

Denique caelesti sumus omnes semine oriundi ;  
 omnibus ille idem pater est, unde alma liquentis  
 umoris guttas mater cum terra recepit,  
 feta parit nitidas fruges arbustaque laeta  
 et genus humanum, parit omnia saecula ferarum, 995  
 pabula cum praebet quibus omnes corpora pascunt  
 et dulcem ducunt vitam prolemque propagant ;  
 quapropter merito maternum nomen adepta est.  
 cedit item retro, de terra quod fuit ante,  
 in terras, et quod missumst ex aetheris oris, 1000  
 id rursus caeli rellatum templa receptant.  
 nec sic interemit mors res ut materiai  
 corpora conficiat, sed coetum dissupat ollis ;  
 inde aliis aliud coniungit, et efficit omnes  
 res ita convertant formas mutantque colores 1005  
 et capiant sensus et puncto tempore reddant ;  
 ut noscas referre eadem primordia rerum  
 cum quibus et quali positura contineantur  
 et quos inter se dent motus accipiantque,  
 neve putes aeterna penes residere potesse 1010

1000 terras et *OQV*: terram sed *Lactantius, Div. Inst. 7.12.5*, perhaps, as *Wakefield* thinks, "memorias fidens nimium," for he has *fulgentia* for *rellatum* in 1001, but nevertheless followed by *Diels* (terram, set)

<sup>a</sup> 991-1022 conclude the argument that the atoms lack secondary qualities and sensation. The first part of the passage is almost certainly in imitation of lines from the *Chrysisippus* of Euripides (fr. 839 Nauck) which were influenced by the doctrines of Empedocles and Anaxagoras. For 172

Lastly, we are all sprung from celestial seed <sup>a</sup> ; The heaven  
 all have that same father, from whom our fostering is our  
 mother earth receives liquid drops of water, and then father, the  
 teeming brings forth bright corn and luxuriant trees earth our  
 and the race of mankind, brings forth all the genera- mother.  
 tions of wild beasts, providing food with which all  
 nourish their bodies and lead a sweet life and beget  
 their offspring ; therefore she has with reason obtained  
 the name of mother.<sup>b</sup> That also which once  
 came from earth, to earth returns back again, and  
 what fell from the borders of ether, that is again  
 brought back, and the regions of heaven again receive  
 it. Nor does death so destroy things as to Death dis-  
 annihilate the bodies of matter, but it disperses the perses the  
 combination abroad ; then it conjoins others with atoms, to  
 others, and brings it about that thus all things alter be united  
 their shapes and change their colours and receive again.  
 sensation and in a moment of time yield it up again ;  
 so that you may recognize how important it is with  
 what and in what arrangement the same first-  
 beginnings are held together, and what motions they  
 give and receive mutually,<sup>c</sup> and that you may not  
 believe it possible that the first bodies for ever hold

the idea of the Sky-Father and Earth-Mother, cf. 1.250-261.

<sup>b</sup> Cf. 5.795, 821-822.

<sup>c</sup> Cf. 760-762, 1.817-819, 908-910.

corpora prima quod in summis fluitare videmus  
 rebus et interdum nasci subitoque perire.  
 quin etiam refert nostris in versibus ipsis  
 cum quibus et quali sint ordine quaeque locata ;  
 namque eadem caelum mare terras flumina solem  
 significant, eadem fruges arbusta animantis ; 1016  
 si non omnia sunt, at multo maxima pars est  
 consimilis ; verum positura discrepant res.  
 sic ipsis in rebus item iam materiai 1019  
 concursus motus ordo positura figurae 1021  
 cum permutantur, mutari res quoque debent.

Nunc animum nobis adhibe veram ad rationem.  
 nam tibi vehementer nova res molitur ad auris  
 accidere et nova se species ostendere rerum. 1025  
 sed neque tam facilis res ulla est quin ea primum  
 difficilis magis ad credendum constet, itemque  
 nil adeo magnum neque tam mirabile quicquam,  
 quod non paulatim minuant mirarier omnes.  
 principio caeli clarum purumque colorem, 1030  
 quaeque in se cohibet, palantia sidera passim,  
 lunamque et solis praeclara luce nitorem—  
 omnia quae nunc si primum mortalibus essent,  
 ex improvviso si sint obiecta repente,  
 quid magis his rebus poterat mirabile dici 1035  
 aut minus ante quod auderent fore credere gentes ?  
 nil, ut opinor : ita haec species miranda fuisset.  
 quam tibi iam nemo, fessus satiate videndi,  
 suspicere in caeli dignatur lucida templa !

