

Italian Artwork With Representtions of Epicurus

Post by "Cassius" of March 30, 2019 at 5:59 PM

Thanks to Michele Pinto I see these two paintings of Epicurus by Agostino Scilla have never before seen!

Agostino-Scilla-Epicuro-229x300.jpg

Agostino-Scilla-Epicuro-1-245x300.jpg

<http://epicuro.org/gli-epicuro-di-agostino-scilla/>

The blog post linked here tells about them. That blog post also mentions the Raphael School of Athens, and the representation that is ATTRIBUTED as being Epicurus, but which [Elli](#) has shown, is probably not, as there is another character who DOES look very much like Epicurus! As soon as I can find a good link I will post that discussion here in this thread too -- perhaps Elli already has a good link (?)

Post by "Elli" of March 30, 2019 at 7:46 PM

The painger Agostino Scilla (1629-1700) made a series of works dedicated to philosophers. Among these at least two are dedicated to Epicurus, both made in oil on canvas. Well, this is very important information. Among the years of 1629-1700 and before the busts of Epicurus to be discovered i.e. in 1734, the painter Agostino Scilla had painted Epicurus with a face similar to our known busts. And now a question : Where Agostino Scilla saw the figure of Epicurus to paint him so similar to our known figures of his busts ? Because on the fresco by Raphael "School of Athens" that was the years 1510-1511, the conjecture for Epicurus states that is a child with a smirk, which is crowned with vine leave !

Post by "Cassius" of March 30, 2019 at 7:52 PM

Yes Michele, as Elli indicates --- after she posted her theory two years ago, we got into quite a debate as to whether the Italians knew what Epicurus looked like before the discovery of the Herculaneum busts with his name inscribed.

Can you help us get to the bottom of this?

After all, you are now our resident expert on all things Epicurean in Italy!!! 😊

Post by “Cassius” of March 30, 2019 at 7:53 PM

Elli I consider both of these to be pretty good likenesses of Epicurus as a "younger" man -- do you agree?

By no means do they look like that little cherub with the garland on his head that people point to in the School of Athens fresco!

Post by “Cassius” of March 30, 2019 at 7:55 PM

Note that in both of these Epicurus is associated with a jar of some kind. Could that be a reference to the "full jar" analogy that we know of at least from Lucretius book 6 and other places?

Michele can you help us with other details and potential symbolism of these two paintings?

Post by “Don” of November 7, 2025 at 10:59 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

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I'm bumping this up in this thread because I just came across the first image in an online article with a link to [Wikimedia Commons](#). I had never seen this before and like the overall vibe.

It's also used in this article: <https://antigonejournal.com/2024/02/epicurus-on-pleasure/>

The older figure has RESPICE FINEM "Consider the final outcome."

Post by “Cassius” of November 7, 2025 at 12:19 PM

Lots of good information in that article, which I don't remember seeing before -- it's apparently from 2024.

I'd say it's a generally very good presentation and to repeat contains lots of good citations. I particular appreciate the references to the author of Quo Vadis.

But after reading through it quickly I'd say it has the flaw of giving the impression that Epicurus was focused on a general subtraction of bodily pleasures rather than the addition of mental pleasures to those bodily pleasures that do not cause more harm than good.

Of the common threads of analysis of Epicurus for 2000 years it seems that most either veer off into (1) asceticism (the implication of this article) or (2) into saying that he was a reprobate obsessed with sensual pleasure (more the focus of Plutarch, and much also of Cicero).

I don't get the impression that for example Emily Austin's book veers off into either extreme, so hopefully things will get better.