



Introduction to Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things*

Cyril Baley

Of the three great Latin poets Lucretius seems to make the most peculiar appeal to our own age. Catullus and Virgil are for all time; the passionate love-history of a genuine soul and a poet of marvellously wide range, the all-embracing yet finely pessimistic sympathy of a mind which could focus past and future in the consciousness of present crisis, will find their response in all generations. But Lucretius—possibly because from the point of view of universality he stands a little below the other two—seems to demand for full appreciation a rather special temper. His are not the interests of every man, nor is his a common attitude to life. A fierce hatred of conventional superstitions and a yearning for intellectual liberty coupled with a sense of awe—deeply religious in reality—in the presence of nature, a strong desire for scientific method and accuracy of observation combined with a profound feeling of the beauty of the world and its works, an unswerving consciousness of natural law and the sequence of cause and effect counteracted by an equal stubbornness in defence of man's moral freedom—these are qualities which may engage attention, but cannot at all times awaken a vital sympathy. Yet these are antitheses familiar enough to our generation, and this is an attitude of mind which we are peculiarly qualified to understand. The antagonism of Religion and Science, the relation of the investigation to the love of Nature, the opposition of Natural Law and Freewill are themes which seem very near to us.

Only we must be careful not to interpret the past by the present. To each generation its problems present themselves in their own peculiar manner, and we must endeavour to understand Lucretius not as a contemporary, but as an Epicurean of the last century BC. It was eminently a period of disturbance and dissolution, intellectually as well as socially and politically. The Republican régime was breaking down, and with it the system of morals and beliefs on which it rested. The genuine Roman religion—the belief in the *numina*, the countless little impersonal 'spirits', always 'about man's path and about his bed', mostly hostile by instinct, but capable of pacification by simple gifts and easy acts of worship—had long ago lost its hold on the life of the city, or at the most lingered on here and there in the old-fashioned piety of a household cult. The imposing structure of the State-worship, raised as the primitive agricultural community developed into a commercial city, and consolidated when the great wave of Greek culture anthropomorphized *numina* into *dei*, gave them temples and statues, and organized ceremonials and priesthoods, remained still untouched in form, but the form was empty. Magistrates and priests duly sacrificed the appropriate victims, augurs watched for omens and blessed or stayed proceedings, the populace kept holiday on the festivals, but little real religious feeling remained, except a vague sense of the insecurity of life owing to the malevolent interference of divine

beings, and an abiding fear of death and the punishments of a life to come. The more recent introduction of Oriental cults, which had obtained a great influence over the popular mind, had but heightened these terrors, by adding an ecstatic and orgiastic form of worship, which through excitement and reaction gave an unnatural and intermittent character to religion, essentially foreign to the sober and straightforward temperament of the Roman.

Among the educated classes in consequence a profound scepticism prevailed. When Q. Mucius Scaevola advocated the maintenance of religion among the populace as a political asset, he was but voicing what had for a generation been the practice of the ruling classes. Cicero, the Augur, could discuss the fundamental assumptions of his art and arrive at a very unfavourable conclusion; Caesar, the acknowledged sceptic, was selected to direct the whole system of religious worship as Pontifex Maximus. But a pure scepticism cannot satisfy any type of mind, least of all the Roman, and Greek culture, which had introduced the disease, brought also the antidote in philosophy. Philosophy professed to place men above the conflict of religions and to give them what religion did not claim to offer, a guide to moral conduct. It seems strange at first sight that the two greatest philosophies of Greece—those of Plato and Aristotle—should have made so little impression on the Roman mind, attracting only a few strong intellects like Cicero's, and even then only to a very eclectic and almost dilettante study. But the reason is not really far to seek: not only were the idealism of Plato and the intellectualism of Aristotle alien to the plain Roman mind, but morally both systems rested essentially on the conception of the State, on the identification of the good man and the good citizen. It was just this conception which with the fall of the Republic was breaking down, and philosophy, if it was to help the sceptical Roman, must be individualistic: he wanted to know about himself and his conduct as a single human being. In the corresponding period of the history of Athens, when the city-state had given place to the monarchy of Macedon, and that again had fallen into the disruption of the rule of the 'Successors', two creeds had arisen to supply the need. Stoicism with its assertion of the divine element in the world and the mind of man had appealed to the more directly religious natures; the doctrine of Epicurus, founded on the atomic materialism of Democritus, made its way with those more inclined to a matter-of-fact scientific outlook on life. And so now in Rome these two philosophies answered the demand, and as men drifted away from religion, they divided themselves almost unconsciously into the rival camps of the Stoics and Epicureans.

