

Episode One Hundred Thirty-Nine - The Letter to Menoecus 06 - Pleasure Part Two

Post by “reneliza” of September 14, 2022 at 8:08 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

[Quote from reneliza](#)

[Quote from Don](#)

One more thought then I'll step off the soapbox:

I was just listening to a podcast (specific one doesn't matter), and they were talking about flow:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flow_%28p...%29?wprov=sfla1

I think there might be parallels or similarities or other connections between flow and katastematic pleasure, ie ataraxia/aponia. I'd be interested to read anything from anyone who knows more about Csíkszentmihályi's work in this area.

Oh gods no don't get me started on flow, because I have THEORIES

Seriously though, tying flow to katastematic pleasure (specifically, emotional regulation and thereby ataraxia/mental non-disturbance) is a really interesting concept I was thinking about yesterday (in slightly different wording) and will probably make it into an upcoming episode of my podcast

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I'm curious if you're "for" the idea of flow being connected somehow to katastematic pleasure or "against" the idea 😊 I'm legitimately unsure from the way you worded that.

I also think there's some connection between mindfulness and ataraxia/aponia. [This excerpt from this article](#) makes me go "Hmmm?"...

Quote

Mindfulness, the awareness that arises from paying attention to the present moment without resistance, is a fertile environment for flow to appear. However, being mindful does not guarantee flow, but rather creates the optimal conditions for flow to happen.

Mindfulness and flow both live "in the here and the now" and involve engaging the present moment with willingness. While flow happens during pleasant experiences, mindfulness can happen all of the time.

I do think ataraxia happens here and now, a calm abiding in the present moment. I'm especially intrigued by that "flow happens during pleasant experiences."

For those unfamiliar with flow, here's an article from Positive Psychology:

<https://positivepsychology.com/mihaly-csikszentmihalyi-father-of-flow/>

Oh, and I have no dog in this flow fight. Consider these my musings on a possible interesting connection.

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Oh, I'm definitely for it. I think that Csikszentmihalyi has made really great contributions, but that he's only scratched the surface and that flow isn't actually ONE state, but something that comes in different forms, and that tranquility and emotional resilience is one of the forms that is most often overlooked.

I focus a lot on neurodivergence (mostly adhd and autism) and the state of hyperfocus is often compared and contrasted with the flow state. I see them as highly related, but not identical processes. Sometimes I find myself in a highly constructive flow state, making progress, reaching goals, etc... But sometimes I find myself staring at a graphic for four hours, switching between color palettes and moving text over pixel by pixel, becoming increasingly frustrated. And when I'm in the middle of it, I can't tell which one is which. It's only after the fact that I realize I wasted four hours on a graphic I decide not to even use.

I do also have some problems with the way flow is approached in productivity advice (essentially, quadruple your productivity by tying yourself so tightly to your work that you can't even tell where you end and it begins AT ALL TIMES) instead of seeing it as one tool which has a place, but can't be relied on for everything and can't be maintained over a 40 hour work week even if you COULD always reach it because it will burn you out so fast if approached like that. Ideas like a 10 hour work week are great, but somehow we always turn it into "yes that, but all the time" not understanding that the high ratio of rest to work is the only thing that can make concentrated productivity viable.

ADHDers especially get the "you accomplished all this in an hour - imagine if you applied yourself consistently" but although hyperfocus will lead to burnout even quicker, the flow state

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isn't sustainable in that way either.

But that's not a complaint against flow, really, just against the way we often use these findings against ourselves and others.