

Authorship of the 1743 Prose Translation of Lucretius

Post by “Joshua” of July 14, 2024 at 9:37 AM

Introduction

In a forum [thread](#) from 2018, [Cassius](#) raised the question of authorship as to the translator of the prose edition of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* that was printed in London "for Daniel Brown (sometimes Browne), at the sign of the Black Swan without Temple-Bar." Cassius has prepared a [copy](#) of the text for the forum, derived from the [PDF version](#) at Internet Archive (archive.org).

The translation in question was printed with facing Latin and English text in two volumes, octavo size, "*adorned with copper plates, curiously engraved by GUERNIER, and others*". The copy that was digitized at Internet Archive was previously owned by American President John Adams, and is now in his collection at the Boston Public Library.

There has been a great deal of confusion about the identity of the translator. The ambiguity of the title page has led some, including later Lucretian scholar John Mason Good, to conclude that Guernier was himself the translator. This is certainly not the case; [Louis du Guernier](#) was a French engraver who relocated to England, and died "probably around 1735" at the latest. Furthermore, the translator in page v of his preface refers to English as "our language"; an odd thing to say for a Frenchman. No, this translation is not the work of du Guernier, and the true identity of the person responsible has never been known.

A Note on English History and English Verse

"I hated the very idea of the eighteenth century, with all those smug men writing tight little couplets and being so dead keen on reason."

-Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*

The two titans of English verse in the first half of the 18th century were the Englishman [Alexander Pope](#) and the Irishman [Jonathan Swift](#). This period saw the dawn of the [Age of Enlightenment](#), a time which

Quote

featured a range of social ideas centered on the value of knowledge learned by way of rationalism and of empiricism and political ideals such as natural law, liberty, and progress, toleration and fraternity, constitutional government and the formal

separation of church and state.

The previous century in England had been an eventful one. It started with the death of the last monarch of the Tudor dynasty, Queen Elizabeth I, in 1603; a year after Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was first registered for publication. Following the unwed and childless Queen's death, her cousin King James VI of Scotland acceded to the throne of England as James I in the [Union of the Crowns](#). The reign of King James VI and I saw the foiled Gunpowder Plot of 1605, a new translation of the Bible into English in 1611, the death of William Shakespeare in 1616, and the outbreak of the devastating Thirty Year's War in Europe in 1618. At his death in 1625, he was succeeded by his son Charles I.

The reign of Charles I saw the birth of John Dryden, England's first poet laureate, in 1631. The King quarreled extensively with Parliament over the limits of power, failed to quell surging religious factional resentments, provoked a Civil War which he lost, and was executed in 1649. Between his death and the restoration of his son Charles II in 1660, England fell under the control of dissident Puritans in a period known as the Interregnum. A republic was established called the Commonwealth of England, Oliver Cromwell took over as Lord Protector, and Lucy Hutchinson began work on the first translation of Lucretius into English.

The return of Charles II and the Restoration of the Monarchy followed the first general election in nearly twenty years. A general amnesty was proclaimed, but Cromwell's inner circle was exempted; Lucy Hutchinson's husband Col. John Hutchinson was among those exempted, and he was imprisoned and died in custody in 1664.

The following two years were disastrous;

Quote

In 1665, the Great Plague of London began, peaking in September with up to 7,000 deaths per week. Charles, his family, and the court fled London in July to Salisbury; Parliament met in Oxford. Plague cases ebbed over the winter, and Charles returned to London in February 1666.

After a long spell of hot and dry weather through mid-1666, the Great Fire of London started on 2 September 1666 in Pudding Lane. Fanned by strong winds and fed by wood and fuel stockpiled for winter, the fire destroyed about 13,200 houses and 87 churches, including St Paul's Cathedral. Charles and his brother James joined and directed the firefighting effort. The public blamed Catholic conspirators for the fire.

