

Dead Reddit / The "Isms" Thread

Post by "Cassius" of December 9, 2019 at 6:34 AM

I agree with Joshua and will add more:

[Quote from Nate](#)

my assertion that Epicurus needs not to have existed for the canon of Epicurean philosophy to have been understood.

I believe this is also a correct statement, and i don't think there is any contradiction between the two positions.

As Joshua says, the combination of ideas could have been assembled by others at other times and places. But the personality of Epicurus is what allowed that combination to be assembled at the time and the place that it was, and but for the personality of Epicurus other separate and distinct combinations would have emerged, but probably not nearly as successfully.

I think we regularly find ourselves realizing that Epicurean philosophy is a revolt against idealism and the suggestion that abstractions exist in the air without connection to reality. Epicurus was a real person with real friends, and real followers, and a philosophy that is devoted to reality has to have living breathing people involved in it. Epicurus' personality was such that it inspired devotion among his friends, and the way he conducted himself reinforced the movement.

There are all sorts of other analogies with different leaders over history that could be used to argue that their personal presence was essential for the success of their movements, and i think those observations apply to Epicurus without there being a sinister aspect. I think Joshua is right that DeWitt was using the term "cult" in an academic sense, but I do wish he had used another word. I suspect this is another area where DeWitt slips due to his affection for Christianity. I suspect he would call Christianity a "cult" of Christ, and in his habit of analogizing the Epicurean movement with Christianity he applied the same word to Epicurus.