

"Kepos" - Epicurus' Garden Name, Location, History

Post by "Don" of May 17, 2024 at 10:50 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Apparently through as late as 40 or so BC in Cicero's time, and probably later, an argument could be made that Epicureanism and organized teaching of it was still very successful.

I would offer that that period of success extended from ~300 BCE when Epicurus was founding The Garden in Athens (after a successful period in Lampsacus) to the intervention of Pompeia Plotina in the 120s CE to allow Popillius Theotimus, the acting head of the Epicurean school in Athens, to become the official head *and* to allow subsequent scholarchs of The Garden to be either Greek or Roman. ([See also](#)) That's 400 years of fairly stable (it sounds like) succession and administration of The Garden, with evidence of Epicurean appreciation extending all the way into the 3rd c CE (200s CE) at Oenoanda in *Asia Minor* and then Diogenes Laertius (probably also from *Asia Minor*) was still writing approvingly of Epicurus in the early-mid 200s CE. So, around 500 years of solid pro-Epicurean evidence, well into the "Christian" era. Clement of Alexandria in *Egypt* (c. 150 - c. 215 AD) was also stealing Greek philosophical ideas for Christian doctrine.

The problem with the eventual downfall of a formal Epicurean school in Athens seems to have been common to many of the philosophical schools. So, I don't think we can look to something unique to the Epicureans, since the Academy, the Lyceum, etc. all met similar fates. Stoicism, Neo-Platonism, and the Peripatetic philosophy could be incorporated into Christian doctrine, not by name, of course, but they could be co-opted to appeal to educated Greeks (and Romans). Epicurean philosophy was anathema to most Christians, so it was never incorporated with credit. Clement could define philosophy in a way that allowed for the Christians to incorporate what they wanted, cafeteria-style, and give no credit to the school: "By philosophy I do not mean the Stoic nor the Platonic, or the Epicurean and Aristotelian, but everything that has been well said by each of the schools and that teaches righteousness along with science marked by reverence; this eclectic whole I call philosophy" (Strom., i. 7. 732CD). I don't think it was a failure on the part of The Garden's scholarchs, adherents, or students or those flung across the Empire. They were all swept up in a world not of their making and hostile to their teachings. To paraphrase *Star Trek's* Borg "Resistance was futile."

All that said, the philosophy DID survive, underground, often unacknowledged, transmitted through the centuries, a fire then lit from a spark kept warm until the Renaissance. Dante had to include the Epicureans being punished in a book he wrote in the 1300s! They were still seen as a threat and had to be "put in their place" so to speak, inside a sealed coffin... and so we

continue the story here on a digital forum in the 21st century. 2,300 years after the death of the school's founder!

Personally, I take inspiration from that story. Epicurus remains relevant after almost 2-1/2 millennia! We live in a world that seems ripe for the life-affirming message of Epicurus. I've said elsewhere that we will never reconstruct The Garden. We don't know enough to reconstruct the administration, structure, etc. nor do I think we want to. BUT we could take inspiration from the - let's call it - "Epicurean diaspora" in the ancient world.