

Pío Baroja, Spanish Novelist and Epicurean

Post by "Joshua" of June 2, 2020 at 1:21 PM

Another new friend!

[Pío Baroja](#) (1872-1956) was a Spanish novelist of the last century who wrote the following in a text called *Juventud, Egoatría (Youth and Egoatry)*:

Epicuri de Grege Porcum

I am also a swine of the herd of Epicurus; I, too, wax eloquent over this ancient philosopher, who conversed with his pupils in his garden. The very epithet of Horace, upon detaching himself from the Epicureans, *Epicuri de grege porcum*, is full of charm.

All noble minds have hymned Epicurus. "Hail Epicurus, thou honour of Greece!" Lucretius exclaims in the third book of his poem.

"I have sought to avenge Epicurus, that truly

holy philosopher, that divine genius," Lucian

tells us in his *Alexander or the False Prophet*.

Lange, in his *History of Materialism* sets down Epicurus as a disciple and imitator of Democritus.

I am not a man of sufficient classical culture to

be able to form an authoritative opinion of the merits of Epicurus as a philosopher. All my

knowledge of him, as well as of the other ancient philosophers, is derived from the book of Diogenes Laertius.

Concerning Epicurus, I have read Bayle's magnificent article in his *Historical and Critical*

Dictionary and Gassendi's work, *De Vita et*

Moribus Epicuri. With this equipment, I have become one of the disciples of the master.

Scholars may say that I have no right to enroll myself as one of the disciples of Epicurus,

but when I think of myself, spontaneously there comes to my mind the grotesque epithet which Horace applied to the Epicureans in his *Epistles*, a characterization which for my part I accept and regard as an honour: Swine of the herd of Epicurus, *Epicuri de grege porcum*.

[Translated from Spanish By JACOB S. FASSETT, Jr. and FRANCES L. PHILLIPS, in an edition presented by H.L. Mencken]

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1586-p%C3%ADo-baroja-spanish-novelist-and-epicurean/?postID=7884#post7884>

There are a few items of concern here. The word 'detaching' with reference to Horace is curious, but that may be a problem of translation.

And his praise for Gassendi's work is notable as well. Nevertheless, it's evident that he read Diogenes Laertius as well as Lucretius and Lucian, so that's enough to be getting on with.

I haven't read any of his novels, but Hemingway praised him very highly, suggesting to him that he (and not Hemingway) should have won the Nobel prize in literature.