Into this atmosphere Lucretius grew up. Of his personal history we are singularly ignorant. By a comparison of an entry in Jerome's *Fasti* and a casual note in Donatus's *Life of Virgil*, and an attempt to reconcile their disagreement by considerations of probability, we can arrive at the conclusion that he was born in 94 BC and died in 55. We have a romantic story, which has been very variously interpreted, that he was 'poisoned by a love-philtre, wrote some poems in his lucid intervals and finally committed suicide'. We are told that Cicero 'edited' the poem—a statement whose meaning is again much vexed—and a recently discovered [9] Renaissance¹ 'Life' gives us what purport to be details of his criticism:² we know for certain that by 54 BC both Cicero and his brother had read the poem and communicated to each other their opinions on it. We are aware that the Lucretii were a family of good standing in Rome, and Lucretius's friendship with Memmius suggests that he too was—or might have been, if he had wished it—in the society of his day: the 'Borgian Life' gives us the names of others, prominent philosophers and public men, with whom he was familiar. But beyond that we must be content to know nothing, nor indeed could any

addition of external details add much to the unmistakable picture of his personality which the poem itself presents to us. A keen active mind, eager in its pursuit of truth and not shrinking from hard thought in the attainment of its end, or from intellectual labour in the attempt to present it to others; and a profound poetic sensitiveness, alive at once to the greatness and the beauty of nature, and instinct with the feeling for accuracy in expression and the consciousness of the revealing power of language in its 'sudden flashes'—these are characteristics which strike one at once. And the closer study of the poem seems to disclose another feature almost equally marked. Whether or no we accept the legend of the love-philtre and the idea of insanity, we cannot refuse the testimony of the poem itself to an abnormal and even morbid strain in its author's character. The fierceness of the unceasing attack on the religious point of view—even on its shadow in a teleological interpretation of nature;¹ the unnatural virulence of the onslaught on love; the almost brooding pessimism with which he anticipates the coming destruction of the world; such are the signs which lead one to think of Lucretius as a not quite normal personality—perhaps even not quite sane.

Lucretius then approached the problems of his age with a strongly-marked temper and a very decided bias. It was not sufficient for him to take up, as did so many of his contemporaries, a position of sceptical indifference towards religion. Nor could he, like the Stoics, attempt to get rid of the grosser elements of superstition and yet retain a purified belief in the divine control of the world, reconciling the conflicts of religion in a kind of religious philosophy. Religion was his enemy and he could have no truce with it, for he saw in it the cause of the greater part of the sorrows and even the crimes⁴ of human life. The whole theological view must be eradicated from men's minds before they could even begin to live a life 'worthy of the gods'. Naturally enough then he turned to the philosophy of Epicurus: he had had the same battle to fight: it was he who, 'when the life of man lay foul and grovelling upon the earth crushed by the weight of religion ... dared first to raise his mortal eyes to meet her ... and in mind and spirit traversed the boundless whole:' he was the real 'god', who had taught that the power of the gods over the world was nought. In the philosophy of Epicurus Lucretius had found his own rest, and it was the purpose of his life to put that philosophy at the service of his countrymen and so deliver them too from the tyranny of religion.

But it would be the greatest mistake to think of Lucretius or his master as the author of a mere polemic against religion. Still less is Epicurus justly represented—as has sometimes been the case—as patching together from various sources a crude piecemeal view of the world to combat superstition and afford a plausible basis for a moral theory of doubtful moral tendency. If there is one point that modern work at Epicureanism tends to reveal, it is that it was a serious philosophy, a consistent whole derived from a single starting-point and following step by step with logical precision. As such Lucretius had learnt it, and as such he intended to present it, and many of the difficulties which modern critics have found in his detail, many of the puerilities at which they have scoffed, are to be explained by the perfectly consistent and relentless application of his fundamental principles. He has seemed trivial or inconsistent or obscure to his critics, because they would not take him seriously enough.

