

# LUCRETIUS, DE RERUM NATURA

TRANSLATED BY CHRISTOPHER KELK (2002)

## BOOK I : LINES 1013 - 1048

For prime germs certainly  
Did not with any perspicacity  
Fashion themselves in order or decide  
What movements for each one they should provide,  
But, since they're multitudinous and change  
In many ways among the All, they range  
Abroad, pushed out and beaten, venturing  
All kinds of movement and of coupling  
Until they settle down eventually  
With those designs through which totality  
Is made: for countless years they've been protected  
Now they acceptably have been projected  
Into their proper motions – thus the sea  
By all the streams is freshened constantly,  
The earth, lapped by the vapours of the sun,  
Brings forth new brood, all creatures, every one,  
Flourish and all the gliding fires which flow  
Above us yet live on. They could not, though,

Have managed this at all had no supply  
Of matter risen from the void, whereby  
They could repair lost things. With scarcity  
Of food beasts waste away, while similarly  
All things must fade when matter, blown aside  
Somehow, is then unable to provide  
Succour, nor from outside can blows maintain  
The world's united sum. For blows can rain  
Often and check a part while others come  
Along, enabled to fill up the sum;  
But meanwhile they are often forced to spring,  
Thus to the primal germs contributing  
A space and time for flight that they may be  
Borne from this union to liberty.  
So many things, we're brought to understand,  
Must rise, and yet the blows must be at hand  
Always in order that there'll always be  
A force of matter universally.

## BOOK II : LINES 207 - 215

Also, I'd have you know  
That atoms, as by their own weight they go

Down through the empty space, quite randomly  
And in quite random places, minimally  
Change course. If they did not, they'd surely drop  
Down through the yawning void and cause a stop  
To impacts and to blows, developing  
From primal elements. Thus not a thing  
Would have been made by Nature.

#### LINES 569 - 583

Nor can death-dealing movements dominate  
Forever or for all time extirpate  
Life. Having given birth and caused a gain  
In growth in things, they yet cannot sustain  
Them always. Their war, from infinity  
Pursued, is waged somewhat debatably.  
The vital elements will get the best  
Of others here and there yet are suppressed  
In the same way. The funeral threnody  
And the wail that babies raise when first they see  
The light of day are mingled. For no night  
That follows day nor any morning light  
Has never heard those new-born, sickly cries

Attending the laments that symbolize  
Black funerals.

BOOK V : LINES 162 - 171

Further, to state  
That for the sake of man the gods devised  
The great world and should thus be eulogized  
And think that it can live forevermore  
And that something established long before  
In heaven should not live eternally  
To aid mankind and not be radically  
Forevermore from top to bottom thrust  
And be by argument consigned to dust  
Is but a foolish act, dear Memmius.

