

Is the Epicurean Always Happy?

Post by "Cassius" of February 18, 2024 at 5:16 AM

Kalosyni the question of whether we should regard happiness as something that "comes and goes" is pretty much what we are grappling with.

[Quote from Diogenes Laertius](#)

[122] They hold that faults are not all of equal gravity, that health is a blessing to some, but indifferent to others, that courage does not come by nature, but by a calculation of advantage. That friendship too has practical needs as its motive: one must indeed lay its foundations (for we sow the ground too for the sake of crops), but it is formed and maintained by means of community of life among those who have reached the fullness of pleasure. They say also that there are two ideas of happiness, complete happiness, such as belongs to a god, which admits of no increase, and the happiness which is concerned with the addition and subtraction of pleasures.

One would think that if happiness can come and go, then being under torture would be one of the times when happiness "goes," but if Epicurus indeed said that even under torture the wise man can consider himself to be happy, then it looks like Epicurus may not have viewed happiness as something that the wise will see "go."

[Quote from Diogenes Laertius](#)

[118] And even if the wise man be put on the rack, he is happy.

We're going to be discussing these issues further as we proceed in Book 2.

It may be that one's mix of stimulative pleasures and pains changes constantly, but if you are wisely philosophical about life then you are constantly appreciating that you are alive and that certain parts of your mind and body are functioning well even while others are not, and you consider yourself happy no matter how bad the temporary painful stimulations are because, all things considered, you focus on the many types of pleasures available to you while you are alive, and you realize that stimulative pains are short if intense and manageable if long.