-Wikipedia

In 1668, John Dryden was appointed Poet Laureate by the King. While Shakespeare and his contemporaries had preferred unrhymed iambic verse, John Dryden's work saw a return to the meter of Geoffrey Chaucer, whose *Canterbury Tales* of the 14th century were written in Middle English in Heroic couplets. In a passage rich with allusions to Lucretius' hymn to Venus, Chaucer writes;

Quote

Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his half cours yronne,
And smale foweles maken melodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open ye
(So Priketh hem Nature in hir corages),
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,
To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;
And specially from every shires ende
Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende,
The hooly blisful martir for to seke,
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.

Display More

John Dryden's own translation of Lucretius opens thus;

Quote

Delight of humankind, and Gods above,
Parent of Rome; propitious Queen of Love,
Whose vital pow'r, Air, Earth, and Sea supplies,
And breeds what e'r is born beneath the rolling skies:
For every kind, by thy prolific might,
Springs, and beholds the regions of the light.
Thee, Goddess, thee the clouds and tempests fear,
And at thy pleasing presence disappear:
For thee the land in fragrant flow'rs is dress'd;
For thee the Ocean smiles, and smooths her wavy breast;

And heav'n it self with more serene and purer light is blest.
For when the rising Spring adorns the Mead,
And a new Scene of Nature stands display'd,
When teeming buds, and cheerful greens appear,
And Western gales unlock the lazy year:
The joyous Birds thy welcome first express;
Whose native Songs thy genial fire confess;
Then salvage Beasts bound o're their slighted food,
Strook with thy darts, and tempt the raging flood.
All Nature is thy Gift; Earth, Air, and Sea:
Of all that breaths, the various progeny,
Stung with delight, is goaded on by thee.
O're barren Mountains, o're the flowery Plain,
The leafy Forest, and the liquid Main
Extends thy uncontroll'd and boundless reign.

Display More

Dryden's influence on the poetry of the 18th century can hardly be overstated. Alexander Pope wrote that "Dryden taught to join / The varying pause, the full resounding line, / The long majestic march, and energy divine". Samuel Johnson recorded that "the veneration with which his name is pronounced by every cultivator of English literature, is paid to him as he refined the language, improved the sentiments, and tuned the numbers of English poetry".

Until the godsend publication of *Lyrical Ballads* by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1798, heroic couplets would be the order of the day.

Blech.

Three Prose Translations; Horace, Juvenal, and Lucretius

It is perhaps not altogether unsurprising, then, that these 'smug men writing tight little couplets' had no appreciation for the new prose translations that were starting to come out. We will be looking at three such translations, all printed for Daniel Brown in London.

- "[The Satires and Epistles of Horace, Done into English with Notes](#)", in several editions, first printed in 1709; translated by Rev. Samuel Dunster, M.A. The second edition featuring Dunster's portrait appeared in 1712, and included Horace's *Ars Poetica*, or *Art of Poetry*.
- "The Satires of Juvenal Translated: with Explanatory and Classical Notes, Relating to the Laws and Customs of the Greeks and Romans". The [second edition](#) was printed for Daniel Brown in 1745.

- "[T. Lucretius Carus of the Nature of Things, in Six Books. Illustrated with proper and useful notes. Adorned with copper plates, curiously engraved by Guernier, and others](#)", printed in 1743.

The latter two translations were both published anonymously.

Post by "Joshua" of July 14, 2024 at 11:20 AM

Rev. Samuel Dunster, D.D., Vicar of Rochdale



S. Dunster A.M.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3963-authorship-of-the-1743-prose-translation-of-lucretius/>

LONDON Printed for Dan: Brown & John Walthoe .

© National Portrait Gallery, London

The translation of Horace before mentioned was the work of an Anglican prelate named [Samuel Dunster](#) (1675-1754), who went on to earn a Doctorate in Divinity, and served for many years as Vicar of Rochdale in the vicinity of Manchester. The most extensive biography available is in [The Vicars of Rochdale: Vol. 1](#) by Francis Robert Raines. Dunster published a series of works in his early career, beginning with

Quote

a curious and somewhat interesting account of the shires and principal towns in England, under the title of *Anglia Rediviva*, 8vo., London, 1699.

