

Opportunities for Activism And Collaboration Here At EpicureanFriends.com

Post by “Don” of July 4, 2020 at 11:28 PM

[Quote from camotero](#)

This also brings to mind something I've been grappling with lately... since pleasure and pain are things you can only experience yourself, it makes it very clear that things can start to become less absolute (*and thus less comfortable - hence the resistance*) and more relative... ... so how can you say he is bad if he is even ignorant of the pain he's causing to said third party... If he does it after it has been brought to his attention the pain his suffering to someone else, then he would be bad, but not before? 🤔

Excellent questions and points to consider, [Mathitis Kipouros](#) .

This, too, is something I grapple with. This is how I'm beginning to reach a conclusion for myself. I hope this helps to see i too am struggling.

We grow up in and live in a culture that wants to have absolutes. Religions want to have god-given absolute laws of right and wrong. Some people want to insist on universal rights like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The US Declaration of Independence states that there are "inalienable" rights of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." At times, I would like to believe that, too.

Epicurus disagrees.

To Epicurus, justice is what is decided on among human communities to procure safety from others and to not allow people to harm other people. When those contracts and agreements are violated, the violators must be punished (by ways agreed on within the community) to keep everyone else safe from harm.

It seems to me there probably are some negative actions that are or should be considered unjust through time (since humans appear to have an innate sense of justice and fairness according to some research on toddlers and young children I've seen). Agreeing on all those may be difficult, but I think a consensus could be arrived at. But it will be subjective and mutually agreed on. There is no universal law giver or source of The Good in the universe. If we want a just world, we have to work to build it ourselves. And we have to live by "neither harm nor be harmed" in our own lives.

People are neither good nor bad. Their actions are neither intrinsically good or bad. Have they harmed someone and gone against the social contract? If so, they deserve punishment. Have

they done something "bad" but no one's come to harm. Then it doesn't matter. I can say I think their actions are ill-advised and won't lead to lasting pleasure for them. But, I don't think, I can call them "bad."

In your example, if someone harms or slights someone else knowingly, chances are that other person can potentially make the life of that person that harmed them difficult in the future. That is not a direction to go for lasting pleasure. If one is "good" and just to others, chances are you will be treated well and justly by others. That's a reason to be "good." Not because God says so or it's a universal law.

As I said, my Epicurean understanding continues to evolve.