

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

Post by "Don" of November 10, 2025 at 1:47 PM

[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.)...

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.

Choices are always made within a larger context which affects the consequences that have to be taken into account. "Good" decisions will sometimes have painful consequences that, in the long run, have positive consequences for the individual(s). Consider the choice to end a marriage or to have major surgery with an extended recovery time. The ending of the marriage may be the best, most prudent decision for both parties individually but that doesn't mean it's pleasurable at the time of the divorce. Having a major surgery will indeed be painful for the individual (and their family and friends) and recovery may be long and painful; but, as a choice, that's "what's good for me" based on prudence. Conversely, if it's a terminal diagnosis and the surgery and recovery will likely make the last months of one's life unbearable, NOT having surgery (if one is relatively able to go about their day up until the last few weeks or days of one's life) may be what's best for one's life.

For Epicurus, context is everything and individual circumstances are of paramount importance.

As far as communal actions, these can also be seen as individual actions that have broader consequences. As [PD31](#) says, "31. Natural justice is a symbol or expression of expediency, to prevent one man from harming or being harmed by another." I don't want to be harmed and, therefore, it's in my best interest for having a pleasurable happy existence to not harm others and to encourage that behavior in others. Individuals choosing "what's best for me" in the moment may decide what's best for them is to steal money or food. This decision could be based on simple greed or it could be based on the need to feed yourself or your children. A decision to lie is also not a virtuous/vicious choice in and of itself. If someone is coming to beat up another person and that intended victim has taken shelter in your house, you don't truthfully at all costs tell the potential assailant that the person is in your house when they come knocking on the door. Absolute adherence to some truth-telling virtue in this case does more

harm than good. There is no virtue in handing a victim over to their assailant in honor of "I always tell the truth."