

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

Post by “godek” of December 10, 2018 at 12:53 PM

It is also available as a free ebook on project gutenbergr which I'd recommend to use rather than the google books edition if you are using a small screen.
<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/10665>

Post by “Cassius” of December 10, 2018 at 4:55 PM

Thanks a good suggestion and thanks particularly for the link!!

Post by “godek” of December 17, 2018 at 2:21 AM

"It would be useless to press the arguments, repeated a hundred times by the Epicureans, that the love of pleasure and the abolition of pain are the primary and most natural inclinations noticed in all people. Wealth, power, honor, and virtue contribute to our happiness, but the enjoyment of pleasure, let us call it voluptuousness, to sum up everything in a word, is the true aim and purpose to which all human acts are inclined"

Epicurus wrote, "When we say, then, that pleasure is the end and aim, we do not mean the pleasures of the prodigal or the pleasures of sensuality, as we are understood to do by some through ignorance, prejudice, or willful misrepresentation. By pleasure we mean the absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul"

source:

<https://www.iep.utm.edu/lenclos/>

Looks like she is more akin to Cyrenaicism than Epicureanism. So It appears Ross from the FB group was correct about that those Epicureans in France were actually more Cyrenaic.

Post by “godek” of December 17, 2018 at 2:30 AM

I see now they are actually not Epicureans at all. They claim to call themselves "neo-epicureans". Maybe this is where the idea that epicureanism was about enjoying fine food and wine. Isn't that the person that came up with that magazine with the similar name to epicurus or epicurean that is about fine foods and living a french magazine?

Post by “godek” of December 17, 2018 at 3:14 AM

Wow this lady is way ahead of her time.

"For romantic love to flourish, reciprocity must reign between the two partners. Men as well as women must cultivate the gentle arts of charm, flirtation, and fascination. The sexual stereotype of the emotional woman and the rational man must be abolished in favor of a more egalitarian vision of both genders called to develop both their intellectual and affective personalities."

Post by “Cassius” of December 17, 2018 at 5:57 AM

Yes Godek I agree that these French "epicureans" were not good examples. It is always a warning flag for people to use the term "Neo-Epicurean" rather than simply "Epicurean."

Post by “godek” of December 17, 2018 at 6:32 AM

Well I am reading about her she makes interesting points. I have studied a little on the arts of dating and women often talk about temper anxiety jealous with passionate love. I am not saying I agree with everything she says but I am a firm believer in not judging a book by its cover because all books can teach us something new. Is the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy a good source for accurate information? Since it is a short article I'll read it later for now I need to try and go back to sleep. Thankfully, Monday is my day off. 😊

So what epicureans the originals argued was that passionate sexual love was bad and that sex shouldn't be done with passion but for only baring children? Does that sound correct? Friendship, Marriage, and sex only for baring children..etc. Thoughts??

Post by “Cassius” of December 17, 2018 at 8:31 AM

1) "because all books can teach us something new." Yes indeed that is true, but it is also true that life is short, and you only live once, and you have to be selective about how you spend your time.

2) No I would not think that is a good summary of the sex position. The GENERAL position, of which sex is just a subcategory, is that all pleasure is desirable but some pleasures cause more pain than they are worth. Since there is no god and no fate and no mechanistic determinism, you have to evaluate each potential love interest and determine whether greater pleasure or greater pain will come from it. There is no one single answer to that question, and the idea that there MIGHT be a single answer is inconsistent with Epicurus at a fundamental level. There are no absolute moral rules. Everything is judged according to context in how much pleasure and pain it brings, considering both intensity and duration (time). If you are 25 and have a great time today, but die from a disease tomorrow when you could have lived to 80, you have very likely poorly judged the pleasure/pain calculus.