

# George Santayana's Essay on Lucretius (1910)

Post by “Cassius” of August 13, 2020 at 3:06 PM

## [Quote from Godfrey](#)

It seems as though one devoted to excelling in scholarship just can't comprehend or stomach the ultimate simplicity and obviousness of Epicurus' insights.

There is a statement in *A Few Days in Athens* to Very similar effect:

“It might seem strange,” said Metrodorus, “that the pedantry of Aristotle should find so many imitators, and his dark sayings so many believers, in a city, too, now graced and enlightened by the simple language, and simple doctrines of an Epicurus. — But the language of truth is too simple for inexperienced ears. We start in search of knowledge, like the demigods of old in search of adventure, prepared to encounter giants, to scale mountains, to pierce into Tartarean gulfs, and to carry off our prize from the grip of some dark enchanter, invulnerable to all save to charmed weapons and deity-gifted assailants. To find none of all these things, but, in their stead, a smooth road through a pleasant country, with a familiar guide to direct our curiosity, and point out the beauties of the landscape, disappoints us of all exploit and all notoriety; and our vanity turns but too often from the fair and open champaigne, into error's dark labyrinths, where we mistake mystery for wisdom, pedantry for knowledge, and prejudice for virtue.”

## [Quote from Godfrey](#)

Of course part of Epicurus' project was to show the futility of over-reliance on the intellect. So the intellectual probably feels compelled to demean and discredit Epicurus. The tragedy, to me, is how over the millennia those who make a fancy argument can blind so many to basic truths.

Yes I agree. The words "intellect" and "intellectual" may or may not be overbroad here, but I agree with the general thrust.

## [Quote from JJEIbert](#)

—the narcissism of small differences.

YES I do think that is a good way to look at it. People get wedded to their own particular perspective in strange ways.