then, brave champion; thine is the wine-skin!

DICAEOPOLIS: Follow me, singing “Triumph! Triumph!”

CHORUS: Aye! we will sing of thee, thee and thy sacred wine-skin, and we all, as we follow thee, will repeat in thine honour, “Triumph, Triumph!”

Post by “Don” of May 24, 2024 at 3:20 PM

Yeah, Aristophanes ended his plays like that a lot.

Post by “Cassius” of May 24, 2024 at 3:50 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

Aristophanes ended his plays like that a lot.

A number of plays were ended explicitly saying "follow me singing triumph, triumph!" (??)

If so, then that helps further to understand Usener's point.

Post by “Don” of May 24, 2024 at 4:08 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

If so, then that helps further to understand Usener's point.

I think Usener was being clever and trying to show off. Occam's Razor tells me that if πλειονος is viable and that's what the manuscript shows with no other conflicting manuscript evidence to the contrary, I'm not impressed by Usener's "brilliant emendation."

Post by “Bryan” of May 25, 2024 at 6:49 PM

Yes, Don, I agree, without conflicting manuscript evidence to the contrary we should not get too imaginative. It seems the thinking at the time was that, given Vat.gr.1950 itself has errors, many therefore felt more free to try to find "a more original form," in a way that would be inexcusable for the P.Hercs.

For example, as we have seen, if we compare [VS10](#) in Vat.gr.1950 vs. the better attested Clemens Alexandrinus, Stromata, 5.138, we see very different versions:

Vat.gr.1950: Remember that, being mortal by nature and having received finite time, you ascended to considerations concerning nature as far as infinity and eternity, and you have seen 'the things that exist, the things that will exist, and the things existing before.'

Clemens Alexandrinus, Stromata, 5.138: Although Metrodorus became an Epicurean, he said these things piously: "Menestratus, remember that, having been born mortal and having received a finite life, and having ascended with your soul up until the eternity and to the infinity of circumstances, you have even seen 'the things that will exist, and the things existing before.'"

Clemens Alexandrinus, Stromata, 5.138: Μητροδώρου τε καίτοι Ἐπικουρείου γενομένου ἐνθῆως ταῦτά γε εἰρηκότος: "Μέμνησο, Μενέστρατε, διότι θνητὸς φύς καὶ λαβὼν βίον ὠρισμένον, ἀναβὰς τῆ ψυχῆ ἕως ἐπὶ τὸν αἰῶνα καὶ τὴν ἀπειρίαν τῶν πραγμάτων, κατεῖδες καὶ 'τά τ' ἐσσόμενα, πρό τ' ἔοντα.'"

Post by “Don” of May 25, 2024 at 7:51 PM

That's great, [Bryan](#) ! You da man!! 😊

I just found that quote in that saying is from the Iliad, I.70:

[Homer, Iliad, Book 1, line 68](#)

Quote from Iliad, I.69/70

When he had thus spoken he sat down, and among them arose Calchas son of Thestor, far the best of bird-diviners, who knew the things that were, and that were to be, and that had been before,

Post by “Kalosyni” of July 17, 2025 at 8:59 AM

VS47. "I have anticipated thee, Fortune, and entrenched myself against all thy secret attacks. And I will not give myself up as captive to thee or to any other circumstance; but when it is time for me to go, spitting contempt on life and on those who vainly cling to it, I will leave life crying aloud a glorious triumph-song that I have lived well." (Bailey translation)

I am wondering if it literally says "spitting contempt on life" or what exactly it said?

[Don Bryan](#) @Eikadistes


Post by “Cassius” of July 17, 2025 at 9:34 AM

In the meantime here is the Epicurism.info version with the Greek:

[Vatican Saying 47 - Epicurus Wiki](#)

Vatican Saying 47

<<Prev | Vatican Sayings | Next>>

Προκατείλημαί σε, ὧς τύχη, καὶ πᾶσαν σὴν παρείσδυσιν ἐνέφραξα, καὶ
I have anticipated you O fortune and [I have blocked] every → intrusion [of yours] → and
οὔτε σοὶ οὔτε ἀλλῇ οὐδεμίᾳ περιστάσει δώσομεν ἑαυτοὺς ἐκδότους· ἀλλ’
neither to you nor [to any] other → circumstance shall we give ourselves in surrender but
ὅταν ἡμᾶς τὸ χρεῶν ἐξάγη, μέγα προπτύσαντες τῷ ζῆν καὶ τοῖς
when → that which is necessary extracts [us] (from life) → spitting [boldly] on life and on those
αὐτῷ κενῶς περιπλαττομένοις ἄπιμεν ἐκ τοῦ ζῆν μετὰ καλοῦ παιῶνος
→ → who cling on [to it in vain] we shall depart from → life with (a beautiful song
ἐπιφωνοῦντες ὡς ἡμῖν βεβίωται. 
shouting out that we have lived (well)

Post by “Don” of July 17, 2025 at 10:37 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

I am wondering if it literally says "spitting contempt on life" or what exactly it said?