It will not be possible here to deal in any detail with the Epicurean system, and indeed, in most of its aspects it will gradually unfold itself in the *De Rerum Natura*, but it will be well to call attention to certain fundamental points with regard to it, which Lucretius has

rather assumed than stated, but which are of vital importance for the understanding of his poem, and the comprehension of its essential unity. First, however, we must very briefly consider the origin of the system. It is commonly said that Epicurus adopted the atomic theory of Democritus to act as a physical basis for his moral theory that the end of life was 'pleasure'. This is in a very limited sense true. The long debate of the pre-Socratic physical philosophers as to the ultimate constitution of the universe had led up to the hypothesis, first propounded by Leucippus and greatly strengthened and elaborated by Democritus of Abdera (circ. 430 BC), that the physical basis of the world was infinite atoms, tiny, eternal, indivisible particles of matter, possessing and differing in size, shape and weight, and moving in infinite space. This conclusion with many of the deductions from it and much of Democritus's elaboration of detail Epicurus accepted, and combined with it the theory that pleasure was the highest good, but in no mere casual spirit of eclecticism. He believed pleasure to be the moral end, because that, as we shall see, was an immediate deduction from his one fundamental principle; he accepted Democritus's atomism, because that alone of all theories of the world known to him was consistent with his fundamental principle—and yet in his very maintenance of that principle he most conspicuously differed from Democritus.

The principle concerned the root-problem of metaphysics: how do we get our knowledge? are we to trust our senses or our reason, or both or neither? The question had been raised at a comparatively early stage in pre-Socratic speculation, and had forced itself more and more into prominence as theories of the world became more and more remote from the experience of every-day consciousness, until Parmenides, who believed the world to be a corporeal *plenum*, had declared wholeheartedly for reason and identified the 'way of the senses' with the 'way of error'. Democritus had pushed scepticism a step further: reason rested upon the senses, and if the senses were untrustworthy, still more so must reason be: 'wretched mind,' he represents the senses as saying, 'from us you received your belief, yet you overthrow us; your victory is your defeat.' Epicurus approached the problem as the plain man: he must have a sure basis for the structure of his system, and no scepticism at the root. The keystone of the whole Epicurean philosophy is the simple assertion: 'sensation is true,' 'I know what I feel.' On this one foundation all is built. Wherever the senses give us evidence, we are to accept their evidence as finally and certainly true: where they do not, as for instance, in considering the ultimate constitution of the world, they are still supreme; we must reject any hypothesis which is contradicted by the evidence of sense, and accept as equally probable any explanations that are consistent with it. Now Lucretius does not start with this fundamental principle: he does not even approach the discussion of it until the fourth Book.³ But on the other hand he is always assuming it and acting on it, and to understand his line of thought it must always be borne in mind. The sun and the moon, for instance, are the same size as we see them to be:⁴ there the senses give us evidence and we must not attempt to go behind it. The sequence of night and day,¹ the orbits of the heavenly bodies, eclipses may be explained in several ways, some of which to our mind appear trivial; but these are cases where the senses provide no direct evidence, and we must therefore accept as equally worthy of consideration all hypotheses which they do not contradict. Above all, it is this principle which prompts him again and again to appeal for support in his theories of imperceptible things to the analogy of the perceptible: the trust in the senses is the ultimate cause of those many illustrations from common experience, which are so largely responsible for the beauty and the poetic wealth of the whole poem.

Let us pursue this line of thought a little further. Of what do the senses give us evidence? Of nothing but a material world: matter then is the one reality. But can the existence of matter alone give us a world as we know it? No, for our senses tell us of a world of matter in motion, and things cannot move without space to move in: there must then be empty space. And in what form does this matter exist? The section in the middle of the first Book, in which Lucretius criticizes rival theories of the world, shows us how Epicurus applied his principle: some schools deny the existence of void, which makes motion impossible; others permit infinite division, which precludes permanence; some propose a fundamental matter that is unstable, for it changes into other things, others one that is perishable, for it is of the same nature as perceptible things. The only theory which is found not to be contradicted, but rather supported by the evidence of the senses, is an atomic theory. Finally, lest the supply of matter should run short, the atoms must be infinite in number, and, lest it should all congregate 'at the bottom', space must be infinite in extent. Epicurus has then arrived at the atomism of Democritus, not, however, as an arbitrary choice, but as a direct deduction from the primary assertion of the infallibility of sense-perception.

