

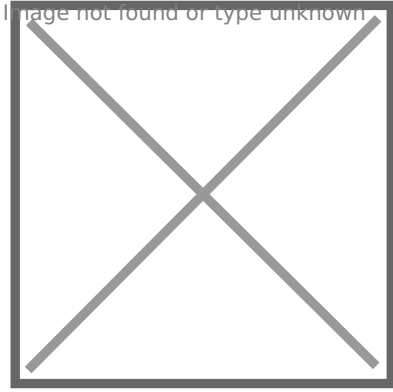
"Cicero' And His Clamorous Silences" - Paper by Javier Aoiz and Marcelo D. Boeri

Post by "Cassius" of September 25, 2023 at 9:03 AM

It appears to me that these two may be among the very best interpreters of Epicurus active today, and they appear to be on a campaign to refute the conventionalist attitudes of Epicurus as a passivist and isolationist that date back 2000 years. They dare to call "cliches" the labels of "live unknown" and "do not participate in politics"? Yes they do. Here's the opening:

Quote from Cicero And His Clamorous Silences

The opponents of Epicureanism in antiquity successfully established a cliché that has remained to this day: the theoretical and practical disinterest of Epicurus and the Epicureans in political communities. The best proof of their success is the transformation of the expressions «live unnoticed» (λάθε βιώσας) and «do not participate in politics» (μη πολιτεύσεσθαι) into famous Epicurean slogans. It is worthwhile, however, to note two well-known facts that cast doubt on this cliché. On the one hand, the Epicurean Lucretius' poem *On the Nature of Things* constitutes, as Strauss has underlined, one of the best and most influential documents of the conventionalist theory of justice. On the other hand, Epicureanism underpins one of the foundational works of modern political philosophy, Hobbes' *Leviathan*. Before Hobbes, Pierre Gassendi had also viewed Epicurus' philosophical project with sympathy. In fact, Hobbes and Gassendi had at their disposal the same Epicurean texts as did opponents of Epicureanism such as Cicero, Epictetus, and Plutarch (though the ancients also had access to works that have not been preserved). But while Hobbes and Gassendi found valuable considerations of political philosophy in Epicureanism, neither Cicero, Epictetus nor Plutarch refer to these ideas in their anti-Epicurean writings. The treatment by Cicero, Epictetus, or Plutarch of Epicureanism was not doxographical; it was part of the philosophical diatribes of antiquity (i.e., the usual debates among the schools). These undoubtedly included some relevant testimonies and criticisms, but some of their usual techniques were the omission of the adversary's views, simplification, exaggeration, and even the use of an overly melodramatic tone.



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There's a lot more to comment on but for the moment here is some that catches my eye. I am sure there is much more:

Epicurus stresses that the circumstances constitute a fundamental ingredient of the Epicurean sage's decisions. In fact, none of the Key Doctrines offers categorical rules of conduct and, not for nothing, Epicurus places prudence at the top of the doctrine (LM 132).

We really need to try to interview these guys for the Lucretius Today podcast and I will look into that further.