

Anticipations in La Mettrie

Post by “Hiram” of January 25, 2020 at 2:26 PM

The Gassendi and Laertius lineage of ideas is something I have not considered, so am unfamiliar if / how this came to his knowledge. Maybe [Charles](#) knows something?

But I don't think these are "severe limitations", except insofar as you consider his writing a commentary on previous thinkers. I think a case could be made that his evaluation of an anatomy of the soul is ESPECIALLY valuable if it's not based on previous sources because it would mean that, without knowing these Epicurean sources, a student of nature is able to come to similar ideas than Epicurus. I almost see it as a demonstration of the soundness of the system.

Also, another thing I noticed is what seem like almost parallel sayings in La Mettrie and in Few Days in Athens. I know Thomas Jefferson lived in France, knew French and may have read La Mettrie. Many arguments against the clergy ("the theologians") and their grip on the intellectual life of people are similar in both works. Same with the insistence that people reason "without bias or prejudice", which informs the anti-dogmatism that seems to appear in La Mettrie in spite of his acknowledgement that he has created "an Epicurean SYSTEM"--and his critique of the pendency and arrogance of philosophers, which (when he starts naming names), specifically refers to idealists of whom he says they "build castles in the air". So I wonder to what extent a transfer of ideas from La Mettrie - to Jefferson - to Wright took place.