

John Stuart Mill on Epicurus

Post by “Martin” of September 12, 2022 at 2:12 PM

Mill himself makes no claim to originate this but rather refers to unspecified earlier writers and seems to imply that it originates from Epicurus himself:

"But there is no known Epicurean theory of life which does not assign to the pleasures 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. It must be admitted, however, that utilitarian writers in general have placed the superiority of mental over bodily pleasures chiefly in the greater permanency, safety, uncostliness, etc., of the former — that is, in their circumstantial advantages rather than in their intrinsic nature. And on all these points utilitarians have fully proved their case; but they might have taken the other, and, as it may be called, higher ground, with entire consistency. It is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognise the fact, that some kinds of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others. It would be absurd that while, in estimating all other things, quality is considered as well as quantity, the estimation of pleasures should be supposed to depend on quantity alone."

(John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, Chapter II, from <http://fair-use.org/john-stuart-mill/utilitarianism>)