

Explaining In Summary Form How A Man In Extreme Pain Can Be Said To Be "Happy"

Post by "Cassius" of April 20, 2024 at 12:12 PM

Here is one place this is referenced in On Ends Book 2. Cicero is not letting Torquatus get in a word here, but the tone of the attack seems to indicate that in some way something is being maintained that would justify Laertius' statement -- though possibly not with "happy"

inconsistent; for while he places his supreme good in pleasure, he refuses to allow that pleasure can reach a greater height in a life of boundless extent, than in one limited and moderate in length. He who places good entirely in virtue can say that happiness is consummated by the consummation of virtue, since he denies that time brings additions to his supreme good; but when a man supposes that happiness is caused by pleasure, how are his doctrines to be reconciled, if he means to affirm that pleasure is not heightened by duration? In that case, neither is pain. Or, though all the most enduring pains are also the most wretched, does length of time not render pleasure more enviable? What reason then has Epicurus for calling a god, as he does, both happy and eternal? If you take away his eternity, Jupiter will be not a whit happier than Epicurus, since both of them are in the enjoyment of the supreme good, which is pleasure. *Oh, but our philosopher is subject to pain as well.* Yes, but he sets it at nought; for he says that, if he were being roasted, he would call out *how sweet this is!* In 89 what respect then is he inferior to the god, if not in respect of eternity? And what good does eternity bring but the highest form of pleasure, and that prolonged for ever? What boots it then to use high sounding language unless your language be consistent? On bodily pleasure (I will add mental, if you like, on the understanding that it also springs, as you believe, from the body) depends the life of happiness. Well, who can guarantee the wise man that this pleasure will be permanent? For the circumstances that give rise to pleasures are not within the control of the wise man, since your happiness is not dependent on wisdom herself, but on the objects which wisdom procures with a view to pleasure. Now all such objects are external to us, and what is external is in the power of chance. Thus fortune becomes lady paramount over happiness, though Epicurus says she to a small extent only crosses the path of the wise man.

XXVIII. *Come, you will say to me, these are small matters.* 90