

Summum bonum (Atheist & Bishop podcast)

Post by "Cassius" of June 24, 2023 at 11:26 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

I don't think you can answer "Why did you do that?" with "Because I'm alive" and have it have any real meaning.

I agree that we can't do that today with our current connotations. I think DeWitt is asking, however, whether that was not the direction that Epicurus was going, and once one "thinks like an Epicurean" in equating life in the absence of pain to be pleasure, then equating "being alive" with "pleasurable experience" is a natural association, and a good way to think.

This is one of the paragraphs we recently covered in "the new hedonism" chapter:

Quote

The extension of the name of pleasure to this normal state of being was the major innovation of the new hedonism. It was in the negative form, freedom from pain of body and distress of mind, that it drew the most persistent and vigorous condemnation from adversaries. The contention was that the application of the name of pleasure to this state was unjustified on the ground that two different things were thereby being denominated by one name. Cicero made a great to-do over this argument, but it is really superficial and captious. The fact that the name of pleasure was not customarily applied to the normal or static state did not alter the fact that the name ought to be applied to it; nor that reason justified the application; nor that human beings would be the happier for so reasoning and believing.

Just thinking out loud at the moment but I think this drift of thought is probably the explanation for DeWitt's viewpoint on the summum bonum, and I am not sure he's not right.