And in this atomic system Epicurus and Lucretius find their refutation of the pretensions of religion, the release from the two great terrors which beset man's mind, the fear of the arbitrary intervention of the gods in life, and the fear of the punishment of an immortal soul after death. For the atomic system, capable of being worked out in detail throughout the whole realm of the universe, can show how every phenomenon is but the result of natural causes. The atoms in the void, obeying the law of their own nature, falling downwards owing to their weight,⁴ meeting and clashing,⁵ form first into little molecules, then into larger masses, and ultimately build up the whole universe of worlds, planted about here and there in infinite space, and all things, down to the smallest, contained in them. Nature, acting by law and yet without purpose—'for not by design did the first-beginnings of things place themselves each in their order with foreseeing mind ... but by trying movements and unions of every kind, at last they fall into such dispositions as those, whereby our world of things is created'—acting indeed blindly and occasionally with a kind of spontaneity which seems like chance, Nature made all the worlds and 'all that in them is'. There is no need for the aid of the gods, there is not even room for their interference. They are rather a part of nature's creation, immortal creatures, of a body of infinitely subtle formation, dwelling apart in the 'interspaces between the worlds', in regions 'where falls not hail or rain or any snow, nor ever wind blows loudly', an example and an ideal in their untroubled calm to man, but utterly unconcerned with the movements of the world or human affairs. As for the soul, it is, like all other things, a corporeal aggregate of atoms, which owes its sensation to the shape and movements of its constituents, and its union with the body: neither can exist without the other, at death the soul is dissolved just like the body, and it can have nothing to fear for all time to come. Nature then has freed man alike from the tyranny of the gods and the fear of death, and in the knowledge of nature he will find not only the guarantee of his freedom, but the highest pleasure of his free life.

But is man 'free'? The exclusion of the gods from the workings of the universe has been accomplished by the establishment of law, the demonstration of the natural sequence of cause and effect from the first downward movement of the atoms to the formation of the newest 'thing' in the remotest world. Is man then alone exempt from this chain of causation? Has he the power to direct his own actions, or is he too ruled by this inexorable destiny, so that his smallest act is but the inevitable outcome of all that has preceded?

Democritus had already been confronted with this problem and had boldly answered it with an absolute determinism: man's actions are no exception to the universal law, free-will is but a delusion. But for Epicurus this answer would not do: man's conduct was his primary interest, and it is no use, he thought, telling a man what he ought to do, unless he is free to do it. Even the tyranny of religion is better than the tyranny of destiny. Besides, Epicurus on his own fundamental principles had a good reason to fight for free-will; for it is a matter of immediate consciousness: 'we know' that from time to time we assert our independence of the great claim of causation: 'we feel' our freedom and it cannot therefore be denied. Yet how is it to be preserved? Is man to be an exception to the universal law, or can it be otherwise accounted for? Epicurus's answer, the 'swerve' of the atoms, has always been ridiculed, but, whatever may be thought of it, it is not to be regarded as a weak admission, but rather as a cardinal point in the system, second only in importance to the infallibility of the senses, and again reached by a strict logical deduction. For if man's will is free, it cannot be by special exemption granted him, but because of some principle inherent in the very first-beginnings: man can do what he will because there is an element of spontaneity—not of course conscious spontaneity—in the atoms. It is the 'swerve' then which enables the atoms to meet in their downward fall, it is the 'swerve' which preserves in inorganic nature that curious element of spontaneity which we call chance,¹ and it is the 'swerve', become conscious in the sensitive aggregate of the atoms of the mind, which secures man's freedom of action and makes it possible to urge on him a theory of conduct.