He further published a sermon on the book of Proverbs, advocating in defense of public education, in 1708. In 1709-1710 there appeared two translations; [The Considerations of Drexelius on Eternity](#), which ran through a number of subsequent editions, and the volume of Horace's *Satires and Epistles* now under consideration. This latter work also went through several editions, but there is some evidence that the literary establishment of the day disapproved of Dunster's prose version. A friend of Jonathan Swift's wrote a few stinging couplets at Dunster's expense, which he sent to the famous poet;

Quote

Attack'd, by slow-devouring moths,
By rage of barb'rous Huns and Goths:
By Bentley's notes, my deadliest foes,
By Creech's rhimes and Dunster's prose;
I found my boasted wit and fire
In their rude hands almost expire:

-John Sican, 1712-1753

Another couplet appeared from the hand of a Professor of Greek at Cambridge;

Quote

O'er Tibur's swan the muses wept in vain,
and mourn'd their Bard by cruel Dunster slain.

-Prof. Thomas Francklin, Cambridge University

There was a kind of mania, not to say insanity, inherent to this view of things. In the frontmatter to his translation of Juvenal, John Dryden had stated his intention to "make [the poet] speak that kind of English, which he would have spoken had he lived in England, and had

he written to this Age". Had Juvenal lived not in Rome but in London, in other words, and in the late 17th and early 18th century, he would have written in rhymed couplets.

In the wake of these criticisms in his early career, Samuel Dunster did one of two things. Either he never published another translation from Latin ever again, or else he continued to publish translations from Latin and he did so anonymously. There is scant evidence in favor of either proposition.

In 1739 there appeared an anonymous prose translation of the *Satires* of Juvenal, and this work has diversely been attributed to one of two men; Reverends Samuel Dunster and Thomas Sheridan. Column 2259 of the third volume of Halkett and Laing's [Dictionary of the Anonymous and Pseudonymous Literature of Great Britain](#) (1882-1888) attributes a 1777 reprint of this work to "Samuel [?] Dunster".

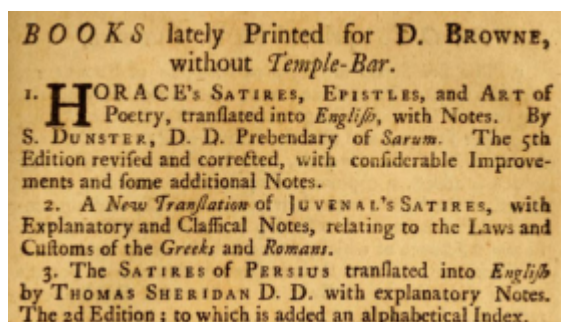
**SATIRES (the) of Juvenal; translated
with explanatory and classical notes,
relating to the laws and customs of the
Greeks and Romans. [By Samuel [?]
DUNSTER.]
London : 1777. Octavo. W.]**

Contrarily, the [Dictionary of National Biography](#) records the following;

Quote

[Thomas] Sheridan wrote much and published little. Translations of the 'Satyrs of Persius' (1728, 8vo) and 'Satires of Juvenal' (1739, 8vo), both of which had several editions, and the 'Philoctetes' of Sophocles (1725) were the most noteworthy of his productions.

The *Persius* and the *Juvenal* were both to be found in the bookseller's shop of Daniel Brown near Temple-Bar. In the 1743 edition of *Lucretius* the following advertisement lists all three of these works--Horace, Persius, and Juvenal.



BOOKS lately Printed for **D. BROWNE**,
without *Temple-Bar*.

1. **H**ORACE'S SATIRES, EPISTLES, and ART of Poetry, translated into *English*, with Notes. By S. DUNSTER, D. D. Prebendary of *Sarum*. The 5th Edition revised and corrected, with considerable Improvements and some additional Notes.
2. A *New Translation* of JUVENAL'S SATIRES, with Explanatory and Classical Notes, relating to the Laws and Customs of the *Greeks* and *Romans*.
3. The SATIRES of PERSIUS translated into *English* by THOMAS SHERIDAN D. D. with explanatory Notes. The 2d Edition; to which is added an alphabetical Index.

