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DIOGENES OF OINOANDA ON THE MEANING OF 'PLEASURE' (NF 192)

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DIOGENES OF OINOANDA ON THE MEANING OF ‘PLEASURE’ (NF 192)

First published in 2011,¹ Diogenes of Oinoanda, New Fragment 192 contains part of an anti-Stoic argument concerning the nature of the moral end (τέλος). The editors identify the fragment as belonging to Diogenes’ *Ethics*, probably coming from the same section as Fragments 32 and 33, both of which deal with the respective roles of virtue in Epicurean hedonism and Stoic virtue ethics.² My intention here is threefold: first, to show how the passage III.10–IV.14, which deals with the respective Stoic and Epicurean attitudes to the role of tranquillity in the moral end, features an (unsuccessful) attempt by Diogenes to reduce the difference between those attitudes to the level of mere verbal disagreement; second, to argue (with Hammerstaedt) that the final lines of Column IV include an appeal to the ordinary meaning of the term ‘pleasure’; and third, to discuss the implications of this interpretation for our knowledge of Epicurean attitudes to the value of ordinary language.

Very little can be read from the first two columns of the four-column fragment. Diogenes begins the third column by drawing a distinction between two types of pleasure, the ‘pleasures of the many’ (III.6–8) and the ‘aforementioned pleasures’ (III.8–9). In a forcefully-expressed sentence³ addressed to Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus and all their followers (III.1–10), Diogenes states that only the ‘aforementioned pleasures’ constitute the moral end (ὕπαρχειν τ[έ]λος).⁴ As the editors suggest, Diogenes’ ‘pleasures of the many’ must be equivalent to the ‘pleasures of the profligate’ listed by Epicurus at *Men.* 131–2: drinking, partying, fish-eating, feasting, sexual enjoyment of boys and women.⁵ The ‘aforementioned pleasures’ are to be identified with the two forms of static pleasure adduced by Epicurus in the very same passage: freedom from bodily pain (ἀπονία) and freedom from mental disturbance (ἀταραξία). The identification of static pleasure with the moral end is standard Epicurean ethical theory: while all pleasures are good *per se*, any pleasure which is likely to be followed by pain, and thus threatens the stability of the state of painless tranquillity, ought to be avoided.⁶ As such, not all pleasures are to be included in the moral end.

The rest of the fragment reads as follows (for the remainder of Column III I give the respective readings of each editor):

	(Smith)	(Hammerstaedt)
III 10	εἰ γὰρ ἀρέε- κει γ’ ὑμεῖν τὸ τῆς φύσεως ἀγαθὸν κατὰ τῆς τι καὶ [οἰκ]εῖτον τοῦτ’ εἶναι τέ- λος κατὰ τὸν ἡμεῖν σύν-	εἰ γὰρ ἀρέε- κει[ι χύ]μεῖν τὸ τῆς φύσεως ἄριστον κατὰ τῆς τι καὶ ἐνάρετον τοῦτ’ εἶναι τέ- λος κατὰ τὸν ἡμεῖν σύν-
IV 5	φωνον λόγον, τὸ δὲ τ[ῆς ἡ]- δονῆς ὄνομα μειρε[ῖτε], τί οὐ πάλαι ἡμεῖν ἐλέ[ξα]- τε; – “τὸ μὲν δόγμα ὑμῶ[ν ἀ]- ληθές, ἄνδρες, τῷ δὲ [τῆς]	

¹ Hammerstaedt and Smith 2011, 90–6. In writing this paper I have benefited from the advice and comments of Jürgen Hammerstaedt and Luuk Huitink, to both of whom I offer my thanks.

² Hammerstaedt and Smith 2011, 90. (All references to fragments of Diogenes other than NF 192 are to the text of Smith 1993.)

³ Employing either double (thus Hammerstaedt) or triple (thus Smith) anaphora of ‘οὐκ ἐκεῖνας’ [*sc.* ἡδονάς].

