

Episode 281 - TD12 - Is Pain The Greatest Evil - Or Even An Evil At All?

Post by "Cassius" of May 19, 2025 at 4:26 PM

I adjusted the title of the podcast to better address what we're about to cover. There are lots of implications in considering pain to be "the greatest evil" or even "an evil at all." In this first episode we don't dive headlong into what "evil" is supposed to be, mainly because I was absent and a slow-witted impersonator did not realize that we ought to start quickly with that question. However we'll come back to that in future episodes, and we'll want to consider how Epicurus is using the term "evil" in statements such as:

[PD10](#). If the things that produce the pleasures of profligates could dispel the fears of the mind about the phenomena of the sky, and death, and its pains, and also teach the limits of desires (and of pains), we should never have cause to blame them: for they would be filling themselves full, with pleasures from every source, and never have pain of body or mind, which is the **evil** of life.

[PD28](#). The same knowledge that makes one confident that nothing dreadful is eternal or long-lasting also recognizes, in the face of these limited **evils**, the security afforded by friendship.

[PD34](#). Injustice is not an **evil** in itself, but only in consequence of the fear which attaches to the apprehension of being unable to escape those appointed to punish such actions.

Menoceus:

[124] For the statements of the many about the gods are not conceptions derived from sensation, but false suppositions, according to which the greatest misfortunes befall the wicked and the greatest blessings (the good) by the gift of the gods. For men being accustomed always to their own virtues welcome those like themselves, but regard all that is not of their nature as alien. Become accustomed to the belief that [death is nothing to us](#). For all **good and evil** consists in sensation, but death is deprivation of sensation.

But the many at one moment shun death as the greatest of **evils**, at another (yearn for it) as a respite from the (evils) in life. (But the wise man neither seeks to escape life) nor fears the cessation of life, for neither does life offend him nor does the absence of life seem to be any **evil**. And just as with food he does not seek simply the larger share and nothing else, but rather the most pleasant, so he seeks to enjoy not the longest period of time, but the most pleasant.

[129] Every pleasure then because of its natural kinship to us is good, yet not every pleasure is to be chosen: even as every pain also is an **evil**, yet not all are always of a nature to be avoided.

[130] Yet by a scale of comparison and by the consideration of advantages and disadvantages we must form our judgment on all these matters. For the good on certain occasions we treat as **bad**, and conversely the bad as good. - (Can we presume here "bad" = "evil" ?)

[134] For, indeed, it were better to follow the myths about the gods than to become a slave to the destiny of the natural philosophers: for the former suggests a hope of placating the gods by worship, whereas the latter involves a necessity which knows no placation. As to chance, he does not regard it as a god as most men do (for in a god's acts there is no disorder), nor as an uncertain cause (of all things) for he does not believe that good and **evil** are given by chance to man for the framing of a blessed life, but that opportunities for great good and great **evil** are afforded by it.