

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

Post by "Cassius" of February 14, 2022 at 7:58 AM

As I wake up this morning I think it is important to address Don's argument about "Why the hesitancy?"

I am sure I have said written many times in the past, and will in the future, that pleasure is the greatest good. So why the hesitancy now?

It's not just a matter of wanting to agree or disagree with DeWitt, that's for sure. I think what we are sensing as we drill down on the question is that we need to figure out why Epicurus seemed to be treating this question carefully, which even Torquatus seems to admit when he said that Epicurus denied the necessity to construct a logical argument that pleasure is good (if that was the point of Torquatus comment).

Something similar seems to run through several questions. How can a thing be judged "good" unless it bring pleasure? Is virtue itself a pleasure, or is it something that brings pleasure?

No one would argue, I think, that the words pleasure and good mean exactly the same thing. They don't . We define pleasure as a feeling (I think) but what is it that tells us that something is "good"? Is there some other quality besides feeling pleasure that defines good? If so what is it?

I think Epicurus would clearly say that [pleasure is the guide of life](#) because we feel it to be so just like we see or hear.

But to say that pleasure is "good" or especially "the greatest good" seems to require some other criteria - almost mystical in nature - which I can see good reasons to be careful about.

Yes it is clear that pleasure is the only thing desirable in and of itself, and if we want to define "good" as desirable in and of itself" then pleasure is not only the highest but the only good. But is that so clearly what we mean by the word "good"?

We have the word guide which is clear. What is added by calling it "good" or calling pain "evil"?

When talking to Plato and Stoics who insist on talking about good, it is natural to answer "pleasure".

But very possibly Epicurus did not want to let THEM set the terms of the debate? And perhaps we should be careful as well?