1020 intervalla vias conexos pondera plagas (= 726, 5.441)  
 deleted by Lachmann

\* *Lucr.* refers to the secondary qualities, especially to colour : with 1011 *cf.* 4.80 *coguntque suo fluitare colore*, 4.74 *de summis ipsum quoque saepe colorem.*

possession of that which we see floating upon the surface of things and sometimes being born and perishing on a sudden.<sup>a</sup> Moreover, it is important in my own verses with what and in what order the various elements are placed. For the same letters denote sky, sea, earth, rivers, sun, the same denote crops, trees, animals.<sup>b</sup> If they are not all alike, yet by far the most part are so ; but position marks the difference in what results.<sup>c</sup> So also when we turn to real things : when the combinations of matter, when its motions, order, position, shapes are changed, the thing also must be changed.

1023 Now, I beg, apply your mind to true reasoning. For a mightily new thing is labouring to fall upon your ears, a new aspect of creation to show itself. But nothing is there so easy that at first it is not more difficult to believe, nothing again so great or so wonderful that all men do not by degrees abate their wonder at it. In the first place, consider the clear and pure colour of the sky, and all that it contains—the travelling constellations, the moon, and the bright light of the dazzling sun ; if all these were now revealed for the first time to mortals, if they were thrown before them suddenly without preparation, what more wonderful than these things could be named, or such as the nations would have less dared to believe beforehand ? Nothing, as I think : so wondrous this spectacle would have been. Yet think how all are so wearied with satiety of seeing it that no one now thinks it worth while to look up

Introduction to an important new truth.

<sup>a</sup> *Cf.* 1.820-821.

<sup>c</sup> For the comparison between letters and atoms, *cf.* *e.g.* 1.823-827 and see note on 1.825.

desine quapropter novitate exterritus ipsa 1040  
 expuere ex animo rationem, sed magis acri  
 iudicio perpende, et, si tibi vera videntur,  
 dede manus, aut, si falsum est, accingere contra.  
 quaerit enim rationem animus, cum summa loci sit  
 infinita foris haec extra moenia mundi, 1045  
 quid sit ibi porro quo prospicere usque velit mens  
 atque animi iactus liber quo pervolet ipse.

Principio nobis in cunctas undique partis  
 et latere ex utroque supra subterque per omne  
 nulla est finis; uti docui, res ipsaque per se 1050  
 vociferatur, et elucet natura profundi.

nullo iam pacto veri simile esse putandumst,  
 undique cum vorsum spatium vacet infinitum  
 seminaque innumero numero summaque profunda  
 multimodis volitent aeterno percita motu, 1055

hunc unum terrarum orbem caelumque creatum,  
 nil agere illa foris tot corpora materiai;  
 cum praesertim hic sit natura factus, et ipsa  
 sponte sua forte offensando semina rerum  
 multimodis temere incassum frustra coacta 1060  
 tandem coluerunt ea quae coniecta repente  
 magnarum rerum fierent exordia semper,  
 terrai maris et caeli generisque animantum.  
 quare etiam atque etiam talis fateare necesse est

1049 supra supterque *Lachmann*: superque *OQVP*: su-  
 per supterque *E. Orth, Helmantica 11 (1960) 131* 1061  
 coluerunt (=coaluerunt) *Lachmann*: colerunt *OQV*: co-  
 lerunt *Q corr., CF*: colarunt *ABLM*

<sup>a</sup> Cf. 740 and see note there.

<sup>b</sup> 1.958-1001.

