

Avowed Enemies of Epicurus: Philo Of Alexandria

Post by "Cassius" of February 10, 2020 at 8:54 AM

This probably fits under a category of "Jewish Opposition to Epicurus" such as is discussed in ["Epicurus and the Judeans"](#) but we can set that up later if needed. I don't know much about [Philo of Alexandria](#) and haven't been able to read yet more than the first few pages of this article. It came to my attention because it was sent to me by Academia.com as part of their daily email blasting. If you're ever lonely and don't get enough email, just subscribe to Academia and your problems will be over.

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MOSES AGAINST THE EGYPTIAN: THE ANTI-EPICUREAN POLEMIC IN PHILO*

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“... and the most recent and most shameless of the physicists; he comes from Samos, is a piffling school teacher, and the crudest of those living”.¹

Timon of Phlius’s contemptuously dismissive judgment of Epicurus was probably not far removed from Philo’s opinion of him. We know that for Philo Epicureanism was his polemical target *par excellence* and its philosophical system was more than any other the polar opposite of his own vision of the world in every respect. Epicurus’ mechanical and materialist vision rejected every form of finality on the physical plane, the idea of creation and providence on the cosmological plane, and the existence of man’s spiritual dimension on the anthropological plane. Not only that, but in theology the Epicureans supported polytheism and divine anthropomorphism, in ethics the absolute insignificance of divinity for the life of man (unless as a distant model of bliss) and, in consequence, the doctrine of pleasure as a moral end.² If, then, Philo had an enemy among earlier Greek philosophers to be combated at all costs and to be opposed with every means, it was undoubtedly Epicurus. Often he will not even mention his name, which sounded “as the name of shame” to his ears.³ That is why in the extensive *corpus* of

Post by “Eikadistes” of February 11, 2020 at 7:13 PM

Based on my readings, the philosophy of Philo of Alexandria was a literary inspiration for John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth. He synthesized neo-Platonism with Messianic Judaism. Even if John the Baptist and Jesus weren't reading his literature, their own conclusions are ***suspiciously similar*** to those of Philo.

Post by “Eikadistes” of February 11, 2020 at 7:16 PM

Let me edit the previous statement for more nuance: the character called "Jesus" as presented in the "Gospel of John" espouses a theology that is ***suspiciously similar*** to the writing of Philo of Alexandria.

Post by “Cassius” of February 12, 2020 at 6:42 AM

Thanks for this info Nate. i really think it would be helpful to have a subforum devoted to this topic so we could list each of the "Christian fathers" and Stoics others who specifically attacked Epicurus, and we'll be able to list and clarify their arguments and thereby better understand them and see how they flow to today, so I will set that up.

Done.