

Have PD35 and Vatican Saying 7 been straw-manned?

Post by “wbernys” of April 18, 2026 at 3:28 AM

EDIT: Grammar got screwed up as Eikadistes pointed out, so i corrected it.

Hello all,

I've been thinking about **PD 35** and **Vatican Saying 7**, A common interpretation (especially in modern discussions) is that *even a single unjust act* results in ever-lasting fear or instability until death, since one can never be certain of escaping detection. But I'm wondering whether that overstates the claim and may be a strawman to knock down Epicurus more by imagining that Epicurus says that someone who stole a DVD as a kid 10 years ago will still live in constant fear. To be clear he's absolutely against all injustice for it's anxiety but i wonder if the points on it destroying happiness are more about a single act or a persistent trait or lifestyle.

Both texts use present participles (τὸν λάθρη τι ποιοῦντα, δύσκολον), in Vatican Saying 7 it is "A wrongdoer (someone who is persistent in wrongdoing)" and in [PD35](#) it is "One who secretly violates the pact (a persistent trait)" which might suggest not merely a one-off action but someone *engaged in injustice as an ongoing practice or disposition*.

My main question is as follows: **Did Epicurus claim that any single act of injustice (no matter how small) ruins a life through constant anxiety unless caught or turning oneself in, or is he primarily targeting those who engage in injustice as a recurring pattern or stable trait being filled with fear because they constantly violate the pact?**

I'd be especially interested in how people read the Greek participles here, perhaps people like [Don](#) and [Bryan](#) could help in clarifying whether Epicurus' point is meant to apply universally to even a single unjust act, or more specifically to injustice as a way of life or permanent trait.

Thanks!