<sup>c</sup> For the Epicurean theory that the number of worlds is

towards the bright vault of heaven! Forbear then  
 to be dismayed by mere novelty and to spew out  
 reason from your mind, but rather ponder it with  
 keen judgement; and if it seems to be true, own  
 yourself vanquished, or, if it is false, gird up your  
 loins to fight. For, since the sum of space is infinite  
 abroad beyond the walls of the world, the mind  
 seeks to understand what is there in the distance  
 whither the intelligence continually desires to look  
 forth, and whither the mind's projection<sup>a</sup> flies free  
 of itself.

1048 In the first place, all around us in every direc-  
 tion and on both sides and above and below through  
 the universe there is no limit: as I have shown,<sup>b</sup>  
 and truth of itself cries aloud, and the nature of the  
 unfathomable deep gives forth light. Now since there  
 is illimitable space empty in every direction, and  
 since seeds innumerable in number in the unfathom-  
 able universe are flying about in many ways driven  
 in everlasting movement, it cannot by any means be  
 thought likely that this is the only round earth and  
 sky that has been made,<sup>c</sup> that all those bodies of  
 matter without do nothing: especially since this  
 world was made by nature, and the seeds of things  
 themselves of their own accord, knocking together  
 by chance, clashed in all sorts of ways, heedless,  
 without aim, without intention, until at length those  
 combined which, suddenly thrown together, could  
 become in each case the beginnings of mighty things,  
 of earth and sea and sky and the generation of living  
 creatures. Therefore again and again I say, you

There are  
 other  
 worlds than  
 this of ours.

for both  
 space and  
 matter are  
 infinite.

and our  
 world was  
 formed  
 naturally  
 by a chance  
 combina-  
 tion of  
 atoms.

infinite, cf. Epicurus, *Ep. ad Hdt.* 45, 73-74, *Ep. ad Pyth.*  
 88-90, Cicero, *Nat.D.* 1.20.53, Diogenes of Oenoanda fr. 63  
 Smith. See also Usener 301-307.

esse alios alibi congressus materiai, 1065  
qualis hic est, avido complexu quem tenet aether.

Praeterea cum materies est multa parata,  
cum locus est praesto, nec res nec causa moratur  
ulla, geri debent nimirum et conferi res.  
nunc et seminibus si tanta est copia quantam 1070  
enumerare aetas animantium non queat omnis,  
visque eadem et natura manet, quae semina rerum  
conicere in loca quaeque queat simili ratione  
atque huc sunt coniecta, necesse est confiteare  
esse alios aliis terrarum in partibus orbis 1075  
et varias hominum gentis et saecula ferarum.

Huc accedit ut in summa res nulla sit una,  
unica quae gignatur et unica solaque crescat,  
quin aliquoiv<sup>1</sup> siet saeculi permultaque eodem 1079  
sint genere. in primis animalibus inice mentem :  
invenies sic montivagum genus esse ferarum,  
sic hominum geminam prolem, sic denique mutas  
squamigerum pecudes et corpora cuncta volantum.  
quapropter caelum simili ratione fatendumst  
terramque et solem lunam mare, cetera quae sunt,  
non esse unica, sed numero magis innumerabili, 1086  
quandoquidem vitae depactus terminus alte  
tam manet haec, et tam nativo corpore constant,  
quam genus omne quod hic generatimst rebus  
abundans.

Quae bene cognita si teneas, natura videtur 1090

1072 visque eadem et *Marullus* : vis eadem *OQVP* : quis eadem *Lachmann* 1080 inice mentem (*cf.* 740, 1047) *Lipsius* : indice mente *OQVP*, *Wakefield*, *Martin*, perhaps rightly (*cf.* 677-678) : inclute *Memmi Gronovius* 1082 geminam *OQVP* : genitam *Marullus* 1089 hic (*Bernays*; for the corruption *cf.* 1120) generatimst *Munro* : his generatim *QV*, *Büchner* : his generat in *OP*

must confess that there are other assemblages of matter in other places, such as this is which the ether holds in greedy embrace.

