

Exploration of Epicurean Concepts of Justice, Contracts, & Not to Harm or Be Harmed

Post by “Don” of January 1, 2022 at 6:05 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I would say that the Pds on justice are closely analogous to, and should be understood to be part of, Epicurus' overall view on virtue (justice generally being considered a virtue). As such, justice is ultimately a tool for the pleasure of ourselves and our friends, in the same way as is wisdom and prudence and the rest. And that's why it is so clear in those PD's that when circumstances change, that which was deemed "just" before is seen to be no longer just.

Hmm ☹️ I'm not entirely convinced, but I'll entertain your post.

As an exercise, I put [PD31](#) to [PD38](#) together as paragraphs and also threw in [PD17](#) (see if y'all can pick it out 😊) to get away from looking at them as discrete thoughts.

Quote

Natural justice is a covenant for mutual benefit, to not harm one another or be harmed. 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. There is neither justice nor injustice with regard to those animals that do not have the power of making a covenant to not harm one another or be harmed similar to those peoples who have neither the power nor the desire of making a covenant to not harm one another or be harmed.

Injustice is not bad in itself, but only because of the fear caused by a suspicion that you will not avoid those who are appointed to punish wrongdoing. One who acts aright is utterly steady and serene, whereas one who goes astray is full of trouble and confusion. It is impossible to be confident that you will escape detection when secretly doing something contrary to an agreement to not harm one another or be harmed, even if currently you do so countless times; for until your death you will be uncertain that you have escaped detection.

In general, justice is the same for all: what is mutually advantageous among companions. But with respect to the particulars of a place or other causes, it does not follow that the same thing is just for all.

Among things that are thought to be just, that which has been witnessed to bring mutual advantage among companions has the nature of justice, whether or not it is the same for everyone. But if someone legislates something whose results are not in accord with what brings mutual advantage among companions, then it does not have the nature of justice. And if what brings advantage according to justice changes, but for some time fits our basic grasp of justice, then for that time it is just, at least to the person who is not confused by empty prattle but instead looks to the facts. When circumstances have not changed and things that were thought to be just are shown to not be in accord with our basic grasp of justice, then those things were not just. But when circumstances do change and things that were just are no longer useful, then those things were just while they brought mutual advantage among companions sharing the same community; but when later they did not bring advantage, then they were not just.

I will say that when you say:

[Quote from Cassius](#)

And that's why it is so clear in those PD's that when circumstances change, that which was deemed "just" before is seen to be no longer just.

I think the reason (which is started in the PD) is that something is no longer just is when it's no longer mutually beneficial and no longer adheres to the "basic grasp of justice" which, as I see it, is to neither harm nor be harmed.