John Stuart Mill on Epicurus

Post by “Cassius” of September 8, 2022 at 7:14 AM

I ran into this passage (from the Continuing Challenge of Epicureanism by Michael Kenneth Wilson) and at some point I'll move this to a better place to find in the future. Looks like pages 99 and 100 are worth finding and reading

John Stuart Mill observes that the original followers of Epicurus were likened to pigs for making pleasure their chief end. Similarly, Utilitarians, have sometimes been lampooned for reviving such a doctrine. When Epicureans were called pigs they responded that such an accusation assumed that human beings are not capable of any pleasure other than what pigs can experience. Consequently, it was their accusers who were really guilty of degrading human nature. Indeed, Mill recognizes, “…there is no known Epicurean theory of life which does not assign to the pleasure of the intellect, of the feelings and imagination, and of the moral sentiments, a much higher value as pleasures than to those of mere sensation.” 12

11 John Stuart Mill, “Higher and Lower Pleasures” in Philosophy: Basic Readings (ed. Nigel Warburton; London:

Routledge, 1999) 99.

12 “Higher and Lower Pleasures”, 100.