

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

Post by "Cassius" of May 8, 2026 at 1:25 PM

I personally think this needs to be hammered home:

To me this conversation is sort of like discussing Epicurus as a "hedonist." Yes I understand that that term has a technical meaning in which pleasure is the key. However in common discussion the term is LOADED with implications, most of which imply that people should choose "pleasures of the moment" over consideration of "all the consequences so as to gain the greatest net pleasure, even if it means temporarily accepting pain." With a proper explanation, the term "hedonism" is fine, but that doesn't cut away the general context that it is loaded with negative vibrations.

So too with "virtue ethics," with "deontology" (clearly the worst) and also "consequentialism" (which strips away the question of "Which consequences?" which is really the important question).

These terms get used to place people in boxes, and the motivation behind the boxing is rarely just a pure intellectual pursuit of truth. Usually the game has much more malicious purposes - to accept a negative label. So we have to be very very careful in how we play those games. Give the wrong people an inch and they will take a mile, and they will use any admission you make against you as if you are being convicted of murder in court.

(I gather this is pretty much what Eikadistes is saying too.....)