

BOOK REVIEW

The Origins of Materialism

BY GEORGE NOVACK

This is the only history of ancient Western materialism by an American. Unlike Frederic Lange's work on materialism which is more comprehensive, since it covers the history of this ancient philosophy to the nineteenth century, it is written by a man who understands and believes in this spirit of his subject. The city of Miletus is given a needed boost as the mother-city of Western philosophy. Novack shows how it provided much of the background for the work of Thales and Anaximander. Despite the topic, the contributions of the great idealists are noted. The final chapter is on Lucretius and Lucian (born a Syrian) who moved in skepticism and agnosticism to prepare the way for the eclipse of materialism in the classical world.