

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

Post by "Don" of February 15, 2022 at 10:38 PM

I don't understand the hesitancy to accept the word "good." In the the letter to Menoikeus alone, Epicurus uses "good" (ἀγαθός (agathos) or a form of it) 16 times, including:

133. He has diligently considered the end (τέλος) fixed by nature, and understands how easily the limit of good things (τῶν ἀγαθῶν περας) can be reached and attained, and how either the duration or the intensity of evils is but slight.

134: he believes that no good or evil is dispensed by chance to men so as to make life blessed, though it supplies the starting-point of great good and great evil.

In fact, the letter ends with the phrase: ἐν ἀθανάτοις ἀγαθοῖς: (live) "in/among eternal goods."

This quote from On Nature, Book 28, seems applicable: "For I do not doubt that you [, Metrodorus,] could cite many cases, from your own past observations, of certain people taking words in various ridiculous senses and indeed in every sense in preference to their actual linguistic meanings, whereas our own usage does not flout linguistic convention, nor do we, alter names with regard to the objects of perception."

It seems to me that the "actual linguistic meaning" of "good", at its most basic, is simply "that which provides pleasure." "Evil" is "that which causes pain."