

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

Post by "Godfrey" of February 14, 2022 at 12:18 AM

If I remember correctly from *The Greeks on Pleasure*, the earlier philosophers were searching for the most pleasant life, not the greatest good.

Having said that, here are some of my notes from the book that might be pertinent (they're scattered throughout the book as shown by the reference numbers):

8.3.1 Eudoxus of Cnidus (via Aristotle): pleasure is the good because:

- *all animals, including men, pursue it, and what all pursue is the good*
- *all animals and men avoid pain as an evil, and what is opposite of an evil, pleasure, must be good*
- *pleasure is never for the sake of something else: no one ever asks "why enjoy yourself?"*
- *if pleasure is added to anything it makes it better.*

So at least some philosophers were discussing "the good".

11.3.10 Aristotle is saying that to enjoy something is to bring a telos to the doing: to do it to the full.

13.2.4 Telos is not a decisively purpose word like goal, but it equally means completion or perfection. Aristotle often uses it as actualization of natural potential.

FWIW, I tend to think along similar lines as [Cassius](#), that "the greatest good" is more of a philosophical argument carried on by others. In a materialist universe is it even possible to define a greatest good? For Epicurus I think that it's a functional guide as described in the Canon. But I'm wide open to correction on the issue!