Lastly then—for though Lucretius never explicitly deals with it, it emerges to the surface again and again in the poem—we must very shortly consider the moral theory of Epicurus. Let us go back once more to the fundamental principle. In the sphere of conduct, of action and suffering, has immediate sensation any evidence to give us comparable to the evidence of sense-perception in the field of knowledge? Clearly it has in the immediate perceptions of pleasure and pain: we all feel them, we all instinctively seek pleasure and avoid pain. Epicurus then has his answer at once: pleasure is the moral good; sensation tells us so, and we cannot attempt to go behind it. But what does 'pleasure' mean? to what practical conduct will its adoption as the aim of life lead us? Two points in the physical theory are here of importance: firstly, that man, in Epicurus's idea, is always essentially a compound of body and soul; secondly, that pain is dislocation of atomic arrangements and motions, pleasure, their readjustment and equilibrium. Pleasure then must be of body and soul alike, and it will show itself in the calm that denotes atomic equilibrium. It is seen at once that Epicurus's doctrine is no recommendation of mere vulgar pleasures of sensuality, as it has sometimes been represented. The body must have its pleasure, but the true pleasure is not such as brings attendant pain in the form either of anticipation or reaction: rather, we shall secure its pleasure best by maintaining its health and restricting its desires within the narrowest possible limits. Lucretius has given us a pleasing picture of the Epicurean 'picnic'—a full satisfaction of the bodily needs: 'men lie in friendly groups on the soft grass near some stream of water under the branches of a tall tree and at no great cost delightfully refresh their bodies, above all when the weather smiles on them and the season of the year bestrews the green grass with flowers.' And with the pleasures of the soul the principle is the same. First it must be relieved of its peculiar pains, the fear of the gods and the fear of death: and then it may give itself up to its own particular pleasure, the study—not of rhetoric, for in the private life of the individual that has no place, not of mathematics, or literature, for they deal with mere words, not things—but of nature: and so the highest

pleasure of the mind is the acquisition of that knowledge which will incidentally free it from its pains. Epicurean pleasure is indeed simple of acquisition, and men are strangely blind that they do not recognize it: 'to think that ye should not see that nature cries aloud for nothing else but that pain may be kept far sundered from the body, and that, withdrawn from care and fear, the mind may enjoy the sense of pleasure.'

The ideal for the individual then is not far to seek, and Epicurus is above all an individualist. But a man cannot live his life quite alone and he must have relations with his fellows: how are they to be regulated? As one would expect, Epicurus treats the 'other-regarding' virtues with scant respect: they are but of secondary importance and necessary only in so far as they secure the individual from interruption in the pursuit of his own pleasure. Justice, the summing up of the relations between man and man, is a convention: Lucretius describes to us how, when primitive man came to unite in a common life, 'neighbours began eagerly to form friendship with one another, not to hurt or be harmed.' The individual retains his freedom by a compact, and for his own sake respects his neighbours. But beyond that he is but little concerned with them. He will not enter public life or attempt to hold office, for ambition and the cares of rule are among the most disturbing influences which can beset the mind: 'it is far better to obey in peace than to long to rule the world with kingly power and to sway kingdoms.' Even in private life he will learn not to trust too much to others, for his life must be independent. Friendships he will form, for friendship based on the common study of philosophy is one of the highest blessings of life: such friendship Lucretius hopes for with Memmius. But love—the giving up of oneself to one's affections and the complete dependence on another's will—the philosopher will of all things eschew: Lucretius's denunciations in the fourth Book are unmistakable. It is not perhaps a very attractive picture of the philosopher in isolation, pursuing his own pleasure and disregarding others, but it is again a relent-less deduction from first principles, and it explains many casual touches in Lucretius.

