

Classical Review Article By Nathan Gilbert

Post by “Cassius” of October 25, 2023 at 4:00 PM

A generally very positive review, but this comes from England, so be prepared for a little criticism. 😊

Quote from From the Review -

Aoiz and Boeri (hereafter ‘A&B’) have written an important contribution to the study of Epicureanism and ancient political thought. Epicurean political theory has been a topic of increasing interest in recent years (see esp. G. Roskam, *Live Unnoticed* [2007]), and many scholars are increasingly inclined to reject interpretations of the school that rely on clichés paraded by hostile ancient commentators that portray Epicureans as apolitical, antisocial parasites. A&B not only summarize these scholarly trends but offer what is probably the most up-to-date and comprehensive interpretation of Epicurean political theory, along with discussions of the political activities of actual historical actors in Greece and Rome for whom there is evidence of Epicurean sympathies. The result is a monograph that will be required reading for specialists in Epicurean philosophy and of great interest to scholars of ancient philosophy and political thought more generally.

Note:

The reason for my comment about England comes from Norman DeWitt's book, which I am personally expanding on by "joking" that most English writers seem to drink too deeply from Stoicism and inhale negativity about Epicurus. I don't expect the next wave of pro-Epicurean philosophers to come from England, but rather from outside that island (and isn't it interesting that Epicurean social engagement is not being defended by someone from England, but from two professors who hale from below the equator):

ago in his *Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics*. This sanction was confirmed in 1887 by the suave erudition of Hermann Usener in his *Epicurea*. This indispensable work, which ought to have inaugurated a fresh scrutiny of the texts, was unfortunately accepted as authoritative, and after its publication the attention of scholars was diverted to the minor Epicureans, especially Philodemus. In this field an imposing corpus of meritorious studies has long been accumulating, chiefly through the industry of German and Italian researchers, though the hope of making great additions to our knowledge of Epicurus himself has fallen short of expectations.

In England the ignominy to which Epicureanism had been relegated by Puritanism after flourishing briefly under the Restoration, though long enough to administer a smart stimulus to philosophical thought, was terminated at last in 1910 by R. D. Hicks in his *Stoic and Epicurean*, followed in 1925 by his translation of Diogenes Laertius, the chief ancient authority, in the Loeb Library; but in the former he merely

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enlarged with lucidity upon Zeller's mistakes while in the latter he confirmed tradition by the benedictory *correxit Usener*. A new text and translation was made available in 1925 by Cyril Bailey, soon followed in 1928 by *The Greek Atomists and Epicurus*, the old errors and fallacies being repeated in both books and amplified in the second one with such urbanity that to dissent seems like discourtesy.

It was in Italy that new ground was first broken. This was the good fortune of Ettore Bignone, who in 1936 began to set the account straight in respect of the life of Epicurus and the development of his doctrine in his *L'Aristotele perduto e la formazione filosofica di Epicuro*.

I would say for example that the reviewer displays his British reserve when he says that "'One also wonders about the reasons for Epicurus' sometimes provocative and bombastic language (e.g. fr. 512 Us.: 'I spit on to kalon'), which seems to have given his opponents rather easy targets to attack." 😊

I suspect Epicurus would say that it is better to give your opponents material to attack than to be less than forthright in speaking the truth. 😊