

The "Daily" Lucretian

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And now, for your sake, my Memmius, and to let you know that the mind and soul are born in us and die with us, I will go on to write lines worthy of thy genius, and which I have been long preparing, and have at last by sweet labor happily perfected. Observe only that you apply both names indifferently, or, more plainly, when I offered to say the soul is mortal, you are to understand I mean the mind likewise, since they are both so united together, that in this respect, they make but one and the same thing.

First then, since I have proved that the soul consists of very minute seeds, and is formed of principles much less than clear water, or mist, or smoke, because it is more apt to move, and is set a-going by a much lighter stroke (for it is moved by the very images of mist and smoke) as when, by sleep overcome, in dreams we see the lofty altars exhale a vapor, and send up smoke into the air, the images of these things no doubt produce these phantasms in us. And since you see, when the vessel is broken to pieces, the water breaks loose and flows away in a stream; and since mist and smoke vanish into air, conclude the soul likewise to be poured out, and that its principles much sooner perish, and its seeds are more easily dissolved, when it is separated and retires from all the limbs; for since the body, which is, as it were, a vessel to it, when it is bruised to pieces by any outward force, or rarefied by the blood being drawn out of the veins, cannot keep it in, how can you suppose it can be contained by subtle air? How can that which is more rare than this body of ours preserve it entire?

Besides, we perceive the soul is born with the body, grows up with it, and both wax old together. For as children are of a weak and tender body, their mind likewise is of the same frail complexion. As their age improves, and their strength is more confirmed, their judgment ripens more, and the powers of their mind are more enlarged. But when the body is shaking by the irresistible stroke of time, and the limbs fail without strength, the understanding grows lame, the tongue and the mind lose their vigor, all the faculties fail, and go away together. The whole nature of the Soul therefore must needs be dissolved, and scattered like smoke into the air, since we see it is born with the body, increases together with it, and with it, as I said before, becomes feeble by age, and decays.

Add to this, that as the body is subject to violent diseases and tormenting pains, so the mind is affected by sharp cares, by griefs and fear, and therefore must equally partake of death and dissolution with it. And then, in great disorders of the body, the Mind frequently grows mad, raves, and talks wildly; sometimes it is sunk into such a profound and never-ending sleep by a heavy lethargy, the eyes shut, and the head nodding, so that neither hears the words, nor is able to distinguish the face of those who stand about bedewing their cheeks with tears, and

striving to recall the departing breath. Wherefore you must needs allow that the mind may be dissolved, since the infection of the disease pierces through it; for grief and diseases are both the causes of death, as we are taught by experience in a thousand instances.