

# 'Proairesis', 'Proairetic' and 'Aproairetic': Synopsis of All the Passages Containing these Terms in the 'Discourses' and the 'Manual' of Epictetus

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**Abstract:** In the last decades, the concepts of προαίρεσις (proairesis), προαιρετικὸν (proairetic) and ἀπροαίρετον (aproairetic) in the Stoic philosophy of Epictetus have aroused the interest, among others, of researchers like C. Cassanmagnago [1]; R. Dobbin [2-3], J. B. Gourinat [4], R. Kamtekar [5], R. Sorabji [6-7], R. S. Braicovich [8], K. Seddon [9] and A. A. Long [10]. The scope of this paper is to present a complete and as far as possible unequivocal picture of the subject. To this end I have produced a new translation and made a careful analysis of all the occurrences of the three terms in the works of Epictetus. The results I have reached show that the three concepts are perfectly clear in their meaning, without the need of translating them and with a simple transliteration from ancient Greek, as modern languages do not have an exact equivalent of such words.

**Keywords:** Epictetus, Proairesis, Proairetic, Aproairetic, Nature of Things, Diairesis, Counterdiairesis

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## 1. The Words of Epictetus

The Stoic Epictetus (about 50-125 A. D.) is crystal clear in saying and repeating many times to many people in his 'Discourses': "You are not your flesh or hair, but your 'proairesis'. What are, then, my flesh or my hair? According to him they are 'aproairetic' things. And which is the difference between the 'proairetic' and the 'aproairetic' things? By definition, the difference between them lies in the empirical evidence that all 'proairetic' things are in our exclusive power, while all 'aproairetic' things are not in our exclusive power. What is, then, 'proairesis'?"

I believe that a synopsis of all the passages of the works of Epictetus in which he uses, for a total of 169 times, the terms 'proairesis', 'proairetic' and 'aproairetic', will help to settle the question by showing, first of all, what proairesis has little or nothing to do with.

In my opinion, it will become evident that the 'proairesis' has little or nothing to do neither with simple judgments or life projects (as Aristotle, on the contrary, believes) nor with the so called 'free will', nor with a choice, a pre-choice or a moral choice able, once and for all, to determine our behavior.

Moreover, it will become evident that 'proairesis' is the name that Epictetus gives to our logical faculty when, and only when, it is considered as a faculty that can assume a

right and virtuous or a wrong and vicious attitude. This happens because the proairesis is the only human faculty able, and specifically dedicated to recognize the 'Nature of Things', that is to establish what is in my exclusive power (the proairetic things: for example, the project of walking) and what is not in my exclusive power (the aproairetic things: for example, the act of actually walking); and then to generate either one or the other of two 'superjudgments' that can be called 'Diairesis' and 'Counterdiairesis'. The proairesis can generate these two 'superjudgments' because is naturally endowed with the ability to make a sort of judgment-squaring, that is some sort of molecular-mathematical operation capable of linking any simple judgment with either the judgment "I care to keep myself in a state of accord with the Nature Of Things" and accordingly take the virtuous 'diairetic attitude'; or with the judgment "I don't care to keep myself in a state of accord with the Nature of Things" and take in this way the vicious 'counterdiairetic attitude'. Epictetus gives a perfect example of what I am saying at (P<sup>4</sup>) 71,72:

- When you are going to undertake a work, remind yourself which is the nature of the work. If you go away for a warm bath, put in front of you the events at the baths: those who sprinkle, those who jostle, those who revile, those who steal. And thus you will undertake the work more safely, if at

once you will say: "I dispose to take a warm bath but also to keep my proairesis in accord with the nature of things". And behave in the same way for each work. For thus, if any hindrance to take a warm bath happens, you will have ready at hand that: "Yet I did not dispose only this, but also to keep my proairesis in accord with the nature of things; and I'll not so keep it, if I am vexed at the events".

*'The Manual' E4*

To sum it up, Epictetus clearly states that human proairesis is a faculty which is: (1) autotheoretical, that is able to evaluate all other human faculties and also itself; (2) impossible to be subordinated to other human faculties and impossible to be made servant to what is aproairetic; (3) able to use the impressions and to understand its own use of them; (4) the dominant part of the human soul, that part to which all other human faculties are subordinated and which owns the chain of command that makes us act in a certain way or another in every single circumstance of our life.

## 2. A Terminological Issue About 'Proairesis', 'Proairetic', and 'Aproairetic'

In a parallel research on the subject of this paper, I have reached the conclusion that it is possible to formally treat the human proairesis as an exponential function written in complex numbers. In particular, while analyzing its arithmetic and its geometry, I found that the proairesis can be understood and treated as a negative real number which is the one and the same fourth grade power ( $P^4$ ) of four different complex numbers (for example  $p_1 = 1+i$ ,  $p_2 = -1+i$ ,  $p_3 = -1-i$ ,  $p_4 = 1-i$ ). Moreover, it turns out that if we square each of these four complex numbers, one gets a couple of imaginary numbers ( $P^2$ ) that differ only for their sign (for example  $+2i$ ,  $-2i$ ); and it is very tempting to consider them as 'rotational operators' able to play exactly the role that diairesis and counterdiairesis are expected to play 'in vivo' in a proairesis at work. This is the reason why I am using in this paper the notation ( $P^4$ ) to label the 'proairesis', the notation ( $P^2$ ) to label what is 'proairetic' and the notation (NOT i.e. Nature Of Things) to label what is 'aproairetic'.

## 3. The Synopsis

All the present translations of Epictetus from Ancient Greek are mine and can be found [www.epitteto.com](http://www.epitteto.com). The text that I used is the text edited by W. A. Oldfather [11].

