

Do Pigs Value Katastematic Pleasure? (Summer 2022 K / K Discussion)

Post by "Don" of July 4, 2022 at 4:46 PM

I wanted to address the title of Metrodorus's book that is cited by Clement of Alexandria.

The title in Greek is:

Περι του μειζονα ειναι την παρ' ημας αιτιαν προς ευδαιμονιαν της εκ των πραγματων

The "New Advent" English translation is:

On the Source of Happiness in Ourselves being greater than that which arises from Objects

I don't entirely agree with the translation choices made there, but they'll do well enough.

What I want to do is look at several key words that impact our current discussion on katastematic pleasure.

μειζονα = greater, larger (comparative degree of μεγας megas)

αιτιαν = (accusative singular) cause (translated above as "source" evidently)

- - την παρ' ημας αιτιαν = the cause for us"

προς ευδαιμονιαν = for eudaimonian (translated above (inadequately, IMHO) as "happiness"; personally I prefer "well-being" to connote or play on the eu + daimon origin of the word.)

πραγματων = (pragmaton, genitive plural of pragma). This is the important one.

Pragma has a number of definitions and connotations:

- deed, act, fact
- occurrence, matter, affair
- thing, concrete reality
- thing, creature
- thing of consequence or importance
- (in the plural) circumstances, affairs
- (in the plural, in bad sense) trouble, annoyance

- - της ἐκ των πραγμάτων "that which is from deeds/things/circumstances/etc."

Now, from Metrodorus's book, we get his quote asking "What else is the good of the soul but the sound state of the flesh, and the sure hope of its continuance?"

This is consistent with the title from what I can see. That title is saying that we can be more confident of "the hope of [the] continuance" of pleasure which arises within us than that which arises from deeds/things/circumstances/etc. This seems to me to be consistent with the emphasis on autarkeia (self-reliance) elsewhere in the texts and that we don't have to rely on outside circumstances for our pleasure. Of course, we can vary our pleasures with our deeds and circumstances! But the pleasure that arises from within ourselves - katastematic pleasure, namely aponia and ataraxia - is always near at hand. We have complete control over that whereas our circumstances are not always under our control due to chance and outside factors.

Additionally, one of the definitions of pragma in LSJ is "deed, act, the concrete of πράξις..."

Along those same lines, Πάθη (pathe) is something that happens to you, something that is experienced. LSJ: "what is done or happens to a person or thing, opp. πράξις (praxis)"

The pathe are pleasure and pain. In this definition, the pathe are opposed to praxis. We always have the pathe to rely on. I'm still mulling over the significance of this point, but I think there's a significance there, too.