

The "Daily" Lucretian

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Besides, we often seen men perish by degrees, and lose their vital sense limb by limb; first, the nails and toes grow black, then the feet and legs rot; at length the traces of cold death proceed on, step by step, over the other parts of the body. Since therefore the soul is divided, and does not at such a time continue whole and entire, you must pronounce it mortal.

But if you think the soul retires out of the dying members into the more inward parts of the body, and contracts its seeds into one place, and so withdraws the sense from the rest of the limbs, yet that place to which the soul retreats, and where so much of it is crowded together, ought to enjoy a more lively and brisker sense; but, since there is no such place, it is plain, as we said before, it is scattered piecemeal through the air, and therefore perishes. But suppose we grant which is false in itself, and allow that the soul may be huddled up together in the bodies of those who die one limb after another, yet then the soul must be confessed to be by Nature mortal. For it signifies not whether the soul dies scattered through the air, or perishes with its parts contracted into one place, while the senses steal away from the whole body more and more, and the powers of life by degrees appear less and less.

And since the mind is a part of man fixed in one certain place, as the ears, eyes, and other senses that preside over life, and as the hands, and eyes, and nose, when separated from the body, are incapable of sense, or even to be, but must in a very short time corrupt and putrefy; for the Mind cannot subsist of itself without the body, (or even be in the man) which is as it were a vessel to the soul, or anything else you can conceive more closely united to it; for it sticks inseparably to the body, and cannot be divided from it.

Further, the vital powers of the body and mind exert themselves together, and live united by the strongest bonds; neither can the nature of the Mind alone dispense the vital motions of itself without the body, nor can the body, void of soul, continue or use the faculties of sense. For as the eye, torn out by the roots and separated from the body, can see nothing, so the soul and mind cannot act of themselves, because they are spread over all the body by the veins, the bowels, the nerves, and bones. Nor could the seeds of the soul exercise those vibrations that produce sense, were they disposed at wide intervals, and enclosed by no solid body. They show those sensible motions because they are shut up close, which they cannot exert when they are forced out of the body into the wide air after death, because they are not under the same restraint as they are within the enclosure of the body; for the air would be an animal, if the soul could be confined within it, and maintain those motions of sense which before it exercised in

the nerves and through the limbs. You must confess therefore, over and over, that the mind and soul (for they both make up but one substance) must needs be dissolved, as soon as they are stripped of the covering of the body, and their vital powers thrown out into the thin air.