### 3.1. Epictetus Uses the Term Proairesis in the Following Passages of His Works

( $P^4$ ) 1 - "Tell the secrets". I say not a word; for this is in my exclusive power. "But I'll fetter you". You sir, what are you saying? Me? You will fetter my leg, but not even Zeus can overcome my proairesis.

*'Discourses' I,1,23*

( $P^4$ ) 2 - Only analyze for how much you sell your own proairesis. If nothing else, man, don't sell it cheap.

*'Discourses' I,2,33*

( $P^4$ ) 3 - Where is, then, our profit? If any among you, diverting from external objects has turned himself towards his own proairesis, works at it and does all he can so as to make it to come out in harmony with the nature of things: elevated, free, unhampered, unhindered, faithful, self respecting, [...] well then, this is the man who profits.

*'Discourses' I,4,18*

( $P^4$ ) 4 - Yet, if you try to know from me what is man's good, I have nothing else to tell you but that it is a proairesis of a certain kind.

*'Discourses' I,8,16*

( $P^4$ ) 5 - Since the man is free to whom everything happens according to his proairesis and whom nobody can hamper.

*'Discourses' I,12,9*

( $P^4$ ) 6 - [The seer] takes them, spreads them out and explains: "Man, you have a proairesis by nature unhampered and unconstrained. Here, in the entrails, this has been written.

*'Discourses' I,17,21*

( $P^4$ ) 7,8 - Again, then, your judgment constrained you, that is, proairesis constrained proairesis.

*'Discourses' I,17,26 (twice)*

( $P^4$ ) 9 - For if the greatest harm is indeed the loss of the greatest things, and in each person the greatest thing is the proairesis as it is needed, and of this very thing one is dispossessed, why are you still embittered against him?

*'Discourses' I,18,8*

( $P^4$ ) 10 - "But the tyrant will fetter"- What? The leg. - "But he will take off"- What? The neck. What will he neither fetter nor take off? The proairesis. For this reason the ancients prescribed "Recognize yourself".

*'Discourses' I,18,17*

( $P^4$ ) 11 - His judgments, instead, are the ones that disconcert him. For when the tyrant tells someone "I'll chain your leg", the man who holds in honor his own leg says "No, have mercy upon me"; while the man who holds in honor his own proairesis says "If it appears more advantageous to you, fetter it".

*'Discourses' I,19,8*

( $P^4$ ) 12 - Of all things, some are in our exclusive power while others are not in our exclusive power. In our exclusive power are proairesis and all the proairetic works; not in our exclusive power are the body, the parts of the body, estate, parents, brothers, offspring, fatherland, in short our mates.

*'Discourses' I,22,10*

( $P^4$ ) 13 - If this is true and we are neither slacking nor merely playing a part when we say that man's good and evil are in our proairesis while all the rest is nothing to us; why are we still disconcerted, why do we still fear?

*'Discourses' I,25,1*

( $P^4$ ) 14,15 - The substance of the good is a proairesis of a certain kind; and of the evil is a proairesis of a certain kind.

*'Discourses' I,29,1 (twice)*

( $P^4$ ) 16 - What are, then, the external objects? They are subject matters for the proairesis, and dealing with them it

hits the center of it's own good or evil.

*'Discourses' I,29,2*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 17,18 - How will our proairesis hit the mark of its good? If it does not become infatuated with the subject matters. For the judgments on subject matters, if they are right make our proairesis good; if they are crooked and perverted make it evil.

*'Discourses' I,29,3 (twice)*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 19 - "Bringing fear upon him", he says, "I shall overcome him". You ignore that the judgment overcame itself and was not overcome from something else; nothing else can overcome proairesis except it itself.

*'Discourses' I,29,12*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 20 - "Come, you, and bear witness for Me. For you are worth to be promoted by Me as a witness. Is any of the objects external to proairesis either good or evil? Do I damage anyone? Did I make each person's benefit in power of other people or in his exclusive power?"

*'Discourses' I,29,47*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 21 - "Tell also what things seemed to you to be goods". "Proairesis and the use of impressions as it must be". "And to what end?" "To follow you".

*'Discourses' I,30,4*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 22 - For if the evil lies in an evil proairesis, only to this regard it is worth to use caution; and if what is aproairetic and not in our exclusive power is nothing to us, one must use courage towards it.

*'Discourses' II,1,6*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 23,24 - For if one transposes his own caution where proairesis and the deeds of proairesis are, together with being cautious to want something he will also have his aversion in his exclusive power. If, on the contrary, he transposes his own caution there where lies what is not in our exclusive power and is aproairetic, having his aversion turned to things that are in power of other people he will necessarily fear, he will be unstable and disconcerted.

*'Discourses' II,1,12 (twice)*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 25 - Because if you dispose to keep your proairesis in accord with the nature of things, all safety is yours, every facility is yours, you have no trouble.

*'Discourses' II,2,2*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 26 - "External objects are not in my exclusive power; proairesis is in my exclusive power. Where shall I seek the good and the evil? Inside myself, in what is my own". About what is another's, never name it good or evil, benefit or damage or anything else of this sort.

*'Discourses' II,5,5*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 27 - What then? Must you use these external objects carelessly? Not at all. For this behavior is an evil for our proairesis and, because of this, is something not in accord with the nature of things.

*'Discourses' II,5,6*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 28 - Tribune and prison are both a place: the tribune an elevated one; the prison a wicked one. But our proairesis can be guarded equal, if you dispose to guard it equal, in each of these two places.

*'Discourses' II,6,25*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 29 - Analyze who you are. In the first place you are a human being, that is a creature who has nothing more dominant than his proairesis and who has the rest subordinated to it, being [the proairesis] itself neither servant nor subordinate.

