

Julien Offray de la Mettrie - Unorganized Thread for findings and quotations

Post by "Charles" of January 25, 2020 at 5:27 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Do we know if he called himself an Epicurean?

Yes, in Paragraph 10 in System of Epicurus he calls out "modern anti-Epicureans", and in Paragraph 41, there are other references but these are the most outward without going any deeper into his work.

10

"If humans have not always existed as we see them today, (what? How could we accept the idea that they sprang into the world fully grown: fathers and mothers, ready to procreate from the get-go!) the Earth must have been a uterus for humans; it must have opened its depths to receive the prepared human seeds so that this superb animal, given certain laws, could be hatched out. **Why, modern anti-Epicureans**, should the Earth, the common mother and wet-nurse of all bodies, deny to the seeds of animals, the favor she grants to the most deformed and harmful of plants? They always find fertility in her inner parts, and this womb can't be all that different, in the end, than what women have." (I've seen this translated and translated it myself as "Why, I ask you modern anti-Epicureans")

41

"So many philosophers have supported Epicurus' views that I've dared to mingle my own weak voice with theirs; besides, like them, I'm only offering a system; which shows us what an enormous task we're really taking on when, hoping to pierce the night of time, we cast our presumptuous glance on things that offer them no clues: for, whether you believe in creation or reject it, the same mystery remains; the same incomprehensibility holds on all sides. How was this Earth, where I live, formed? Is it the only inhabited planet? Where did I come from? Where am I? What is the nature of everything I see? What about all these brilliant phantoms whose illusions I love? Did I exist, before the time when I was nothing? Will I be, when I am no more? What state came before I was aware of my existence? What state will follow the loss of sensation? These are questions that the greatest geniuses can never answer; they will philosophically fight the battle as I have done, will set off the bigots' alarm bells, and we'll learn nothing at all."

I'd put a lot less thought into 41, as he more frequently cites Lucretius than Epicurus at least in

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this book, but perhaps the remaining sections of Anti-Seneca will be more forthcoming, as it appears to be.