Yes. I believe προπτύσαντες conveys literally spitting upon.

Another curiosity of this VS is that it's Metrodorus writing and not Epicurus.

Post by “Eikadistes” of July 17, 2025 at 10:47 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

VS47. "I have anticipated thee, Fortune, and entrenched myself against all thy secret attacks. And I will not give myself up as captive to thee or to any other circumstance; but when it is time for me to go, spitting contempt on life and on those who vainly cling to it, I will leave life crying aloud a glorious triumph-song that I have lived well." (Bailey translation)

I am wondering if it literally says "spitting contempt on life" or what exactly it said?

[Don Bryan](#) @Eikadistes

Great question!

I found differing renderings from different authors. Bailey seems to be an outlier in his transposition; note the verb [προπτύσαντες](#) (*proptúsantes*) versus προσπύσαντες (*prospptúsantes*).

[Screenshot 2025-07-17 at 10.33.27 AM.png](#)

The **first** rendering [προπτύσαντες](#) (*proptúsantes*) is (I believe) the aorist active participle of the verb προπτύω (*proptúo*), meaning something like "having spit out" ... or else, the "-αντες" ending refers to a plural, active participle, meaning "you [all] are spitting out"? (...I wasn't really sure).

The **second** rendering [προσπύσαντες](#) (*prospptúsantes*) is the aorist active participle of the verb [προσπύσσομαι](#) (*prospptússomai*), meaning "having received", "embraced", or "folded to oneself" ... or else, here again, it might be the plural active participle, meaning "you [all] are embracing".

[Screenshot 2025-07-17 at 10.34.36 AM.png](#)

... it looks like the **second** one to me, with the extra sigma, [προσπύσαντες](#) (*prospptúsantes*).

...ἀλλ' ὅταν ἡμᾶς τὸ χρεὼν ἐξάγη
μέγα προ[σ]πύσαντες τῷ ζῆν καὶ...

A directly-transposed translation might be something like (*it's clunky, but...*) either:

...but when, [for] us, a [life full] of necessities recedes,
[the] great [thing], [subjects] are spitting out, then, to live, and...

or perhaps:

*...but when, [for] us, a [life full] of necessities recedes,
[the] great [thing], [subjects] are embracing, then, to live, and...*

So the question I then struggle with, is to decide "to which of the implied subject(s)/object(s) do the articles/pronouns refer?" Are people vomiting (rejecting?) their natural impulse to live? Or are necessities vomiting (killing?) people from life? Otherwise (I think this is the case based on the screenshots above) people must be **embracing** the necessary end to living (i.e. accepting death).

...but could be totally wrong. 100% amateur here.

Post by "Eikadistes" of July 17, 2025 at 11:02 AM



Post by "Bryan" of July 17, 2025 at 12:49 PM

If we take the sigma, I think we have [προσπύω](#). Given the active form of [προσπύσαντες](#), it is difficult to pair with [προσπύσσομαι](#).

Post by “Eikadistes” of July 17, 2025 at 2:09 PM

I just wanted to add another brief reflection on the "embracing" versus "spitting" nuance:

There are a variety of ways in which people seem to interface with death: *fearing* death, *fleeing from* death, *fighting* death, *chasing immortality*, *damning life*, *welcoming* death, *accepting* death, expressing gratitude for having lived, and plenty of other responses and orientations I'm not picturing. Adding another dimension (perhaps arbitrarily ... just thinking out loud) we can [1] lament life, and fear death, [2] lament life and accept death, [3] prize life but fear death, or [4] prize life and accept death. In *Menoikeús*, Epíkouros explicitly rejects [1 + 2] *lamenting* life in any capacity, and he rejects [3] *fearing* death in the first two *Key Doctrines*, so, in general (by this measurement), the appropriate Epicurean attitude would be to [4] prize life and accept the inevitable necessity of death.

I think that concept reinforces what (I believe) I'm seeing, visually. No *spitting*. 😊

Post by “Cassius” of July 17, 2025 at 2:18 PM

How does this relate to the phrasing of the fragment translated as about spitting on good (or is it beauty?) unless it bring pleasure?

Post by “Bryan” of July 17, 2025 at 2:47 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

spitting on good (or is it beauty?)

