

Thomas Nail - Returning to Lucretius

Post by “Joshua” of January 27, 2026 at 7:18 PM

I haven't read the article, but I notice that we are going to be encountering related ideas in *Academic Questions*, Book 1, section 2 this weekend;

Quote

[Varro speaking] But now, if I approved of the doctrines of Epicurus, that is to say, of Democritus, I could write of natural philosophy in as plain a style as Amafanius. For what is the great difficulty when you have put an end to all efficient causes, **in speaking of the fortuitous concourse of corpuscules**, for this is the name he gives to atoms. You know our system of natural philosophy, which depends upon the two principles, the efficient cause, and the subject matter out of which the efficient cause forms and produces what it does produce. For we must have recourse to geometry, since, if we do not, in what words will any one be able to enunciate the principles he wishes, or whom will he be able to cause to comprehend those assertions about life, and manners, and desiring and avoiding such and such things?

And I also recall that Alfred Tennyson in [Lucretius](#) makes reference to 'streams' of atoms;

Quote

A void was made in Nature, all her bonds
Crack'd; and I saw the **flaring atom-streams**
And torrents of her myriad universe,
Ruining along the illimitable inane,
Fly on to clash together again, and make
Another and another frame of things
For ever.

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Apart from all of this, my own view on the matter is in agreement with [Bryan's](#). Lucretius is translating (finding Latin words with which to convey the 'dark discoveries of the Greeks') rather than innovating.