

New Sedley Chapter On Ancient Greek Atheism

Post by “Don” of March 24, 2022 at 10:26 PM

[Quote from Nate](#)

I guess what I want to know is this: in which public festivals, specifically, did Epicurus participate? Better yet, let me ask, what public festivals existed in Hellenistic Greece were compatible with Epicurean theology?

Your question made me go back and look at my posted notes on On Piety. This post talks about those festivals:

Post

[RE: Philodemus On Piety](#)

The following are excerpts and notes from columns 27-36 of Obbink's Philodemus On Piety which outline the participation of Epicurus himself and the early Epicureans in religious festivals and other rites and practices. Obbink also shared more detailed notes in his book, so I may try and share some of those pages in later posts. For now, the material below has proved quite interesting...

Quoted in col. 27, On Piety: Epicurus, On Gods (Περὶ θεῶν): as being both the greatest thing and that...



Don

December 25, 2020 at 10:05 PM

You can of course check out the link, but here are some excerpts:

Col. 28/9: Epicurus wrote to Phyrson during the archonship of Aristonymus (289/8 BCE) about Phyrson's countryman from Colophon, Theodotus, Epicurus says that he (Epicurus) shared in all the festivals... Epicurus celebrated the festival of the Choes and the urban mysteries and the other festivals at a meagre dinner, and that it was necessary for him (prob. Theodotus) to celebrate this feast of the Twentieth for distinguished revelers, while those in the house decorated it most piously ('ὀλως) and after making invitations to host a feast for all of them.

Notes

For festivals, see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthesteria>

The Choes were part of this festival dedicated to Dionysus

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2436-new-sedley-chapter-on-ancient-greek-atheism/?postID=17342#post17342>

The "urban mysteries" refer to the Attic Dionysia, either the Lenaea (in the month of Gamelion, Epicurus's birth month) or Lesser Mysteries during 20-6 Anthesteria, both in honor of Dionysus.

I find it interesting that the festivals mentioned were dedicated to Dionysus. It could just be coincidence that those are mentioned; or Athens had a lot of Dionysian festivals; or Epicurus had an affinity for Dionysian festivals or the god. No way to tell from what I've read so far.

Col. 29: Epicurus advised them to retain assertions made by means of these and similar expressions, and above all to preserve those made by Zeus himself (maintain the practice of swearing by Zeus by name $\nu\eta\ \Delta\acute{\iota}\alpha!$)... Not merely "it must be so!"

Notes

So, Epicureans, feel free to pepper your writing and conversation with $\nu\eta\ \Delta\acute{\iota}\alpha!$ "By Zeus!"