

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

Post by "Cassius" of February 19, 2022 at 11:10 PM

I wonder if we can begin to summarize practical takeaways from this thread. Would they include something like the following?

1 I think most or all of us are unimpressed that the idea of a golden mean is very helpful for much of anything, and it is likely more of a harmful oversimplification than a help.

2 To the extent that someone asks us to explain what was Epicurus' position on "the greatest good," would the explanation start with a statement that "greatest good was not Epicurus' preferred formulation, which instead was _____." (?)

3 That to the extent "greatest good" is taken to imply that there are multiple independent goods that can be ranked, Epicurus' viewpoint was distinctively that:

A. In order to be classified as good a thing must produce pleasure / remove pain, and

B. That these pleasures and pains are both bodily and mental so we are talking about an innumerable variety of pleasures and pains, not just immediate bodily sensations, and

C. That any ranking of pleasures and pains is substantially personal and contextual and although generalizations can be made (i.e., being boiled in oil is very unpleasant for most people) there is no final list that is absolute for everyone, and

D. That there are an innumerable number of things that are instrumental in producing pleasure, including the classical virtues and many other things. While there is no absolute ranking of these, Epicurus specially noted that among the most important are friendship and prudence.

If this is way off let's keep working and try again and see where we can improve it.