

Astronomical Events During the Time of Epicurus (& Discussion on Letter to Pythocles Section 91)

Post by “Eikadistes” of May 27, 2021 at 6:34 PM

The morning of August 15th 309 BCE, while Epicurus was teaching his first pupils at Lampsacus, a total Solar Eclipse darkened his sky. No doubt, Epicurus would have spent time addressing this phenomena with his students.

Anyone who witnessed this event could have made the following observations:

1. Parts of the Sun are still visible even when the Moon slides in front of it, **so the Sun must be bigger than the moon no matter where it is.**
2. The body of the Sun goes behind the Moon, **so the Sun and the Moon must occupy different regions of space, the Sun being further away.**
3. The body of the Moon is not damaged, **so the Sun's distance behind the moon is at least greater than the size of its own diameter.**

Given these observations *which I am certain Epicurus would have made*, I'm curious why he suggested that both celestial objects are about the same size. Do we have any documentation of his estimation of the size of comets?

ASTRONOMICAL EVENTS DURING THE TIME OF EPICURUS

COMETS

Epicurus would have witnessed several comets throughout his lifetime. The only one I confirm is **Halley's Comet** which he would have seen in above the hills of Colophon with his Democritean teacher Nausiphanes in **October** of **316 BCE**.

SOLAR ECLIPSES

Year	Date	Type	Age	Location	View
337 BCE	03/01	Partial	4	Samos	poor
336 BCE	07/14	Total	5	Samos	poor

335 BCE	07/04	Total	6	Samos	good
334 BCE	12/17	Partial	7	Samos	poor
326 BCE	07/24	Partial	15	Samos	good
325 BCE	12/08	Hybrid	16	Samos	poor
323 BCE	05/23	Annular	18	Athens	excellent
322 BCE	10/07	Partial	19	Athens	average
321 BCE	09/26	Annular	20	Colophon	poor
309 BCE	08/15	Total	32	Lampsacus	excellent
308 BCE	12/29	Partial	33	Lampsacus	average
306 BCE	06/14	Annular	35	Athens	average
305 BCE	06/03	Annular	36	Athens	poor
302 BCE	04/02	Total	39	Athens	average
296 BCE	05/24	Annular	45	Athens	average
295 BCE	05/13	Hybrid	46	Athens	average
295 BCE	11/07	Annular	46	Athens	poor
294 BCE	10/27	Partial	47	Athens	poor
293 BCE	03/24	Partial	48	Athens	poor

285 BCE	10/18	Annular	56	Athens	poor
283 BCE	04/02	Total	58	Athens	poor
282 BCE	08/16	Partial	59	Athens	poor
281 BCE	08/06	Total	60	Athens	good
278 BCE	06/04	Annular	63	Athens	poor
274 BCE	03/24	Hybrid	67	Athens	average
270 BCE	01/09	Total	69	Athens	poor