

Choice & Avoidance: towards a better translation for avoidance

Post by “Don” of August 15, 2024 at 10:58 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

We need more input from others.... 😊

Okay, I'll take the bait...

[Quote from Julia](#)

To move-from pleasure, move-to pain or stay-in pain are not things I should do; let's ignore them in this post.

I wouldn't ignore those as options. We can choose to undergo pain IF it will lead to future greater pleasure. So, move-to pain is an option, and even stay-in (for a defined amount of time) are options; which, by definition mean one is in a move-from pleasure motion by choice to gain greater pleasure.

[Quote from Julia](#)

To stay-in pleasure. This experience doesn't tend to last long, and it is an absence-of-direction. This means: I can desire it and pursue it, but I cannot do it, because not-doing cannot be done.

I'm not sure I agree with this formulation. From my perspective, a goal of Epicurean philosophy is to be able to experience pleasure for as long as possible. If one's life and attitude are structured to experience the joy of existence, "feeling no pain", that seems a desirable state. Various activities can be undertaken and experienced, but the through-line is being able to experience a pleasurable state in as many activities as possible if one feels no pain.

[Quote from Julia](#)

Moving-from pain. I have begun to call this action "to avoid", to call the process "avoidance" and the behaviour "avoiding".

For anyone whose been around here a while, I apologize for jumping on my habitual soapbox/broken record. Personally, I dislike the "avoid/avoidance/avoiding" translation used in the stock phrases "choice and avoidance." The Greek words Epicurus uses are αἴρεσις (haireisis)

and φεύγω (pheugo) which literally mean "taking/choice" and "flee/take flight/escape" (avoid is also a definition, but down the list). αἵρεσις (haireisis) evolved later into the word *heresy* as in "someone making a choice... oops! wrong choice, we're going to have to punish you!" φεύγω (pheugo) as "flee/escape" always struck me as more immediate, more urgent, than "avoiding" which always reminds me of "avoiding a mud puddle." I realize that's a tangent, but one I can't "avoid" when it comes up.

[Quote from Julia](#)

using special words (to play/to avoid) to encapsulate the same meaning in a single, direct linguistic entity made it much easier to shift myself. It seems quite useful to me to categorise my behaviours into avoidance and play, to think of everything I do as either avoiding or playing.

Hmm... I **think** I can see where you're going, but moving toward pleasure isn't always "play" unless you're redefining "play." I'm all for play, btw, just to be clear! But moving toward pleasure sometimes means getting rid of fears, superstitions, anxieties, etc. Yes, that's moving away from pain, or jettisoning pain-producing fears, etc. You can certainly assign words to those movements you've described, but I'm not sure playing and avoiding are expansive enough to encompass what can be involved in those "motions."

Since this post is getting long, I'll stop here and start anew...