⁴ For the expression see Epicur. *Men.* 131.

⁵ See also Diogenes Fr. 29 Col. II.

⁶ See Epicur. *Men.* 129; *KD* 8 (quoted in the lower margin of Diogenes Fr. 32).

ἡδονῆς ὀνόματι φα[ύλωσ]
 κέχρηθε”, ἵνα πρὸς [τοῦ]-
 το ὑμεῖν εἴπαμεν· “[καί]-
 νὸν μὲν οὐδαμῶς γ[ὺν]
 10 τάττομεν τόνδε τὸν [λό]-
 γον κατὰ τοῦ προειρη[μέ]-
 νου καταστήματος, [ἀλ]-
 λ’ ἄνωθεν ὠμειλη[μέ]-
 νον πᾶσιν Ἑλλησιν [.]”

Here Diogenes suggests that a difference between the Stoic and Epicurean accounts of the moral end may be reduced to the level of mere verbal disagreement. While the first conjunct of the conditional protasis (εἰ γὰρ ... σύμφωνον λόγον) is restored differently by each editor, there can be no doubt that in it Diogenes invokes a perceived similarity between the Epicurean and Stoic accounts of the state (κατάκτημα) constituting the moral end. Diogenes asks the Stoics why, if they accept an account of the moral end with which the Epicurean account is in agreement (κατὰ τὸν ἡμεῖν σύμφωνον λόγον), but hate the term ‘pleasure’, they do not concede the truth of the Epicureans’ doctrine while objecting to their use of that term. What perceived doctrinal similarity is at issue here? What shared ground can Diogenes believe there to be between Stoic and Epicurean accounts of the moral end? There are a few potential candidates: both schools believe happiness to constitute the moral end; both believe the moral end to be a state; both believe that one who has achieved happiness will be virtuous; both believe that tranquillity will be a feature of the life of the truly happy person.⁷ That the last of these possibilities (tranquillity as part of the moral end) is what is under discussion at III.10–IV.14 is confirmed by (a) the reference at IV.10–12 to ‘the aforementioned state’ (cf. the ‘aforementioned pleasures’ [= static pleasures] of III.8–9), and (b) the Stoics’ imagined rejection of the term ‘pleasure’ being used to describe the state in question: for Epicureans, the experience of tranquillity is to be considered a form of pleasure (indeed, the highest form of pleasure); for Stoics, it decidedly is not. Thus the crucial difference, from Diogenes’ point of view, between Stoic and Epicurean views on tranquillity is that Stoics (unlike Epicureans) did not consider the experience of tranquillity to constitute a type of pleasure.⁸ What is more, Diogenes appears to believe this difference to be reducible to a matter of mere verbal disagreement – both schools believe tranquillity to be a feature of the moral end, but only one school is willing to call the experience of tranquillity ‘pleasure’.⁹

⁷ For Stoic tranquillity see Sen. *Ep.* 92.3: *quid est beata vita? securitas et perpetua tranquillitas*; *Ep.* 85.2; Cic. *Tusc.* 5.43, 48; Striker 1996, 185–6; Irwin 1986, 224–8.

⁸ In fact, this is far from being the only difference (or, for that matter, even the most important difference) between the respective roles of tranquillity in the ethical systems of each school. For Epicureans, happiness consists in tranquillity (*Epicur. Men.* 128, 131, 133); for Stoics, happiness consists in virtue, a by-product of which is tranquillity (see esp. Sen. *Dial.* 7.15.2; Striker 1996, 186). In suggesting that the difference between each school’s account of tranquillity may be reduced to a linguistic disagreement over the meaning of the word ‘pleasure’, Diogenes thus obscures a distinction upon which any intelligent Stoic counterpart would have insisted. A similar point can be made regarding virtue: if Hammerstaedt’s preferred supplement at Col. III.13 (ἐνάρητον) is correct, Diogenes also stresses the fact that both schools feature virtue in their account of the moral end. Again, however, this obscures a crucial difference: for Stoics, virtue *is* the moral end; for Epicureans, the life of one who has achieved the moral end will be virtuous only because static pleasure (the moral end) and virtue are interentailing (see Mitsis 1988, 61) – a point Diogenes himself acknowledges at Fr. 32 Col. I.6–III.8.