Which of these men was actually responsible for the translation of Juvenal? And even more interestingly, could these two names hold the key to the prose translation of Lucretius?

Vocation and Avocation

The flourishing of human talent that blossomed among the Anglican clergy during the 18th and early 19th centuries is a matter of record, and I would point to Bill Bryson's [At Home](#), a rather discursive account of his time spent living in an old rectory in the English countryside, as offering an exemplary look into this interesting world. The upshot is that when a huge number of educated people are given leisure time and an income, their output may be prodigious. The Reverends Dunster and Sheridan are no more than typical of their set; their occupation was minimal, their free time extensive.

[Thomas Sheridan](#) (1687-1738) was, among other things, an essayist, playwright, poet, and a close personal friend of Jonathan Swift. His [Satyrs of Persius](#) stand somewhat apart from the Horace, Juvenal, and Lucretius linked to above; in the first place, the translator has given us no preface. The prologue which you shall see before the first Satire is not Sheridan's; it was written by the poet Aulus Persius Flaccus himself, and has merely been translated.

By contrast, the three prose translations under consideration all have features common to each of their prefaces. All three of them contain;

1. A self-effacing references to the translator's own language or abilities.
2. A justification for translating verse into prose.
3. A defense against those who would lay the sins of the Roman poet at the feet of the English translator.

Here's how this works in practice.

The Three Prefaces Compared

1. A self-effacing reference to the translator's own abilities.

Dunster's Horace:

Quote

This was the motive which induced me attempt the following translation; I am very sensible, that the Grace and Delicacy of the Latin Can't be turn'd into English; but our Language is not without its beauties, which perhaps are no less pleasing and delightful.

Anonymous Juvenal:

Quote

I have attempted a Just and Intelligible Translation of Juvenal's Satires, and offer them to be read, without the alluring Jingle of poetic Trappings, in a plain and simple Dress, with nothing besides their own native Worth and Excellency to recommend them.

Anonymous Lucretius:

Quote

I have endeavoured (because disencumber'd from the Fetters of Poetry) faithfully to disclose his Meaning in his own Terms, and to shew him whole and intire ; I have followed the different Readings and Explications of the best Expositors, but whether agreeable to the Mind of the Author or no, Comparison only can discover.

2. A justification for translating verse into prose.

Dunster's Horace:

Quote

This I thought the most likely way to make him intelligible, which, is much better done in Prose than Verse; the Restraint of Rhime is no ordinary Difficulty, it too often forces the ingenious Translator to abandon the true Sense of the Poet, and for the sake of a sounding Word, put in something of his own.

Anonymous Juvenal:

Quote

However, let these Poetical translations enjoy undisturbed the Glory they have acquired: it will be Fame and Reward sufficient for me to render this Great Author more familiar, to shew him as he really is, and endeavour that the English Readers of both Sexes may not continue unacquainted with the true Value and the just undisguised Merit of Juvenal's Satires.

Anonymous Lucretius:

Quote

This is no wonder; for the Poet he [Creech] undertook is not to be confined and shackled by the Rules of Rhyme; his Verse is nearest, and runs more naturally into Prose than any other, Juvenal and Horace only excepted, among all the Classicks.

3. A defense against those who would lay the sins of the Roman poet at the feet of the English translator

Dunster's Horace:

Quote

Having given this Account of the following Version, I must advertise the Reader of one thing more, and that is, that I have castrated our Poet, in translating nothing that border'd on Obscenity, or that was contrary to the Rules of Decency and good Manners ; insomuch that the most modest Person may now safely read his Satires and Epistles, and not run the risque of endangering his Vertue.

