

Téōs Around an Idea

Post by “Eikadistes” of March 2, 2025 at 1:36 PM

I thought this might be better as a forum post.

I am very interested if anyone has specific evidence or documentation of Epicurus' time in Teos with Nausiphanes. Colophon is 16 hours on-foot from Teos, and just a short time in a boat to Mytilene, from which Praxiphanes hailed, *his second teacher*, a Peripatetic whom he may have been inspired to meet while Theophrastus spoke during his conscription in Athens ... *all being pure speculation, because Praxiphanes spent most of his adult life in Rhodes*. Still, it may have given Epicurus a reason to visit Mytilene in the first place, and then he decided that he liked it, and tried to teach there half-a-decade later, after he got fed up with Nausiphanes' skepticism.)

I sort of wonder ... was Epicurus repelled by Platonism as represented to him as a teenager by Pamphilius, but then re-invigorated by Philosophy when he heard Aristotelians speak against the Platonic gymnasiums during his two years in Athens? And then perhaps that compelled him to visit an Aristotelian after he completed his term of service. He rejected that as well, either in Mytilene, or Rhodes ... unless Praxiphanes was briefly teaching in Ionia ... it's interesting that Teos is really close in distance to Colophon. Epicurus may have accidentally found Nausiphanes on vacation.

Was there any kind of gathering of philosophers throughout the Hellenic area? I'm still curious if Epicurus physically relocated for a significant time to any of those cities on the West Coast of modern-day Turkey in his 20s.

Anyway, I am considering whether (1) Epicurus moved *from* his parents' property in Colophon to Teos for several months-to-years in his 20s to study under Nausiphanes, or (2) was Epicurus stationed with his family in Colophon, and made brief trips to Teos to hear Nausiphanes lecture, or (3) did Epicurus and his brothers back-pack monthly trips to Teos, and while they were there, they spent considerable time with Nausiphanes, before ultimately rejecting him. (There is also speculation that Epicurus travelled to Rhodes to study under Praxiphanes in his early-20s.). Or (4) did Nausiphanes come to him? Did Nausiphanes and/or Praxiphanes travel occasionally to other cities to lecture? (I'm not sure, but I'm looking into it). And if so, did Epicurus follow him back? Or were their interactions limited?

Rhodes also became a center of Epicurean thought, so Epicurus' early presence there would be contextually appropriate, if he planted the seeds for a future garden on that island. At the same time (as I recall), they were accused of being heterodox, Epicurean sophists, so the community there was not founded by Epicurus? Rhodes is pretty far away from the other locations. Then again, sailing was common. Epicurus got in (at least) one shipwreck.

Then again, *then again*, perhaps we should believe Epicurus in his claim of him being a self-taught thinker. I would like to better understand what sorts of resources he had at his disposal. He was not only an insightful thinker, but he was a true historian of several hundred years of philosophy, and deeply fascinated by each thinker's arguments. This doesn't necessarily require a teacher, but it does require a lot of literature ... which perhaps his father had as a schoolteacher? Or perhaps his father was the source, himself. Perhaps his time with Praxiphanes and Nausiphanes was very brief, and he disliked them within weeks, and the core of his learning had to do with personal study of each philosophers' literature. Perhaps his atomism wasn't inherited from Nausiphanes, but from much Democritus' literature. Perhaps his interest in Pyrrho had to do with the fact that orthodox, Indian philosophers were atomists, and they were (somehow) an influence. Perhaps his hedonistic ethics was inspired by some of the literature of Aristippus and his fellow Kyrenaiks. Maybe he just took Nausiphanes' "tripod" as a useful teaching model and rejected his Nausiphanes' physics, thus, representing himself as a unique thinker. I am sort of surprised that Diogenes doesn't mention more about Nausiphanes and Praxiphanes. I'd like to.

One more thing to add: According to Leonteus, Epicurus thought of himself as a "Democritean" as a younger man (Plutarch, *Against Colotes* 3, 1108e-f) before founding his own, dogmatic school. Thus, we note his simultaneous admiration of Pyrrho and his rejection of Skepticism. So I'm considering that, as well.