

Why Is Injustice Not Bad In Itself?

Post by "Cassius" of March 11, 2017 at 5:54 PM

[Michael Carteron](#)

[March 5 at 5:19pm](#)

In regards to Epicurean justice it is said that the harm of injustice only comes from the fear criminals feel at getting caught. Yet the philosophy acknowledges pain is bad as a core principle. So how is the harm of the various crimes (mental, physical, both) not also a part of injustice (a much greater one, in fact, as many criminals do not appear to fear their getting caught-sometimes reasonably)? Correct me if I have been mistaken about any aspect of Epicureanism.

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[4](#) Jason Baker, Alexander Rios and 2 others

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[Cassius Amicus](#) type unknown

[Cassius Amicus](#) (1) "Yet the philosophy acknowledges pain is bad as a core principle." Pain is "bad," but it is sometimes / frequently chosen in order to ward off more pain or to experience greater pleasure. That applies not only to you but to other people.

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[Michael Carteron](#) type unknown

[Michael Carteron](#) Yes, but that doesn't seem to apply here.

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Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...

[Hiram Crespo](#) or type unknown

[Hiram Crespo](#) I Dont think the harm ONLY comes from fear of apprehension. There are other harms. Injustice is disadvantage. So depending on the kind of advantage that one has given up, one pays another price. One may have given up the feeling of safety or an important friendship.

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Michael Carteron

[Michael Carteron](#) Definitely.

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Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...

Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) (2) While pain is "bad" and pleasure is "good" that does not mean that (a) your own pleasure and pain and (b) the pleasure and pain of your friends and (c) the pleasure and pain of strangers and (d) the pleasure and pain of enemies are all on the same level of relevance to you. In the absence of a supernatural creator and/or an absolute justice that links you, then I would think that your relationship with other people is governed mainly by the specific circumstances of those relationships and how those relationships affect yourself and your friends. There is no one in heaven keeping score, and no scorecard at all to add up at death who "wins" and who "loses" to determine what is "fair."

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Michael Carteron

[Michael Carteron](#) Sure. The pain to you, friends and strangers can all be factors that it seems would make injustice bad.

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) But injustice is not bad IN ITSELF- only in its effects - [PD34](#) is very explicit: "Injustice is not an evil in itself, but only in consequence of the fear which attaches to the apprehension of being unable to escape those appointed to punish such actions."

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Michael Carteron

[Michael Carteron](#) My point is that those effects include other things, which I laid out.

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) Well certainly if you feel bad because of the pain you inflict, that is part of the equation, but that is very subjective and as you point out - most people don't feel bad in some situations, and some people NEVER feel bad about inflicting pain.

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Michael Carteron

[Michael Carteron](#) That's not what I'm suggesting.

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Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...

Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) " (a much greater one, in fact, as many criminals do not appear to fear their getting caught-sometimes reasonably)" << I think this is the part where the main difficulty comes in as the implication here is that this is "unfair." Again, given the absence of a supernatural judge or referee evening out the score at the end, it is entirely possible (but not likely) for a reprobate to live successfully, and if he does, then he does, and there is no "justice" which evens the scales at the end of the day.

Edit: "Evening the score" is "our" job - the job of those who are effected by the reprobate, and if they don't do it, the score doesn't get evened.

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Michael Carteron

[Michael Carteron](#) I'm not disputing that, just the specifics of what makes an injustice bad.

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Cassius Amicus

Cassius Amicus in Epicurean philosophy nothing makes it bad except the consequences: "Injustice is not an evil in itself, but only in consequence of the fear which attaches to the apprehension of being unable to escape those appointed to punish such actions."

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Michael Carteron

Michael Carteron I know, it's just there are consequences besides what the Principle Doctrines says it seems.

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Cassius Amicus

Cassius Amicus Like a lot of other aspects, I think that Epicurus presumes that we keep the basics in mind as we get to the particular cases. And the basics ALWAYS IS: VS72 - "Every desire must be confronted by this question: what will happen to me if the object of my desire is accomplished and what if it is not?" If you always keep that in mind then you have all the bases covered

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Michael Carteron

Michael Carteron I don't disagree with that, but I'm not sure how what I've said doesn't jibe with it.

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Cassius Amicus

Cassius Amicus I think if you combine VS72 with [PD34](#) you're totally in sync with it.

