

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

Post by "Cassius" of February 17, 2022 at 2:26 AM

Wow Don thanks for the lengthy summary.

Maybe I am jumping to a conclusion too early but it does seem to me that the ultimate issue is still in the area of "What was Epicurus own opinion of discussing an 'ultimate good?'.

He clearly did use similar terms himself. So no one can argue that he did not talk about the subject.

The issue is more a question of what limitations or caveats did he imply in his usage that differs from the other philosophers.

It seems to me that he differs not only in selecting his ultimate good ("pleasure") but in warning against placing too much weight on the discussion.

Like one of the Frances Wright quotes above, it seems to me that the other philosophers we're implying a "magic" to the discussion in that once the proved logically there was an ultimate good, they thought they had actually accomplished something.

I read Epicurus as saying that the exercise really accomplishes very little other than answering the philosophic question that the others insist on asking. Once you have identified "pleasure" as the answer to the logic game, you're still at the very beginning of your analysis of how to act in a particular situation.

Which tells me that Epicurus was much less interested in the application of the logic game than he was in identifying that there is no supernatural god, and no life after death, and no logical magic that answers the truly practical question of how to live. What we are left with is "feeling" in the same generic sense as is any other living animal. Our reasoning ability lets us pursue far more elaborate means of pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain than other animals, but we're ultimately all one big family of life doing the best we can with the time we have.