

Politics And Epicurean Natural Justice - A Post Devoted To Our Epicurean Facebook Friends

Post by "Cassius" of September 29, 2018 at 11:42 AM

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I don't think I have ever in my life seen political emotions in the United States as hot as they are right now, and all indications are that they are going to get hotter before they cool off. I also think it would be irresponsible of those of us who promote Epicurus to act as if Epicurean philosophy has nothing worthwhile to consider on this subject. To the contrary, the fundamental principals set forth by Epicurus are the starting point for EVERY day to day decision, including one's day to day political stance. The very suggestion that Epicurean philosophy has nothing to offer on burning issues of the day is offensive to me.

My personal goal will always be to refrain from arguing my personal contextual political opinions, not because I think that is necessary for an Epicurean to do so, but because it is critically important that we protect our fellowship. I therefore think we need to follow our long-established precedent: refrain from day-to-day "politics" in this group. Political personalities and issues that come and go are purely contextual to the individuals involved, just as the emergent qualities of combinations of the combinations of atoms come and go and are perceived differently according to context. My feelings of pleasure and pain are as real to me as yours are to you, and that goes for everyone in or out of this Facebook group. On the other hand some months ago a number of us did set up an "Epicurean Natural Justice" group on Facebook for discussion of issues related to "justice." I recommend that anyone who has a burning desire to talk about Epicurean principles of justice post there, at the link below.

Maybe everyone here would have continued to ignore the current political situation in the USA, and this post was unnecessary. I also know that this is a worldwide group, but the reality is that probably a significant majority of people who read this group are USA-based. I hope no matter how hot emotions get, we will not forget that "of all the means which wisdom acquires to ensure happiness throughout the whole of life, by far the most important is friendship."

We have a very clear outline of Epicurus' views on Justice in the final ten Doctrines. Failing to consider them in the current context would fly in the face of our desire to study Epicurus and apply his wisdom to our lives. Even more, to insist on a stony silence would be to give in to the worst of the Stoicizing tendencies which we always face from modern academic Epicureans. But for further discussion of these principles in the current context I would advise use of the Natural Justice group linked below:

31. Natural justice is a pledge of reciprocal benefit, to prevent one man from harming or being harmed by another.

32. Those animals which are incapable of making binding agreements with one another not to inflict nor suffer harm are without either justice or injustice; and likewise for those peoples who either could not or would not form binding agreements not to inflict nor suffer harm.

33. There never was such a thing as absolute justice, but only agreements made in mutual dealings among men in whatever places at various times providing against the infliction or suffering of harm.

34. Injustice is not an evil in itself, but only in consequence of the fear which is associated with the apprehension of being discovered by those appointed to punish such actions.

35. It is impossible for a man who secretly violates the terms of the agreement not to harm or be harmed to feel confident that he will remain undiscovered, even if he has already escaped ten thousand times; for until his death he is never sure that he will not be detected.

36. In general justice is the same for all, for it is something found mutually beneficial in men's dealings, but in its application to particular places or other circumstances the same thing is not necessarily just for everyone.

37. Among the things held to be just by law, whatever is proved to be of advantage in men's dealings has the stamp of justice, whether or not it be the same for all; but if a man makes a law and it does not prove to be mutually advantageous, then this is no longer just. And if what is mutually advantageous varies and only for a time corresponds to our concept of justice, nevertheless for that time it is just for those who do not trouble themselves about empty words, but look simply at the facts.

38. Where without any change in circumstances the things held to be just by law are seen not to correspond with the concept of justice in actual practice, such laws are not really just; but wherever the laws have ceased to be advantageous because of a change in circumstances, in that case the laws were for that time just when they were advantageous for the mutual dealings of the citizens, and subsequently ceased to be just when they were no longer advantageous.

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.

40. Those who possess the power to defend themselves against threats by their neighbors, being thus in possession of the surest guarantee of security, live the most pleasant life with one another; and their enjoyment of the fullest intimacy is such that if one of them dies prematurely, the others do not lament his death as though it called for pity.

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Please note remember that posts on this topic are welcome at [the JUSTICE forum at EpicureanFriends.com](https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/531-politics-and-epicurean-natural-justice-a-post-devoted-to-our-epicurean-facebook/)