We do have Johannes Stobaeus (fl. f. 450 CE) in his Anthology: volume 3, chapter 17, section 24 quoting Epicurus: "I teem with what is pleasant for this little body – using only water and bread – and I spit on the pleasures from extravagances: not because of them, but because of what is difficult that follows from them"

[Ἐπικούρου] "Βρυάζω τῶ κατὰ τὸ σωματίον ἡδεῖ – ὕδατι καὶ ἄρτῳ χρώμενος – καὶ Προσπύω ταῖς ἐκ πολυτελείας ἡδοναῖς: οὐ δι' αὐτάς, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὰ ἐξακολουθοῦντα αὐταῖς δυσχερῆ"

Post by “DaveT” of July 17, 2025 at 3:49 PM

Comments please.

I've come across the following post questioning the attribution of VS 47 to Epicurus himself: VS 47" I have anticipated thee, Fortune, and entrenched myself against all thy secret attacks. And we will not give ourselves up as captives to thee or to any other circumstance; but when it is time for us to go, spitting contempt on life and on those who here vainly cling to it, we will leave life crying aloud in a glorious triumph-song that we have lived well."

SOURCE: https://www.epicurism.info/etexts/VS.html#**

Post by “Eikadistes” of July 17, 2025 at 3:58 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

How does this relate to the phrasing of the fragment translated as about spitting on good (or is it beauty?) unless it bring pleasure?

I'd say ... paraphrasing, it could mean, either: [1] *we are to live while embracing the grand inevitability of death*, or else, [2] *we are to live while spitting upon the universal fear of death*.

Post by “Don” of July 17, 2025 at 5:24 PM

[Quote from DaveT](#)

Comments please.

I've come across the following post questioning the attribution of VS 47 to Epicurus himself: VS 47" I have anticipated thee, Fortune, and entrenched myself against all thy secret attacks. And we will not give ourselves up as captives to thee or to any other circumstance; but when it is time for us to go, spitting contempt on life and on those who here vainly cling to it, we will leave life crying aloud in a glorious triumph-song that we have lived well."

SOURCE: https://www.epicurism.info/etexts/VS.html#**

Right. It's attributed to Metrodorus: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metrodoru...%29?wprov=sfla1>

Post by "Bryan" of July 17, 2025 at 8:48 PM

[Quote from Eikadistes](#)

"to which of the implied subject(s)/object(s) do the articles/pronouns refer?"

I am not seeing a reference to fears. I am seeing "...but whenever **what must happen (τὸ χρεῶν)** leads us out: having greatly spat on life and on those who cling to it in vain, we go out of life..."

(Although, of course, τὸ ζῆν is more "living" than "life")

Post by "Eikadistes" of July 17, 2025 at 9:25 PM

[Quote from Bryan](#)

[Quote from Eikadistes](#)

"to which of the implied subject(s)/object(s) do the articles/pronouns refer?"

I am not seeing a reference to fears

Yeah, no explicit reference to that word, just the general idea of *dismissing death*.

[Quote from Bryan](#)

(Although, of course, τὸ ζῆν is more "living" than "life")

I'm glad you brought this up because I want your take on it. I read ζῆν as an infinitive, so, even though it's awkward, I try to squeeze a "to..." into the sentence ... but it never works, so I add fillers, and I'm never quite satisfied. 😊 I think most translators like reading the [article + infinitive] as a noun ("life")? That seems conceptually fair, but it's still a *little* bit different. The active participle tends to fit ("-ing"), though I recall seeing that somewhat less. I at least want to see it as a verb for the sake of coherence.

Post by “Don” of July 18, 2025 at 7:14 AM

And if you go back to our discussion at the start of this thread: remember that παιωνος "triumph song" doesn't appear in the manuscript. It's πλειονος.

