

# Welcome Ben!

Post by "Don" of October 4, 2022 at 3:29 PM

## [Quote from Ben](#)

Great to have tracked you down. I am really interested in how the communities functioned on a day to day level. Were they isolated, with no money used (barter economies) or drop-in places etc. I believe the children were communally cared for but little more. How did it work in practice in other words?

I, too, am very interested in the day-to-day workings of the Gardens, both Epicurus's original one in Athens and subsequent ones that grew up later in cities across the ancient world. There is most likely a good chance that they all did not work the same as well.

I see no evidence that they were isolated. Even though Epicurus situated the original Garden "outside the city walls of Athens" it was literally \*right outside\* the city walls and also on the same road that led to Plato's Academy. It's situation near/in the Kerameikos section of the city means it was near the potter's shops/homes as well as the tombs of the city. The Garden was on one of the busiest roads leading into the city right outside one of the busiest gates (the Dipylon Gate) leading into the city itself. Those who want to make the Garden to be some sort of walled-off exclusive commune isolated from the rest of society are barking up the wrong tree.

I certainly don't see a "barter economy" taking place "within the Garden" unless within certain parameters given the ancient setting. It's also important to remember that the Garden was neither a "commune" in the colloquial nor in the literal sense. Epicurus specifically decided that resources should not be shared in common among his students.

I've always seen the Garden as more of a drop-in/"commuter school" than a residential school. It's important to remember (and I have problems remembering this myself) that the Garden as as much a philosophical school as Plato's Academy, Aristotle's Lyceum, Chryssipus' Stoa, etc. I would conjecture that all the schools worked similarly administratively. The BIG difference between all those and the Garden was that the Garden was private property! All the others were founded on public grounds (near the gymnasiums for Plato and Aristotle, near the public agora for the "Stoics"). The fact that Epicurus also welcomed enslaved people into the Garden also tells me that it was not primarily residential. Those who were enslaved by others would only have been able to visit on their days of liberty, they'd need to go back to their master's house at night. Same way with women and especially hetairai. And there must have been enough enslaved people and women attending classes in the Garden for people to make a big deal out of it and be scandalized by it.

Those are some thoughts off the top of my head, but Norman DeWitt wrote a paper entitled "[Organization and Procedure in Epicurean Groups](#)" (*Classical Philology*. Volume 31, Number 3. Jul., 1936) which may interest you. It is definitely an intriguing topic!! Thanks for raising it!