


Social feelings/actions to not-friends(or strangers, animals) (Philantropy /compassion /sympathy / kindness / charity /)

Post by “Matteng” of May 17, 2023 at 4:50 AM

Hi everyone.

Do you know how the Epicurean attitude is for a general Philantropy/compassion /sympathy or let's say "social feelings". 

I see them in the subjects: "justice" and "friendship" or "live honorable".

It seems to me that in "justice" it seems low, and the focus is more to be not disturbed by having done injustice to someone.

A minimum expression.

A maximum expression is in "friendship". But that regards only few people (or is this a misunderstanding ?)


Is there a middle ground or is "justice" seen broader or include such attitudes like the Stoic justice ?

And many people have compassion towards animals.

In Stoic philosophy or buddhism the compassion aspect and philantropy/altruism seems to have a stronger focus (cosmopolis, oikeiosis, loving kindness wishing to everyone...)

and that such feelings contribute to the own happiness (a common argument that altruism is included in hedonism).

For example a donation to beggars or general charity.

But maybe there are good reasons to see this critical and limit kindness to everyone 

(cosmopolis/war, blind kindness, natural xenophobia, avoiding hostile people, turn the other cheek...)

Post by “Cassius” of May 17, 2023 at 6:43 AM

[Quote from Matteng](#)

Do you know how the Epicurean attitude is for a general Philanthropy/compassion /sympathy or let's say "social feelings".

I am sure that many here will have good comments on this. The first thing that would come to my mind in laying the ground work for the discussion, however, would be to suggest that this question stated this way is essentially another form of the "virtue" question that is discussed at great length in the Epicurean texts. The qualities you are suggesting (and even friendship is included in this) are tested by the practical question of whether they in fact (and not in theory) lead to a more pleasant life for the individual who is asking the question. Maybe the best example of this is in the [Torquatus narrative](#) starting at least around line 32.

As in the Vatican Saying, our desire for the qualities you mention are subject to the same test: [VS71](#). :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?"

Now having said that, a very good case can be made in many instances for pleasure arising from pursuing the objectives you list, but if you cross the line into thinking that these objectives are worthy "in themselves" apart from the actual results they produce, then I would suggest Epicurus would say that analysis goes too far astray from the goal of real people pursuing pleasure in their own lives and - as with any other deviation from "pleasure" as the goal - would end up with results that undermine that goal.

Now with that as a fundamental you could go forward in many ways to show that in particular situations with particular people, the goals you mention can be in many ways pleasure-enhancing.

Post by "Kalosyni" of May 17, 2023 at 10:43 AM

[Quote from Matteng](#)

Do you know how the Epicurean attitude is for a general Philanthropy/compassion /sympathy or let's say "social feelings"

Principal Doctrine 5:

"It is not possible to live joyously without also living wisely and beautifully and rightly, nor to live wisely and beautifully and rightly without living joyously; and whoever lacks this cannot live

joyously."

My own thoughts...Everything is evaluated on a case-by-case situation. When "virtuous" actions become separate from the reasons for choosing those actions, then they are elevated to an abstraction which can later cause problems. Since there is no way to eliminate all the suffering in the world, then it is wise to choose a kind of equilibrium with regard to helping others who are asking for or needing some help, such as helping those in our immediate community or location with whom we cross paths. Yet in some situations there is nothing but our own feelings to attend to. We can only choose what seems best according to the results that we imagine will come out from our actions or non-actions.

Post by "Cassius" of May 17, 2023 at 10:59 AM

"Do you know how the Epicurean attitude is for a **general** Philanthropy/compassion /sympathy or let's say "social feelings""

Yes the word that creates the real issue there is "general." Presumably everyone agrees that philanthropy / compassion / sympathy /social feelings are appropriate in certain situation, and the real issue is whether there is a categorical imperative that such feelings must be pursued in "all" situations --- i e a general and generic attempt to embrace every living human being.

And even then, why stop there? Why not extend equal concern to the dead, or to the unborn, or to very living animal or insect, etc. etc.

The harder question is where to draw the lines, and from that perspective that's where Epicurus' test of practical results becomes more clear.

Post by "Joshua" of May 17, 2023 at 11:00 AM

Two key sources on this are Principal Doctrine 39:

"The man who best knows how to meet external threats makes into one family all the creatures he can; and those he can not, he at any rate does not treat as aliens; and where he finds even this impossible, he avoids all dealings, and, so far as is advantageous, excludes them from his life."

And in general, the cosmopolitan sentiments of the inscription of Diogenes of Oenoanda.

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"... time ... and we contrived this in order that, even while [sitting at] home, [we might be able to exhibit] the goods of philosophy, not to all people here [indeed], but to those of them who are civil-spoken; and not least we did [this] for those who are called «foreigners,» though they are not really so. For, while the various segments of the earth give different people a different country, the whole compass of this world gives all people a single country, the entire earth, and a single home, the world."

The inscription is in a very fragmentary form.