

Epicureanism and cult-like mentality?

Post by "Cassius" of January 8, 2022 at 1:05 PM

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

Thus I get the expression that Epicureanism favours the creation of cult-like mentalities, where Epicureans claim to know „true beliefs“ (the same thing any cult leader would proclaim to know). What is your stance on that?

As explored in most of the responses, it depends on one's definition of a cult. That word has lots of bad connotations that would not apply. On the other hand certainly Epicurus was the leader of a group, and the group held its leader in high esteem (without necessarily thinking him perfect) and I think there are all sorts of observations that can be made to the effect that there is nothing wrong whatsoever with that.

[Quote from Nate](#)

It was totally a cult.

However, like the word "God", the word "cult" has been de-contextualized from its origins.

I wouldn't use Nate's first sentence because I think he's right in the second sentence - you have to be careful to define your terms before you emphatically apply them.

[Quote from Don](#)

If you're getting this impression from DeWitt, I'll be the first to admit I have problems with DeWitt. You'll notice some of my reviews of specific chapters of Epicurus and His Philosophers in this section. I have major issues with his Ranks and Titles section in chapter 5. I do not necessarily subscribe to a DeWittian interpretation in all things Epicurean.

Not to take this off on a tangent on DeWitt, but I think DeWitt might occasionally go too far in some areas, but in most areas his ultimate conclusions are pretty fair. You could probably pull some sentences that support calling the Epicureans a "cult" but by the time you finish the whole book and consider the whole philosophy (which I think DeWitt does better than most) then I don't think you reach any of the negative conclusions that we use when using the word "Cult" today. And just the opposite - it would be absurd to argue that the man who more than anyone else taught that authority should be challenged, and that nothing should be accepted

that cannot be grounded in the evidence of the senses, was attempting to set up an organization of mind-numbed robots and to intimidate them into unquestioning belief in following his whims (which I think is a fair meaning of the word cult as we use it today).