

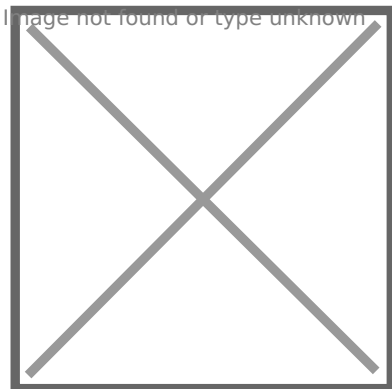
Episode One Hundred Thirty Eight - Letter to Menoecus 5 - Pleasure Part One

Post by "Don" of September 6, 2022 at 7:37 AM

Wonderful and potentially very fruitful discussion!! Having this many insightful and curious people on the podcast and on the forum is a boon!

I realize I'm heading deep into the weeds with this post, but, as is my habit, I wanted to try to get at what the ancients thought when they used the word we're translating as "desire": epithymia επιθυμία. Where did it show up? What connotations did it have? How was it defined at the time?

I found this paper:



[A Semantic Analysis of Desire in 4 Maccabees and its bearing on Romans 7](https://www.academia.edu/100000000/A_Semantic_Analysis_of_Desire_in_4_Maccabees_and_its_bearing_on_Romans_7)
www.academia.edu

Granted, it's looking at [4 Maccabees](#) and Romans 7, but I found its diagram on page 4 very interesting (screenshot below)



For those who don't read Greek, I'll transliterate that table and provide some translations:

Pathos (see LSJ definition below)

1. Hēdonē (pleasure) 2. Ponos (pain)

Under pleasure and pain, there's a series that from the paper the author says it's a sequence:

Hēdonē

{epithymia (desire)

|

hēdonē (pleasure)

|

χαρά khara (joy - NOTE: one of the two named "kinetic" pleasures, too!)

So, first comes desire, then pleasure, then joy in this scheme.

On the other side:

Pain

{phobos (fear)

|

ponos (pain)

|

lypē/lupē (pain, grief, distress; see LSJ below)

So, fear then pain then the feeling of distress as opposed to joy in the other column)

The middle word θυμός thymos is tricky. I've placed the LSJ entry below. Basically, those sequences make up the mind or soul.

I'm sharing all this because I found that sequence in the middle interesting and the distinctions made among the components potentially intriguing for the discussion. I haven't read the whole paper yet but the diagram popped out. These texts were written c. 50-150 CE so several hundred years post-Epicurus but still within the classical Epicurean time period albeit from a very different perspective. However, those words were common ways of speaking about pain, pleasure, feelings, desire, etc.

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, ἐπιθυμία](#)

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, π , πάγ-χαλκος , πάθος](#)

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, παῖθ-η](#)

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, θυμός](#)

Epicurus uses ponos for pain here:

486. Pain does not consist in being deprived of things, but rather in bearing the avoidable distress caused by groundless opinion. οὐκ ἀπορεῖν τούτων πόνος ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ φέρειν μᾶλλον τὸν ἀνόνητον ἐκ τῶν κενῶν δοξῶν πόνον.

However he also uses other words for pain elsewhere (especially words connoting disturbance, etc) but πόνος is here in 486.