

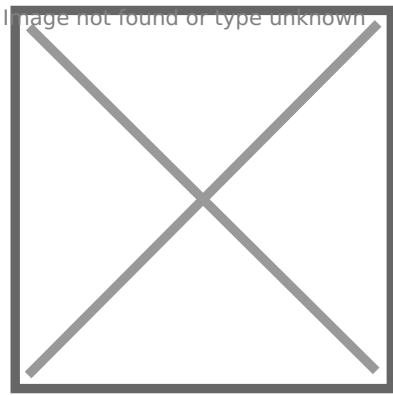
"Cicero' And His Clamorous Silences" - Paper by Javier Aoiz and Marcelo D. Boeri

Post by "Cassius" of September 25, 2023 at 9:03 AM

It appears to me that these two may be among the very best interpreters of Epicurus active today, and they appear to be on a campaign to refute the conventionalist attitudes of Epicurus as a passivist and isolationist that date back 2000 years. They dare to call "cliches" the labels of "live unknown" and "do not participate in politics"? Yes they do. Here's the opening:

Quote from Cicero And His Clamorous Silences

The opponents of Epicureanism in antiquity successfully established a cliché that has remained to this day: the theoretical and practical disinterest of Epicurus and the Epicureans in political communities. The best proof of their success is the transformation of the expressions «live unnoticed» (λάθε βιώσας) and «do not participate in politics» (μη πολιτεύεσθαι) into famous Epicurean slogans. It is worthwhile, however, to note two well-known facts that cast doubt on this cliché. On the one hand, the Epicurean Lucretius' poem *On the Nature of Things* constitutes, as Strauss has underlined, one of the best and most influential documents of the conventionalist theory of justice. On the other hand, Epicureanism underpins one of the foundational works of modern political philosophy, Hobbes' *Leviathan*. Before Hobbes, Pierre Gassendi had also viewed Epicurus' philosophical project with sympathy. In fact, Hobbes and Gassendi had at their disposal the same Epicurean texts as did opponents of Epicureanism such as Cicero, Epictetus, and Plutarch (though the ancients also had access to works that have not been preserved). But while Hobbes and Gassendi found valuable considerations of political philosophy in Epicureanism, neither Cicero, Epictetus nor Plutarch refer to these ideas in their anti-Epicurean writings. The treatment by Cicero, Epictetus, or Plutarch of Epicureanism was not doxographical; it was part of the philosophical diatribes of antiquity (i.e., the usual debates among the schools). These undoubtedly included some relevant testimonies and criticisms, but some of their usual techniques were the omission of the adversary's views, simplification, exaggeration, and even the use of an overly melodramatic tone.



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There's a lot more to comment on but for the moment here is some that catches my eye. I am sure there is much more:

Epicurus stresses that the circumstances constitute a fundamental ingredient of the Epicurean sage's decisions. In fact, none of the Key Doctrines offers categorical rules of conduct and, not for nothing, Epicurus places prudence at the top of the doctrine (LM 132).

We really need to try to interview these guys for the Lucretius Today podcast and I will look into that further.

Post by "Cassius" of September 25, 2023 at 9:09 AM

For this I offer a standing ovation to the writers:

Quote from Cicero and His Clamorous Silences

To make our point clearer, we think that Cicero and other writers (such as Plutarch) «absolutize», so to speak, the slogans «do not participate in politics» and «live unnoticed» as if they were principles of conduct of the Epicureans. However, they do not dedicate a single line to the specification of which text of Epicurus it comes from and what its original context was. Diogenes Laertius (10, 119) states that «do not participate in politics» was contained in the first book of On Ways of Life but offers no further information. The case of the slogan «live unnoticed» is even more significant and, to some extent, more intriguing, since Plutarch devoted to it an entire treatise (Live Unnoticed) which does not contain the slightest information about its meaning or the text of Epicurus from which it comes. From this perspective, Plutarch's opusculum is especially disappointing, although very illustrative of how some topics in ancient

thought were formed. Plutarch, in fact, not only does not provide any indication about the context of the expression λάθε βιώσας but almost makes it the appropriate motto for a hidden way of life by emphasizing its perversity (Live Unnoticed 1128d-e). These are undoubtedly characteristic rhetorical procedures in the philosophic diatribes of antiquity that require caution regarding the absolutization of the motto «live unnoticed». In fact, none of the Key Doctrines (hereafter KD) offers categorical rules of conduct and, not for nothing, Epicurus places prudence at the top of the doctrine (LM 132). As we will show in this paper, the testimonies about Epicurus do not paint a picture of a person shut away in the Garden and isolated from the life of Athens, but of someone who, while refusing to participate actively in politics, respected the laws and institutions of the city, participated in its worship and piety, integrated family relationships into the exercise of philosophy and cultivated friendships and philanthropy.

(underlined emphasis is mine)