⁹ For the objection that the Epicurean account of tranquillity involves an incorrect use of the term ‘pleasure’ we may compare the arguments of the early parts of Cic. *Fin.* 2, where it is argued that Epicurus, in referring to both pleasure and the absence of pain with the single term ‘pleasure’ is using that term in an idiosyncratic and unfamiliar sense: see esp. 2.15: *quamquam non negatis nos intellegere quid sit voluptas, sed quid ille dicat. e quo efficitur, non ut nos non intellegamus quae vis sit istius verbi, sed ut ille suo more loquatur, nostrum negligat*; and 2.16: *cum efficere non possit ut cuiquam, qui ipse sibi notus sit, hoc est qui suam naturam sensumque perspexerit, vacuitas doloris et voluptas idem esse videatur. hoc est vim afferre, Torquate, sensibus, extorquere ex animis cognitiones verborum, quibus inbuti sumus*. See also Cic. *Fin.* 2.6, and Varro *de Philosophia* Fr. 2 Langenberg (August. *De civ. D.* 19.1 = Usener 398): *utramque [sc. voluptatem et quietem] quam tamen uno nomine voluptatis Epicurus appellat*.

In the final sentence of Col. IV, in response to the Stoic claim that to call the experience of tranquillity pleasurable is to misuse the term ‘pleasure’, Diogenes replies that ‘this account concerning the aforementioned state’ (i.e. tranquillity) is not new, but ‘ἄνωθεν ὠμειλη[μέ]νον πᾶσιν Ἑλλήσιν [...]’. The ‘account’ in question, as we have seen, must be the claim that the experience of tranquillity is a form of pleasure (a claim which the Stoics, who allow no room for pleasure in their account of the moral end, reject). The editors have disagreed over the interpretation of the last clause of the column. For Smith, who tentatively supplies [Ἐπίκουρος αὐτὸν ἐκήρυξεν] following Ἑλλήσιν, this refers to a statement of Epicurus himself.¹⁰ Smith translates: ‘This argument we are now marshalling concerning the previously mentioned condition is by no means new, but from the beginning [Epicurus proclaimed it] in an address to all Greeks [...]’.¹¹ For Hammerstaedt, this is ‘part of a reference to the normal and genuine meaning of the word ἡδονή’.¹² Hammerstaedt translates: ‘It is not now that we fashion this argument concerning the previously mentioned condition as a new one, but it is normal language from the beginning (of language) among all Greeks [...]’.¹³

There are good reasons to accept Hammerstaedt’s interpretation over that of Smith. First, we may appeal to the meaning of ὀμιλία elsewhere in Epicurean philosophical discourse (= ‘ordinary language’).¹⁴ This word is often encountered in contexts where the meanings of items of terminology are under discussion; given the metalinguistic context of Col. IV (a discussion of ethical terminology), we might expect the cognate verb ὀμιλέω to express a related idea. Moreover, the prevalence of the participle ὠμειλημένος in the very fragmentary early parts of *Nat.* 28 (in one case [Fr. 4 Col. IV.2 Sedley] qualifying ὄνομα), coupled with the importance to that book of ordinary language as a philosophical issue, led Sedley to suggest ‘colloquial’ as an appropriate translation.¹⁵ This matches the meaning of the same participle when it is found in other philosophical texts.¹⁶

Second, we may question the plausibility of Smith’s own interpretation of the participle: for Smith, ὠμειλημένον refers to an ‘address to all Greeks’, delivered by Epicurus in the past. While it is common in Greek for a perfect passive participle to be used to refer to an extant work composed in the past, normally we would expect such a participle to be substantivized (with the addition of a definite article).¹⁷ The predicative use of ὠμειλημένον that features in Smith’s reconstruction would be an unusual way to express this idea. What is more, there are no surviving examples of ὠμειλημένον being used to refer to an address delivered in the past. Finally, no texts of Epicurus are referred to as ‘addresses’ elsewhere (the normal meaning of ὀμιλέω in Epicurean texts being ‘converse’ [hence ὠμειλημένος = ‘colloquial’, ‘used in conversation’], rather than ‘address’).

