

From The "Golden Mean" to the "Summum Bonum" - Useful or Deceptive Frames of Reference?

Post by "Cassius" of February 13, 2022 at 11:32 PM

As a categorical answer for philosophical debate, I agree with you. And as a statement of the *guide* of life I would agree even more. But as a practical and discrete definition of "greatest good" that an average person can apply, I don't think that the single word is sufficient to convey the full meaning that Epicurus would convey if he were here to explain it in greater detail. And I am not yet convinced that he would even attempt to do so, beyond providing the example that he then used to show the futility of the Peripatetics efforts.

Also, in discussion tonight on chapter 3 of A Few Days In Athens, Kevin brought up that it was the Stoics who postulated a single unified and unitary good - virtue - which is something that in his view even Aristotle did not do. (Kevin suggested that Aristotle spoke in terms of many goods in Nichomachean Ethics.)

That makes me more concerned than ever that the search for a "greatest good" might not be Epicurean at all, despite Torquatus' framework.

Then there is the question of whether pleasure is a "unity" such that pleasure can be considered singly in a way similar to the way the Stoics considered virtue to be a unity. And that would implicate the PD which refers to "if pleasure could be condensed.....". I am still not confident what that saying means at all, much less whether he is implying an affirmative or negative answer.

I think this question probably has an answer that we can eventually come to terms on, but I am now thinking that being confident would require more knowledge of what the earlier philosopher had done with the issue of single versus multiple goods than I presently have myself.

When I combine the Lucretian reference to pleasure as a guide with what I see in the letter to Menoeceus, I see much more foundation for seeing pleasure as the GUIDE than I do for a specific "greatest good" analysis.

Cause frankly I am pretty sure I know what a "guide" is, but I am not at all sure I know what a "greatest good" is.