

Sunday November 9, 2025 - Zoom Discussion 12:30 PM EST - Epicurus on Good And Evil

Post by "Kalosyni" of November 10, 2025 at 7:55 AM

[Quote from DaveT](#)

My take away from the selections is kind of like: Epicurus: What's good for me is good and what's bad for me is bad with proportions of each depending on prudence. And if everyone does it that way; "what a wonderful world it would be." (to borrow a phrase from a popular tune.)

While contrarily, Cicero is saying: Sure, I get that, sort of; but let's get real here. Everyone in the world can't be allowed to judge on their own, we'll have chaos. We need clear standards of right and wrong.

And then, I start to remember that when we do act for our own good, whether judged by pleasure, or by adhering to Virtues, there sometimes are unintended bad or evil consequences for others. And that leaves me wondering how to reconcile both Stoic and Epicurean real world consequences of individual as well as communal actions.

I've been thinking about how there are two differing meanings (or connotations) to consider with regard to the ideas (or words) "good" and "evil":

- 1) that which is either "good" or "bad" -- as in that which is either wanted or not wanted. In Epicureanism, this is determined by knowing what brings pleasure or pain.
- 2) that which is of a moral nature -- that which is either morally correct or morally wrong. This is determined by reason, based on the truth that all humans wish to not be harmed. I don't think we see this directly referenced within Epicurean philosophy, but if we reason through things then we arrive at very similar "morals" as all the highest held by society.

Principal Doctrine 5 demonstrates the final result of having reasoned through to the understanding that living prudently (and morally) leads to the best life: [PD05](#): "It is not possible to live pleasantly without living prudently, honorably, and justly, [nor again to live a life of prudence, honor, and justice] without living pleasantly. And the man who does not possess the pleasant life is not living prudently, honorably, and justly, [and the man who does not possess the virtuous life] cannot possibly live pleasantly."

Also illustrated in: [PD17](#): "The just man is most free from trouble; the unjust most full of trouble."

The benefit here is in understanding morals from a very grounded, visceral, and direct manner, rather than as something coming from God (or gods) which can be altered depending on "what God wants".

Yet there still remains the problem of conveying morals to very young children who are still unable to reason through things and understand cause and effect (end results and consequences). And of course there are plenty of adults who have trouble with this as well.