*'Discourses' II,10,1*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 30,31 - For if the good is in proairesis and the evil is, in the same way, in proairesis, notice if what you say is not something of this sort....

*'Discourses' II,10,25 (twice)*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 32 - Why do we fancy nothing of this sort and instead, where there is some impairment of our body or of our estate, there we count this as a damage; and where the impairment affects our proairesis, we count that as no damage?

*'Discourses' II,10,27*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 33 - And we want nothing else but this. Yet whether we will have our proairesis self respecting and faithful or shameless and faithless, this we are not even near to quarrel about, except in school only and so far as petty discourses are involved.

*'Discourses' II,10,29*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 34 - When some people hear these discourses: that a man ought to be steadfast and that proairesis is something free and unconstrained by nature while everything else is hampered, is constrained, is servant, is another's; they fancy that they must remain inviolably fixed to any of their determinations.

*'Discourses' II,15,1*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 35,36 - Where is the good? -In proairesis- Where is the evil? -In proairesis- Where is the odious? -In the aproairetic things-

*'Discourses' II,16,1 (twice)*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 37 - For where the "I" and the "mine" are, there is necessary for the creature to lean. If "I and mine" are in the flesh, the dominant power has to be there; if "I and mine" are in the proairesis, the dominant power has to be in it; if they are in the external objects, the dominant power has to be in these.

*'Discourses' II,22,19*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 38 - If, therefore, I am where my proairesis is, in this way only I'll be a friend and a son and a father as one ought to be. For it will be my interest to keep the faithful, self respecting man, the man able to tolerate another's intemperance, able to abstain from intemperance, to co-work and guard his social relationships.

*'Discourses' II,22,20*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 39 - So, do not inquire what the others inquire about: whether they have the same parents, or have been reared at the same time and from the same pedagogue; but only where they set their interest, whether externally or in their proairesis.

*'Discourses' II,22,26*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 40 - If, on the contrary, you hear these men truly think the good to be only where proairesis is, where the right use of the impressions is, do not meddle any more whether they are son and father or brothers or have gone to school together for a long time and are fellows. Once you have

recognized this only, declare confidently that they are friends, as you can declare that they are faithful, that they are just men.

*'Discourses' II,22,29*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 41 - "What then", someone says, "if the business stands like this, can ministers be better than that to which they serve as ministers? Can the horse be better than the horseman, the dog than the hunter, the instrument than the lyre-player, the manservants than the king?" What is it that makes use of the other faculties? The proairesis.

*'Discourses' II,23,16*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 42,43 - What does take care of everything? The proairesis. What is it that clears out the whole man, sometimes by hunger, sometimes by a noose, sometimes down the cliffs? The proairesis.

*'Discourses' II,23,17 (twice)*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 44,45 - What is by nature able to hinder the faculty of sight? Both the proairesis and what is aproairetic. The same is true for the faculty of hearing and in the same way for the faculty of expression. But what is by nature able to hinder the proairesis? Nothing of what is aproairetic but [proairesis] itself, when it is perverted. For this reason the [proairesis] becomes the only vice or the only virtue.

*'Discourses' II,23,19 (twice)*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 46 - Your flesh or your proairesis? You [Epicurus] acknowledge, then, to have something better than the flesh and are you not mad? Are you indeed so blind and deaf?

*'Discourses' II,23,22*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 47 - Since a man must come to his completion through the discourse and a certain transmission of knowledge; since he must purify his own proairesis and structure rightly the faculty that uses the impressions; since the transmission of knowledge necessarily happens through general principles and a certain elocution and a variety and subtlety of form of these principles....

*'Discourses' II,23,40*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 48 - Because you are neither a piece of meat nor hairs but proairesis: if you have this beautiful, then you will be beautiful.

*'Discourses' III,1,40*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 49 - But see what Socrates says to the most handsome and youthfully wonderful of all, to Alcibiades: "Try, then, to be beautiful". What does he tell him? "Shape your hair and pluck your leg's hair?" Far from it. But: "Adorn your proairesis, eradicate your insipient judgments".

*'Discourses' III,1,42*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 50 - Let's look at your judgments too. Is it not plain that you set to nothing your proairesis and that you look outside, to the aproairetic things, to what So-and-so will say and who you will seem to be, whether people will think you a scholar, or one who has read Chrysippus or Antipater?

*'Discourses' III,2,13*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 51 - If, however, we set the good in a right proairesis, the very fact of keeping our relationships becomes a good and furthermore the one who recedes from certain external objects hits the center of the good.

*'Discourses' III,3,8*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 52 - What then? Upon entering the theatre, ought one say: "Come on, let Sophron be crowned"? No, but that: "Come on, let me keep, on this subject matter, my proairesis in accord with the nature of things".

*'Discourses' III,4,9*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 53 - For at home, were you exempt from disease? Are you not considering whether you do here any of those things that bring to a rectification of your proairesis? For if you are accomplishing nothing, it is superfluous that you came here.

*'Discourses' III,5,2*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 54 - As for me, may it happen that I am seized while nothing else I am taking care of but my proairesis, that it may be self-controlled, unhampered, unconstrained, free.

*'Discourses' III,5,7*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 55 - For we must have ready at hand these two general principles: that outside of proairesis nothing is either good or evil; and that one must not take the lead of the things but stick to them.

*'Discourses' III,10,18*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 56 - Your father has these certain things ready. Against whom? Against, perhaps, your proairesis? And whence can he? But against your body, against your petty estate. You are safe; it is not against you.

*'Discourses' III,18,3*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 57 - For no aproairetic thing can hamper or damage the proairesis; [proairesis] alone can hamper or damage itself.

