

Retirement (Financial Independence, Early Retirement, etc.)

Post by "Don" of September 6, 2020 at 8:07 AM

You are correct, [Cassius](#) . Both of those in the original text are pathē.

I would agree that desire and feeling or reaction or "internal sensation" (that's my personal least favorite translation incidentally) are closely connected.

The English idiom "She *really had her heart set on* going to the theater tonight" describes a desire. And I find it fascinating that it almost directly translates the Greek *epithumia*. The desire - the thought of going to the theater here - causes a reaction or feeling of pleasure, but the desire or experience has to come first. You can't just experience pleasure by itself. There has to be an *experience that happens to you* (externally experienced by your physical perceptions) or *a thought of some kind* (internally experienced by your mental perception) to cause the feeling of pleasure or pain to arise. I don't believe you can just say "I am experiencing pleasure" or "I feel pain." Why? What is happening to you in that moment that is making you experience one of those two? It can be a number of things:

- Thinking about a future desire
- Remembering a past pleasure
- Having a painful experience in the present
- Engaging in a present pleasurable activity

While you can't separate the pleasure or pain from the experience - as Epicurus says we're either feeling pleasure or pain - you have to have the experience first to be able to react with one or the other. The pleasure reinforces the experience as choiceworthy, but not every pleasure (pleasurable experience) should be chosen due to the consideration of whether this individual pleasure in the present promotes a pleasurable life overall.

[Godfrey](#) had a good comment:

Quote

the key point is being keenly aware of your feelings, understanding that they are indeed a criterion of truth.

That echoes Epicurus's statement: Ask of each desire (epithumia): What happens if it is fulfilled and what if it's not? (VS 71)

And

Quote

[129] Pleasure is our first and kindred good. It is the starting-point of every choice and of every aversion, and to it we come back, inasmuch as we make feeling (pathē) the rule by which to judge of "every good thing" (pan agathon*). And since pleasure is our first and native good, for that reason we do not choose every pleasure whatsoever, but oftentimes pass over many pleasures when a greater annoyance ensues from them. And oftentimes we consider pains superior to pleasures when submission to the pains for a long time brings us as a consequence a greater pleasure. While therefore all pleasure because it is naturally akin to us is good, not all pleasure is choiceworthy (**hairesis), just as all pain is an evil and yet not all pain is to be shunned.

*agathon is the same word used in the third line of the Tetrapharmakos: "The Good (agathon) is easy to obtain."

**hairesis "to be chosen" is the same used throughout Epicurus's writings when he talks about "choice and avoidance."

Epicurus is using "pleasure" to mean "pleasurable experience" in this passage. I find it interesting that this passage doesn't address desires. He doesn't say specific desires are choiceworthy or not, but some pleasurable experiences are not choiceworthy.

In section [127], Epicurus describes the natural, necessary, and empty desires. Why are they empty? They don't lead to pleasure since he goes on to talk about the pathē of pleasure and pain in 129. Desires in and of themselves are neither choiceworthy or not. It is the actions taken in response to those desires that cause us pain or pleasure. Now, it can be a mental, internal activity that causes pleasure or pain and so can be judged choiceworthy or not. You may not "see" the action. But there has to be an action or experience first before we can "feel" either pleasure or pain.