

Immutability of Epicurean school in ancient times

Post by “Cassius” of July 29, 2025 at 7:52 AM

I scanned over the opening pages of the Numenius material and there's a lot of good information there, with the Epicureans coming off very well in comparison to the schisms of the other schools, the problems and schisms of which inevitably arise from the notorious teachings of forms of skepticism:

Quote

I. Why the Successors of Plato diverged from Him.

1. Under Speusippus, Plato's nephew, and Xenocrates, his successor, and Polemo, who took over the school from Xenocrates, the character of the teachings remained almost the same, because the notorious teaching of the “reserve of judgment” and the like, did not yet exist.

I see also this article. Numenius is a Platonist and therefore a mystic, but at least he seems to have understood the problems with skepticism.

[Numenius \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](#)

Quote

Numenius' best attested work is his treatise *On the Dissension of the Academics from Plato* (frs. 24-28 Des Places, also in Reinhardt 2023). Eusebius in his *Preparatio Evangelica* (*Preparation for the Gospel*) has excerpted five long pieces from it (in book XIV). The reason why Eusebius quotes so extensively from this work of Numenius is in order to substantiate his claim, which permeates the entire *Preparatio Evangelica*, that ancient philosophers were in disagreement with each other. He takes that feature to indicate the inability of pagan philosophy to reach the truth (on Eusebius' reading of Numenius see Des Places 1975, Jourdan 2015). This is an originally skeptic argument, that is employed by Academic and Pyrrhonian skeptics alike, to the effect that dogmatic philosophy amounts to failure because of the disagreements occurring in it (Cicero, *Academica* II.115, Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians* II.11). Eusebius has a special kind of disagreement in mind, namely that with Plato's philosophy, which he considers to have come closer to the truth than any other pagan philosophy, that is, in his view, to Christian doctrine (*Praep. Ev.* XI.pref. 2-3, XI.8.1,

XIII.4.3). Numenius' testimony in this work fits well an argument like that of Eusebius. For Numenius criticizes in this work the departure of the skeptical Academics from what he considers to be Plato's central doctrine, namely, the doctrine of first principles of reality that Numenius finds adumbrated in the 2nd *Letter* attributed to Plato (fr. 24.51–6). For Numenius it is primarily the disagreement of the Academic skeptics with Plato's allegedly dogmatic philosophy that marks a failure.