

Characteristics of the Wise Man, 1-9 Rough Draft of Outline

Post by "Cassius" of May 29, 2020 at 3:20 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

who has achieved a level of mastery over their choices and rejections that allows them to continually experience the fullness of pleasure in their life.

That last part is the issue for me. If anyone deserved the title of "sage" it would be Epicurus, but at the end of his life he was himself in great pain, and I would not think he was any less a sage then than earlier. I therefore tend to think that there is always a difference between the concept and the reality in words like this, and I don't think I would say someone is not a sage simply because there are events that are impinging on their ability to experiencing nothing but pleasure at any particular time. And yet that is the reality for virtually anyone I am familiar with, so it would seem harmful to me to use a word as an indicia of a goal that cannot be fully reached all the time.

I can certainly see the usefulness of terms like "wise man" and so forth, but the closer those terms seem to get to idealized states, the less likely do I think that Epicurus would have agreed that the terms are helpful rather than harmful.

I think this is an area where I sense the tension between conceptualization and reality, and I sense that Epicurus would have been at war with words that set false expectations. Kind of like the quote about walking around uselessly talking about the meaning of "good." That's the sense in which a word like "sage" would bother me unless strictly limited in meaning. Another analogy: Living as "gods among men" being a useful term while strictly defining "gods" as real rather than supernatural beings.