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Michael Carteron

Michael Carteron Okay.

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Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...

Ilkka Vuoristo or type unknown

[Ilkka Vuoristo](#) When we are talking about the **[Principal Doctrines](#)**, we need to remember that they are the condensed core of Epicurean Philosophy, and leave out much of the meat around the bones.

In the case of PD 34 the context is that the injustice is bad for the **_offender_** because they can never be sure that they will not get caught. This fear will prevent the pleasant life that is the goal. (In real life it's possible that they are never caught, but the fear remains.)

For the **_victims_** injustice is bad in other ways (physical and mental harm, loss of necessary property, etc.).

There is another aspect of justice that isn't specifically mentioned in the PDs: self-defense and the catching of offenders are **_virtues_** in Epicurean Philosophy. Passively enduring crimes isn't conducive to a pleasant life either...

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Michael Carteron

[Michael Carteron](#) I figured it would be considered bad for victims too, but that's not mentioned, hence the post.

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[Ilkka Vuoristo](#) or type unknown

[Ilkka Vuoristo](#) The strongest motivation is always an internal one ("this thing is good for me. That thing is bad for me.") This applies to justice as well as to eating. In effect Epicurus is saying: don't be a criminal, because you're hurting yourself, too.

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Michael Carteron

[Michael Carteron](#) Well yes, that is often the case, but it's incomplete.

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Ilkka Vuoristo

[Ilkka Vuoristo](#) Welcome to the hunt for the lost pieces of Epicurean Philosophy!

Epicurus wrote at least two books on justice (Of Just Dealing, Of Justice and the other Virtues), which we no longer have access to. It's probable that your question was answered there.

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Michael Carteron

[Michael Carteron](#) Yes, very sad so many ancient texts have been lost. I'd be very surprised if he didn't include these as part of injustice.

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Andrew Wright Image not found or type unknown

[Andrew Wright](#) Has anyone attempted to write these in modern times using Epicurus' ideas and ideals as a foundation?

I believe deeply in acting for a more just world. I believe there are injustices that hack away at our humanity, but that don't directly impact me in my white, middle class, male position. I don't believe I should turn away/ignore these even though acting will not necessarily bring greater pleasure to me, and could cause greater pain.

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Michael Carteron

[Michael Carteron](#) A good question. I'd be interested to hear the more experienced Epicureans' views.

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Ilkka Vuoristo

[Ilkka Vuoristo](#) What are you referring to with "these", [Andrew](#)?

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Andrew Wright

[Andrew Wright](#) By "these" I mean, has anyone had a go at recreating, or just setting out to fill the gaps you refer to, the lost works.

Sorry, now I re-read it, it's clearly ambiguous.   Image not found or type unknown

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Ilkka Vuoristo

Ilkka Vuoristo Yes, many of us are trying to fill the gaps by extrapolating from what we know from all the surviving sources and from what seems reasonable to have been the Epicurean position. I certainly don't have the hubris to try and re-create the actual works...  type unknown

This group is one of those efforts.

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Cassius Amicus

Cassius Amicus "I believe deeply in acting for a more just world. I believe there are injustices that hack away at our humanity, but that don't directly impact me in my white, middle class, male position. I don't believe I should turn away/ignore these even though acting will not necessarily bring greater pleasure to me, and could cause greater pain." <<< This recalls a debate we used to have several years ago about how to integrate the "live unknown" and other more complete texts that advise against a life in politics. Some take a strong view that it's not Epicurean to get involved in the community at all, but I take the other side, and I think that for the reasons you state (you get mental pleasure from acting, and pain from not acting) that one can easily justify many types of community involvement.

My standard example is Cassius Longinus who clearly knew his Epicurean philosophy and still (or even because of it) helped lead one of the sides in the Roman civil war. But I also think it is key that it is realistic to take action on the issue that brings the mental pleasure and pain. Unrealistic abstract logical constructs or other mental fantasies would seem to be definitely against the Epicurean view. For example we today can visit Pompeii and feel sorry for all the people who died in the eruption of Vesuvius, but should we spend our lives trying to develop a time machine to go back before the eruption help them? Very poor example, but unrealistic goals of any kind are not going to be productive of happy living. (Of course if we were some quantum theorist who had made actual progress with a time machine, then maybe that would make sense.....)

