

An Epicurean Study of Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics

Post by "Cassius" of October 28, 2022 at 10:54 PM

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

Hmmm. I'll have to give DeWitt a more thorough scrutiny on this. Being alive certainly is an existential requirement for any telos -- albeit that is likely a trivial parsing ...

My take on this is that DeWitt is clearly onto something, but might not be framing it exactly as it should be. Not saying I can do better, but as you note, "being alive" *is* a requirement for any telos, or as I think DeWitt put it in a more memorable way, something like "pleasure has no meaning except to the living."

And I feel sure that Don would agree with that point -- that pleasure has meaning only to the living.

So the issue of clarity seems to me to come in unwinding what it means to use the phrase "the greatest good." The word "good" has multiple meanings or subtleties, just like the word "true" as Dewitt discusses, more successfully I think, in discussing "[all sensations are true](#)." And even "greatest" might be open to shades of meaning.

In the end my view of this is that DeWitt is making a very important point, but he's not explaining it as well as he does with "[all sensations are true](#)," The issue seems to me is to be that we need to attack the shades of meaning and ambiguities in the word "good" -- which we know that Epicurus was challenging given his other statement against walking around uselessly harping on the meaning of "good."

I give credit to DeWitt for highlighting the issue, even if he doesn't drive it home to an optimum conclusion.