Post by “Bryan” of July 18, 2025 at 6:42 PM

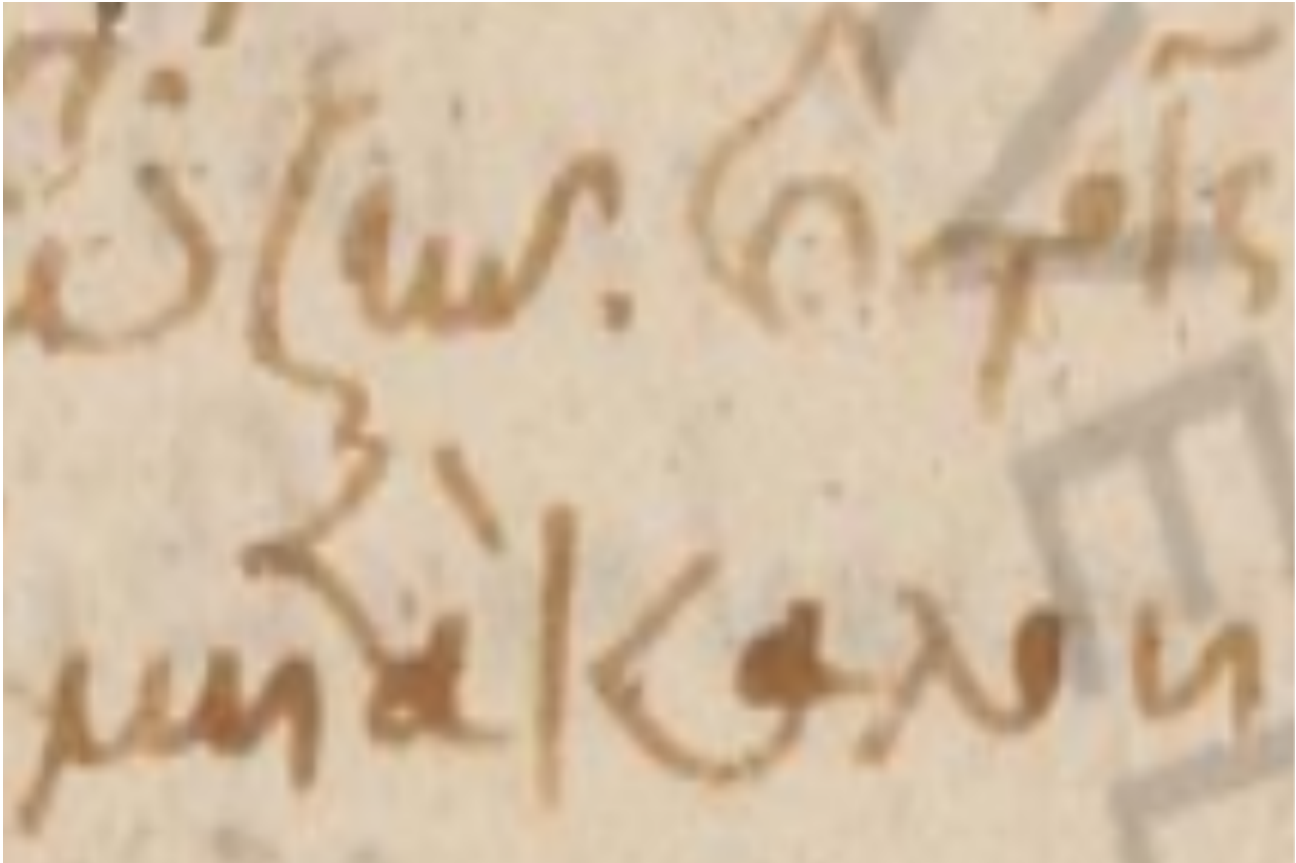
[Quote from Don](#)

It's πλειονος.

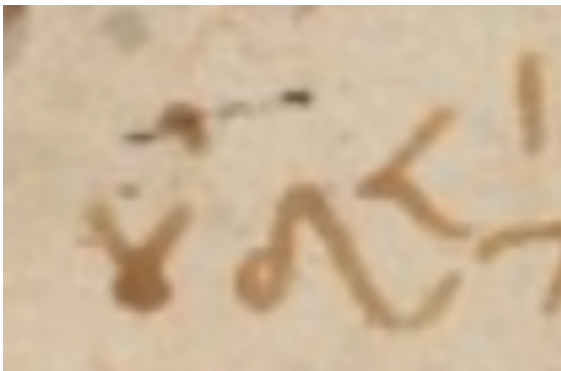
Although I think that would require adding τοῦ before καλοῦ, giving μετὰ [τοῦ] καλοῦ **πλείονος**, but even then we would expect μετὰ **πλείονος** [τοῦ] καλοῦ -- all of which is more of a change than from **πλειονος** to παιωνος.

In further support of this, we do have "τοῦ καλοῦ **πλείονος**" used [here](#) (which is an Usener Edition). I have not been able to find both adjectives put together (but only καλός being made substantive by adding an article).

Post by "Don" of July 19, 2025 at 4:21 AM



In looking closer, that phrase can't be (in the manuscript) μετά καλού...(bottom line above). What we (writ large) have been using as μετά has no ε in it but looks like a η. Also, that letter above the line doesn't appear to be a τ. The same shape, down to the line to the right is also in VS2, which is PD1, where the word below is ουδεν .



So, on a cursory glance that word looks less like μετά and something like μηνα? μήνα being maybe genitive/accusative singular of μήνας "month"?? Then maybe καλη?? The feminine nominative singular of καλος?

Admittedly, I'm looking at words in isolation out of context. That said, I personally like to try to stick to the manuscript text if at all possible, especially when it's as well preserved like the Vatican Sayings are and not filled with lacunae like the P.Herc's.

This is all blue-skying it right now. Doing my usual muddying the waters.