

Who Was Bernard Mandeville and Was He Truly An Epicurean?

Post by "Cassius" of August 26, 2021 at 11:08 AM

This looks very promising. First is the part of the poem that references Footnote (O), then the

Thus Vice nursed Ingenuity,
Which join'd with Time, and Industry
Had carry'd Life's Conveniencies,
(O.) It's real Pleasures, Comforts, Ease,
(P.) To such a Height, the very Poor
Lived better than the Rich before;
And nothing could be added more :

PAGE 69. LINE 10. That the highest Good consisted in Pleasure, was the Doctrine of *Epicurus*, who yet lead a life Exemplary for Continnence, Sobriety and other Vertues, which made People of the succeeding Ages quarrel about the signification of Pleasure. Those who argued from the Temperance of the Philosopher, said, that the Delight *Epicurus* meant, was being Virtuous; so *Erasmus* in his Colloquies tells us, that there are no greater *Epicures* than pious Christians. Others that reflected on the dissolute Manners of the greatest part of his Followers, would have it, that by Pleasures he could have understood nothing but sensual Ones, and the Gratification of our Passions. I shall not decide their Quarrel, but am of Opinion, that whether Men be good or bad, what they take delight in is their Pleasure, and not to look out for any further Etymology from the learned Languages, I believe an *Englishman* may justily call every thing a Pleasure that pleases him, and according to this Definition, we ought to dispute no more about Men's Pleasures than their Tastes: *Trahit sua quemque Voluptas*.²⁴

The worldly minded, voluptuous and ambitious Man, notwithstanding he is void of Merit, covets Precedence every where, and desires to be dignify'd above his Betters: He aims at spacious Palaces and delicious Gardens; his chief Delight is in excelling others in stately Horses, magnificent Coaches, a numerous Attendance, and dear-bought Furniture. To gratify his Lust, he wishes for genteel, young, beautiful Women of different Charms and Complexions that shall adore his Greatness, and be really in love with his Person: His Cellars he would have stored with the Flower of every Country that produces excellent Wines: His Table he desires may be serv'd with many Courses, and each of them

24. 'Its sweetest pleasure leads each creature on.' Virgil, *Eclogues*, ii, 65. - Ed.