

Horace - Ode I-34

Post by “Joshua” of October 30, 2020 at 12:08 PM

My mind is running on two tracks right now, and this observation might serve a point in the Divinity megathread. I'll post it here since I've already started.

I've suspected that this Ode might contain allusions to Lucretius, and a footnote in the Loeb edition seems to confirm it. Notice the following passage;

Quote

For Jupiter, who usually cleaves the **clouds** with his gleaming lightning, lately drove his thundering horses and rapid chariot through the **clear serene**;

Compare to Lucretius in Book VI (Leonard);

Quote

Again, why never hurtles Jupiter

A bolt upon the lands nor pours abroad

Clap upon clap, when skies are cloudless all?

Horace must certainly notice that by seizing on one counter-example he is misrepresenting the broad Epicurean case against divine intervention. But it serves to illustrate a point; if we are too specific about the divine, we invite nitpicking. If we are too vague, we invite unrestrained speculation.

Lucretius says in Book 1 (Leonard again);

Quote

Whence he to us, a conqueror, reports

What things can rise to being, what cannot,

And by what law to each its scope prescribed,

Its boundary stone that clings so deep in Time.

A large measure of our project, then, must be to mark that boundary. If the study of divinity starts to lead where the philosophy cannot and should not go, we have to say as much.