

# Should Epicurus be viewed as a pure consequentialist, virtue ethicist, or both?

**Post by “wbernys” of May 7, 2026 at 8:21 PM**

If any of you have seen the PhilSurvey, it asks a question about whether your normative ethics is consequentialist or virtue ethics or deontology. I think it's fair to say he's surely not deontology. But i struggle between putting him as a consequentialist or virtue ethicist.

Obviously i know these are modern categories which may not fit Epicurus entirely but i personally think of him more as a Virtue ethicist rather than a strict consequentialist in large part because of the Letter to Menoceus.

He says "And he considers it better to be rationally unfortunate than irrationally fortunate, since it is better for a beautiful choice to have the wrong results than for an ugly choice to have the right results just by chance." (Peter Saint-Andre). This seem to pain the picture of personal intentions mattering more than actual consequences.

Along with Diogenes of Oenoanda saying "The sum of happiness consists in our disposition, of which we are master."

I'm obviously not trying to say he is part of the Stoic "virtue in of itself" but he seems to stress personal character so much, even to the point of disregarding external consequences as seen above, that it feels wrong to consider him just a consequentialist, and perhaps listed as both a virtue ethicist and consequentialist together. Curious for other people's thoughts.