Third, and most importantly, Hammerstaedt’s interpretation is considerably more plausible when considered in the light of the (pseudo-)dialectic context of the passage (a ‘debate’ between Stoics and Epicureans). On Smith’s interpretation, Diogenes seeks to defend the Epicurean use of the term ‘pleasure’ from the Stoics’ charge of incorrectness or idiosyncrasy by appealing to the authority of Epicurus himself. It is hard to see what Diogenes could have hoped to achieve with such a move: the imagined Stoic objection quoted at

¹⁰ Hammerstaedt and Smith 2011, 95.

¹¹ Hammerstaedt and Smith 2011, 93.

¹² Hammerstaedt and Smith 2011, 96.

¹³ Hammerstaedt and Smith 2011, 93.

¹⁴ See *Hdt.* 67; Phld. *Piet.* 213–4 Obbink (both quoted below); Phld. *Rhet.* 1.288 Sudhaus: διαστέλλειν τε [το]ῦτ’ ἐχρῆν καὶ δὴ καὶ σημαίνειν, κατὰ ποίας ὀμιλίας φωνῆς οὕτως προσαγορεύειν σύμφαμεν [τ]ὰς ἀγαθὰς πράξεις; Phld. *Mus.* Δ Col. 98.36 Delattre; Phld. *Oec.* Col. XX–XXI Jensen. Sextus Empiricus uses ὀμιλία in the same sense at *M.* 1.1 and 64, the first of which passages concerns Epicurus’ own style: ἐν πολλοῖς γὰρ ἀμαθῆς Ἐπίκουρος ἐλέγχεται, οὐδὲ ἐν ταῖς κοιναῖς ὀμιλίαις καθαρεύων.

¹⁵ Sedley 1973, 22.

¹⁶ Compare Nausiphanes’ account of the style of the φυσιολόγος, as recorded by Philodemus (*Rhet.* 2.27 Sudhaus = Fr. 2 DK): θαυμαστόν μὲν οὖν φυσιολόγου [κ]αὶ τὴν λαλιὰν ὡς συνεστῶσαν ἄκρως κατ’ εὐοδίαν τῶν ὠμειλημένων καὶ μεταφοραῖς ἐπὶ τὸ ἀγν[ο]ούμενον πρᾶγμα ἄριστα μετε[ν]νεγμένων καὶ οὐ [π]λά[σματι] κενῶι καὶ νόμω[ι] γεγνη[ν]ῶιαν ἀλλὰ τ[ῆ]ι τῶν πραγμάτων [φύσει] καὶ κατὰ τὴν συν[ῆ]θειαν; Plut. *Comm. not.* 1073c: τὴν αἴρεσιν αὐτῶν ἐλέγχουμεν, οὐτε πιθανοῖς πράγμασιν οὐθ’ ὠμειλημένοις ὀνόμασι τὰς κοινὰς ἐκστρέφουσιν ἡμῶν καὶ παραβιαζομένην ἐννοίας;

¹⁷ For an example in Diogenes, see Fr. 30 Col. III.11–12: τοῖς γεγρ[αμμέ]νοις (referring to his own writings).