*'Discourses' III,19,2*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 58 - Where, instead, are proairesis and the use of the impressions, there you will see that the Cynic has so many eyes that you will say Argus was blind in comparison with him.

*'Discourses' III,22,103*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 59 - Here is his great attention and energy; for the rest he snores flat on his back: complete peace. There is no robber of proairesis, no tyrant [of proairesis].

*'Discourses' III,22,105*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 60 - Every peculiar model is referred to the job of each person and to his proairesis, that is, that the citharist may act as a citharist, the carpenter as a carpenter, the philosopher as a philosopher, the orator as an orator.

*'Discourses' III,23,5*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 61 - If you dispose to have this, you will have it everywhere and will live confidently. Confident in what? In the only thing in which it's feasible to be confident: what is faithful, unhampered, what cannot be taken away, that is in your proairesis.

*'Discourses' III,26,24*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 62,63 - In short, remember that whatever you will honor outside of your proairesis, you have lost your proairesis. And outside of it there is not only an office but also the lack of an office, not only a commitment but also the leisure.

*'Discourses' IV,4,23 (twice)*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 64 - "My neighbor has thrown some stones!" Did you aber, then, did you? "But some things in my house were broken!" Are you, then, a vessel? No, but proairesis.

*'Discourses' IV,5,11*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 65 - But they will stick much closer to me!- Why do you say 'to me'? Can anyone damage your proairesis or prevent it to use the impressions that befall you in the way you have been born to do?

*'Discourses' IV,5,23*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 66 - But if our only good is proairesis as it ought to be, and the only evil is [proairesis] as it ought not to be, where is there any longer room for strife, where for reviling? About what? About things that are nothing to us? Against whom? Against ignorant people, against ill-fortuned people, against people who have been deceived in the greatest issues?

*'Discourses' IV,5,32*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 67 - To what ought I, then, pay attention?- In the first place to the universal principles and these have ready at hand. Neither sleep nor get up, neither drink nor eat nor confer with people separate from these principles: that no one is lord of another's proairesis and that good and evil are only in the [proairesis].

*'Discourses' IV,12,7*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 68 - It recommended me to myself and subordinated my proairesis to myself only, giving standards for its right use; and when I conform to these standards, in syllogisms I do not turn my mind towards any who claims otherwise; and in equivocal arguments I worry about no one.

*'Discourses' IV,12,12*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 69 - And do you want me to commend my affairs to you, to a human being who disparages his own proairesis, who wants to obtain small coins or some office or a promotion at court, even if you are going to slaughter your offspring as Medea did?

*'Discourses' IV,13,14*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 70 - If, therefore, you see someone who is eager for proairetic things and who has subordinated to them his own proairesis, know that this fellow has myriads of people who constrain him, who hamper him.

*'Discourses' IV,13,21*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 71,72 - When you are going to undertake a work, remind yourself which is the nature of the work. If you go away for a warm bath, put in front of you the events at the baths: those who sprinkle, those who jostle, those who revile, those who steal. And thus you will undertake the work more safely, if at once you will say: "I dispose to take a warm bath but also to keep my proairesis in accord with the nature of things". And behave in the same way for each work. For thus, if any hindrance to take a warm bath happens, you will have ready at hand that: "Yet I did not dispose only this, but also to keep my proairesis in accord with the nature of things; and I'll not so keep it, if I am vexed at the events".

*'The Manual' E4 (twice)*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 73,74 - Sickness is a hindrance of the body, not of proairesis, if our [proairesis] does not dispose so. Lameness is a hindrance of the leg, not of proairesis. And say this for each occurrence, for you will find that it hinders something else but not you.

*'The Manual' E9 (twice)*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 75 - If you dispose to profit, submit to seem crazy

and silly with regard to external objects and do not decide to seem someone who has science of anything. And if some people think that you are somebody, distrust yourself. For know that it is not easy to guard your proairesis working in accord with the nature of things and the external objects, but if you take care of the first one it's inevitable for you to neglect the others.

*'The Manual' E13*

(P<sup>4</sup>) 76 - The proper deeds are generally calibrated upon our social relationships. He is a father: what is dictated is to take care of him, to give him way in everything, to tolerate him if he reviles, if he smites. "But he is a bad father". Were you made by nature kinsman to a good father? No, but simply to a father. "My brother does me wrong". Keep, therefore, your position with regard to him and do not consider what he does but what you do in order to have your proairesis in accord with the nature of things. For another person will not damage you, if you do not dispose so. And then you will have been damaged, when you conceive that you are damaged. In like manner, then, you will find what is the proper deed of a neighbor, of a citizen, of a general, if you accustom yourself to know the general principles of your social relationships.

*'The Manual' E30*

General total for the term 'Proairesis': 76 times

### **3.2. Epictetus Uses the Term Proairetic in the Following Passages of His Works**

(P<sup>2</sup>) 1 - Having learned from the philosophers that the desire is towards good things and the aversion is towards evil things, and having also learned that serenity and self control do not otherwise ensue for the man unless he gets an unflinching desire and an unshaking aversion; he who profits has fully removed desire from himself or has deferred it, and uses aversion only towards what is proairetic.

*'Discourses' I,4,1*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 2 - Do you see that in this topic what is proairetic is for you unhampered, unconstrained, unimpeded?

*'Discourses' I,17,23*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 3 - Who, then, suddenly made him a prudent man? This is to hold in honor something else than what is proairetic.

*'Discourses' I,19,23*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 4 - Of all things, some are in our exclusive power while others are not in our exclusive power. In our exclusive power are proairesis and all the proairetic works; not in our exclusive power are the body, the parts of the body, estate, parents, brothers, offspring, fatherland, in short our mates.