Anonymous Juvenal:

Quote

Some perhaps may conceive, that Juvenal is an Author of too free a Character, and too loose a Manner to appear in a plain and natural Translation ; but to censure the most severe and pungent Satires against Vice, as the strongest Incentives to the Commission of it, betrays a Narrowness of Mind, which I think deserves no Answer.

Anonymous Lucretius:

Quote

And here I would have it be understood, that I translate Lucretius only as a Classick Writer of the first Rank, and one of the Venerable Fathers of Latin Poetry, without thinking myself accountable for his Principles, or justifying his System; and whoever apprehends the Design of this Work, in any other View, is a Person of narrow and stinted Conceptions; he is a precise Fanatick in the Republick of Letters, and a secret and ignorant Enemy to Human Learning.

The reader will perceive that the earliest translation takes a milder approach, and the latter a more combative one. Note also the reference in the preface to Lucretius, that "his Verse is nearest, and runs more naturally into Prose than any other, Juvenal and Horace only excepted, among all the Classicks."

If Thomas Sheridan translated the *Satires* of Juvenal, why do they contain this prefatory material while his *Persius* does not? There is, moreover, criticism of Thomas Creech in the preface to both Horace and Lucretius.

Post by "Joshua" of July 14, 2024 at 12:53 PM

Odds and Ends from a Literary Life

And speaking of Thomas Creech, he crops up again in the *Oxford Handbook of Eighteenth Century Satire*;

Quote

"Creech typically translated Horace closely, but when he encountered an Epicurean passage, whether atheist or hedonist, he often acted as a commentator instead, repressing it, softening it, leaving it prominently in place, or even seeming to justify and explain it. We see a striking example in epistle 1.6. Meanwhile, the translation of the lyrics organized by William Oldisworth (1712-13) appeared with Horace's Latin on the facing page. The device was likely encouraged by the popularity of Dacier's edition, although Richard Fanshawe had one the same. Dunster, faced with the philosophy of the hexameter poems, often rendered literally some extremely heterodox passages; yet even he could sometimes shield them from full view in time-honoured ways."

A digital scan of Rev. Samuel Dunster's Last Will and Testament, dated 22nd October 1751, is in my possession, though I cannot at present find the link at the National Archive website (*The National Archives' reference PROB 11/810/394*). In any case, the [book](#) containing his biography by Raines also contains a text of this Will; one entry reads as follows:

Quote

To Mr. Joseph Haigh (my curate) all my MS. sermons, my new black gown and bands, and neck cloths, my Virgil and Horace, with my MS. notes in three volumes;

This work on Virgil is given the following shelf-mark at Chetham's Library:

A.4.29	DUNSTER, Samuel (1675-1754), Vicar of Rochdale A dissertation on Virgil's first eclogue (Byrom collection). 21 pp.
---------------	---

There is also a very interesting letter recorded by Raines:

He addressed the following letter to Dr. Byrom on another subject. The article is entitled (in Byrom's *Library Catalogue*, 4to, p. 247, note) "A Dissertation on Virgil's first Eclogue," wherein 'tis proved from authority, from reason, and from the absurdity of the contrary opinion, that Virgil's father, not Virgil himself, is there represented under the person of Tityrus. The critical remarks sent to Byrom extend to twenty-one pages in quarto, written in "a large bold hand," probably by Dunster's son from the Doctor's dictation. (*Remains of Byrom*, vol. i. part 2, p. 537, note.)

Rochdale, December 2nd, 1734.

Sir,—Though, like a truly Christian philosopher, you are continually entertaining yourself with speculations of the highest nature — with the first principles of things, the nature of the soul, the perfection of man, the supreme good, and how far it is

attainable by us poor mortals ; I have the pleasure of persuading myself that you will not be displeas'd at your being interrupted with some critical remarks on two of Virgil's Eclogues. The first, I grant, are of very little consideration, but then the last are of very great moment, and as such I recommend 'em.