Col. IV. 4–7 is addressed not to Diogenes himself but to Epicureans in general; as such, the Stoics' allegation concerning the Epicureans' 'misuse' of the term 'pleasure' would not be satisfactorily answered simply by stating that Epicureans use the term in a sense that was approved by Epicurus. Diogenes, as we have seen, has asserted the existence of common doctrinal ground between the Epicurean and Stoic accounts of the moral end: to respond to Stoic objections concerning the correct meaning of the term 'pleasure' with a partisan appeal to the authority of Epicurus would be a decidedly weak move in such a context. On Hammerstaedt's interpretation, Diogenes appeals not to the authority of Epicurus (which would hardly be compelling for a Stoic interlocutor), but rather to the ordinary, accepted meaning of the term 'pleasure'. The claim that Epicurean usage is in alignment with the ordinary usage of the term in question would be a powerful response to the Stoic claim that it is being used incorrectly or idiosyncratically. So, adopting Hammerstaedt's interpretation, the final sentence of Col. IV should be understood as an assertion about the ordinary meaning of the term 'pleasure'. Whereas the Stoic objection states that to call the experience of tranquillity 'pleasure' is an inaccurate or sloppy use of that term, the Epicurean response is to insist that using 'pleasure' to refer to the experience of tranquillity is in accordance with the term's ordinary meaning.

There is no doubt that Epicurus believed knowledge of the ordinary meanings of terms to be valuable for doing philosophy. Twice in the *Letter to Herodotus* he appeals to the ordinary meaning of a term: at 67, where he appeals to 'the common usage' (τὴν πλείστην ὁμιλίαν) of the term 'ἄσώματον', and at 70, where he states that using the term 'accidents' (συμπτώματα) in its 'common meaning' (κατὰ τὴν πλείστην φοράν) will allow the nature of accidents to be clearly expressed.¹⁸ This focus in *Hdt.* on the value of knowing the ordinary meanings of particular terms reflects the general rule expressed at *Nat.* 28 Fr. 13 Col. V sup. 8–12 Sedley, where it is stated that 'our own usage does not flout linguistic convention, nor do we alter names with regard to the objects of perception'¹⁹ (οὐκ ἔξω τῶν ἰθισμένων λέξεων ἡμῶν χρωμένων οὐδὲ μετατιθέντων ὀνόματα ἐπὶ τῶμ φανε[ρ]ῶν).²⁰

Epicurus' attitude to ordinary language seems²¹ to have been related to his theory of preconceptions (προλήψεις – self-evident conceptions available to all appropriately-experienced inquirers, and capable of serving as criteria of truth).²² As is made clear by Epicurus himself (*Hdt.* 37–8), and by Diogenes Laertius (10.33), preconceptions stand in a special relationship to terms: a preconception of a thing is the 'primary conception' subordinated to the term referring to that thing. Attending to the primary meaning of a term thus enables inquirers to identify the relevant preconception, which can then go on to function as a criterion of truth. An awareness of the basic, primary meanings of terms thus played a crucial role in Epicurean philosophical inquiry. While there has been some debate over the precise scope of the word 'primary' (πρῶτον) at *Hdt.* 38,²³ Diogenes Laertius' account at 10.33 makes it clear that a preconception will be the first conception to come to mind on hearing a particular term. As such, the preconception underlying each term will be closely coordinated with that term's ordinary meaning.

Exactly how Epicureans grounded their belief that preconceptions and terms were related in this way is not made clear in Epicurus' extant texts. While it is possible that the relationship of 'primary subordination' that was believed to hold between preconceptions and individual terms was seen simply as a conventional feature of language, we may, alternatively, posit a connection between Epicurus' beliefs about the relation of preconceptions to terms used in their ordinary senses and his theory of linguistic naturalism

¹⁸ A similar appeal to ordinary language in fixing the meaning of a term was likely present at Phld. *Piet.* 213–4 Obbink (καθ' ὁμιλιάν), on which Obbink (1996, 304) comments: 'The point of adding καθ' ὁμιλίαν is to imply, by a kind of argument from *consensus omnium*, that there is something veridical about both classes being called "unities" ' (ἐνότητες).