*'Discourses' I,22,10*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 5 - Yes, but if I set the good somewhere here, in what is proairetic, all people will mock me. Some old hoary fellow with many golden rings will come along and, after shaking his head, will say: "Listen, my offspring: one ought to philosophize, but one ought also to keep one's brain: these are stupid things.

*'Discourses' I,22,18*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 6 - What a paradox do the philosophers urge if they

say: "Where the aproairetic things are involved, there be courageous; where what is proairetic is involved, there be cautious?"

*'Discourses' II,1,5*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 7 - So we too, where do we use fear? In front of the aproairetic things. Again, about what do we conduct ourselves with courage as if there were nothing terrible in it? About what is proairetic.

*'Discourses' II,1,9*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 8 - For this reason I often say: "Study these things and have ready at hand the knowledge of what you must face with courage and of what you must dispose yourselves towards with caution, because in the face of the aproairetic we must be courageous and in the face of what is proairetic cautious".

*'Discourses' II,1,29*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 9 - And thus the paradox that at the same time we must be both cautious and courageous will no longer appear either impossible or a paradox, because we must be courageous in the face of the aproairetic things and cautious about what is proairetic.

*'Discourses' II,1,40*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 10 - After this know that you are a brother too. For this role one is bound to give way, to ready obedience, to kindly speech, to never lay claim to anything aproairetic in contrast with your brother but to turn it over with pleasure, so that you have more in what is proairetic.

*'Discourses' II,10,8*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 11 - If, then, aproairetic things are neither good nor evil while all that is proairetic is in our exclusive power and no one can deprive us of it nor secure upon us such of it as we do not dispose: where is there still a place for anxiety?

*'Discourses' II,13,10*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 12 - Which of those knows what it is and what it is worth? Which of those knows when one has to use it and when not? Which is the faculty that opens and closes the eyes and turns them away from things from which they have to be turned away and moves them towards other things? The faculty of sight? No, but the proairetic faculty. Which one shuts and opens the ears?

*'Discourses' II,23,9*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 13 - Thanks to which faculty do we become officious and nosey parkers or, again, unmoved by a discourse? Thanks to the faculty of hearing? No, thanks to none other but to the proairetic faculty.

*'Discourses' II,23,10*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 14 - What else does the open eye do but see? Yet whether one must look at the wife of someone and how, which faculty tells this? The proairetic faculty.

*'Discourses' II,23,12*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 15 - Whether we must trust or distrust the words that are said and, if we trust them, to be provoked or not, what tells us this? Is it not the proairetic faculty?

*'Discourses' II,23,13*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 16 - But whether it is better to speak or to keep silent, to speak in this way or that way, whether this is fitting or unfitting, the time and the need of each thing, which other

faculty does say this but the proairetic faculty? Do you want, then, that this faculty comes to vote against itself?

*'Discourses' II,23,15*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 17 - What then? Does anyone disparage the other faculties? Far from it. Does anyone say that there is no need or promotion outside of the proairetic faculty? Far from it. This would be crazy, impious, ungrateful towards Matter Immortal. Matter Immortal gives back to each its own value.

*'Discourses' II,23,23*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 18 - Yet because some things are better we must not disparage the utility that is provided by the other things too. Also the faculty of expression has a certain value, but not so big as the proairetic faculty.

*'Discourses' II,23,25*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 19 - But if you try to know from me: "Of the things that are which one is, then, the most powerful?" What to say? The faculty of expression? I cannot; but the proairetic faculty, when it becomes right.

*'Discourses' II,23,27*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 20 - We must train ourselves especially in this form of exercise. At once, stepping forth at dawn, inquire about whom you see, inquire about whom you hear and answer like to a question. What did you see? A handsome youngster or a handsome wench? Apply the standard. Is it an aproairetic or aproairetic thing? An aproairetic one. Remove it outside.

*'Discourses' III,3,14*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 21 - What did you see? Someone mourning over the end of his offspring? Apply the standard. Death is an aproairetic thing. Remove it out. Did you meet a consul? Apply the standard: what kind of thing is a consulship? Aproairetic or proairetic? Aproairetic: remove this too, it has no value; throw it away, it is nothing to you.

*'Discourses' III,3,15*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 22 - These are all judgments and nothing else, and judgments on aproairetic things as good and evil ones. Let one transpose these judgments on what is proairetic and I warrant him that he will be stable, whatever be the state of what surrounds him.

*'Discourses' III,3,19*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 23 - If, instead, you understand that you are throwing away certain insipient judgments and are acquiring other judgments in their place; that you have transposed your station from aproairetic things to what is proairetic; that if you say "woe's me" you are not saying this because of your father or your brother but "because of me", do you any longer compute sickness?

*'Discourses' III,5,4*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 24 - He ventures only in this contest, the one about what is proairetic. How, then, is he going to be but unconquerable?

*'Discourses' III,6,7*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 25,26,27 - And are the goods of our soul aproairetic or aproairetic? -Proairetic- Is the soul's pleasure, then, proairetic? -Yes, he said-

*'Discourses' III,7,5 (thrice)*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 28,29 - He grieved at this. "Proairetic thing, it is an evil". He stood firm generously. "Proairetic, it is a good

thing”.

*‘Discourses’ III,8,3 (twice)*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 30 - “Whoever believes good anything else but what is proairetic, let him envy, crave, flatter, be disconcerted. Whoever believes evil anything else, let him grieve, mourn, moan, have ill fortune”.

*‘Discourses’ III,11,2*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 31 - For who is the practiser? The fellow who studies to not use his desire and to use his aversion only towards what is proairetic, and who studies more the things that are hard to execute. And so one has to exercise more in something and another in something else.

*‘Discourses’ III,12,8*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 32 - When some disconcerting news is reported to you, have ready at hand that no news are about proairetic things.

