

What Epicurus Offers To The Modern World As Of April, 2024?

Post by “Joshua” of April 28, 2024 at 2:20 AM

Quote

Did Epicurus structure the Garden as a cult to himself? Well... He did institute the celebration of his birthday during his lifetime. He did institute the 20th celebration each month as a celebration of himself and Metrodorus... like the other monthly celebrations of the gods like Apollo, Aphrodite, etc. The question would have to be asked if he instituted those celebrations at the request of his students or did his student request to celebrate him and he provided a structure for them.

Quote

A quick thought prompted by Don's post: did Epicurus create a cult around himself?

Did Plato? Aristotle? Epictetus? (&c) They were all the commanding personalities of their schools. Was Epicurus perhaps making his school friendlier, less intimidating? One way of doing that may have been the practice of monthly celebrations. In other words, practices that may seem cultish today may have served functions of which we are completely unaware.

I was somewhat interested to learn, after reading Cicero's condemnation on this point, that Plotinus--the founder of Neoplatonism in the 3rd century AD--was adamant that his birthday not be celebrated, and that his portrait not be carved or painted;

Quote

Plotinus, the philosopher our contemporary, seemed ashamed of being in the body.

So deeply rooted was this feeling that he could never be induced to tell of his ancestry, his parentage, or his birthplace.

He showed, too, an unconquerable reluctance to sit to a painter or a sculptor, and when Amelius persisted in urging him to allow of a portrait being made he asked him, 'Is it not enough to carry about this image in which nature has enclosed us? Do you really think I must also consent to leave, as a desired spectacle to posterity, an image of the image?'

In view of this determined refusal Amelius brought his friend Carterius, the best artist of the day, to the Conferences, which were open to every comer, and saw to it that by long observation of the philosopher he caught his most striking personal traits. From the impressions thus stored in mind the artist drew a first sketch; Amelius made various suggestions towards bringing out the resemblance, and in this way, without the knowledge of Plotinus, the genius of Carterius gave us a lifelike portrait. [...] Counting sixty-six years back from the second year of Claudius, we can fix Plotinus' birth at the thirteenth year of Severus (A.D. 204-5); but he never disclosed the month or day. This was because he did not desire any birthday sacrifice or feast; yet he himself sacrificed on the traditional birthdays of Plato and of Socrates, afterwards giving a banquet at which every member of the circle who was able was expected to deliver an address.

--Porphyry, *De Vita Plotini*

Jehovah's Witnesses also refrain from the celebration of birthdays, and this includes declining to celebrate Christmas.