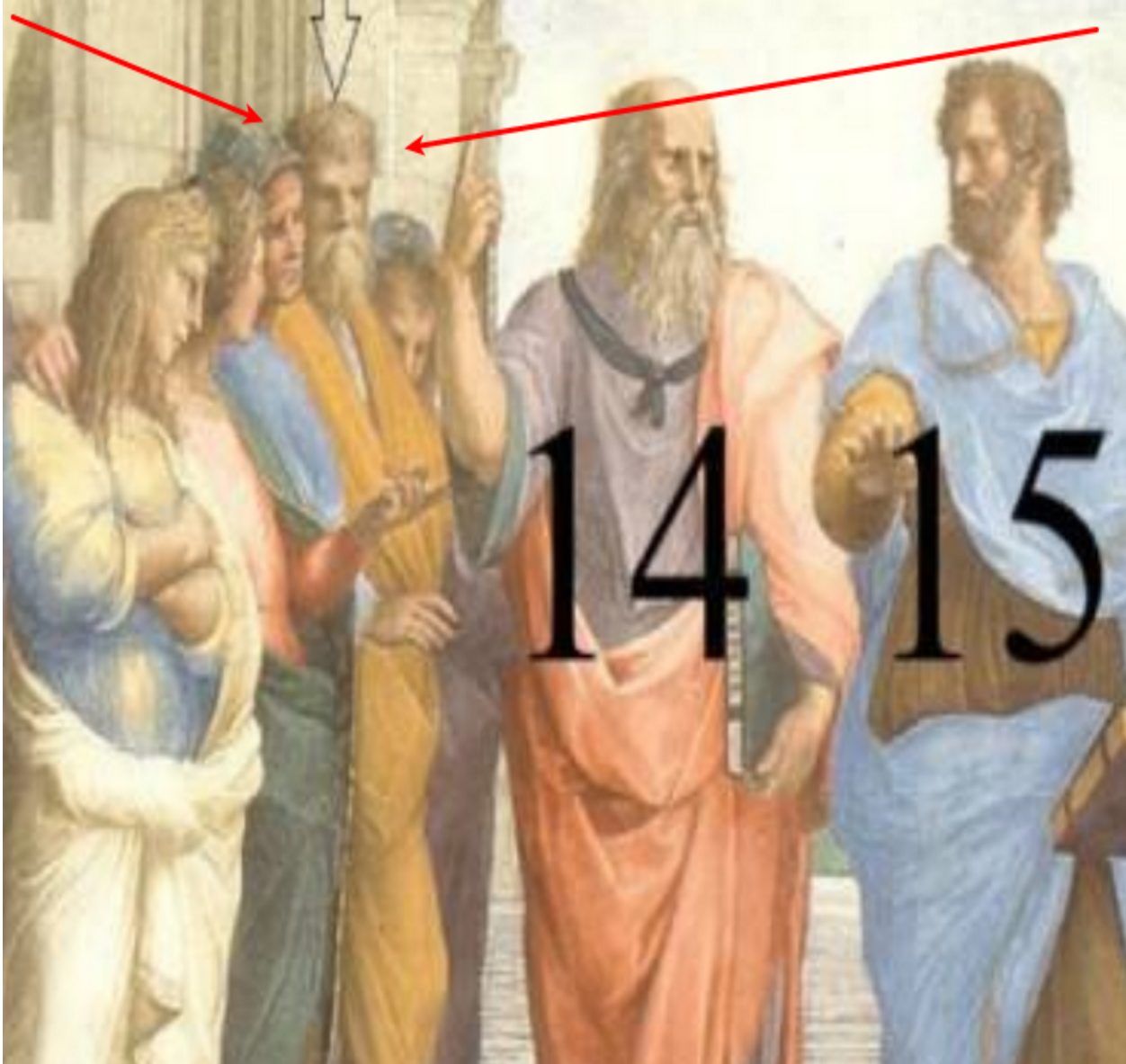


Where Is Epicurus In The "School of Athens"?

Post by "Cassius" of March 30, 2019 at 6:10 PM



something of considerable significance. Please let us know your thoughts:]

Raphael's fresco "The School of Athens" in the Vatican is famous throughout the world, but less well known are the identities of the philosophies shown within it. Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato seem confidently identified, but where are the other leading lights of Greek philosophy, especially Epicurus and Zeno, founders of two of the most popular schools in ancient Greece?

The purpose of this is to discuss theories for identifying the other philosophers shown in the fresco.

From various reports it is believed that Raphael, Botticelli and many other painters of the Renaissance, had studied the Epicurean Lucretius and his famous poem "On the Nature of Things." Theories of "who is who" in the fresco "School of Athens" came from the Vatican and the popes, and not from the painter himself. And these speculations as opinions are reproduced for centuries by various writers and art critics. But let everyone making his speculations, and holding their views and opinions ...

The figure most commonly identified as Epicurus is this one, with the garland on his head:



As mentioned above the title "The School of Athens" was not given by Raphael himself, and the theme of the mural is actually "Philosophy," or "the ancient Greek philosophy" since over the mural, the painter Raphael scored two words «Causarum Cognitio» this means « knowing the causes», a philosophical conclusion from the study of Aristotle's works, "Metaphysics Book I" and "Physics Book II".

Indeed, Plato and Aristotle appear to be the central figures in the scene. However, all the philosophers sought knowledge of first causes. Many of them had lived before Plato and Aristotle, and hardly a third were Athenians. It is assumed that every philosopher is on the picture, however the recognition of all is impossible, for two reasons : firstly because Raphael has not left any description of the persons that he designed, and second because Raphael has designed some of the philosophers based on his imagination. The painter Raphael has combined his imagination with his knowledge and created his own iconography system for painting them. Although Raphael had read something for them, but he had not seen any picture for some of them. For example, Socrates is immediately recognizable in the mural center because we know today, like Raphael then, a pattern of his type, how he looked from busts or statues, while the person that is presumed to be Epicurus is far removed from the standard type as encountered in his busts. The conjecture for Epicurus states that is a child "with a smirk", which is crowned with vine leaves. The same conjecture states that Raphael was inspired by the librarian and Catholic Cardinal of the Vatican Tommaso Inghirami who was known by the nickname "Faedra".

Although we don't have information from Raphael to allow us to be certain, in Epicurus's letter to Herodotus we read his advice on solving mysteries: "And besides we must keep all our investigations in accord with our sensations, and in particular with the immediate apprehensions whether of the mind or of any one of the instruments of judgment, and likewise in accord with the feelings existing in us, in order that we may have indications whereby we may judge both the problem of sense perception and the unseen. " So if we follow this advice to locate the figure of Epicurus and identify the others, we first must start by using our own eyes.

There is considerable controversy as to the identification of busts from the ancient world, but we know that numbers of busts of Epicurus survived. In comparing the bust that we know today is that of Epicurus, we see that the figure to the immediate left of Plato bears a distinct resemblance to Epicurus. This identification is supported by the observation that the grouping with Epicurus seems to be "friendly" one of the trademark features of the Epicurean garden.

VS 78. The noble man is chiefly concerned with wisdom and friendship; of these, the former is a mortal good, the latter an immortal one.

Further the expressions of a number of this group, especially the figure in the foreground with arms folded, seem to be viewing Plato and Aristotle with scepticism. Opposition to Plato and Aristotle was a hallmark of Epicurean philosophy.

Please help us by contributing your thoughts on the identification of Epicurus and other central philosophers from the School of Athens.

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