

Porphyry - Letter to Marcella -"Vain Is the Word of the Philosopher..."

Post by "Don" of May 27, 2024 at 1:26 PM

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

DeWitt wrote his book not as a scholar but more as a fanboy of Epicurus

[Quote from Cassius](#)

i strongly disagree with this characterization of the DeWitt book...

I'm going to wade into the fray to add that I think you're both correct. To [TauPhi](#)'s assertions, I agree that Dewitt was a "fanboy" of Epicurus, but I don't see that as necessarily a negative. His "Epicurus and his Philosophy" and his "St. Paul and Epicurus" appear (from the publication dates) to be projects he put off completing until after his retirement from academia. He obviously gave them lots of thought, but it seems he didn't feel he could write them as part of his academic career. And we're all familiar with personal projects here at the forum and finding time to do them! Do I think some of Dewitt's ideas fall under "fan fiction"? Yes. Do I think it detracts from the *overall* value of his work. Only the slightest bit.

With [Cassius](#), I'll concur that Dewitt charted his own path, and even within his career, he was fearless in advocating for the importance of studying Epicurus. It's always gratifying to see him footnoted in papers! I also like his academic papers and highly recommend those to the curious student of Epicurus, but they're not for the casual reader and definitely not a starting point! And we have Dewitt to thank for this forum, per [Cassius](#)'s history.

For myself, I admit that I have never read all of "Epicurus and his Philosophy" cover to cover. That said, the podcast episodes that methodically went through the book were very helpful in reminding me of the value of Dewitt's book. It is valuable as an overview of the history, development, and tenets of the philosophy and for providing context. It will never be my go-to recommendation (looking at you, Emily Austin 😊), but I will always include it in any important books to read bibliography.