

Various ideas of happiness

Post by "Don" of August 13, 2021 at 9:10 PM

Here's the relevant Dewitt passage from The New Hedonism chapter:

Quote

There was for Epicureans no preexistence, as Plato believed, and no afterlife, as the majority of mankind believed. Epicurus himself expressed the thought with stark directness, Vatican Saying 14: "We are born once and we cannot be born twice but to all eternity must be no more." Thus the supreme values must be sought between the limits of birth and death.

The specific teaching that life itself is the greatest good is to be drawn from Vatican Saying 42: "The same span of time includes both beginning and termination of the greatest good." If this seems to be a dark saying, the obscurity is dispelled by viewing it as merely a denial of belief in either pre-existence or the afterlife. As Horace wrote, concluding Epistle i.i6 with stinging abruptness, "Death is the tape-line that ends the race of life." Editors, however, misled by the summum bonum fallacy, equate "the greatest good" with pleasure and so are forced to emend. The change of a single letter does the trick but fundamental teaching is obliterated.¹

Footnote 1 reads: Editors follow Usener in changing ἀπολύσεως to ἀπολαύσεως, "termination" to "enjoyment."

Here's my copy of VS42:

42. At the very same time, the greatest good is created and the greatest evil is removed. ὁ αὐτὸς χρόνος καὶ τοῦ μεγίστου ἀγαθοῦ καὶ ἀπολύσεως <τοῦ κακοῦ>.

My copy has Dewitt's preferred ἀπολύσεως but still doesn't have his translation. He's leaving the "evil" του κακοῦ out so I'm not sure where that comes in in the editorial process. If you leave out the evil, it does read: At the same time, the greatest good is created and dispelled (terminated per DeWitt).