

What Evidence Do We Have That Frances Wright Personally Was An Epicurean?

Post by "Cassius" of September 24, 2020 at 6:15 AM

I won't have time and it would take too much space to paste too many of these clips, but some are so blindingly obviously derived from Epicurus that I'd like to save people some time and post a few more:

Before we can proceed to examine our opinions, we must ascertain facts drawn from the attentive observation of matter. We must know the anatomy of the matter composing our own bodies, and that of the matter composing all other bodies. We must familiarize our senses and our understandings with the multiform and yet unvarying phenomena of nature. We must know what does happen and what does not happen. We must trace in the physical world, cause to cause; or, more properly, occurrence to occurrence; and whenever we do not perceive the clenching link between two occurrences, we must not imagine it; we must say we do not know it, and we must go, with our five senses open, in search of it. Had human beings, in all ages of the world, done this, where should we not now be in just knowledge? It is time that we seek out the right road. We have groped long enough in error; lived long enough in fairy land; dreamed more than enough of things unseen and causes unknown. We have, indeed, dreamed so much and observed so little, that our imaginations have grown larger than the world we live in, and our judgments have dwindled

Judgment based on analogy against past observations:

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Having obtained a general view of the philosophy of matter, we may then carry our investigations into the other branches of knowledge, according to our leisure, taste, and opportunity. We may apply ourselves to the past history of man, as handed down to us by tradition, oral or in writing; and comparing these traditions with what we know of the nature of man and the nature of things, of matter and its phenomena, we may judge of their credibility. If we are not prepared thus to judge by accurate analogy, we may receive every fable for matter of fact, swallow every fairy tale for true history, suppose every mythology sound philosophy, and mistake equally the tricks of conjurers and the phenomena of nature for miracles.

We may then peruse with equal interest and advantage the narratives of travellers, and engage in general reading with little risk of taking facts for granted without evidence,

This is aimed at the church, but does it not remind you of Torquatus criticizing Plato in "On Ends"?

But, it may be asked, how are the generality of men, and, more especially, of women, to find time and opportunity for such preparatory investigations as we acknowledge to be absolutely indispensable? Should we discover that they now spend more time and more opportunity in useless investigations, than they need devote to the most useful; that they now waste more anxious thought, more

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precious time, and more hard earned money in fruitless enquiry—enquiry which never can be answered, and whose answer, if possible, could profit them nothing—than would suffice to gratify every laudable curiosity, and store their minds with knowledge, whose utility should be felt at every moment of their lives—should we discover this, would there be no effect made to turn time and opportunity to better account, and to divert thought and money into the more useful channel?

We speak of enquiry. Behold! my friends, a subject for it! Ask yourselves how ye employ your leisure hours—how ye employ your leisure day, the first of the week! Ask, for what have ye raised spacious buildings through your cities and villages, and for what ye pay a host of teachers, interested, as we have seen—as we have proved—in deceiving you!

Compare that to "You are pleased to think him uneducated. The reason is that he refused to consider any education worth the name that did not help to school us in happiness. Was he to spend his time, as you encourage Triarius and me to do, in perusing poets, who give us nothing solid and useful, but merely childish amusement? Was he to occupy himself like Plato with music and geometry, arithmetic and astronomy, which starting from false premises cannot be true, and which moreover if they were true would contribute nothing to make our lives pleasanter and therefore better? Was he, I say, to study arts like these, and neglect the master art, so difficult and correspondingly so fruitful, the art of living?"

This is SO good:

Such being my motives, such my object, I must entreat you to enquire what the knowledge is, that you learn from your spiritual teachers. "The knowledge by faith," they will answer for you. "And faith," they will add, "is the knowledge of things unseen." Can there be any such knowledge? I put it to your reason. Knowledge we have shown to be ascertained facts. Things unseen! Can human understanding know any thing about them? More I will ask: could it be of any utility were even such knowledge possible? And do ye hire teachers to teach you nonexistent knowledge, impossible knowledge, and knowledge which, even under the supposition of its possibility, could serve no conceivable purpose? We are on the earth, and they tell us of heaven; we are human beings, and they tell us of angels and devils; we are matter, and they tell us of spirit: we have five senses whereby to admit truths, and a reasoning faculty by which to build our belief upon them; and they tell us of dreams dreamed thousands of years ago, which all our experience flatly contradicts.

Longer version of excerpt already cited:

The proof comes with the assertion; the fact constitutes the truth.

But, you will say, there is other evidence than the physically tangible—other truths than those admitted through the senses. There is the more *immediate* and the more *remote* testimony of our senses; nothing more, nothing less. Will you appeal to numerical and geometrical truth? Had we no senses, could we know any thing of either? Were there no objects, no substances and existences around you, how could you conceive of number or of form? If the child see not *four things*, how shall he understand the meaning of *four*? If he see not two halves, put them together, divide them, compare them, measure, weigh them, how shall he know that two halves are equal to a whole? or a whole greater than its part? These are the simple truths conceived by the philosopher of nature, Pestalozzi. Here are the leading beauties of that system of experimental instruction which he so long strove to put in practice, and which time may enable others successfully to develop.