

# Episode 168 - "Epicurus And His Philosophy" Part 21

## - Chapter 10 - The New Freedom 01

Post by "Don" of April 2, 2023 at 3:00 PM

During the episode, I expressed my misgivings/frustrations about the stock phrase "choice and avoidance." Avoiding, avoid, and avoidance have always struck me as [milquetoast](#) words. It reminds me of stepping around a mud puddle. "I avoided getting my foot wet."

Epicurus specific words are in the title of the work that laid out his thoughts on these actions: Περὶ αἰρέσεων καὶ φυγῶν. (Peri haireseon kai phugon). First, let's get the LSJ definitions on the table:

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

αἴρεσις (hairesis) does mean "choice" but the connotation for me is much more active than just "choosing": "purpose, course of action or thought" Interestingly enough, it can also refer to the "taking" of a town by an army. It connotes for me an active process, not just a casual "choosing" what one has for dinner. I can live with "choice, choosing" but want to keep that active connotation in mind.

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

φεύγω is what I really dislike translated as "avoidance." The first LSJ definition is "flee, take flight." If αἴρεσις is the taking of a town, φεύγω is fleeing or retreating. LSJ states that it is the opposite of διώκω which it "pursue or chase." *A form of that word shows up in VS46:*

*We cast off common customs just as we would do to wicked men who have been causing great harm for a long time.*

*τὰς φαύλας συνηθείας ὥσπερ ἄνδρας πονηροὺς πολὺν χρόνον μέγα βλάψαντες τελείως ἐκδιώκομεν.*

ἐκδιώκομεν in this context means "to chase away, banish." So, φεύγω would refer to those being chased or being banished.

So, in keeping with my active sense of αἴρεσις, I see the same for φεύγω. It's not just a casual avoidance or avoiding, it is an active fleeing, taking flight (as in Gandalf's telling the Fellowship "Fly, you fools!" as he fell in Moria), or escaping from something. True, LSJ includes "avoid" but down the list and in the context of all those other active words.

So, I much prefer, if I were to translate Epicurus's book Περὶ αἰρέσεων καὶ φυγῶν (and subsequent mentions of the practice) as "Concerning Choice and Flight" or "Choice and Escape" or "Pursuit and Escape" or something more active than "Choice and 'Avoidance'." You'll often

see me use "choice or rejection" on the forum, but I would prefer to use one of those other translations.