

Famous Historical Quotes *About* Epicurus

Post by “Cassius” of March 18, 2023 at 8:10 PM

As part of the work that Kalosyni is putting together for "Epicurus Week," the first section is devoted to quotes of famous men *about* the significance of Epicurus.

I am surprised to say that I don't think we have put together such a list before, but I know that many of us have favorite quotes from figures in later history that we ought to include. We've started with just two, but please help us add to the list, as doubtless we will use it many times. I know there are other great quotes from Homer, Ovid, potentially Virgil, and many many others which are either outright admiring or at least grudgingly recognizing the impact that Epicurus had. Please help us add to this list and eventually we'll probably put it together in a @Nate style collection -- unless Nate himself has done so already and I have forgotten!

1. **Thomas Jefferson** - As you say of yourself, I too am an Epicurean. I consider the genuine (not the imputed) doctrines of Epicurus as containing everything rational in moral philosophy which Greece and Rome have left us. Epictetus indeed, has given us what was good of the stoics; all beyond, of their dogmas, being hypocrisy and grimace. Their great crime was in their calumnies of Epicurus and misrepresentations of his doctrines; in which we lament to see the candid character of Cicero engaging as an accomplice. Diffuse, vapid, rhetorical, but enchanting. His prototype Plato, eloquent as himself, dealing out mysticisms incomprehensible to the human mind, has been deified by certain sects usurping the name of Christians; because, in his foggy conceptions, they found a basis of impenetrable darkness whereon to rear fabrications as delirious, of their own invention. These they fathered blasphemously on him who they claimed as their founder, but who would disclaim them with the indignation which their caricatures of his religion so justly excite. Of Socrates we have nothing genuine but in the Memorabilia of Xenophon; for Plato makes him one of his collocutors merely to cover his own whimsies under the mantle of his name; a liberty of which we are told Socrates himself complained. Seneca is indeed a fine moralist, disguising his work at times with some Stoicisms, and affecting too much of antithesis and point, yet giving us on the whole a great deal of sound and practical morality." [Jefferson's letter to William Short]
2. **Friedrich Nietzsche** - "The imperium Romanum that we know, and that the history of the Roman provinces teaches us to know better and better,—this most admirable of all works of art in the grand manner was merely the beginning, and the structure to follow was not to prove its worth for thousands of years. To this day, nothing on a like scale sub specie aeterni has been brought into being, or even dreamed of!—This organization was strong enough to withstand bad emperors: the accident of personality has nothing to do with such things—the first principle of all genuinely great architecture. But it was not strong enough to stand up against the corruptest of all forms of corruption—against

Christians... These stealthy worms, which under the cover of night, mist and duplicity, crept upon every individual, sucking him dry of all earnest interest in real things, of all instinct for reality—this cowardly, effeminate and sugar-coated gang gradually alienated all "souls", step by step, from that colossal edifice, turning against it all the meritorious, manly and noble natures that had found in the cause of Rome their own cause, their own serious purpose, their own pride. The sneakishness of hypocrisy, the secrecy of the conventicle, concepts as black as hell, such as the sacrifice of the innocent, the unio mystica in the drinking of blood, above all, the slowly rekindled fire of revenge, of Chandala revenge—all that sort of thing became master of Rome: the same kind of religion which, in a pre-existent form, Epicurus had combatted. One has but to read Lucretius to know what Epicurus made war upon—not paganism, but "Christianity", which is to say, the corruption of souls by means of the concepts of guilt, punishment and immortality.—He combatted the subterranean cults, the whole of latent Christianity—to deny immortality was already a form of genuine salvation.—Epicurus had triumphed, and every respectable intellect in Rome was Epicurean—when Paul appeared... Paul, the Chandala hatred of Rome, of "the world", in the flesh and inspired by genius....”
[Nietzsche - AntiChrist]

3.

Post by “Eikadistes” of March 19, 2023 at 8:29 AM

Lucretius :“Epicurus [...] he who outshone the human race in genius and obscured the luster of all as the rising of the sun extinguishes the stars.” (III:1043-45)

“For if we are to speak as the majesty of his revelations demand, a god he was, a god [...] who first discovered that principle of life which is now identified with wisdom, and who by his genius saved life from such mighty waves and such deep darkness and moored it in such calm water and so brilliant light. [...] so we have the more justification for deifying the author of the sweet consolations of life that, disseminated throughout might nations, even now are soothing people’s minds.” (V:7-12, 19-21)

“And will not the man who, using words instead of weapons, subdued all these monsters and banished them from the mind rightly be considered worthy of a place among the gods? Especially since it was his wont to present many precepts in a good and godlike manner about the immortal gods themselves, and to reveal the whole nature of things in his discourse.” (V:49-54)

“[...] a man endowed with such genius, whose lips once gave utterance to true pronouncements on every subject. And even now, though his life’s light is extinguished, the godlike nature of his discoveries ensures that his fame, spread far and wide long ago, is raised to the skies.” (VI:4-8)

Diogenes Laertius: “There are plenty of witnesses of the unsurpassable kindness of [Epicurus] to everybody; both his own country which honored him with brazen statues, and his friends who were so numerous that they could not be contained in whole cities; and all his acquaintances who were bound to him by nothing but the charms of his doctrine.”