

Epicurean Golden Rule?

Post by "Cassius" of July 6, 2023 at 5:56 PM

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

Are there (in the classical Epicurean corpus) any similar affirmative statements on: 1) where reasonably possible, to prevent or stop wrongful harm from being done to another (particularly someone outside our immediate friendship circle); and 2) to foster social conditions that are conducive to maximizing the possibility for enjoyment/pleasure by most people (including those that may be on the socioeconomic margins)?

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

Note: in case 1) above, the perpetrator of harm would be someone who has not embraced the Epicurean social compact.

I think Joshua's answer hits the high point of quoting the statement from Diogenes of Oinoanda.

I also think that Pacatus you are correct here:

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

Of course, one can strive to do both without drawing on any school's (or religion's) ethical philosophy - e.g., as a matter of personal conscience.

...because rather than "personal conscience" I think you can substitute "pleasure." It gives a lot of people "pleasure" to want to make life better for "others in general" - even where you don't have direct relationships with those others.

But as to the general drift of your question as to whether there is anything in Epicurus that would provide some kind of general instruction analogous to a "great commission" to do so, I don't think such a thing would exist because that would come too close to a sort of "idealism" that would be inconsistent with much of the rest of the philosophy. But I think here is plenty of reason for thinking that it enhances your own happiness by making life better for others.

And like everything else there is probably a warning needed about making such a goal an end in itself. The general rule remains that nothing is "good in itself" other than pleasure, and pleasure isn't just out there floating in the air, so it seems to me that everything ultimately has to be tied to the question of whether the action will result in specific improvements in pleasure for specific people who are in some kind of relationship of degree of friendship (or at least not an enemy).