

Sunday November 2, 2025 - Zoom Discussion 12:30 PM EST - Continuation of Discussion of Nature of Pleasure

Post by "Eikadistes" of October 28, 2025 at 12:37 PM

[Quote from DaveT](#)

De Witt, in [Philosophy for the Millions](#), says: "In spite of this teaching it was not the doctrine of Epicurus that pleasure was the greatest good. To his thinking the greatest good was life itself.

De Witt is a phenomenal and reliable resource, and I think he is one of the best resources to new students of Epicurean Philosophy, overall, synoptically ... but he *does* take a few liberties. This is one example of a case where he makes a proposition that stands in contrast to the original texts.

Epíkouros writes in his *Epistle to Menoikeus* that "of all of these things, the original and the greatest good [is] prudence" or [φρόνησις](#) (*phrónēsis*, "practical wisdom" 132). Here, he uses the phrase [τὸ μέγιστον ἀγαθόν](#) (*tò mégiston ágathòn* or "the greatest good"). Note, in this context, "a good" (lowercase "g") refers to an *instrumental good*, or a *virtue*, employed in the service of pleasure. We often distinguish "a good" (*tò ágathòn*) versus "The Good" (*Tágathòn*), a subtle, but important distinction, exemplifying the relationship between the [τέλος](#) (*télos*) or "goal" of life, and the means but which that goal is attained. Nonetheless, according to Epíkouros, "**practical wisdom**" is the **greatest good**, among other instrumental goods that support the goal of pleasure.

It's subtle, but, If you'll tolerate the play on words, I'd express it as follows: pleasure is *The Good*, and practical wisdom is *the greatest good*. The *greatest good* helps us achieve *The Good*.