

# Toward A Better Understanding of Epicurean Justice And Injustice (With Examples of "Just" and "Unjust")

Post by "Don" of March 24, 2021 at 7:25 AM

Okay, moving on to PD 33, it appears pretty straightforward:

33 Οὐκ ἦν τι καθ' ἑαυτὸ δικαιοσύνη, ἀλλ' ἐν ταῖς μετ' ἀλλήλων συστροφαῖς καθ' ὀπηλίκους δὴ ποτε ἀεὶ τόπους συνθήκη τις ὑπὲρ τοῦ μὴ βλάπτειν ἢ βλάπτεσθαι.

Saint-Andre translation: 33 Justice does not exist in itself; instead, it is always a compact to not harm one another or be harmed, which is agreed upon by those who gather together at some time and place. [St-Andre note: The word συνθήκη, translated here as "compact", means essentially the same as the word σύμβολον from Principal Doctrine 31.\*]

Here, it's important to note that there's not a word meaning absolute although the intent is the same. Epicurus specifically says:

Οὐκ ἦν τι καθ' ἑαυτὸ δικαιοσύνη...

"Righteousness does not exist in and of itself"

δικαιοσύνη is an abstract noun formed from δίκαιος (díkaios, "just") + -σύνη (-súnē, "forms abstract nouns from adjectives or nouns"). So, δικαιοσύνη = righteousness, justice (as an abstract concept); fulfillment of the law.  
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...try=dikaiosu/nh>

Epicurus states unequivocally that there is no such entity as δικαιοσύνη that exists independent of context. There is no Platonic Form of righteousness in the Cosmos.

... but/instead... ἀλλ'...

it is always a compact

...ἀεὶ ... συνθήκη...

...ἐν ταῖς μετ' ἀλλήλων συστροφαῖς καθ' ὀπηλίκους δὴ ποτε ... τόπους ... τις...

agreed upon by those who gather together at some time and place.

ὑπὲρ τοῦ μὴ βλάπτειν ἢ βλάπτεσθαι.

to not harm one another or be harmed

(Note our old friend βλάπτειν from the previous PDs)

Some important words:

ἀλλήλων expresses an action done in two directions: of one another, to one another, one another, each other, mutually, reciprocally. So, the compact/agreement has to be reciprocal and mutually agreed upon.

συστροφᾶς is a mass or gathering of people. This is the dative plural form of συστροφή. The -στοφῆ -strophē is akin to strophe in English as in a poem's twisting lines or the word apostrophe. I imagine a coming together of people, swirling in from disparate locations, to form a bustling community.

ὄπηλίκους refers to the idea of no matter how big or how small. The size of the gathering doesn't matter when it comes to making an agreement. This is potentially important for our discussions.

I'm also putting βλάπτειν back in here <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...7:entry=bla/ptw> and its opposite αδικέω which notably Epicurus chooses NOT to use: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l...=captus#lexicon> That may also continue to be important as this discussion moves along.

Let the games continue...