

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

Post by "Don" of September 7, 2022 at 12:54 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

But per the letter to Menoecus do we not also to some degree choose our own desires, consistent with our free will, and indeed to the events arising from those choices praise and blame do attach?

Oh, agreed. But I would re-word your statement to say:

"We choose which of our desires *we will fulfill*, consistent with our free will"

We don't necessarily choose which desires arise within us. Many - most? - of our desires arise from things outside of ourselves. Of course, we have desires to drink, eat, etc., that arise from bodily interoception. We may also have desires that arise naturally from within our memories of past pleasures we'd like to repeat. But we also have desires that arise from outside influences - people talking, commercials (in the modern world), reading, etc. Desires we may not have thought of without those outside influences.

So, I'm not entirely convinced that we "choose" our desires entirely. But I am completely onboard with the fact that we "choose" to follow or avoid desires which arise.

And this is exactly why we can attach praise or blame to the consequences of the act of fulfilling those desires which we choose to act upon. We have the free will to act on desires or not to act on desires. We are responsible for our actions, and, in some senses, ALL actions are the result of fulfilling certain desires.

Here's my translation of that Menoikeus section:

For that person, even though some things happen by necessity, some by chance, and some by our own power, for although necessity is beyond our control, they see that chance is unstable and there is no other master beyond themselves, so that praise and its opposite are inseparably connected to themselves.

Those things that happen "by our own power" are our responsibility. We can be praised for some things that we do, and we can get the opposite of praise for other things that come about "by our own power." If some action is detrimental to our own well-being or harmful to society at large, we can be held responsible for that if it was indeed "by our own power" that it came about. We can't be held responsible for someone's boat being wrecked at sea. We CAN be held responsible if we were the one to forget to tie it off at the harbor and it drifted out and THEN

got wrecked in a storm. Okay, that's maybe a weird example but I'll let it stand.