¹⁹ Translation: Sedley 1973, 48.

²⁰ While ordinary language was clearly seen as valuable for doing philosophy, such value was by no means absolute: ordinary language could sometimes be imperfect or inaccurate, as is made clear at several points in *Nat.* 28 (Sedley 1973, 22); see also Phld. *Oec.* Col. XX–XXI Jensen with Tsouna 2013, 98; Asmis 1984, 33–4.

²¹ See Sedley 1973, 22.

²² The scholarship on preconceptions is vast and still growing: see esp. Barnes 1996; Hammerstaedt 1996; Morel 2008; Fine 2014, 226–56.

²³ See e.g. Sedley 1973, 20–21; Asmis 1984, 31–4; Atherton 2009, 213–4.

(*Hdt.* 75–6; *Lucr.* 5.1028–9). On this account, the natural connections between terms and preconceptions that would have emerged during the early stages of language development are retained in contemporary ordinary language. The remnants of these connections, due to the intervening effects of conventional language development (*Hdt.* 76), would likely be imperfect,²⁴ but would nonetheless be significant enough to make ordinary usage a valuable standard for identifying the preconception underlying each term. While the plausibility of this naturalist account is strengthened by two *testimonia* (Usener 334–5) suggesting that Epicurean naturalism about language was not limited to the past but extended into the present,²⁵ there has been until now no explicit evidence for the existence of a historical dimension to Epicureans' motivations for favouring ordinary language (invocations of ordinary language in Epicurus and Philodemus being limited to [contemporary] ὁμιλία).²⁶

The final sentence of Diogenes NF 192 constitutes important new evidence in this regard. There, as we have seen, Diogenes justifies the Epicurean use of the term 'pleasure' to refer to the experience of the state of tranquillity that constitutes the moral end by stating that such usage is in line with the term's ordinary meaning. Crucially, however, he does not do so simply by appealing to contemporary ὁμιλία (as does Epicurus at *Hdt.* 67), but makes an explicitly historical claim, stating that the Epicurean use of the term 'pleasure', far from being a recent development, is in fact in line with what has been that term's ordinary meaning for all Greeks from the beginning (ἀνωθεν ὁμειλη[μέ]νον πᾶσιν Ἑλλήσιν). NF 192 thus provides uniquely valuable evidence concerning the Epicurean attitude to the value of ordinary language. Diogenes' defense of the Epicurean use of the term 'pleasure' to refer to tranquillity combines the issues of colloquialism and language history, connecting what he claims to be the contemporary colloquial usage of 'pleasure' with what he claims to have been the ordinary meaning of the same term from the beginning. This suggests, (a): that the Epicurean theory of language development was sufficiently conservative to allow original meanings to be preserved in contemporary colloquial usage, and (b): that the diachronic connections that such a conservatism would have created between ancient and contemporary uses of terms were seen as valuable for those doing philosophy (providing inquirers with easy access to the preconception originally associated with each term). It is not surprising that Epicureans should have considered the term 'pleasure' to be part of the natural lexicon of early language users: pleasure is, after all, understood by Epicureans to be the principal motivator and driving force behind human behavior (see *Cic. Fin.* 1.30; Brunschwig 1986). What may surprise us is that, according to Diogenes, the 'static' use of the term 'pleasure' to refer to the experience of tranquillity is to be understood not as a technical development of the philosophical lexicon but as part of the original and ordinary meaning of that term.

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²⁴ See n. 20.

²⁵ Origen *C. Cels.* 1.24: ὡς διδάσκει Ἐπίκουρος, ... φύσει ἐστὶ τὰ ὀνόματα; Procl. *Crat.* 17: Ἐπίκουρος ... ᾗτετο φύσει εἶναι τὰ ὀνόματα.

²⁶ Although the use of the perfect participle 'ἰθισμένων' at *Nat.* 28 Fr. 13 Col. V sup. 9 Sedley (quoted above), may be said to point to such a historical dimension.

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