

Did the Ancient Epicureans Travel in Pairs?

Post by “Joshua” of March 29, 2025 at 2:29 PM

This is somewhat tongue-in-cheek, but I am noticing that there are a number of named pairs in the surviving fragments of Epicureans journeying to (and getting kicked out of) the ancient cities of the Mediterranean.

Cicero in his Academic Questions addresses the style of Amafinius and Rabirius, and elsewhere says that Amafinius was the first to write philosophical texts in Latin.

Quote

And, therefore, I did not choose to write treatises which unlearned men could not understand, and learned men would not be at the trouble of reading. And you yourself are aware of this. For you have learnt that we cannot resemble Amafanius[3] or Rabirius,[4] who without any art discuss matters which come before the eyes of every one in plain ordinary language, giving no accurate definitions, making no divisions, drawing no inferences by well-directed questions, and who appear to think that there is no such thing as any art of speaking or disputing.

Aelian, found here and elsewhere venting his spleen in the general direction of the Ceramicus, is quoted in the [Suda](#) in a passage relating to the Epicureans [Alcaeus and Philiscus](#):

Quote

They banished the Epicureans from Rome by a public senatorial decree.[8] And also the Messenians, the ones who live in Arcadia, expelled those reputed to be members of this, let us say, "manger", saying that they were corrupters of the youth and attaching to their doctrine the stain of infamy because of their effeminacy and impiety; and they gave orders that, before sunset, the Epicureans be out of the borders of Messenia and that after they had left, the priests purify the temples and the timouchoi (this is the name Messenians give to their magistrates) purify the whole city, as delivered from some filthy contaminations and offscourings. [Note] that in Crete the citizens of Lyktos[9] chased away some Epicureans who had come there. And a law was written in the local language, stating that whoever thought of adhering to this effeminate and ignominious and hideous doctrine were enemies of the gods and should be banished from Lyktos; but if anybody dared to come and neglect the orders of the law, he should be bound in a pillory near the office of the magistrates for twenty days, naked and with

his body spread with honey and milk, so that he would be a meal for bees and flies and the insects would in the stated time kill them. After this time, if he were still alive, he should be thrown from a cliff, dressed in women's clothes.

Footnote: "[8] The reference is to the expulsion of the Epicureans Alcaeus and Philiscus in 154 BCE as a result of their ethical teaching."

Diogenes Laertius in his tenth book of *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* gives the names of two others:

Quote

And there were the two Ptolemaei of Alexandria, Ptolemaeus the Black, and Ptolemaeus the Fair.

Strabo in his *Geography* lends interesting insight into these practices:

Quote

Among the other philosophers, "Those whom I know, and could in order name," were Plutades and Diogenes, who went about from city to city, instituting schools of philosophy as the opportunity occurred. Diogenes, as if inspired by Apollo, composed and rehearsed poems, chiefly of the tragic kind, upon any subject that was proposed.

Wikipedia suggests that this passage from Diogenes Laertius refers to the same Diogenes:

Quote

That even if the wise man were to be put to the torture, he would still be happy. That the wise man will only feel gratitude to his friends, but to them equally whether they are present or absent. Nor will he groan and howl when he is put to the torture. Nor will he marry a wife whom the laws forbid, as Diogenes says, in his epitome of the Ethical Maxims of Epicurus.

And I am grateful as always for the work of our friend @Eikadistes for compiling [this](#) list; perhaps some of the other names listed there will shed light upon the question.



Post by “Don” of March 29, 2025 at 4:09 PM

That's fascinating, [Joshua](#) . You could very well be on to something, if for no other reason than (relative) safety in numbers.

That meme, though 😄