

To think of pleasure as the greatest good is an error; pleasure is the telos and is not to be confused with the greatest good: DeWitt

Post by "Eikadistes" of February 13, 2022 at 9:54 AM

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Quote

When life is the highest good- why does Epicurus then allow suicide? Why isn't the goal of Epicureanism then to prolong life to the maximum? Why do we then even pursue pleasure, when the highest good is to simply stay alive?

Epicurus resolutely rejects suicide under any circumstances:

"Even if the wise man should lose his eyesight, he will not end his whole life" (Wise Man Saying 17)

"He is a little man in all respects who has many good reasons for quitting life." (Vatican Saying 38)

Philodemus **does** argue that the length of the wise person's life should be maximized:

"And therefore the greatest good has been grasped by the person who has become wise and lived through a certain amount of time. Once his journey has achieved balance and consistency, it would be fitting to prolong it for an unlimited time, if such were possible; but should his life be limited, this will not be the deprivation of what has already been, but [sc. merely] a prevention of its continued presence." (Philodemus, *On Death*).

While De Witt is one of our greatest resources in modern scholarship, he takes liberties where he sees fit. His suggestion that Life (not Pleasure) is the Greatest Good does not align with my reading of Epicurus' original texts. Nowhere that I have found does Epicurus suggest that *agathon* ("the good") is *biou* or *bion* ("life", "living"). A life devoid of pleasure is not Good. I would argue to De Witt that a thing is only Good when Pleasure is present.

This is one of few places (to me) that De Witt's scholarship seems tinged by his own reading.