

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

Post by "Kalosyni" of February 18, 2022 at 1:07 PM

Further thoughts on "post-philosophy"...

If we can't or don't want to agree on exact definitions of words (because of several reasons) then how do we do philosophy?

1) We can't agree because certain words themselves are too abstract, and to give an exact definition will mean that we are no longer "doing philosophy" and instead we are now in the realm of psychology/self-help...which personally I am okay with that. But there will not be one "right way"...and I am okay with that too.

2) If we want to agree on one definition that will force us into trying to find the "right" answer or one "right" formula. Do we really think that there is always one right answer to everything?

So I would suggest that the best way out of this conundrum is to accept that we need to move toward a more open-ended way of approaching the world. This is not skepticism, because we can say given the assertion A... then if you do B or if you do C, then there is a likelihood that W, X, Y, or Z will result. The results are not infinite. They are dependent on the inputs. We can be certain that something will result from our actions, and there may be a higher likelihood of one result over the other, but sometimes we won't be able to know until we take action (so you have to choose based purely on which option has the greatest anticipated pleasure without depending on reason). In Buddhism there is a phrase called "skillful means" and we can learn from our previous experiences. You could then analyze backward and ask: "When do the best results happen? What causes the best results in decision making?"

On the flip side of what I just said about there not being one right way...is that as Epicureans we could take specific stands on things, as to which things in life bring the best pleasure and as well as the most pleasure over the longest time...so that would be: don't do such and such, but instead do X Y Z.