

Was Epicurus Sexually Active?

Post by "Joshua" of February 23, 2023 at 9:09 PM

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There remain the epithets "imposter" and "prostitute." For these it is the most plausible explanation that Epicurus discovered his teacher to be living a double life, preaching virtue, as all philosophers did, and at the same time practicing vice. Cicero informs us that most philosophers condoned the practice of homosexuality, and for once he agreed emphatically with Epicurus in condemning it as against Plato. The latter, as is well known, had essayed in his Symposium to sublimate this passion into a passion for knowledge. Epicurus also wrote a Symposium, in which he retorted: "Intercourse never was the cause of any good and it is fortunate if it does no harm." In the case of Nausiphanes there is another item of evidence from the pen of Epicurus: "As for my own opinion, I presume that the high-steppers (Platonists) will think me really a pupil of the 'lung-fish' and that I listened to his lectures in the company of certain lads who were stupid from the night's carousing. For he was both an immoral man and addicted to such practices as made it impossible for him to arrive at wisdom." The practices here referred to have been interpreted as the study of mathematics, but the mention of adolescent lads, of drinking, and of immorality make the true reference unmistakable to any reader conversant with the shadier side of student life among the Greeks.