

Bertrand Russell

Post by "Cassius" of March 11, 2019 at 8:55 AM

People regularly question to what extent Bertrand Russell should be considered to be Epicurean. No doubt he has some positions (such as disdain for the influence of common religion) that are similar to Epicurus, but there are many profound differences, and I am not aware that Russell labeled himself an Epicurean in any respect. On that topic, here are some quotes about Epicurus from Russell's "History of Western Philosophy" which do not indicate that Russell held Epicurus in high regard:

Image may contain: text

Russell asserts, ridiculously slanting the evidence, that Epicurus and his friends lived mainly on bread and water:

Image may contain: text

More negative commentary:

Image may contain: text

No photo description available.

Image may contain: text

Here's another which is deeply off base - the only advantage of mental pleasure over bodily pleasure is that we have more control over it?

of taste and withdraw the pleasures of love and those of hearing and sight." Again: "The beginning and the root of all good is the pleasure of the stomach; even wisdom and culture must be referred to this." The pleasure of the mind, we are told, is the contemplation of pleasures of the body. Its only advantage over bodily pleasures is that we can learn to contemplate pleasure rather than pain, and thus have more control over mental than over physical pleasures. "Virtue, unless it means "prudence in the pursuit of pleasure," is an empty name. Justice, for example, consists in so acting as not to have occasion to fear other men's resentment—a view which leads to a doctrine of the origin of society not unlike the theory of the Social Contract.