

Where Is Epicurus In The "School of Athens"?

Post by "Cassius" of May 19, 2021 at 7:39 AM

Elli: Given the new development about the changes in the two characters you are looking at between draft and final execution, maybe it's time for you (or someone) to update your article?

When you say:

[Quote from elli](#)

Myths and fairytales (Jesus and Saul/Paul) mixed with books and movies (Umberto Eco and Dan Brown) and a totally rejection of the two criteria of truth of the Canon which are our own eyes and our feelings for the examination on the issue: where and who is Epicurus on the fresco by Raphael?

I would say that it would be extremely interesting to see a discussion of that argument. I think it's easy to understand how your would assert that your senses (eyes) bear on the issue, but not so easy to explain how "feelings" play into the assertion. After the evidence of the eyes (which I think is strong), I would think that we are left with little more than a long chain of deductive reasoning based largely on hearsay as to the proper identification of the two figures. I think it would be useful to discuss through this example how an Epicurean DOES use deductive reasoning (tied closely to the senses) just as Epicurus used deductive reasoning throughout his physics.

And the article could also discuss how it becomes very difficult to get out from under a consensus after it is long formed and has assumed the air of an authority, but that an Epicurean will trust his senses and his own reasoning (if he is confident enough of it) against a consensus of other people no matter how large that consensus might be, depending on the evidence.

I tagged you in a note about the article that Don linked to - here is a statement in one of its footnotes that makes the point that I simply cannot /do not accept as true.

3. According to the standard works of references, there were virtually no Greek portraits in statues, busts, carved gems, or coins which can be identified as sources in European art before or during 1509-12; see A. Pigler, *Barockthemen*, 3 vols., Budapest, 1974; Raimond Van Marle, *The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting*, 19 vols., The Hague, 1925-38, vi, 147; the *Index Iconologicus*, microfiche, 1980, to Bartsch; Richter, 25-30; and Guy de Tervarent, *Attributs et symboles dans l'art profane, 1450-1600*, Geneva, 1958. The very few examples of fanciful Greek "portraits" which existed in earlier Renaissance art would have been of no use to Raphael, and there is little evidence of such sources anywhere in the *School of Athens*; see "Plato" and "Aristotle," workshop of Andrea Orcagna, Van Marle (as in n. 3), v, 203-7. For minor sources of iconographic influence, see Perugino's frescoes of the Virtues in the Cambio, Perugia (1500-1507), where the name of Socrates is inscribed under an "Oriental" figure holding a book. See also Gombrich, 87-88, pl. 80a, for Pinturicchio's *Liberal Arts* cycle in the Borgia apartments, the Vatican (1492-95). Rather surprisingly, Konrad Oberhuber, "Raphael and Pinturicchio," *Studies in the History of Art*, xvii, 1985, 167, sees no influence of Pinturicchio in Raphael's work in the Stanza.

It looks like the article contains a lot of good historical information even for someone (like me) who rejects certain of its fundamental premises from the start. The idea that Raphael had no models to work by and guessed at the central figures from descriptions, but that his "guesses" proved so accurate to the busts in so many cases, strikes me as absurd. Hopefully as I read further into the article the writer won't take an extreme position on that.

OK I have read it. He does take the pretty extreme position, but the article is focused on disputing the identity of the figure sitting on the steps in front of Plato and Aristotle, which the write says is Socrates rather than Diogenes the Cynic, as is apparently the consensus today. Some reasonably good arguments in it, but the contention flies in the face of the other Socrates figure being a dead ringer for the bust that is today identified with Socrates. Maybe the identification of the bust of Socrates and his location in the picture is wrong, but since the article is really based on the contention that Raphael had little or no knowledge of the ancient busts, i am very skeptical.