

# Discussion Round-Up

Post by “Joshua” of December 31, 2019 at 5:21 AM

Quote

I think that, if we look back to Dr. Greenblatt's "the swerve", he states, I forget the page (anyone?) that Christian scholars did make an attempt to "reconcile" the philosophy of Lucretius (namely, Epicureanism) but couldn't because the Epicurean view that the soul dies with us, since it is dispersed into its constituent atoms when we die, is antithetical to Christian theology.

Greenblatt cites several examples. I don't have page numbers, but I can recall a few names.

**Marsilio Ficino**—Fifteenth century Florentine humanist. Wrote a commentary on Lucretius; but, seeing where it was leading him, he burned it. He devoted the rest of his life to translating Plato into Latin, and reconciling his philosophy with Christianity.

**Thomas More**—16th century cleric of the English Renaissance. After reading *The New World* by Amerigo Vespucci—a book that described the natives as "Epicureans", who "live according to Nature", and whose lives "are completely devoted to pleasure"—More used the conceit to explore an enlightened society beyond the edge of the map that was free of the social ills plaguing England at the time. And yet even in *Utopia*, one is barred from honor, office, and social status for two crimes; first, to believe that the soul likewise perishes with the body. And second, to believe that the Universe is the random sport of chance.

To paraphrase Greenblatt; More systematically builds up a more enlightened and Epicurean society, and then proceeds to carve its heart out.

There are also the obvious examples of Bruno and Gassendi.