But whatever they are, I desire you will by no means think that at this stage of life I concern myself much with things of this nature. I am willing sometimes, by way of amusement, to give a few hours to the reading of the Greek and Latin poets, to encourage my son in his present studies ; but what delight soever they formerly gave me,

Non eadem est ætas, non mens—

insomuch that now I am wholly taken up with the much more delightful and profitable enquiries :—

Qua ratione queam traducere leniter ævum
Ne me semper inops agitet vexetque cupido
Ne pavor, et rerum mediocriter utilium spes
Virtutem doctrina paret, naturane donet ?
Quid minuat curas, quid me mihi reddat amicum
Quid pure tranquillet ? honos an dulce lucellum
An secretum iter, et fallentis semita vitæ ?
Mequoties reficit gelidus Rochdalia rivus
Quid sentire putas ? quid credis, amice, precari ?
Sit mihi quod nunc est ; etiam minus ; et mihi vivam
Quod superest ævi, siquid superesse volunt Di.

(Hor. lib. i. ep. 18.)

You will much oblige me in making my compliments to Messieurs Byrom and the two young ladies, by whom I was treated, when I lately was among 'em, with such an open, undisguis'd civility, that it will always be thankfully remembered by,

Sir, your affectionate humble Servant,

S. DUNSTER.

(Remains, vol. i. part 2.)

This letter dated 1734 would seem to suggest that Dunster has given up any rigorous work in the field of classics, but the quoted epistle from Horace gives some insight into his ongoing pursuits. Here is a comment on that epistle from Mark Morford.

Quote

In the midst of everything you will read, and you will ask your teachers by what system you may pass your life gently. Ask whether desire (that always needs more) should trouble and disturb you; whether fear and hope for things that are not advantageous; whether philosophy or nature will give

you virtue; what will lessen anxiety, what will make you a friend to yourself, what will bring you simple tranquillity—whether it is public honours or the pleasure of profits or the secret way and the path of a life hidden from others. As for me, when I am refreshed by the cold stream of Digentia, which Mandela drinks, a village furrowed with cold, what do you think is my opinion, my friend, what do you believe is my prayer? “Let me keep what I have now, or even less, so that I can live out the rest of my life (if the gods wish me to live longer) for myself. Let me have a good supply of books and a year’s supply of food, and may I not float hanging on the hopes of an uncertain hour.” Well, it is enough to ask Jupiter for what he gives and takes away. He may grant me life, he may grant me wealth: I myself will provide a mind free from anxiety (aequum animum).

These beautiful and famous lines are the final expression of Horace’s ethics. Although they are only indirectly concerned with pleasure and although they suggest that prayer to the gods is efficacious, they are fundamentally Epicurean. They are based on the maxim, “live unobtrusively”, and they suggest the moderate enjoyment of moderate pleasures. Their goal is a life free from mental disturbance, the achievement of ataraxia that is as much Stoic as Epicurean. Finally, they suggest that happiness is ours to achieve through control of our will, whatever the gods may give, good or ill. Here Horace agrees with the Stoics, and this doctrine will prove to be the foundation of the ethics of Epictetus.

-The Roman Philosophers; from the Time of Cato the Censor to the Death of Marcus Aurelius by Mark Morford

Display More

As [TauPhi](#) has alluded to in [another thread](#), Juvenal's [tenth satire](#) touches on similar themes. If Dunster is our translator of both Juvenal (1739) and Lucretius (1743), he would have been working on one or both of them at the the time of this letter (1734).

Only two things more remain to be said. Rev. Dunster's personal library went to auction in November of 1754 with the personal libraries of a handful of others. A catalogue in two volumes (I, [II](#)) was made available, and among the collections listed in Volume II were translations of Lucretius by Creech and Evelyn.

26384	Lucretius Carus of the Nature of Things, by Creech, 2 vol	
	5s	171
26385	_____ Epicurean Philosophy, in Verse, 1s 6d	168
26386	_____ The same, <i>stained</i> , 1s	168
26387	_____ de Rerum Natura, by Evelyn, 1s	165
26388	_____ Epicurean Philosophy — Manilius of ancient Astronomy and Astrology; 3s 6d	170

It is impossible, of course, to know whether they belonged to Dunster or one of the others. A search of the collection also brings up several books ancient and modern on astronomy. In the 1743 edition of Lucretius, a series of footnotes in Book V on pages 171-175 provide an extensive explanation of the movement of the heavenly bodies.

