

Lucretius' Expressions of Epicurus' Atomoi

Post by “Eikadistes” of February 4, 2023 at 6:06 PM

I have been translating sections of *De Rerum Natura* (and plan to continue), and I found something interesting I wanted to share, upon which I will likely build later. Lucretius discusses the difficult task of translating scientific Greek vocabulary into Latin metaphors, and I feel that (overwhelmingly) **most** translators gloss over Lucretius' specific innovations by employing the word "atom" or "atoms", which can be misleading for several reasons.

Instead, I found that (*usually*) Munro best preserves Lucretius' linguistic innovations without resorting to contemporary scientific jargon or reducing the poetic flavor to the tone of a textbook.

Latin Words For ATOMI (found in *DRN* I-VI):

CORPORA — “first bodies” (Munro)

CORPORA MATERIALI — “elements of matter” (Munro)

CORPORA PRIMA — “first bodies” (Munro)

CORPORIBUS PRIMIS — “first bodies” (Munro)

CORPORIS — “first body” (Munro)

CORPVSCVLA MATERIALI — “the minute bodies of matter” (Munro)

ELEMENTA — “elements” (Munro)

ELEMENTAQUE PRIMA — “prime elements” (Munro)

ELEMENTIS — “elements” (Munro)

FIGVRAS — “elements” (Munro)

EXORDIA — “beginnings” (Munro)

EXORDIA PRIMA — “first-beginnings” (Munro)

EXORDIA RERVM — “beginnings of things” (Munro)

GENITALIA CORPORA — “begetting bodies” (Munro)

GENITALIA CORPORA REBVS — “begetting bodies of things” (Munro)

MATERIALI CORPORA — “bodies of matter” (Munro)

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2877-lucretius-expressions-of-epicurus-atomoi/?postID=22442#post22442>

MATERIAI CORPORIBVS — “bodies of matter” (Munro)

MATERIEM RERVM — “matter of things” (Munro)

MATERIES AETERNA — “matter everlasting” (Munro)

MINVTIS PERQVAM CORPORIBVS — “exceedingly minute bodies” (Munro)

PRIMAS PARTIS — “primal parts” (Munro)

PRIMASQVE FIGVRAS — “primary elements” (Munro)

PRIMORDIA — “first-beginnings” (Munro)

PRIMORDIA CORPORE — “first elements” (Munro)

PRIMORDIA PRINCIPIORVM — “basic elements” (Humphries)

PRIMORDIA RERVM — “first beginnings of things” (Munro)

PRIMORDIAQVE — “firstlings” (Humphries)

PRIMORVM — “first things” (Munro)

PRINCIPIIS — “primary particles” (Smith)

PRINCIPIIS RERVM — “primary elements of things” (Smith)

PRINCIPIORVM — “primary elements” (Smith)

PRINCIPIORVM CORPORIBVS — “primary particles” (Melville)

PRINCIPIORVM CORPORIS ATQVE ANIMI — “the elements of the body and spirit” (Smith)

SEMINA — “seeds” (Munro)

SEMINA REBVS — “seeds of things” (Munro)

SEMINA RERVM — “seeds of things” (Munro)

SEMINAQVE — “seeds” (Smith)

SEMINE — “seed” (Munro)

SEMINIBVS — “seeds” (Munro)

SEMINIS — “seeds” (Munro)

RERVM PRIMORDIA — “first-beginnings of things”

Of note, lines between 1000-1288 in Book V use SEMINA to refer to male ejaculate fluid, thus, employing literal imagery, creating a necessary, poetic comparison between the generation of the Earth and the generation of a Child through the same, insentient mechanisms; both of which are composed of clumps of eternal matter that get entangled while falling through the void, both of which lead to inextricably vast complexity, coming from simple, primordial seeds.

I plan on reviewing III-VI next, but I thought that I-II would most efficiently provide me with the largest variety of phrases for "atoms" in the ancient context or "subatomic particles" in the modern meaning. (Edit: *updated to sixerino*)