

On The Decline of Epicurean Philosophy In The Ancient World

Post by "Cassius" of August 19, 2019 at 2:20 PM

Poster: 2000 is too much. Fine till 400 CE and born again in 1700s. 1500 year doldrums?

Cassius Amicus:

I understand why you cite those years, but I hesitate to call what happened in the 1700's, or even today, as a rebirth. I think it is probably more accurate to consider that we've never had a time when there did not exist individual Epicureans, but they had little or no organization and contact. The 1429 letter by Cosma Raimondi would be an example of such a person.

The great majority of people since the ancient world have been under the oppression of Christianity and not able to speak publicly about the full Epicurean viewpoint. Many others were under the control of "academia" and not able to reject the Platonic/Aristotelian/Stoic orthodoxy. The best they could do, which was ineffective or worse, was to embrace an eclectic mishmash of elements, paint it over with some form of theism, and run from the name of Epicurus. Even today we're not much emerged from those forces. Most of our "friends" on the world stage make no claim to be "Epicureans" but at most to adopt a select few of his positions that happen to suit their taste. And then they rush to distinguish themselves from Epicurus with their own "improvements" to his doctrines. An example here would be the Utilitarians.

So I think a case could be made that the last time Epicurean philosophy, speaking actively and openly and unapologetically and directly in the name of Epicurus, as an open and active major force in society, was sometime before the conversion of the empire by Constantine.

Of course we're just talking very generally here and all sorts of relevant observations could be made about exceptions.

But active and vibrant Epicurean "schools?" With people actively working together to churn out new orthodox Epicurean content, and new polemical works against opposing schools? And working to organize themselves to exist in perpetuity into the future? Not since the fall of the Roman world, and not reborn even yet today.

That should be our goal! 😊