

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

Post by “Don” of May 29, 2020 at 2:19 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Sorry we just crossposted and I elaborated on my earlier post....

But I think your comment emphasizes my question. "Can't"? What does "can't" mean with a human nature possessing agency, and absence of fate?

Diogenes Laertius was compiling from who knows how many sources. Was this characteristic referring to Epicurus himself as written by one of his admiring students ("The Founder *can't* fall back into...")? Was it hyperbole ("Sages of *our* school *can't* fall back....")? The original original source could shed light on the issue you're bringing up... and, of course, we can't know that.

Your question made me go back and take another look at the text:

ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν ἅπαξ γενόμενον σοφὸν μηκέτι τὴν ἐναντίαν λαμβάνειν διάθεσιν μηδὲ πλάττειν ἐκόντα:

Those words are fairly adamant that it's a one-and-done (at least according to whatever source DL was using):

- ἅπαξ once, once only, once for all
- μηκέτι no more, no longer, no further
- μηδέ and not

That's a lot of "no, nay, never, no more" as far as falling back to the opposite disposition (opposite to being a sage).

I would also say that once you know something, you can't unknow it. Once you know the truth of the "true philosophy" you can't un-know it. It's part of your knowledge. So, while someone may behave as if they were ignorant or choose to act in ways contrary to their well-being or contrary to the truth, they can't do it (or say they're doing it) from a place of ignorance.