

Contrasting Traditional Greek vs Platonic vs Epicurean Views of Justice

Post by "Cassius" of December 22, 2022 at 11:29 AM

I only have time to start this topic, but this morning while driving I heard it asserted in a podcast that in Book One of Plato's Republic, Socrates had attacked the traditional Greek view (which was asserted to be doing good to your friends and doing harm to your enemies). Supposedly Socrates said that rather than doing harm to one's enemies one should try to "improve" them.

If true, I can easily imagine such a doctrine being considered to be a component of virtue, with a universalized conclusion that doing harm to ones enemies is always bad.

It seems to me that Epicurus' views on justice are much more realistic -- to neither do harm *nor be harmed* with the implication that there is no universal rule of benevolence to "improve" one's enemies. One should make friends of them if possible, not treat them as enemies if friendship is not possible, or when necessary have nothing to do with them.

[PD39](#). The man who has best ordered the element of disquiet arising from external circumstances has made those things that he could akin to himself, and the rest at least not alien; but with all to which he could not do even this, he has refrained from mixing, and has expelled from his life all which it was of advantage to treat thus.

I would expect that there are probably articles out there which discuss this in detail which would be worth looking into. We regularly discuss the Justice doctrines without making a lot of progress, and if we could link Epicurus' views to specific Platonic or Aristotelian ideas to which they are responses, things would probably be much more clear.