

"Setting Before the Eyes"

Post by "Cassius" of January 29, 2022 at 8:07 AM

Ok finally I remember for this thread one of the main points I want to raise:

What I interpret to be the most important reference to "ante oculos" is the reference early in book one of Lucretius:

"Humana ante oculos foede cum vita....."

The translators seem to view that as an interjection on the order of:

"all too conspicuous" - Humphrey

(I will get some more to add here)

But I interpret them to be saying, and it makes sense in the translation, that this is just some kind of idiom or expression for what we might say as:

- "right in front of you"
- "right before your eyes"
- "apparently"
- "obviously"
- "plain to see"
- "unmistakeably"

All of which would be normal ways of expressing something that is "right in front of you to be seen." And that's a point that is echoed later in book one, in the passage about if you can't have confidence in your senses as to what is right in front of you, you certainly can't have confidence in your opinions about anything that is hidden.

(And I need to look to see if there are other instances of ante oculos in Lucretius)

But the point of this being that if "ante oculos" is just an idiom or expression about things that are clearly right in front of you, that in itself has significance, without turning the issue into a "technique" so we can match the Stoics or some others who are really into "procedures."

Again this is not a criticism of you personally or anyone in particular who wants to search for such techniques, it's just a matter of wanting to document them very clearly before we accept something that Tsouna in the last several decades thinks she has discovered, when there doesn't seem to be any significant record of it in the rest of 2000 years of Epicurean texts.

Kind of like that other Lucretius line -- If it's true let's embrace it, if it's not true let's fight against it, but whatever, let's work to be as accurate as we can possibly be.