

# Memorable Line from Lucretius Book IV: "The Eyes Can Know Nothing of the Nature of Things"

Post by "Cassius" of January 2, 2021 at 9:17 AM

**This is the 1743 Browne translation (approximately 380 of the Latin text of Book 4)**

Our shadows seem to move with us in the sun, to follow our steps, and imitate our gestures (if you can suppose that air, void of light, is able to walk, and to follow the motions and gestures of the body; for what we usually call shadow can be nothing but the air deprived of light). The reason is because as we walk we hinder the rays of the sun from striking upon a certain part of the earth, which by that means becomes dark; but that as we leave the place it is covered with light, and therefore it is that the shadow of the body over against it follows us in all our motions. For a train of new rays are continually flowing from the sun; and the first dies away like thread of wool drawn through a flame, and by this means that part of the earth is soon deprived of light, and again becomes bright, and discharges the black shade that hung upon it.

**But in this case we are not in the least to allow that the eyes are deceived; it is their business to discover only where the light and shade are, but to determine nothing whether the light be the same, or the shadow be the same that moves from one place to another, or whether it be as we explained above. It is the office of the mind and judgment to distinguish this, for the eyes can know nothing of the nature of things, and therefore you are not to impute to them the failures of the mind.**