

Pleasure and Pain in the Practice of Smoking

Post by “Joshua” of May 15, 2021 at 10:07 AM

I have been a pack-a-day smoker for several years now. For nearly as long as I have been addicted to cigarettes, I have also had the kind of niggling fear that makes me anxious to quit. A few times I've tried; but after a few days without a smoke, those nebulous ideas like "long-term health" or "savings of future earnings" start to lose their power to persuade.

Cigarettes—at least for this addict—will win that argument every time. What I needed was something real to lose; something coveted, and physical, and deeply inspiring. Something that belongs to the life of the man I want to be, instead of to the man I am. Were I stronger, the memory of Epicurus' school and its teachings would be enough.

But I've tried, and I simply didn't have it in me to quit smoking.

I've now done something supremely ridiculous; I spent the *next three months* of my cigarette money (~\$650) on something I'd rather have instead—I ordered another copy of Lucretius.

I won't receive the book until the end of this week, but, in eager anticipation, I present it now!

I have bought a copy of the 1675 Latin Edition of *De Rerum Natura*, published—**for the very first time in England**—by John Hayes, printer to the University of Cambridge; itself a reprint of a French Edition (of the Latin Text), that published by Tanneguy Le Fèvre in 1662(?). Both versions based on Denis Lambin's influential 16th century scholarship and emmendations.



TITI
LUCRETII

CARI

De Rerum Natura

LIBRI SEX.

Quibus additæ sunt Conjecturæ &
Emendationes

TAN. FABRI

Cum Notulis Perpetuis.

Et Præterea

OBITE GIPANII VICE LUCRETII

& De Gente Memmia ejusdem
Prolegomena.

ITEM

D. LABBINI Index perquam necessarius.

CANTABRIGIÆ.

Ex Officina *Juann. Hayes*, Celeberrimæ

Academiæ Typographi, 1675.

Impensis *W. Mearns*, Bibliopolæ Cantab.

T. LUCRETII.

Liber Quintus.

Quis potis est dignum pollenti pectore
 carmen
 Condere, pro rerum maiestate, hisque
 repertis?
 Quisve valet verbis tantum, qui fundere
 laudes

Pro meritis ejus possit, qui talia nobis
 Pectore prata suo, quæ sitaque præmia liquit?
 Nemo (ut opinor) erit mortali corpore cretus.
 Nam si, ut ipsa petit maiestas cognita rerum,
 Dicendum 'st: deus ille fuit, deus, inclue Memmi,
 Qui princeps vitæ rationem invenit eam, quæ
 Nunc appellatur sapientia: quique per artem
 Fluctibus è tantis vitam, tantisque tenebris,
 In tam tranquillo, & tam clara luce locavit.
 Confer enim divina aliorum antiqua reperta.
 Namque Ceres fertur fruges, Liberque liquoris
 Vitigeni laticem mortalibus instituisse:
 Cum tamen his posset sine rebus vita manere:
 Ut fama 'st, aliquas etiam nunc vivere genteis.
 At bene non poterat sine puro pectore vivi.
 Quo magis hic merito nobis deus esse videtur:
 Ex quo nunc etiam per magnas didita genteis
 Dulcia permulcent animos solatia vitæ.
 Herculis antistare autem si facta putabis:
 Longius à vera multo ratione ferere.
 Quid Nemeæus enim nobis nunc magnus hiatus
 Ille tonis obellet, & horrens Arcadius sus?

Published in 1675, this book is ~112 years older than the United States Constitution. Its printing was closer in time to Poggio Bracciolini and his rediscovery of the manuscript in 1417, than it is to me. It was set to paper in the same century in which Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake in the Campo de Fiori in Rome. I'm so terribly excited I can hardly stand it!

There's one rule and it's very simple. If I want to pick up smoking again, I have to sell this book first. I threw away the last two cigarettes I had yesterday.

So there it is—my small, personal bribe; my little corruption, mingling the fates of a few leaves of tobacco and of antique paper, with a not-quite-insignificant sum of money.

-josh

Condition of the book as described by the seller;

Quote

Description:

Gordon 107. The Cambridge edition published by John Hayes. Contemporary Cambridge paneled calf. Title page in red and black, ruled in red ink; old owner's name to flyleaf. Inner hinges professionally repaired; endpapers stained. Mild even toning to text. A very sound and handsome copy.

Post by “Don” of May 15, 2021 at 11:10 AM

That is a beautiful book, [Joshua](#) !

I sincerely wish you all the best in your efforts to not pick up smoking again.

Post by “Cassius” of May 15, 2021 at 12:07 PM

Wow that is beautiful! Now, even though, "[death is nothing to us](#)," you've got to be careful not only to take good care of it but to provide for its continued safety when, many years from now, you have to pass it down to new generations!

Post by “Joshua” of May 15, 2021 at 12:14 PM

Quote

Wow that is beautiful! Now, even though, "[death is nothing to us](#)," you've got to be careful not only to take good care of it but to provide for its continued safety when, many years from now, you have to pass it down to new generations!

I've been doing a bit of research on that point, Cassius! I hope that Florida's humidity isn't a problem indoors. I may need to meet some special storage requirements apart from just dark, temperate, and stable.

Post by “Cassius” of May 15, 2021 at 2:04 PM

The oldest Lucretius (or other book) I have is the John Mason Goode edition from 1805. I have it in a glass case, but I fear you are right that humidity is a big enemy. Let us know what you find out as to how to keep it safe.

Post by “Cassius” of January 17, 2023 at 9:53 PM

For some reason I came back to this thread and realize that it went entirely off topic. How are you doing on quitting smoking?

Post by “Little Rocker” of January 22, 2023 at 8:41 AM

Damn, that's a beautiful book! I knew someone whose graduate adviser (securing consent, of course) asked her students to write a check to an organization that represented something they greatly disliked as an incentive to finish a research task. Otherwise, she mailed the check. Are there any Stoic organizations that take donations? Asking for a friend.