*‘Discourses’ III,18,1*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 33 - First, in what concerns you, you must no longer appear similar in nothing to what you do now, and bring no more charges to god or man. You must totally remove desire and transpose your aversion only onto what is proairetic. You must not have anger, fury, envy, pity. No wench, no bit of reputation, no young boy, no small cake must appear wonderful to you.

*‘Discourses’ III,22,13*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 34 - In this way you will not be able to control fear and disconcertment. What is grief for you? For the fear of things expected becomes grief when they are present. What do you still crave? Now you have a well proportioned and reconstituted desire of what is proairetic because you know that this is beautiful and present; and you desire nothing of what is aproairetic, so that a certain element which is unreasonable, impetuous, urgent beyond measure may not have a place.

*‘Discourses’ IV,1,84*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 35 - How will this happen?- How else than by examining the impulses and the government of Matter Immortal? What has It given me that is mine and unconditioned? What did It forsake for Itself? It gave me what is proairetic, It has placed this in my exclusive power, unhindered, unhampered. But the body made of clay, how could Matter Immortal have made it unhampered? Matter Immortal, then, subordinated my estate, furniture, house, offspring, wife to the regular cycle of the whole.

*‘Discourses’ IV,1,100*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 36 - But we would say: “Today I used impulse as it is prescribed by the philosophers, I did not use desire, I used aversion only towards what is proairetic, I was not terrified by So-and-so, I was not discountenanced by So-and-so, I trained my ability to tolerate another's intemperance, my ability to abstain from it, my cooperativity”, and in this way we should thank Matter Immortal for what one ought to thank It.

*‘Discourses’ IV,4,18*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 37-And how shall I get rid of it?- Did you not often hear that you ought to remove totally your desire and turn your aversion only towards what is proairetic? That you

ought to give up everything: body, estate, fame, books, turmoil, offices, lack of office? For where you are inclined there you are a servant, you are subordinated, you become hampered, constrained, entirely in the power of others.

*‘Discourses’ IV,4,33*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 38 - Besides this, the rational creature, being by nature generous, magnanimous, free, sees that of the things which are around him, something is unhampered and in his exclusive power, while something else is hampered and in another's power. Unhampered is what is proairetic, hampered what is aproairetic.

*‘Discourses’ IV,7,8*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 39 - Now, the outcome of any business is it not an aproairetic thing? -Yes- The substance of the good and of the evil is it not proairetic? -Yes- You have, then, the power to use everything that comes about in accord with the nature of things. Can anyone hamper you? -No one can-

*‘Discourses’ IV,10,8*

(P<sup>2</sup>) 40 - In the first place you must, then, have ready at hand these principles and do nothing apart from them, but to have your soul intent upon this target: to pursue none of the external things, nothing of what is another's but, as the one with the power ordained, to pursue at any cost what is proairetic and the rest as it is given.

*‘Discourses’ IV,12,15*

General total for the term ‘Proairetic’: 40 times

### 3.3. Epictetus Uses the Term Aproairetic in the Following Passages of His Works

(NOT) 1 - For if he averts something aproairetic, he knows that some time he will stumble on it in spite of his aversion and will have ill fortune.

*‘Discourses’ I,4,2*

(NOT) 2 - If indeed one had to be deceived in order to learn that none of the external and aproairetic objects is for us, I would dispose for me this deception; through which I would live thereafter serene and undisconcerted, while you yourselves will see in it what you want to see.

*‘Discourses’ I,4,27*

(NOT) 3 - Who is, then, the unconquerable man? He whom nothing aproairetic can daze. And coming to each of the circumstances, well then, I decipher it as in the case of the athlete: “This fellow dislodged the first opponent appointed to him by lot”.

*‘Discourses’ I,18,21*

(NOT) 4 - What then? When judgments of a different kind, about what is aproairetic as being good or evil, lie underneath, it is inevitable for human beings to look after the tyrants.

*‘Discourses’ I,19,16*

(NOT) 5 - Did I learn, then, nothing else? I learned to see that all that happens, if it be aproairetic, is nothing to me.

*‘Discourses’ I,29,24*

(NOT) 6,7 - “Tell, then, what is indifferent”. “What is aproairetic”. “Tell also the consequences”. “The aproairetic is nothing to me”.

*‘Discourses’ I,30,3 (twice)*

(NOT) 8 - Now, instead, what is strange in what is said?

For if it is sound what has been often said and often demonstrated, namely that the substance of the good as well as that of the evil lies in the use of our impressions, while that which is aproairetic admits neither the nature of evil nor the nature of good....

*'Discourses' II,1,4*

(NOT) 9 - What a paradox do the philosophers urge if they say: "Where aproairetic things are involved, there be courageous; where proairetic things are involved, there be cautious?"

*'Discourses' II,1,5*

(NOT) 10 - For if the evil lies in an evil proairesis, only to this regard it is worth to use caution; and if what is aproairetic and not in our exclusive power is nothing to us, one must use courage towards it.

*'Discourses' II,1,6*

(NOT) 11 - So we too, where do we use fear? In front of the aproairetic things. Again, about what do we conduct ourselves with courage as if there were nothing terrible in it? About the proairetic things.

*'Discourses' II,1,9*

(NOT) 12 - To be deceived or to be reckless or to do something shameless or to desire something with a shameful crave makes no difference to us, if only we hit the mark in the aproairetic things. Where, instead, there are death or exile or pain or ill reputation, there is withdrawal, there is agitation.

*'Discourses' II,1,10*

(NOT) 13 - For if one transposes his caution there where proairesis and the deeds of proairesis are, together with being cautious to want something he will also have his aversion in his exclusive power. If, on the contrary, he transposes his caution there where lies what is not in our exclusive power and is aproairetic, having his aversion turned to things that are in power of other people he will necessarily fear, he will be unstable and disconcerted.

