

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

Post by "Don" of September 6, 2022 at 11:33 PM

Here's where I'm at on what desires are. Some of this has already been offered by ya'll so I fully admit this is not necessarily original! I'm just consolidating my understanding. So...

The BIG category under which all this falls are the *pathe*. This literally means "that which happens to someone, that which is experienced." Everything we "feel" falls under this category.

The only ways we experience something is whether it causes us to feel pleasure or whether it causes us to feel pain. That's why - to my understanding - is why Epicurus was so adamant about two feelings especially against the Cyrenaics. If it happens to us, we feel it. Whether that's a subtle pleasurable feeling or an intense pleasurable feeling or a twinge of pain or a terrible pain. That's it. Only two ways of feeling.

That's why the table in the post above puts *pathos/pathe* at the top under which are pleasure and pain.

That's why I like the idea of desire and *phobos*/"fear" being the starting points for the two schemas under pleasure and pain. I took *phobos* to mean "fear" because it's SO associated with English -phobia now. But at its root it means

fear, terror, alarm, fright, panic

the act of fleeing: flight, retreat

which is exactly the same idea for the words Epicurus uses for choice and "avoidance" - literally, choice or "flight/fleeing"

Desire is an attraction to something pleasurable

Flight is a repulsion from something that causes pain

The feeling of desire attracts us to a pleasure leading to a feeling of joy/khara (I ****really**** want to explore how khara got into that schema!!)

The feeling of wanting to flee repels us from a pain that leads to a feeling of distress

I don't think we "desire" pain, BUT we can *choose* to undergo the pain - fighting the urge to flee - IF we are relatively convinced that going through the pain will lead to a feeling of pleasure. We are choosing to undergo the pain BECAUSE we have a *desire* - an attraction - for the pleasure at the other end. We do not have a desire to undergo the pain. We would rather

flee from the pain... BUT we can *choose* otherwise due to our practice of practical wisdom.

We can anticipate the pleasure, and that in itself is pleasurable.

I'm intrigued by [Joshua](#) 's concept of desire as a lack of satisfaction or a knowledge of some lack in ourselves that we endeavor to fill. But I'm wondering whether it's focusing on a "lack" or whether we're instead focusing on the pleasure that will accrue from fulfilling that desire. It's not the pain that's the focus but the pleasure at the end that initiates a feeling of desire. I'm still working on that. Pain can be a guide, it IS one of the two feelings after all! But it is also something that we don't seek out for its own sake. If someone says "Hot peppers cause pain." Objectively, yes. Subjectively, some people derive pleasure from spicy food. The hot pepper is not "bad" or "good", painful or pleasurable in itself. It is only our feeling about the hot pepper that causes us to be attracted to it or to flee from it.

Still working through this. Consider this my on-going stream of consciousness on this thread!