

Stephen Greenblatt

on

**“The elements that constituted
the Lucretian challenge”**

Everything is made of invisible particles

**The elementary particles of matter - “the
seeds of things” - are eternal**

**The elementary particles are infinite in
number but limited in shape and size**

**All particles are in motion in an infinite
void**

The universe has no creator or designer

**Everything comes into being as a result of
a swerve [*declinatio, inclinatio, clinamen*]**

The swerve is the source of free will

Nature ceaselessly experiments

The universe was not created for or about humans

Humans are not unique

Human society began not in a Golden Age of tranquility and plenty, but in a primitive battle for survival

The soul dies

There is no afterlife

Death is nothing to us

All organized religions are superstitious delusions

Religions are invariably cruel

There are no angels, demons, or ghosts

**The highest goal of human life is the
enhancement of pleasure and the
reduction of pain**

**The greatest obstacle to pleasure is not
pain; it is delusion**

UNDERSTANDING
THE NATURE OF THINGS
GENERATES
DEEP WONDER

Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve* (2011), pp. 185 - 202