

Sunday Zoom - August 24, 2025 - 12:30 PM ET - Topic: "Virtue Is Not Absolute Or An End In Itself. All Good And Evil Consists In Sensation"

Post by "Cassius" of August 22, 2025 at 5:02 PM

This week's meeting will be on the Epicurean view of virtue and the general concept of good and evil, and here are some notes in preparation:

1.1. [Discussion Guide](#)

1.2. [Lucretius Today Podcast 267 devoted to this topic](#)

Epicurean philosophy has shocked the sensibilities of conventional thinkers for two thousand years by committing itself boldly to the conclusion that "virtue" is not absolute or an end in itself, and that Nature alone provides us the proper guide of life.

As with "gods," Epicurus held that "virtue" is a useful concept, but one that has been drastically misunderstood. True "virtue" is not something given by divine revelation, or through logical analysis of ideal forms, but is instead simply a set of tools for living the best life possible. Epicurus held that virtue is not the same for all people, or the same at all times and places, but that instead what is virtuous varies with circumstance, according to whether the action is instrumental for achieving happiness. Good and evil are not absolutes, but instead consist in sensation, as Epicurus explained to Menoeceus: "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. And therefore a right understanding that [death is nothing to us](#) makes the mortality of life enjoyable, not because it adds to it an infinite span of time, but because it takes away the craving for immortality." (124)

Likewise, even something as highly regarded as justice is not absolute, but observable only in practical effects: "In its general aspect, justice is the same for all, for it is a kind of mutual advantage in the dealings of men with one another; but with reference to the individual peculiarities of a country, or any other circumstances, the same thing does not turn out to be just for all." ([PD36](#))