These hints may serve to make clear some of the salient points in the Epicurean theory which in Lucretius's own treatment are somewhat obscured, and to show how the whole system is really knit together by the single principle of the certainty of sensation. For those who like to find in antiquity the anticipation of modern ideas and hypotheses Lucretius is of course instinct with interest. The physicist will find in him the germs of the modern atomic theory, which in its most recent development seems more likely than ever to come back to the notion of uniform homogeneous 'first-beginnings': the biologist will find notable anticipations of the hypothesis of the formation of species by evolutionary experiments and the survival of the fittest, and in the idea of the spontaneous 'swerve' of the atoms a supposition not far remote from the modern speculations of W. K. Clifford and Haeckel: the anthropologist will see a picture of primitive man startlingly like that to which modern investigation has led, and all the more noticeable in that the current notions of Lucretius's time looked back to a primitive 'Golden Age': the moral philosopher will discover the foundation both of Hedonism and Utilitarianism, and the political scientist will recognize the familiar description of the Social Contract. But to the general reader what will come home most is the spirit of the whole, the problems with which Lucretius is faced and the general attitude in which he goes to meet them. And if one is to appreciate this fully, it is more than all else necessary to have the clear conception of the main principles and their fearless application.

It is often asked whether a didactic work can be real poetry, and certainly didactic poetry

must stand or fall by the answer given in the case of Lucretius, for not even Hesiod or the Georgics can put forward a higher claim. It is easy, of course, to point to long tracts of scientific discussion, to call them ‘arid’, or to characterize them as ‘scanning prose’: it is just to urge that a few or even many great passages of sustained poetic beauty cannot in themselves save a poem, if they are sundered by such deserts. It is not difficult to reply by pointing, as Cicero did, to the ‘flashes of genius’ in the poem, whether they be the wonderful descriptions, such as that of the cow who has lost her calf, or the distant view of the flock on the hillside, or those quieter ‘flashes’ of poetic painting,—the ‘flower of flame’, ‘the ice of brass,’⁵ the shells ‘painting the lap of the earth’—which in a moment transform argument with imagination. It might be maintained rather more subtly that there is high poetic quality in the very exactness of the expression of the intricate theories and abstruse arguments—a quality which is the more appreciated, the more we realize the genius with which almost every word in the poem is chosen to do precisely its own work and no more. But surely a didactic poem, more than any other, must not be judged piecemeal in this way by isolated phrases or even continuous passages of poetic imagination. Its claim to rank as true poetry will rest rather on the spirit of the whole—the depth of intention underlying the work and giving life to the parts. And this is the supreme claim of the *De Rerum Natura*; there may be portions of it, which judged separately by superficial students would seem to fall beneath the dignity of poetry, but it is knit into a whole and vivified through all its parts by the fearless desire for truth, the consciousness of a great purpose, and a deep reverence for nature—felt almost as a personal presence—which has caused this bitter opponent of religion to be universally recognized as one of the most truly religious of the world’s poets.

Short Analysis of the Poem

- *Book I* deals with the ultimate constitution of the universe, which consists of infinite atoms moving in infinite space.
 - *Introduction*: Invocation to Venus and appeal to Memmius; 1-145.
 - *A. General principles*; 146-482.
 - (a) The existence of ‘first-bodies’, or fundamental matter in the form of particles; 146-328.
 - (b) The existence of void, or empty space; 329-417.
 - (c) Everything else is either property or accident of these two; 418-82.
 - *B. The ‘first-bodies’* are atoms: solid, eternal and indivisible particles; 483-634.
 - *C. Refutation of rival theories*; 635-920.
 - (a) Heraclitus; 635-704.
 - (b) Empedocles; 705-829.
 - (c) Anaxagoras; 830-920.
 - *D. The universe is infinite*; 921-1117.
- *Book II* deals with the motion and forms of the atoms, and their combination in things.

- *Introduction: The blessings of philosophy; 1-61.*
 - *A. The motion of the atoms; 62-332.*
 - (a) The incessant movement of the atoms; 80-141.
 - (b) The velocity of their motion; 142-164.
 - (c) Universal downward motion due to weight; 184-215.
 - (d) The swerve of the atoms; 216-293.
 - (e) The permanence of matter and motion; 294-332.
 - *B. The forms of the atoms and their effects in combination; 333-729.*
 - (a) The variety of atomic forms and their effects on sensation; 333-477.
 - (b) This variety not infinite; 478-521.
 - (c) Atoms of any given form infinite; 522-580.
 - (d) Variety of combinations: differences within species; 581-729.
 - *C. The atoms are without secondary qualities; 730-990.*
 - (a) Colour; 730-841.
 - (b) Heat, Sound, Taste, Smell; 842-64.
 - (c) Sensation; 865-990.
 - (d) Summary; 991-1022.
 - *D. The infinite worlds and their formation and destruction; 1023-1174.*
- *Book III deals with the soul, its nature, and its fate.*
 - *Introduction: Praise of Epicurus and effect of the fear of punishment after death; 1-93.*
 - *A. Nature and formation of the Soul; 94-416.*
 - (a) Distinction between mind and soul, or vital principle; 94-160.
 - (b) Their corporeal nature and composition; 161-257.
 - (c) Their relation to one another and to the body; 258-416.
 - *B. Proofs of the Mortality of the Soul; 417-829.*

