

George Santayana's Essay on Lucretius (1910)

Post by "Cassius" of August 12, 2020 at 9:38 PM

Thank you for weighing in Don. The document is not easy reading. Santayana is obviously a brilliant man, and what i am reading strikes me as a long-form extrapolation of arguments made by the later Nietzsche in considering Epicurus a "decadent." That's why I made my initial comment about being wary of suggesting that I or any of us are "smarter" than Santayana or Nietzsche. I don't think what we're talking about is a division by levels of intelligence.

I think this goes much deeper than scholarship issues. The Dewitt non-depressive interpretation of Epicurus is not rocket science -- neither Jefferson nor Wright display it. There's something much deeper here. What Dewitt (just to use one example) could see, Nietzsche and Santayana certainly could have seen as well -- there is an explanation for why they didn't, and that's what I want to understand, or at least come up with a working theory.

Depending on what was really going on in Epicurus' criticism of "poetry," that might be one part of the answer. Maybe there is something about a personality which is so taken by "flights of fancy" that makes such a character inhospitable to seeing Epicurus in a positive way.