

Sedley - Epicurus and His Professional Rivals

Post by "Cassius" of March 11, 2021 at 9:03 AM

David Sedley
'Epicurus and his professional rivals'
in J. Bollack and A. Laks (eds.),
Etudes sur l'Epicurisme antique
d.Lille 1976
121-59

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EPICURUS AND HIS PROFESSIONAL RIVALS
1. Introduction
For a historical appreciation of any system of thought a certain amount of biographical information is needed. Often we may derive progress beyond vague speculations about its philosophical accuracy; for the same doctrine can just as well be fostered by the negative influence of one school of thought as by the positive influence of another. If, on the other hand, we can find out whom its founder taught and what he thought of them, our hand is immediately strengthened. In this regard we are very much better furnished with data about the origins of Epicureanism than we are about those of Stoicism and Skepticism, the other two schools that grew up in the generation following the death of Aristotle. But my feeling is that within the Epicureanists have either ignored these former benefactors than the two mentioned. The object of this study is to establish just what Epicurus did think of certain philosophers to whom he was especially indebted.
The first essential is a brief outline of Epicurus' early career. Born in Samos in 341 B.C., he was the son of an Athenian clerk, a schoolmaster named Nectes. He turned to the study of philosophy in his early teens, important, it was said, at his schoolmaster's inability to answer his question: «Elle dit que "Tous les êtres ont un commencement", quel est le commencement de tout?». The teacher replied that it was the job of the so-called philosophers to answer such questions. It was probably at this time that Epicurus began to attend the lectures of a local Platonic named Pamphile. At the age of eighteen he had to travel to Athens for his year's military training. This was in 323, when Aristotle had already quit Athens for Chalcis. At the Academy, Neanthes was in charge, and Epicurus could have attended his lectures, but did not. At some stage, probably after his year in Athens, he studied under Neanthes of Teos, a pupil of Democritus. In 311/10, at the age of thirty-one, he set up his first school. This was in Mytilene, but he quickly moved on to Lampsacus, where he taught until 307/6. Then, at the age of thirty-five, he travelled to Athens, bought the plot of land which was to

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Post by "Joshua" of March 11, 2021 at 12:32 PM

I came across an article the other day that heavily cited Sedley. It was highly relevant to my ongoing interest in the Epicurean geometers. I'll see if I can track it down.

Post by "Cassius" of March 11, 2021 at 2:51 PM

Thanks Joshua. Over the years I have been impressed with virtually everything I have ever read by Sedley. I think he's probably the foremost living scholar on Epicurus, though Martin Ferguson Smith and Voula Tsouna and probably several other names would be in the pack. I am thinking that it would be good to have a thread on most every book / article that Sedley and several others have written. For now I would put the articles in a new thread here in this subforum, and if it gets large enough we can break up the forum by name.