

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

Post by "Don" of February 13, 2022 at 9:01 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I have always realized that the word "happiness" and even "pleasure" to a degree are conceptual abstractions.

From my perspective, the big difference between "pleasure" and, say, "virtue" as the goal is that pleasure is first and primarily a biological reality, then the concept is built in that. Virtue as a concept is built in a foundation of sand at the seashore. There's nothing there. It's a concept on a concept. Pleasure and pain, in contrast, in some form are present in all forms of life down to amoebas and tardigrades. Even plants exhibit some aspect of this. Humans move from this biological imperative of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain for survival to extrapolate mental pleasure and pain, to build concepts on top of this imperative, but there is always that sound foundation upon which those concepts point back to.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

But it's also obvious that "pleasure" is no different from "hedone" or other words in other languages - it too is a concept for which we have to do some mental processing to identify what we mean when we use it

I would be careful about using phrases like "it too is a concept" in this context. It's maybe better to think of words as labels. All languages label reality in different ways, sometimes dividing it up finer or coarser. I'll have to go back again and read Book XXVIII.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

It is totally non-Epicurean to simply and blindly pursue "pleasure" without regard to what the action we engage in ultimately brings to us

Yep. That's the job of the Cyrenaics.