

Episode Ninety - Recap Of Atomism In Preparation for Details of Magnetism

Post by “Joshua” of September 24, 2021 at 10:35 PM

In reading the Rolfe Humphries translation of this passage I found something interesting. At Loeb line 921, he translates with an emendation;

Quote

In the first place, from everything we see

There is bound to be an everlasting flow.

Ah, look about you! Watch a glimmering pool

In the first shine of starlight, see the stars

Respond, that very instant, radiant

In water's universe. Does this not prove

How marvelous the swift descent from heaven?

Our other senses know of emanance

In fragrances [...]

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I was startled by the seemingly unwarranted poetic license, and the Loeb edition did not point to a *lacuna* in these lines. However, when I did a search for Lucretius' use of that imagery it took me all the way back to a heavily corrupted passage in Book 4. Here is a part of the Loeb note on page 292.

Quote

[...] The new passage should begin before 217, but after 216, the opening of it being lost. 217-229 are repeated, with a few minor variations, in 6.923-935, and the reviser of this work thinks it most probable that 217 was preceded by two lines identical or almost identical to 6.921-922, and that those two lines were preceded by lines by lines in which the new subject was introduced. [...]

It seems the translators are doing their best to use these two passages (both corrupted in the manuscripts) to form a coherent whole.

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