*'Discourses' II,1,12*

(NOT) 14 - For this reason I often say: "Study these things and have ready at hand the knowledge of what you must face with courage and of what you must dispose yourselves towards with caution, because in the face of what is aproairetic we must be courageous and in the face of what is proairetic, cautious".

*'Discourses' II,1,29*

(NOT) 15 - And all this with courage, relying on the One who has called you to do that, on What has judged you worth of this task, appointed to which you will exhibit what a rational ruling principle arrayed against aproairetic forces can do.

*'Discourses' II,1,39*

(NOT) 16 - And thus the paradox that at the same time we must be both cautious and courageous will no longer appear either impossible or a paradox, because we must be courageous in the face of the aproairetic things and cautious about the proairetic ones.

*'Discourses' II,1,40*

(NOT) 17 - After this know that you are a brother too. For this role one is bound to give way, to ready obedience, to

kindly speech, to never lay claim to anything aproairetic in contrast with your brother but to turn it over with pleasure, so that you have more in what is proairetic.

*'Discourses' II,10,8*

(NOT) 18 - And yet those things are lost by some external and aproairetic cause, while these are lost by our fault. Those are neither beautiful to have nor shameful to lose; while not to have and to lose these is shameful, it's disgraceful, it's a misfortune.

*'Discourses' II,10,16*

(NOT) 19 - If, then, aproairetic things are neither good nor evil while all proairetic things are in our exclusive power and no one can deprive us of them nor secure upon us such of them as we do not dispose: where is there still a place for anxiety?

*'Discourses' II,13,10*

(NOT) 20 - Where is the good? -In proairesis- Where is the evil? -In proairesis- Where is the odious? -In the aproairetic things-

*'Discourses' II,16,1*

(NOT) 21 - Give graciously your desire and your aversion to poverty in money and to money's wealth: you will fail, you will stumble on what you avert. Give them graciously to body's health: you will have ill fortune. To offices, honors, fatherland, friends, offspring, in short to anything aproairetic.

*'Discourses' II,17,24*

(NOT) 22 - For it is not the judgment of a man the one that makes them bite one another, revile, seize lonely places or market-places like beasts in the mountains, and show to have robbers' attitudes in law courts. Nor is the judgment of a man the one that makes people not masters of themselves, adulterers, corrupters. Nor the one that makes them responsible of the many other trespasses that human beings commit against each other because of this judgment and this judgment alone: to set themselves and what is their own in aproairetic things.

*'Discourses' II,22,28*

(NOT) 23,24 - What is by nature able to hinder the faculty of sight? Both the proairesis and what is aproairetic. The same is true for the faculty of hearing and in the same way for the faculty of expression. But what is by nature able to hinder the proairesis? Nothing of what is aproairetic but proairesis itself, when it is perverted. For this reason the proairesis becomes the only vice or the only virtue.

*'Discourses' II,23,19 (twice)*

(NOT) 25 - Let's look at your judgments too. Is it not plain that you set to nothing your proairesis and that you look outside, to the aproairetic things, to what So-and-so will say and who you will seem to be, whether people will think you a scholar, or one who has read Chrysippus or Antipater? If Archedemus too, you have really everything!

*'Discourses' III,2,13*

(NOT) 26,27 - We must train ourselves especially in this form of exercise. At once, stepping forth at dawn, inquire about whom you see, inquire about whom you hear and answer like to a question. What did you see? A handsome youngster or a handsome wench? Apply the standard. Is it an

aproairetic or proairetic thing? Aproairetic. Remove it outside.

*'Discourses' III,3,14 (twice)*

(NOT) 28,29,30 - What did you see? Someone mourning over the end of his offspring? Apply the standard. Death is an aproairetic thing. Remove it out. Did you meet a consul? Apply the standard: what kind of thing is a consulship? Aproairetic or proairetic? Aproairetic: remove this too, it has no value; throw it away, it is nothing to you.

*'Discourses' III,3,15 (thrice)*

(NOT) 31 - These are all judgments and nothing else, and judgments on aproairetic things as good and evil ones. Let one transpose these judgments on proairetic things and I warrant him that he will be stable, whatever be the state of what surrounds him.

*'Discourses' III,3,19*

(NOT) 32 - If, instead, you understand that you are throwing away certain insipid judgments and are acquiring other judgments in their place; that you have transposed your station from aproairetic things to proairetic ones; that if you say "woe's me" you are not saying this because of your father or your brother but "because of me", do you any longer compute sickness?

*'Discourses' III,5,4*

(NOT) 33 - And are the goods of our soul proairetic or aproairetic? -Proairetic- Is the soul's pleasure, then, proairetic? -Yes, he said-

*'Discourses' III,7,5*

(NOT) 34,35,36 - Because they too propound us some questions. The son of So-and-so died. Answer: "Aproairetic thing, it is not an evil". His father left behind So-and-so disinherited. What do you think? "Aproairetic, not evil". Caesar condemned him. "Aproairetic, not evil".

*'Discourses' III,8,2 (thrice)*

(NOT) 37 - Since it is impossible to have an unflinching desire and an unstumbling aversion without great and constant practice, know that if you allow your practice to be turned outwards, to the aproairetic things, you will neither have a desire right on the mark nor an unstumbling aversion.

*'Discourses' III,12,5*

(NOT) 38 - And so we acquire no fine habit nor attention nor thoughtfulness upon ourselves and surveillance: "How do I use the impressions that befall me? In accord with the nature of things or not in accord with the nature of things? How do I answer them? As one ought or as one ought not? Do I say to aproairetic things that they are nothing to me?"