(This section cannot be satisfactorily subdivided, but may roughly be classified as follows:)

- (a) Proofs from the structure of the soul; 425-58.
 - (b) Proofs from disease and its cure; 459-547.
 - (c) Proofs from connexion of soul and body; 548-623.
 - (d) Proofs from absurdity of separate existence of soul; 624-829.
 - C. *The folly of the fear of death*; 830-1094.
- *Book IV* deals mainly with the psychology of sensation and thought, and also with certain biological functions.
 - *Introduction: Lucretius's Mission*; 1-25.
 - A. *Existence and nature of the 'idols'*; 26-216.
 - (a) Their existence; 26-109.
 - (b) Their fineness of texture; 110-42.
 - (c) Swiftmess of their formation; 143-75.
 - (d) Rapidity of their motion; 176-216.
 - B. *Sensation and Thought*; 217-822.
 - (a) Sight and phenomena connected with it; 217-378.
 - (b) False inferences of the mind and infallibility of the senses; 379-521
 - (c) Hearing; 522-614.
 - (d) Taste; 615-72.
 - (e) Smell; 673-721.
 - (f) Thought, i. e. mental images, both in sleep and waking life; 722-822.
 - C. *Some functions of the Body*; 823-1057.
 - (a) Refutation of teleological view; 823-57. [26]
 - (b) Food; 858-76.
 - (c) Walking: the act of will; 877-906.
 - (d) Sleep and dreams; 907-1036.
 - (e) Love; 1037-57.

- *D. Attack on the passion of Love; 1058-1287.*
- *Book V* deals with our world and its formation, astronomy, the beginnings of life and civilization.
 - *Introduction: Praise of Epicurus; 1-54.*

Argument of the book; 55-109; attack on the theological and teleological view; 110-234.

 - *A. The world had a beginning and is mortal; 235-415.*
 - *B. Formation of the world; 416-508, 534-64.*
 - *C. Astronomy; 509-33, 564-770.*
 - (a) Motions of heavenly bodies; 509-33.
 - (b) Size of sun, moon and stars; 564-613.
 - (c) Cause of orbits of heavenly bodies; 614-49.
 - (d) Causes of night and day, and their variations; 650-704.
 - (e) Cause of the moon's light; 705-50.
 - (f) Cause of eclipses; 751-70.
 - *D. The youth of the world; 772-1010.*
 - (a) Origin of vegetable and animal life; 772-924.
 - (b) Origin of human life and primitive man; 925-1010.
 - *E. The beginnings of civilization; 1011-1457.*
- *Book VI* explains from the atomic point of view a variety of occurrences, partly meteorological phenomena, partly terrestrial curiosities.
 - *Introduction: Praise of Epicurus: the gods; 1-95.*
 - *A. Celestial phenomena; 96-534.*
 - (a) Thunder, lightning and thunderbolts; 96-422.
 - (b) Waterspouts; 423-50.
 - (c) Clouds and Rain; 451-534.
 - *B. Terrestrial phenomena; 535-1137.*

- (a) Earthquakes; 535-607.
- (b) Constant size of the sea; 608-38.
- (c) Volcanoes; 639-711.
- (d) The Nile; 712-37.
- (e) Pestilential lakes, &c.; 738-847.
- (f) Curious fountains; 848-905.
- (g) The Magnet; 906-1089.
- (h) Pestilences; 1090-1137.
- C. *The Plague at Athens*; 1138-1286.

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