<sup>1067</sup> Besides, when abundant matter is ready, when space is to hand, and no thing and no cause hinders, things must assuredly be done and completed. And if there is at this moment both so great store of seeds as all the time of living existence could not suffice to tell, and if the same power and the same nature abides, able to throw the seeds of things together in any place in the same way as they have been thrown together into this place, then you are bound to confess that there are other worlds in other regions and different races of men and generations of wild beasts.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>1077</sup> Moreover, there is no one thing in the whole sum which is produced unique, and grows up unique and alone, so as not to belong to some kind and to be one of many like it. To begin with, cast your mind to the animals : you will find that this is so with the mountain-ranging generation of wild beasts, this is so with the double breed <sup>b</sup> of men, so also with the dumb scaly fish and all creatures that fly. Therefore you must in like manner confess for sky and earth, for sun, moon, sea and all else that exists, that they are not unique, but rather of number innumerable ; since there is a deepset limit of life equally awaiting them, and they are as much made of a perishable body as any kind here on earth which has so many specimens of its kind.

1090 If you hold fast to these convictions, nature is Nature

<sup>a</sup> *Cf.* Epicurus, *Ep. ad Hdt.* 74.

<sup>b</sup> Male and female. Virgil, *Aen.* 1.274 has *geminam . . . prolem*, and, though he is referring to Ilia's twin sons Romulus and Remus, he may have recalled the present passage.

libera continuo, dominis privata superbis,  
 ipsa sua per se sponte omnia dis agere expers.  
 nam pro sancta deum tranquilla pectora pace,  
 quae placidum degunt aevom vitamque serenam,  
 quis regere immensi summam, quis habere profundi  
 indu manu validas potis est moderanter habenas, 1096  
 quis pariter caelos omnis convertere et omnis  
 ignibus aetheriis terras suffire feracis,  
 omnibus inve locis esse omni tempore praesto,  
 nubibus ut tenebras faciat caelique serena 1100  
 concutiat sonitu, tum fulmina mittat et aedis  
 saepe suas disturbet et in deserta recedens  
 saeviat exercens telum quod saepe nocentes  
 praeterit exanimatque indignos inque merentes ?

Multaque post mundi tempus genitale diemque  
 primigenum maris et terrae sisque coortum 1106  
 addita corpora sunt extrinsecus, addita circum  
 semina quae magnum iaculando contulit omne,  
 unde mare et terrae possent augescere, et unde  
 appareret spatium caeli domus altaque tecta 1110  
 tolleret a terris procul et consurgeret aer.  
 nam sua cuique locis ex omnibus omnia plagis  
 corpora distribuuntur et ad sua saecla recedunt,  
 umor ad umorem, terreno corpore terra  
 crescit, et ignem ignes procidunt aetheraque aether,  
 donique ad extremum crescendi perfica finem 1116  
 omnia perduxit rerum natura creatrix ;  
 ut fit ubi nilo iam plus est quod datur intra  
 vitalis venas quam quod fluit atque recedit.

<sup>a</sup> Cf. 6.417-420.

<sup>b</sup> Cf. 6.390-395.

<sup>c</sup> Lucr. resumes the argument interrupted at 1089.

seen to be free at once and rid of proud masters, herself doing all by herself of her own accord, without the help of the gods. For I appeal to the holy hearts of the gods, which in tranquil peace pass untroubled days and a life serene : who is strong enough to rule the sum of the immeasurable, who to hold in hand and control the mighty bridle of the unfathomable ? who to turn about all the heavens at one time and warm the fruitful worlds with ethereal fires, or to be present in all places and at all times, so as to make darkness with his clouds and to shake the serene sky with thunder, then to launch lightnings and often to shatter his own temples,<sup>a</sup> and as he passes away into the wilds to cast that bolt in his wrath which often passes the guilty by and slays the innocent and undeserving ?<sup>b</sup>

works of herself, without the gods.

What god indeed could suffice for the task ?

Would a god strike his own temple ?

