

Dr. Lisa Feldman Barrett on The Functions of the Brain

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I just started reading Dr. Barrett's book *How Emotions Are Made* (2017) and find it fascinating. I just finished the first chapter, so, in looking for something to listen to on the treadmill this morning, found her TED talk.

I see implications and applications to Epicurean philosophy (I think). She talks about the basic experiences all humans have from birth like pleasure and displeasure (I'm calling that pain). Overlaid on these basic sensations are the emotions our brains build from contextual clues and predictions from past experience.

This seems to me to be akin to the *pathē* being foundational to how we should react to any given situation and how we should decide our choices and rejections.

Her primary thesis, backed up by extensive research, is that our emotions are NOT hardwired. Those basic experiences are (pleasure, displeasure) but not what we call emotions (anger, fear, etc.) People experience the same physical reactions as different emotions in different contexts. This also speaks to me in light of my unease over talking about "feelings" as opposed to "reactions" of pleasure and pain.

I'll be interested to read what anyone thinks if they watch this or read about her research.