*'Discourses' III,16,15*

(NOT) 39 - For no aproairetic thing can hamper or damage the proairesis but only proairesis itself.

*'Discourses' III,19,2*

(NOT) 40 - The man, besides being by nature high-minded and able to despise everything that is aproairetic, has had also the quality of not being rooted nor clutched to the earth but to hasten from place to place, sometimes for some urgent needs, sometimes also for the vision itself.

*'Discourses' III,24,12*

(NOT) 41 - Once you have disparaged the external and aproairetic objects and believed none of them as yours, and

believed yours, instead, only to determine, to conceive, to impel, to desire, to avert as a virtuous man; where is there any more place for flattery, for a slave-minded appreciation of yourself?

*'Discourses' III,24,56*

(NOT) 42 - And then if you turn your mind to yourself and look for the quarter from which what has occurred comes, straightaway you will recall to memory: "From the quarter of what is aproairetic, of what is not mine; what is it, then, to me?"

*'Discourses' III,24,106*

(NOT) 43 - And of this Zeus disposed to take a demonstration in my person, and also to recognize if He has a soldier as ought to be, a citizen as ought to be and to promote me as a witness about the aproairetic things: "Behold that at random you fear, that like fools you crave for what you crave. Do not seek your goods outside, seek them in yourselves; otherwise you will not find them".

*'Discourses' III,24,112*

(NOT) 44 - In this way you will not be able to control fear and disconcertment. What is grief for you? For the fear of things expected becomes grief when they are present. What do you still crave? Now you have a well proportioned and reconstituted desire of what is proairetic because you know that this is beautiful and present; and you desire nothing of what is aproairetic, so that a certain element which is unreasonable, impetuous, urgent beyond measure may not have a place.

*'Discourses' IV,1,84*

(NOT) 45 - For as salutations and offices are external and aproairetic objects, so is also a book.

*'Discourses' IV,4,3*

(NOT) 46 - There is only one way to serenity (keep this judgment ready at hand at dawn, by day and by night): the detachment from aproairetic things, to believe none of them exclusively ours, to commit everything to our genius, to fortune; to make trustees of them those whom Zeus too has made trustees.

*'Discourses' IV,4,39*

(NOT) 47 - Have you not heard that there is only one way that brings to this: to give up aproairetic things, withdraw from them and acknowledge what is another's?

*'Discourses' IV,6,9*

(NOT) 48 - The fact, then, that another conceives something about you, of what class of things is it? -Aproairetic- Therefore is it nothing to you? -Nothing- But if you are still bit and disconcerted by this, do you think that you have been persuaded of what is good and what is evil?

*'Discourses' IV,6,10*

(NOT) 49 - Besides this, the rational creature, being by nature generous, magnanimous, free, sees that of the things which are around him, something is unhampered and in his exclusive power, while something else is hampered and in another's power. Unhampered is what is proairetic, hampered what is aproairetic.

*'Discourses' IV,7,8*

(NOT) 50 - If, however, he believes it to be in the external

and aproairetic objects, it is necessary for this creature to be hampered, hindered, subservient to those who have power over external and [aproairetic] objects, objects that he is infatuated with and that he fears.

*'Discourses' IV,7,10*

(NOT) 51 - All these are the utterances of people turned to aproairetic things. For who says: "How am I not to assent to the false? How am I not to bend away from the true?"

*'Discourses' IV,10,2*

(NOT) 52 - Now, the outcome of any business is it not an aproairetic thing? -Yes- The substance of the good and of the evil is it not proairetic? -Yes- You have, then, the power to use everything that comes about in accord with the nature of things. Can anyone hamper you? -No one can-

*'Discourses' IV,10,8*

(NOT) 53 - If, therefore, you see someone who is eager for aproairetic things and who has subordinated to them his own proairesis, know that this fellow has myriads of people who constrain him, who hamper him.

*'Discourses' IV,13,21*

General total for 'Aproairetic': 53 times

Grand Total: 169 times: - Proairesis: 76 times - Proairetic: 40 times - Aproairetic: 53 times.

## 4. A Conclusion

As our proairesis is free, infinite, impossible to be subordinated to other human faculties and impossible to be made servant to what is aproairetic, Epictetus rightly considers it the marvel of the marvels that Nature has been able till now to generate.

Let's follow him and listen to what he says in *'Discourses' I,17,20-27*. "I come therefore to this interpreter and sacrificer and ask him: "Examine for me the entrails, what they mean for me". He takes them, spreads them out and explains: "Man, you have a proairesis by nature unhampered and unconstrained. Here, in the entrails, this has been written. I'll show this to you, first in the topic of assent. Can anyone prevent you from nodding to the truth?" "No one can". "Can anyone constrain you to accept what is false?" "No one can". Do you see, then, that in this topic your proairesis is unhampered, unconstrained, unimpeded? Come on, is it otherwise in the topic of desire and impulse? What can overcome an impulse except another impulse? And what a desire and an aversion except another desire and another aversion?" "But", says someone, "if a person brings upon me the fear of death, he constrains me". "It is not what is brought

upon you that constrains you, but the fact that you think better for you to do something of that sort than to die. Again, then, your judgment constrained you; that is, proairesis constrained proairesis. For if Zeus had fashioned the peculiar part that he tore away and gave us, hampered or constrained by Himself or someone else, He would no longer be Matter Immortal nor It would take care of us in the right manner. This I find in the victims. This is meant to you. If you so dispose, you are free. If you so dispose, you will blame no one, you will bring charges to no one, everything will be in accord with both your intelligence and that of Zeus".

These are the words of Epictetus and, if I am now allowed to say a word as a Molecular Biologist, this is also exactly what is written in the double helix of human DNA.

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