

Discussion Plan For Chapter 03 "Colophon: Development of Doctrine" (Norman DeWitt's "Epicurus And His Philosophy")

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Outline by - and thanks to! - [JAWS](#)

Chapter III: Colophon: Development of Doctrine

1. Introduction

1. 321-311 BC - Epicurus was in Colophon with his family
2. During this time he fully developed an independent doctrine
3. Synoptic view of this period
 1. 322 BC Athenians evicted per Antipater - Epicurus's father finds refuge in Colophon
 2. 321 BC Epicurus joins his family in Colophon - Epicurus likely begins to study under Praxiphanes but his studies with him were short-lived
 3. Epicurus enrolls in school of Nausiphanes of Teos
 1. Nausiphanes was a student of Democritus
 2. They explored concepts such as free will, determinism, and the function of philosophy
 3. Hostilities arose between Epicurus and Nausiphanes
 4. Epicurus may have done some teaching in Colophon
 4. Colophon still an intellectual Ionian city
 5. It was common to take one's time when studying philosophy

2. Praxiphanes

1. Praxiphanes was one of the foremost teachers of the time
2. Praxiphanes was a Peripatetic
 1. He was a critical student of literature (Homer & poetry)
 2. Separated literary rhetoric from political rhetoric
 3. To him grammar = good writing
3. Praxiphanes was critical and did not get along well with Epicurus
4. Carneiscus, an Epicurean, later condemns Praxiphanes in a biography of another Epicurean friend, thus providing evidence of Epicurean hostilities
5. Epicurus denies tutelage to Praxiphanes by arguing that he was self-taught
 1. The potential of Praxiphanes of being a pupil of Theophrastus would support the claim that Epicurus did not study under Praxiphanes

2. It is more likely that Praxiphanes studied under Aristotle and that Praxiphanes and Theophrastus were contemporaries
 6. The skill in writing that Epicurus exhibits in his Letter to Menoeceus supports the claim that Epicurus studied under Praxiphanes
 7. Letters included in the wall at Oenoanda suggest that Epicurus spent some time in Rhodes
 8. Letter from Epicurus to his mother helps establish him as the author of the letter that mentions time in Rhodes
 9. The second letter expresses gratitude to a woman with whom the author stayed with in Rhodes.
 10. The importance of the letters is that it would put Epicurus in Rhodes at the same time as Praxiphanes suggesting that he did study with him
3. Nausiphanes
1. Pamphilus was a Platonist; Praxiphanes was a Paripatetic; Nausiphanes was a Democritean atomist
 2. The above list is given in chronological order of the assumed teachers of Epicurus. Epicurus and Nausiphanes did not part well.
 3. Teos was populated by people from the home of Democritus, Abdera. Nausiphanes was known for teaching rhetoric
 4. Nausiphanes was greatly influenced by the imperturbability of Pyrrho - as was Epicurus
 1. This is a possible origin of the Epicurean doctrine of ataraxy - tranquility of the soul.
 2. Pyrrho recommended abstention from public life which mirrors Epicurus's disapproval of public careers.
4. The Quarrel
1. Epicurus is eventually disgusted with Nausiphanes, calling him lung-fish, dumb animal, imposter, and prostitute
 2. Epicurus and Nausiphanes agreed on some things:
 1. Opposition to skepticism
 2. Acceptance of dogmatism
 3. The source of their quarrel may have been over a topic they disagreed on
 1. Free will and determinism
 2. The function of philosophy
 3. Nausiphanes has a canon of knowledge called the Tripod
 1. Epicurus has his canon of knowledge also
 1. Sensations
 2. Anticipations
 3. Feelings
 2. One source suggests that Epicurus took his canon from Nausiphanes' Tripod
 4. The charge of imposter and prostitute may be related to vices of Nausiphanes, specifically homosexuality (adolescent lads) and drinking. Epicurus: Intercourse never was the cause of any good and it is fortunate if it does no harm.

5. Epicurus was an irritating pupil.
 1. He had a negative view of most people as slaves who surrender their freedom to Fate - fatalism
 2. Or of the Platonists who surrendered their freedom to the pursuit of power, fame, or wealth
6. Epicurus then retreated to Colophon for independent study
 1. He may have offered public instruction in rhetoric
 2. Recreational style of education - to make play hours of study hours
7. Thus started a period of incubation when Epicurus could work out the details of his doctrine
5. Self-Taught
 1. Epicurus denies tutelage to Nausiphanes and claims to have been self-taught
 2. This section discusses the Canon, Physics, and Ethics of Epicurus highlighting what is different (original) from other teachings, thus supporting a claim of self-teaching
 3. Canon
 1. We don't have evidence of what Nausiphanes's Tripod actually was
 2. It is likely that Epicurus's demotion of Reason and promotion of Nature is likely not something Epicurus was taught by any of his instructors as none of them was involved in the research of zoology which is the only other place this idea came up
 4. Epicurus agrees with Democritus save two concepts: skepticism and physical determinism.
 5. Skepticism
 1. Democritus's belief that all existence other than atoms and void and that everything else existed by convention committed him to skepticism
 2. To Epicurus, "belief or disbelief was a matter of morals and the happiness of mankind"
 3. "Knowledge must not only be possible, but also have relevance to action and to happiness"
 6. Physical determinism
 1. Moral reform implies conversion, and conversion presumes freewill. Thus Epicurus could not tolerate an attitude of determinism
 2. The addition of human volition was a new innovation for his ethics
 7. Hedonism
 1. Plato suggested the calculus of advantage and the classification of desires but was not a hedonist
 2. Epicurus differed from both Plato and Aristippus in his definition of pleasure - neither of which believed the continuation of pleasure was possible
 3. Epicurus developed his own division of pleasure
 1. Basic: being sane and in good health
 2. All others are decorative and superfluous
 4. This was an Epicurus original
 8. Epicurus's original teleology

1. Other philosophies based on adaptation of organ to function (Aristotle) or where no teleology was possible as with determinism (Democritus)
2. Epicurus's teleology based on natural laws
3. Only rational human beings are capable of intelligent planning for living and thus a telos is possible and this telos is pleasure as ordained by Nature
4. This was an Epicurean original

6. The Function of Philosophy

1. Epicurus believed philosophy was only good if it healed suffering of the soul. To Democritean skepticism he was especially impatient as skepticism paralyzes one from taking action.
2. Epicurus as a pragmatist
 1. "Impatient of all knowledge that lacks relevance to action"
 2. Answering questions like What is the meaning of 'good'? Are useless endeavors
 3. Supreme urgency: happiness of mankind
3. The pragmatic philosophy of Epicurus was for all mankind including women, children, and slaves and a parallel between medicine and philosophy was born. "There is no one for whom the hour has not yet come nor for whom the hour has passed for attending to the health of his soul."
4. Epicurus was likely developing the above sentiment while still under the tutelage of Nausiphanes which may have been a source of friction between them. It is also likely that word of it preceded Epicurus to Mytilene and thus setting up hostilities against him.
5. Epicurus likely finished developing his doctrine in Colophon as he immediately offered himself as a public teacher in Mytilene.
6. Once in Mytilene a gymnasiarch either threatened or lodged an indictment for impiety.
 1. This implies that Epicurus's doctrine already included the denial of divine participation in human affairs
 2. This denial was an integral part of the freedom of man - to be happy, man must be free to plan his whole life
7. Free planning of life requires rejection of determinism, both divine or physical, and the belief in the possibility of knowledge. The possibility of knowledge required the canon of truth.