

# Paul Thyry (Baron D'Holbach / Mirabaud) - French / German Sympathizer With Some Epicurean Ideas

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As to pleasure, I don't get the impression that D'Holbach ties everything to pleasure and pain quite as clearly as does Epicurus, but I may be missing that in earlier chapters. Regardless of that, this chapter and book closing by D'Holbach clearly echoes [PD03](#) and PDO4 in a way I would say is almost unmistakable:

## [System of Nature - Part 1, Chapter 16](#)

As long as man desires the continuation of his being, he has no right to call himself completely unhappy; whilst hope sustains him, he still enjoys a great benefit. If man was more just, in rendering to himself an account of his pleasures, in estimating his pains, he would acknowledge that the sum of the first exceeds by much the amount of the last; he would perceive that he keeps a very exact ledger of the evil, but a very unfaithful journal of the good: indeed he would avow, that there are but few days entirely unhappy during the whole course of his existence. His periodical wants procure for him the pleasure of satisfying them; his soul is perpetually moved by a thousand objects, of which, the variety, the multiplicity, the novelty, rejoices him, suspends his sorrows, diverts his chagrin. His physical evils, are they violent? They are not of long duration; they conduct him quickly to his end: the sorrows of his mind, when too powerful, conduct him to it equally. At the same time nature refuses him every happiness, she opens to him a door by which he quits life; does he refuse to enter it? It is that he yet finds pleasure in existence. Are nations reduced to despair? Are they completely miserable? They have recourse to arms; at the risque of perishing, they make the most violent efforts to terminate there sufferings.

Thus because he sees so many of his fellows cling to life, man ought to conclude they are not so unhappy as he thinks. Then let him not exaggerate the evils of the human race, but let him impose silence on that gloomy humour that persuades him these evils are without remedy; let him only diminish by degrees the number of his errors, his calamities will vanish in the same proportion; he is not to conclude himself infelicitous because his heart never ceases to form new desires, which he finds it difficult, sometimes impossible to gratify. Since his body daily requires nourishment, let him infer that it is sound, that it fulfils its functions. As long as he has desires, the proper deduction ought to be, that his mind is kept in the necessary activity; he should gather from all this that passions are essential to him, that they constitute the happiness of a being who feels; are indispensable to a man who thinks; are requisite to furnish him with ideas; that they are a vital principle with a creature who must necessarily love that which procures him comfort, who must equally desire that which promises him a mode of existence analogous to his natural energies. As long as he exists, as long as the spring of his soul maintains its elasticity, this soul desires; as long as it desires, he experiences the activity

which is necessary to him; as long as he acts, so long he lives. Human life may be compared to a river, of which the waters succeed each other, drive each other forward, and flow on without interruption; these waters, obliged to roll over an unequal bed, encounter at intervals those obstacles which prevent their stagnation; they never cease to undulate; sometimes they recoil, then again rush forward, thus continuing to run with more or less velocity, until they are restored to the ocean of nature.