

# Where Is Epicurus In The "School of Athens"?

Post by "Cassius" of May 21, 2021 at 9:08 AM

## [Quote from Nate](#)

Does anyone have a single source which mentions any historical figure who would have been familiar with Epicurean philosophy in the Late Middle Ages?

I cannot name one. However, IF we presume that there were educated monks throughout Europe who had access to Latin and Greek texts that included Cicero's works and Diogenes Laertius, then we would deduce that MANY people, even if not "historical figures," were familiar with Epicurean principles in an unbroken stream throughout history. As for their being historical record of them, that analysis would have to include the oppressive intellectual atmosphere which would have given strong motivation for most fans of Epicurus to keep quiet.

## [Quote from Nate](#)

In the 13th century, Danté mentions contemporary "Epicureans" by reputation, but fails to name any Epicurean teachers or writers. Our next recorded mention of Epicurean philosophy is several hundred years later, at the beginning of the Renaissance.

Again I would expect that from 500 AD for at least a thousand years, people who were fans of Epicurus through Cicero or DL would be highly motivated to keep their opinions to themselves. I can't quickly find a good reference to Pelagius being an overt Epicurean, but I do see [this](#), so it would not be surprising if throughout church history anyone who failed to toe the line would be labeled an Epicurean, with the intelligent class fully understanding what that meant:

## Quote

I have often wondered how Luther would assess our own age and the state of the church today. I suspect if he wrote for our time his book would be entitled *The Pelagian Captivity of the Church*. I suspect this would be the case because Luther considered the most important book he ever wrote to be his classic magnum opus, *The Bondage of the Will* (*De Servo Arbitrio*). This work focused on the issue of the enslaved will of man as a result of original sin. It was a response to the Diatribe of Desiderius Erasmus, of Rotterdam. In the translator's introduction to this work it is said that Luther "saw Erasmus as an enemy of God and the Christian religion, an Epicurean and a serpent, and he was not afraid to say so."

I think Luther would see the great threat to the church today in terms of Pelagianism because of what transpired after the Reformation. Historians have said that though Luther won the battle with Erasmus in the sixteenth century he lost it in the seventeenth century and was demolished in the eighteenth century by the conquest achieved by the Pelagianism of the Enlightenment. He would see the church today as being in the grasp of Pelagianism with this adversary of the faith having a stranglehold on us.

#### [Quote from Nate](#)

All publicly-identifiable busts of Epicurus in the 21st-century were buried in the 16th.

If you're referring to the standard view of those busts we trace today, yes. I have no evidence I can point to to dispute that, but I do continue to think that this modern consensus is highly unlikely to be accurate.

#### [Quote from Nate](#)

, rather than as a unique exception to the prevailing trend, that Epicurean philosophy was functionally neglected for 300 years.

And the key word there is "neglected." As referenced above I would think otherwise - I would think that it was continuously held up as a heresy for the entire time, and in order for that label to work people had to know what it meant, and the likely availability of a tremendous amount of material through Diogenes Laertius and through Cicero would have been a lot of information with which they would work.

The more I think about it, the less I really think that Lucretius adds much more than extra detail to what would already have been known through DL and Cicero.

This would be another good symposium topic like the fresco itself, but I think a strong argument can be made for the proposition (great for one of those formal public debates!):

***"A basic and accurate outline of the major points of Epicurean philosophy was never 'lost' to the west, and the contention that it was only the "rediscovery" of Lucretius that gave Epicurean philosophy a new lease on life is Academic (establishment) propaganda aimed at marginalizing the significance of Epicurus in history."***