

Albert Einstein, "Foreword to Lucretius"

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Great find! We need that full intro, eventually in English, but I guess the German is the place to start

J. EINSTEIN AND EPICURUS

I. ATOMS AND SPACE

In 1923 a new edition of Lucretius's poem, *De rerum natura*, was published in Germany. A foreword by Einstein was included in the second volume, which contains a German translation of the poem (Lucretius 1923–24). In it Einstein writes: "For anyone who is not completely submerged in the spirit of our age, who feels instead like a spectator as the world goes past him, especially, from time to time, *vis-à-vis* the intellectual attitudes of his contemporaries — an item will Lucretius's poem work its magic" (Lucretius 1923–24, 2, p. VIIa).
Why, in fact, is it necessary not to submerge oneself in the spirit of the modern age and to look at it from the sidelines? Apparently, Einstein considers all this an intellectual advantage, perhaps even a characteristic demand of the modern age itself. And so it is. As we mentioned in our Introduction, nonclassical science requires an analysis of the contemporary situation in science from the point of view of its dynamics: that is, there must be some prediction, a conjecture as to the future of contemporary conceptions, as well as some excursions into the past, some re-evaluation from an historical perspective. The theory of relativity could not have emerged without a re-evaluation of conceptions that were deeply rooted in the past and seemed independent of time, unchangeable. In searching for what he called the "inner perfection" of the theory (its natural deduction from the most general assumptions), Einstein returned to the controversies of classical physics, which he transformed and generalized so that they acquired new meaning. At the same time, Einstein saw the open character of the theory of relativity itself and sought more general solutions, which had still not acquired "external confirmation," that is, they could not be compared with the results of observation.