

Michel de Montaigne on pleasure

Post by "Godfrey" of April 30, 2020 at 6:19 PM

From Michel de Montaigne, The Complete Essays, Book 1.20. Screech translation:

Quote

All the opinions in the world reach the same point, that pleasure is our target even though they may get there by different means; otherwise we would throw them out immediately, for who would listen to anyone whose goal was to achieve for us pain and suffering?

I assume he's referring to PD 5 here:

Quote

Even in virtue our ultimate aim - no matter what they say - is pleasure. I enjoy bashing people's ears with that word which runs so strongly counter to their minds. When pleasure is taken to mean the most profound delight and an exceeding happiness it is a better companion to virtue than anything else; and rightly so. Such pleasure is no less seriously pleasurable for being more lively, taut, robust and virile. We ought to have given virtue the more favourable, noble and natural name of pleasure not (as we have done) a name derived from vis (vigour).

This seems like a rather judgmental view of PD 8 as well as natural and necessary v vain pleasures:

Quote

There is that lower voluptuous pleasure which can only be said to have a disputed claim to the name not a privileged right to it. I find it less pure of lets and hindrances than virtue. Apart from having a savour which is fleeting, fluid and perishable, it has its vigils, fasts and travails, its blood and its sweat; it also has its own peculiar sufferings, which are sharp in so many different ways and accompanied by a satiety of such weight that it amounts to repentance.

The rest of Book 1.20 is a meditation on death. I'm restricting this post to pleasure!