

Immutability of Epicurean school in ancient times

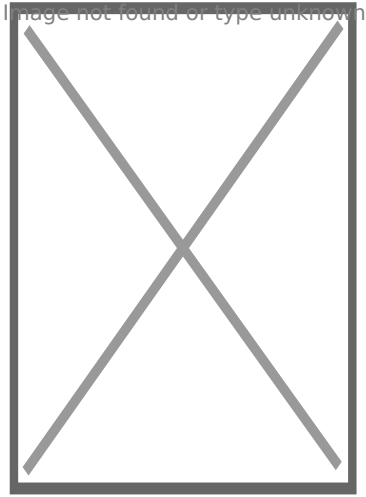
Post by "TauPhi" of July 28, 2025 at 8:44 PM

I came across this observation from Numenius of Apamea who wrote the passage some 500 years after Epicurus and I thought it may be interesting topic for us to discuss. Epicurean school in antiquity was uniquely resistant to any change or innovation. When other schools went through distinct periods in their development - Middle Platonism, Neoplatonism, Early Stoa, Middle Stoa, 1st Academy, 2nd Academy, umpteen academy etc. - Epicureanism had never developed. No new ideas were introduced, nothing was really questioned or corrected, there were around 10 scholars in succession that we know of who run the school and yet no-one really deviated or influenced in any significant way the teachings of the school.

So what do you think? Why was Epicurean school like a tardigrade in a state of cryptobiosis? Was the school's stagnation a feature or a bug?

Quote

On the contrary, there was no great necessity that the Epicureans should have preserved the teachings of their master so scrupulously; but they understood them, and it was evident that they taught nothing that diverged from the doctrines of Epicurus in any point. They agreed that he was the true Wise-man, remained unanimously with him, and therefore were fully justified in bearing his name. Even among the later Epicureans it was an understood thing, that they should contradict neither each other nor Epicurus in any material point, and they consider it an infamous piece of outlawry; it is forbidden to promote any innovation. Consequently, none of them dared such a thing, and those teachings have always remained unchanged, because they were always unanimous. The School of Epicurus is like a properly administered state in which there are no parties who have the same thoughts and opinions; hence, they were genuine successors, and apparently, will ever remain such.



[Numenius Of Apamea : Guthrie, Kenneth. Sylvan. : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

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