

Marshal de Saint Evremond on Epicurus

Post by "Cassius" of December 10, 2018 at 10:59 AM

Thanks to [godek](#) for this reference to someone I've not read before:

Saint-Evremond has an interesting take with which I someone agree, except for the implication that Epicurus changed his position over time. S.E. points out that Epicurus embraced BOTH active and "restful" pleasures (as we tend to discuss them) but he attributes that to different phases of Epicurus' age. There's no need to look to age for the answer, however, because it's right in front of him that Epicurus taught that we should pursue the pleasures that are available and suit our circumstances -- and some pleasures are more available with less pain during youth, some more appropriate to old age. So I think S.E. is wisely rejecting the austerity view of Epicurus, he's just not quite there in viewing the arguments sympathetically and seeing that there is no contradiction. Overall I think this SE letter is a very worthwhile read. Here's the concluding paragraph:

After saying this much, I am of the opinion that ease and tranquillity constituted the sovereign good for Epicurus when he was infirm and feeble. For a man who is in a condition to enjoy pleasures, I believe that health makes itself felt by something more active than ease, or indolence, as a good disposition of the soul demands something more animated than will permit a state of tranquillity. We are all living in the midst of an infinity of good and evil things, with senses capable of being agreeably affected by the former and injured by the latter. Without so much philosophy, a little reason will enable us to enjoy the good as deliciously as possible and accommodate ourselves to the evil as patiently as we can.

DOCTRINE OF EPICURUS

EXPLAINED BY

MARSHAL DE SAINT-EVREMOND

IN A LETTER TO

THE MODERN LEONTIUM

(NINON DE L'ENCLOS)

[Link to Google Books](#)

I presume this is who we are talking about, although the name is slightly different:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_de_Saint-Évremond