

# Epicurean Attitudes Toward Emotion

Post by "Godfrey" of March 11, 2020 at 7:23 PM

Returning to the initial post in this thread, I think it's instructive to compare EP to the Stoics. Stoicism involves (often miserable) mental training practices to prepare one for future adverse situations. In contrast, Epicurean practices involve training in understanding the underlying "nature of things": by having this understanding, the Epicurean removes some underlying causes of painful emotions and is therefore free to experience both painful and pleasurable emotions more fully.

To my limited understanding, fear is an underlying contributor to anger. So removing fear where appropriate is much more therapeutic than trying to decipher whether a particular form or degree of anger is "okay" or not. Removing fear goes deeper in that it works to transform a person from an "angry person" to a "not so angry person". But anger is by no means the only emotion. We would also need to deal with sadness, grief, depression, longing, envy and on and on. And what about positive emotions?

The primary fears are considered to be those of the gods and of death. Next comes a proper understanding of pleasure and pain. These are addressed in PD 1-4. We have the rather glib tetrapharmakos, but I'm speculating that the Epicurean theory of the emotions is based on these four doctrines and that they were further developed in writings lost to us and in life, with frank speech, in the Garden. A deep and voluminous subject on this forum is the proper understanding of pleasure which goes way beyond "pleasure is easy to obtain". I'm wondering if similar depth of study in all of PD 1-4 isn't where the Epicurean theory and therapy of the emotions lies.