

Does The Wise Man Groan and Cry Out When On The Rack / Under Torture / In Extreme Pain?

Post by "Cassius" of June 17, 2025 at 8:20 PM

And I think the same mistaken estimation of Epicurus ' views of "happiness" is why Cosma Raimondi apparently failed to recognize that Epicurus was taking the same position as the Stoics took, albeit with drastically different definitions of the term "happiness."

It's going to take a lot of adjustment in the minds of many people who think that Epicurus' highest priority was to exclude every pain from life, and that their way to happiness is to live minimally and ascetically so as to never let any pain intrude.

Instead, it appears to me that the fragments we have remaining on this issue point the way to seeing that Epicurus fully recognized that all pain cannot be removed from life in practice, and that in fact he was prepared to find happiness even during periods of great mental and physical pain.

We all know that it was important to Epicurus to emphasize that the goal is happiness rather than "virtue," but this understanding blows a hole in the superficial analysis that happiness is to be found in finding some kind of ambiguous "absence of pain." It points to a much deeper analysis of how pleasure and pain form the basis of happiness. As Diogenes of Oinoanda said, the question is not "what is the means to happiness" but "What is happiness?" And many writers on Epicurus have never really articulated what happiness really means and how it doesn't equate to "absence of pain."

Quote

Fragment 32:

If, gentlemen, the point at issue between these people and us involved inquiry into «what is the means of happiness?» and they wanted to say «the virtues» (which would actually be true), it would be unnecessary to take any other step than to agree with them about this, without more ado. But since, as I say, the issue is not «what is the means of happiness?» but «what is happiness and what is the ultimate goal of our nature?», I say both now and always, shouting out loudly to all Greeks and non-Greeks, that pleasure is the end of the best mode of life, while the virtues, which are inopportunately messed about by these people (being transferred from the place of the means to that of the end), are in no way an end, but the means to the end.