And since we've been talking about justice, what if no one works to enforce the law and keep criminals from running over other people at will?

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Michael Carteron

Michael Carteron Good point. Apparently the historians debate how much Cassius's Epicureanism affected his politics however.

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Cassius Amicus

Cassius Amicus Yes apparently they do, for the same reasons those issues are debated today. And yet it is clear from Cassius' letters with Cicero that Cassius understood Epicurus well enough to debate one of the most educated philosophers (or pseudo philosophers) of his day (Cicero) and that Cassius understood the issue of living for virtue vs living for pleasure, and that Cassius had read Catus and would have had access to the leading Epicurean authorities. So I will put my money on Cassius understanding Epicurus rather than putting my money on the modern commentators who live and breath stoic/ religious / anti-Epicurean views and read nothing but fragments

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Michael Carteron

Michael Carteron I shall take your word for it. Many of the historians I've read who mentioned Epicureanism say things which clash with the original material you've shown, to be sure. I wonder why-don't historians read things anymore?

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Jason Baker Profile picture unknown

Jason Baker **Michael Carteron** They do, but historiography has shown that narrative building is more important than integration of all information available. We have a strong desire for narratives, they're important to our identity. We're trying to reweave one here from the disparate threads cut and scattered to the winds so long ago by historians who wanted to erase Epicurus from history.

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Michael Carteron

Michael Carteron What use is a narrative if it ignores facts?

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Ilkka Vuoristo

Ilkka Vuoristo None. It's propaganda. (I think all of it begins with the false idea that pleasure is evil. After that all the facts in the world can't save people from error.)

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Michael Carteron

[Michael Carteron](#) I wonder how this idea developed.

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) [Michael Carteron](#) a question for the ages....

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[Hiram Crespo](#) or type unknown

[Hiram Crespo](#) I think it has many roots. platonism (which Michel Onfray calls "the great neurosis at the heart of Western civilization) had a hand in promoting it because it does not want us to trust our bodies and our faculties and our instincts. Plato is an attempt to deny our real (animal) nature, it is anti natural. But also I think many people with repressed libido (the kind that head the churches today) have always held positions of power in prominent schools and written theology in lonely monasteries and have done their best to poison the pleasure of everyone else by calling it evil because they resent their own inability or unwillingness (perhaps due to abuse or mental health issues) to enjoy delights. This is one of the Nietzschean explanations. I think there may be other roots to this problem but here are two main ones.

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Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...

[Elli Pensa](#) or type unknown

[Elli Pensa](#) *I read comments here again of some persons that insist that there are gaps that occurred by the missing works of Epicurus and the Epicureans. But this happens because they do not see the Epicurean philosophy as a whole !*

There are not gaps in the Epicurean philosophy if you connect the physics, the ethics and the Canon and see our philosophy as a whole !

Specially with the usage of the Epicurean Canon and the method of the analogy we have not any gaps on any issues that are not obvious or obvious in our era too..

On the issue of justice :

Examine the meaning of the words that are based on your prolepsis (preconceptions or anticipations) and your experiences to realize what usually happens to the just persons and what happens to the unjust persons. Remember when you were a child and you were playing games with some children who made tricks against the rules of the game, as their desire was to gain unjustly. Remember on how the rest children put them out of the game. Because that was something that did not pleased the whole team. These were some exercises/experiences to put us in mind that that Epicurus said as "prolepsis".

The procedure of the Canon within we can use in all the issues of our life is this :

Use your senses to examine carefully the General Picture, remember your prolepsis what brought to you pleasure and what pain.

then examine carefully the parts,

then synthesize the parts to give you at least the same General Picture. and finally use your prudence to measure again among pleasure and pain for now and then.

After this, a question on the General Picture arises : How many criminal personalities have been escaped from the punishment ? Is there any criminal to not be found never ? Has ever been exist that is called "the perfect murder ?

The statistics on criminal actions show to us definitely that are few those that can be escape. But as they are few PARTS do not synthesize the General Picture.

Did you measure properly among pleasure and pain ? Is any criminal personality to not be troubled, agitated and in pains ? IMO no, thrice NO !

"Crime and Punishment" is a good novel written by Fyodor Dostoyevsky to read shades of the inner psychological situation of a person who made a criminal action.

Thanks.