

Emotionlessness? The Epicurean View Is the Deeper Experience of Emotion!

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We frequently get into discussions in which some people contend that the goal of life is to achieve implacable emotionlessness. The Epicurean view of "tranquility" does not require this, because the meaning of tranquility consistent with the rest of Epicurean philosophy is better understood as "unbroken" and "smooth." In support of this we know that Epicurus called his students to "continuous pleasure." Under the influence of Stoic hostility to emotion, however, many people exalt emotionlessness as the goal. They argue that avoidance of pain is the true goal, and that therefore emotionlessness is superior to the joys and ordinary pleasures of life.

In response to those contentions, I frequently cite the following passage on "feelings" from Diogenes Laertius, and it is important to point out how this passage links to even more fundamental Epicurean doctrine. The graphic below shows the Bailey version of two passages, with the Greek original of the payoff passage. Think carefully about the implications of this linkage: Not only should we never forget that emotion (passion / feelings / pleasure / pain) are not a ****hindrance**** to wisdom -- more importantly, the wise man will experience these passions more deeply than other men! That is because emotions/passions/pleasure/pain are the ****guides of life****. OF COURSE Epicureans will take the OPPOSITE view of the Stoics.

Epicureans will experience passions MORE DEEPLY than other men, because emotions/passions/pleasure/pain are Canonical foundation of all that we decide to choose and to avoid!

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