

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

Post by "Don" of September 7, 2022 at 12:11 AM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

I'm not sure I can get on board with the underlined part above. Lucian opposes fear to *hope*, which I think is nearer the mark;

Quote

And from this point, as Thucydides might say, the war takes its beginning. These ambitious scoundrels were quite devoid of scruples, and they had now joined forces; it could not escape their penetration that human life is under the absolute dominion of two mighty principles, fear and hope (ἐλπίδος καὶ φόβου) and that anyone who can make these serve his ends may be sure of a rapid fortune.

Which drives me on to my next (tentative) conclusion--that fear and hope are both *kinds* of desire. Desire is everything that happens when you see things as they are, and wish that they were different. When unscrupulous scoundrels prey on hope and fear, they prey on desire.

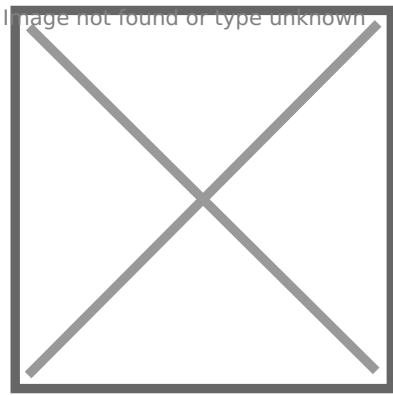
As i mentioned, I'm intrigued by [Joshua](#) 's thesis, and additionally I was taken with the idea of hope and fear (ἐλπίδος καὶ φόβου). So, I was really wondering where Epicurus may have used ἐλπίδος (which is the genitive of ἐλπίς) "hope, confidence, expectation"

Fragment 116: I summon you to unceasing joy and not to empty and trifling virtues, which destroy your confidence in the fruits of what you have. ἐγὼ δ' ἐφ' ἡδονὰς συνεχεῖς παρακαλῶ καὶ οὐκ ἐπ' ἀρετὰς κενὰς καὶ ματαιὰς καὶ ταραχώδεις ἐχούσας τῶν καρπῶν ἐλπίδας.

Fragment 445: We must not blame the body for the greatest evils nor attribute our troubles to mere circumstance. Instead we seek their cause within the soul: for by giving up every trifling and fleeting desire*** we give birth to a confidence perfect (ἐλπίδα ὅλοι) in itself. (For *** see below)

Letter to Menoikeus 134: Because, on the one hand, one can generally hope for the intercession of the gods by means of worship... ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἐλπίδα παραιτήσεως ὑπογράφει θεῶν διὰ τιμῆς

The Strong's Concordance even has this:



[G1680 - elpis - Strong's Greek Lexicon \(kjv\)](#)

G1680 - ἐλπίς *elpís*, el-pece'; from a primary ἔλπω *élpō* (to anticipate, usually with pleasure); expectation (abstractly or concretely) or confidence:—faith,...

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"from a primary ἔλπω *élpō* (to anticipate, usually with pleasure); expectation (abstractly or concretely) or confidence:—faith, hope"

So, *elpis* does have sense of "desire for something pleasurable" but it seems to be more of a "confident hope" or "anticipation with the expectation of coming to fruition" whereas "desire" writ large has no sense that it will be fulfilled for sure, it is more a longing for something pleasurable.

Still thinking...

***The "trifling and fleeting desires" referenced in Fragment 445 also shed an interesting light on this discussion. Interestingly, the word *epithymia* is NOT used here:

πᾶσαν ματαίαν τῶν ἐφημέρων ὄρεξις (ἐφημέρων = *ephemeron*)

"Every trifling 'ephemeral' desire"

ὄρεξις "yearning, longing, desire"

Even LSJ defines it as opposed to *φυγή* which is the *exact* word used by Epicurus in "choice and avoidance/flight"

Epicurus also uses this word in Fragment 202:

He who follows nature and not groundless opinions is completely self-reliant. With regard to what is enough by nature, everything he owns is a source of wealth; whereas with regard to unlimited desires (τὰς ἀορίστους ὀρέξεις), even the greatest wealth is poverty.

It shows up in Demetrius Lacon's PHerc831 (Column 16) as "empty desires" κενῶν [ὀρέ]ξεων

[DCLP/Trismegistos 59491 = LDAB 591](#)

So, in addition to epithymia we have to take orexis into account:

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