Conclusion

I have tried to accumulate here all of the sources and citations that I have been sitting on for the better part of a year. The evidence, as the reader will observe, is inconclusive and circumstantial at best. However, I am going to propose on the basis of this inconclusive evidence that Reverend Samuel Dunster, D.D., Rector of Hartley and Gravesend, Prebendary at the Cathedrals of Salisbury and Lincoln, and Vicar of Rochdale, is a promising candidate for the anonymous translator of the 1743 translation of *De Rerum Natura*, printed for Daniel Brown, bookseller, at the sign of the Black Swan without Temple-Bar, London.

Finis

Post by “Cassius” of July 14, 2024 at 2:25 PM

Writing before post 3 is updated: I can't wait for the conclusion! Cliffhanger!

Post by “Joshua” of July 14, 2024 at 2:56 PM

I added more to post #2, which some of you may have read in an earlier version.

Edit; Have fun chewing on all of that! 😊

Post by “TauPhi” of July 14, 2024 at 5:17 PM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

Have fun chewing on all of that! 😊

I had so much fun chewing on all of that, I chewed it all up twice. Thank you, [Joshua](#) . Amazing research.

Post by “Cassius” of July 14, 2024 at 5:38 PM

Yes bravo Joshua - it was worth the wait! i will have lots of comments before this is over but something caught my eye that you and I have not discussed:

[Quote from Joshua](#)

He further published a sermon on the book of Proverbs, advocating in defense of public education, in 1708. In 1709-1710 there appeared two translations; The Considerations of Drexelius on Eternity, which ran through a number of subsequent editions,

Do you think there is any possibility of us getting our hands on this?

This 1743 edition is one of my favorites because there are several passages that I think Dunster (I will assume the question for the moment) translates better than anyone else. My prime example of that is how Dunster uses *events* rather than *accidents* early in the poem in that section referencing the Trojan War.

I therefore have developed a notion that Dunster was more "in tune" with Lucretius (and Epicurus) than many other writers, so I would expect him to be drawn to some of the same questions that we are pursuing now -- especially the question of infinity / eternity of the universe.

I would love to read what Dunster wrote about eternity. I want to know what "Drexelius" said too (don't know who that is at this point) but I would expect Dunster to have wanted to follow up on many of the leads that we are following today.

Did you see anything indicating that any of Dunster's other works (especially on eternity) have still survived?

EDIT: Well it pays to Google before typing too much!
<https://books.google.com/books/about/Th...id=2mNiAAAACAAJ>

Post by “Joshua” of July 14, 2024 at 5:45 PM

Quote

I would love to read what Dunster wrote about eternity. I want to know what "[Drexelius](#)" said too (don't know who that is at this point) but I would expect Dunster to have wanted to follow up on many of the leads that we are following today.

I attached a link into the quote above.

I know this text survives and I read it in full several months ago; my memory is that this is a very clerical work that didn't offer anything of interest. I'll let you know when I find it again!

Post by “Joshua” of July 14, 2024 at 5:55 PM

[Here](#) is that text on archive.org

Post by “Cassius” of July 14, 2024 at 6:00 PM

Thank you Joshua. I am processing this quickly so I may be mistaken, but what I see is :

1 - The introduction is by Dunster's SON, and contains nothing of interest, but typical clerical affirmation that the soul has an eternal existence.

2 - The text itself is wholly clerical and contains nothing of interest. To the extent it refers to the ancients, it doesn't mention any Epicurean views - just circular representations of god and the like.

So what we are missing, which might have been of interest if it still existed, was Dunster's OWN commentary on the issue of eternity. Looks doubtful we will find anything based on this.