

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

Post by "Don" of April 6, 2021 at 7:16 AM

## [Quote from Cassius](#)

When you say "the community needs...." you are making an observation that is no doubt true (organizations of any kind have a need to perpetuate their existence)

As far as perpetuation of an organization's existence, Epicurus himself made explicit arrangements for the continuation of the Garden in his will.

But I think the use of the word "organization" is wrong here. I would advocate consistently for terms like "community" "society" "civilization" that is the social medium/environment in which individuals live. Ancient Greeks were very concerned about how individuals lived in common. Those outside of common society were looked at with suspicion. That's why Greek ἴδιος idios meaning "private, separate, one's own" could give rise to the English word [idiot](#). I think Epicurus is addressing these concepts in the last set of KDs.

## [Quote from Cassius](#)

but I see nothing in the texts that indicate to me that Epicurus was in any way concerned with the needs of "organizations."

Hmm. I see KD 31-40 concerned about nothing else except the interrelation among individuals, community, and "justice." We talk about the contextual and relative nature of the philosophy. These last KDs are \*all\* about justice as a contextual principle concerning how individuals interact in a society. There is no "justice" apart from that context. I'm going back and re-reading the posts on KD 31-38 and then working on 39 and 40, but that's my take on them in recollecting.

## [Quote from Cassius](#)

It seems to me that Epicurus was focused on the issues of feelings - pleasure and pain - and only individual human beings have those feelings.

Exactly. The majority of the KDs specifically focus on the individual, the use of the Canon, death (of the individual), etc., etc. But the individual doesn't exist in a vacuum. How do we live in community (whether it's Athens or the Garden)? Epicurus addresses this in 31-40. He set out an entire system from atoms to the cosmos and \*everything\* in between. Book V in Lucretius

addresses the rise of humans and civilization and so this discussion of what justice is seems to fit right into that.

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Now he might have been referring to organizational concepts as a part of showing how they are obstacles to pleasure, as he referred to false religions and false philosophies, so it is a possibility that he was singling out "justice" for attention given its status as one of the classic "virtues" which are elevated to ends in themselves.

Bingo (in part)! If your community has no justice and is just "red in tooth and claw" or even "nasty, brutish, and short" you're going to have a hard time living a pleasurable life. I think this is why your fav Atticus could justify his resistance to developments in his society. He felt that direction didn't provide for the context of living a pleasurable life and so fought to restore peace and safety/stability.

To your second point, I think Epicurus was singling out justice because it was/is necessary for living a pleasurable life. That's why he can say living justly, wisely, and nobly is living pleurably and vice versa. If we get along with our fellow members of our community and feel safe, we have a better chance of living pleurably. Therefore, "not doing harm and not being harmed" are the most basic "natural" definition of justice. It's not imposed by a god or even Nature but is the foundational agreement among individuals upon which civilization itself is built.