1105 And <sup>c</sup> since the time when the world came into being, since the first birthday of sea and earth and since the arising of the sun, many bodies have been added from without, many seeds have been added around, which the great all has brought together in its tossing ; that from these sea and land might increase, and the habitation of the sky might amplify its expanse and uplift its dwellings high over the earth, and the air might rise up. For all bodies are distributed abroad by blows from all places each to its own thing and pass back to their own kinds : liquid goes to liquid, earth grows by earthy elements, fires forge out fires and air air, until up to the extreme limit of growth, nature, the maker of all things, has brought them through with finishing touch ; as happens when no more is now given into the arteries of life than what flows out and passes away. At this

Bodies added from without first produced our earth,

omnibus hic aetas debet consistere rebus, 1120  
 hic natura suis refrenat viribus auctum.  
 nam quaecumque vides hilaro grandescere adauctu  
 paulatimque gradus aetatis scandere adultae,  
 plura sibi adsumunt quam de se corpora mittunt,  
 dum facile in venas cibus omnis inditur, et dum 1125  
 non ita sunt late dispessa ut multa remittant  
 et plus dispendi faciant quam vescitur aetas.  
 nam certe fluere atque recedere corpora rebus  
 multa manus dandum est; sed plura accedere debent,  
 donec alescendi summum tetigere cacumen. 1130  
 inde minutatim vires et robor adultum  
 frangit et in partem peiorem liquitur aetas.  
 quippe etenim quanto est res amplior, augmine  
 adempto,  
 et quo latior est, in cunctas undique partis  
 plura modo dispargit et ab se corpora mittit, 1135  
 nec facile in venas cibus omnis deditur ei  
 nec satis est, proquam largos exaestuat aestus,  
 unde queat tantum suboriri ac subpeditare.  
 iure igitur pereunt, cum rarefacta fluendo  
 sunt et cum externis succumbunt omnia plagis, 1140  
 quandoquidem grandi cibus aevo denique defit,  
 nec tuditantia rem cessant extrinsecus ullam  
 corpora conficere et plagis infesta domare.  
 Sic igitur magni quoque circum moenia mundi  
 expugnata dabunt labem putrisque ruinas. 1145  
 omnia debet enim cibus integrare novando  
 et fulcire cibus, cibus omnia sustentare—  
 nequiquam, quoniam nec venae perpetiuntur

1120 hic attributed by recent editors to W. Christ, but stated by Creech to be a manuscript reading. Certainly, so far as printed texts are concerned, it goes back at least as far as Jansson's edition of 1620: his OQV 1126 dis-

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point the life of all things must come to a stand, at this point nature by her power curbs back growth. For whatever you see growing with merry increase, and gradually climbing the steps of mature life, assimilates to itself more bodies than it discharges, so long as food is easily absorbed into all the veins, and so long as the things are not so widely spread open as to let go many elements and to spend away more than their age feeds on. For certainly we must own ourselves convinced that many elements flow out and pass away from things; but still more must be passed in, until they have touched the pinnacle of growth. After that by minute degrees age breaks the strength and mature vigour, and melts into decay. And indeed when growth ceases, the larger a thing is and the wider it is, the more particles it now scatters abroad on all sides and lets go from itself, nor is food easily sent abroad into all its veins, nor is this enough, in proportion to the abundant streams that it streams out, to enable as much to spring up and to be brought up in its place. With good reason therefore the things pass away, when by the flowing off they have become thinned, and all fall by blows from without, inasmuch as by great age food fails at last, nor is there anything which bodies buffeting from without cease to break up and to subdue with fatal blows.

<sup>1144</sup> So therefore the walls of the mighty world in like manner shall be stormed all around, and shall collapse into crumbling ruin. For it is food that must repair all by renewing, food must support, food sustain everything, but in vain, since the veins cannot

pessa Munro: dispersa OQVP, Leonard-Smith, Büchner 1146-1149 transferred to follow 1133 by P. E. Goebel

just as living things grow by such additions,

until they give out more than they take in, and so pass away.

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quod satis est neque quantum opus est natura  
ministrat.

iamque adeo fracta est aetas, effetaque tellus 1160  
vix animalia parva creat, quae cuncta creavit  
saecla deditque ferarum ingentia corpora partu.  
haud, ut opinor, enim mortalia saecla superne  
aurea de caelo demisit funis in arva,  
nec mare nec fluctus plangentes saxa creantur, 1155  
sed genuit tellus eadem quae nunc alit ex se.  
praeterea nitidas fruges vinetaque laeta  
sponte sua primum mortalibus ipsa creavit,  
ipsa dedit dulcis fetus et pabula laeta ;  
quae nunc vix nostro grandescunt aucta labore, 1160  
conterimusque boves et viris agricoliarum,  
conficimus ferrum vix arvis suppeditati :  
usque adeo parcunt fetus augentque laborem.  
iamque caput quassans grandis suspirat arator  
crebrius, incassum magnum cecidisse laborem, 1165  
et cum tempora temporibus praesentia confert  
praeteritis, laudat fortunas saepe parentis.  
tristis item vetulae vitis sator atque vietae

1163 laborem *CF, Pius (notes)*: labore *QQ VABL* 1165  
magnum *OQ VP*: magnos *Q corr.*: manuum *Isaac Voss*  
laborem *P*: labores *OQ V* 1168 vietae *Heinsius*: fatigat  
(from 1169) *OQ VP*

\* 1146-1149 certainly come in rather strangely here, but, as Merrill remarks, "the necessity for transposition does not seem to have been proved." See also Ernout-Robin and Bailey. It is probable that Lucr. would have made an alteration in revision.

<sup>b</sup> In 5.783-825 Lucr. explains that the earth in her youth

contain enough and nature does not supply as much as is necessary.<sup>a</sup> Even now indeed the power of life is broken, and the earth exhausted scarce produces tiny creatures, she who once produced all kinds and gave birth to the huge bodies of wild beasts.<sup>b</sup> For it is not true, as I think, that the races of mortal creatures were let down from high heaven by some golden chain <sup>c</sup> upon the fields, nor were they sprung from sea or waves beating upon the rocks,<sup>d</sup> but the same earth generated them which feeds them now from herself. Besides, she of her own accord first made for mortals the bright corn and the luxuriant vineyards, of herself she gave forth sweet fruits and luxuriant pasturage, which now scarce grow great when increased by our toil ; and we exhaust our oxen and the strength of our farmers, we wear out the ploughshare, and then are scarce fed by our fields : so do they grudge their fruits and increase our toil. Now the ancient ploughman shaking his head sighs many a time that his great labour has all come to nothing, and comparing times present with times past often praises the fortunes of his father. Sadly also the cultivator of the degenerate and shrivelled vine rails at the progress of time and continually herself produced not only plants, but also all kinds of birds and animals, but that later (see 5.826-836), like a woman, she became effete, so that now she can only produce *animalia parva* (2.1151) such as worms (cf. 2.871-872, 898-901, 928-929, 3.719-736, 5.797-798).

<sup>c</sup> In Homer, *Il.* 8.19 Zeus says that, if the gods were to suspend a golden rope from heaven, they could not pull him down. This *αεθή χρυσείη* was allegorized by philosophers, including Plato (*Th.* 153 c) and (see Munro) the Stoics. In 5.793 Lucr. again denies that animals came from the sky.

<sup>d</sup> Here and in 5.794 Lucr. probably alludes to the theory of Anaximander.

Even so  
our earth  
has begun  
its decay.

## LUCRETIUS

temporis incusat momen saeculumque fatigat,  
 et crepat antiquum genus ut pietate repletum 1170  
 perfacile angustis tolerarit finibus aevom,  
 cum minor esset agri multo modus ante viritim ;  
 nec tenet omnia paulatim tabescere et ire  
 ad scopulum, spatio aetatis defessa vetusto.

1169 omitted by *P* momen noted by *Pius* ("quidam  
 momen scribunt pro momento"): nomen *OQV* sae-  
 culumque *O*: saeculumque *Q*: insaeculumque *V*: caelumque  
*Wakefield* 1174 scopulum *O, Q* corr., *P*: scopulum *V*:  
 copulum *Q*: capulum *Isaac Voss*

## DE RERUM NATURA, 2. 1169-1174

criticizes the age, and grumbles how the old world,  
 full of piety, supported life with great ease on a  
 narrow domain, though the man's portion of land was  
 formerly much smaller than it is now ; nor does he  
 comprehend that all things gradually decay, and go  
 to the reef of destruction,<sup>a</sup> outworn by the ancient  
 lapse of years.

<sup>a</sup> *ad scopulum*: "ad interitum. translatum a navi, quae  
 infligitur scopulo" (Lambinus). The phrase is discussed and  
 defended by M. Possanza, *CQ* N.S. 40 (1990) 459-464.