

ON THE NATURE OF LAUGHTER IN LUCRETIIUS

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1. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* Bk. 2, vv. 974-979

denique uti possint sentire animalia quaeque,
principiis si iam est sensus tribuendum eorum,
quid, genus humanum propritim de quibus auctumst? 975
scilicet et risu tremula concussa cachinnant
et lacrimis spargunt rorantibus ora genasque,
multaque de rerum mixtura dicere callent,
et sibi porporro quae sint primordia quaerunt [...].

And then, if, so that all animate things are able to sense,
sensation must be attributed to the atoms of these things,
what about those from which the human race has grown?
Surely, shaken with trembling laughter, they guffaw
and with dewy tears they sprinkle their faces and cheeks, and
they know how to speak at length on the composition of things
and they inquire furthermore what their own origins are [...].

2. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* Bk. 2, vv. 983-990

quippe sequar, **quodcumque loqui ridereque dices**
et sapere, ex aliis eadem haec facientibus ut sit.
quod si delira haec furiosaque cernimus esse, 985
et ridere potest non ex ridentibus auctus,
et sapere et doctis rationem reddere dictis
non ex seminibus sapientibus atque disertis,
qui minus esse queant ea quae sentire videmus
seminibus permixta carentibus undique sensu? 990

Indeed, I will continue: whatever you'll say speaks and laughs
and is wise, that it is from other things doing these same things.
But if we realize that this is deranged and mad, and that
someone grown not from laughing things is able to laugh
and to be wise and to impart reason with learned words,
although grown not from wise and clever seeds,
why shouldn't the things which we see sensing be able to be
thoroughly composed of seeds altogether lacking sensation?

3. Epicurus, *Κύρια Δόξα* 27

ὄν ἡ σοφία παρασκευάζεται εἰς τὴν τοῦ ὄλου βίου
μακαριότητα, πολὺ μέγιστόν ἐστιν ἡ τῆς φιλίας κτῆσις.

Of the things wisdom prepares for life-long happiness, far
the greatest is the acquisition of a friend.

4. Epicurus, *Sententiae Vaticanae* 52

ἡ φιλία περιχορεύει τὴν οἰκουμένην κηρύττουσα δὴ
πᾶσιν ἡμῖν ἐγείρεσθαι ἐπὶ τὸν μακαρισμόν.

Friendship dances through the inhabited world,
summoning us all then to be awake to naming happiness.

5. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* Bk. 1, vv. 140-148

sed tua me virtus tamen et sperata voluptas
suavis amicitiae quemvis efferre laborem
suadet, et inducit noctes vigilare serenas
quaerentem dictis quibus et quo carmine demum
clara tuae possim praepandere lumina menti,
res quibus occultas penitus convisere possis. 145
hunc igitur terrorem animi tenebrasque necesses
non radii solis neque lucida tela diei
discutient, sed naturae species ratioque.

But your virtue, at least, and the desired pleasure of your
pleasant friendship persuades me to endure any and all labor,
and it compels me to stay up through calm nights
seeking by what words and with what poetry at last
I may be able to lay out bright lights before your mind, lights
by which you may be able to see matters thoroughly hidden. 145
This terror of the mind, therefore, and these shadows must be
shaken off, not by the rays of the sun nor by the bright shafts of
daylight, but by the appearance and reason of nature.

6. Epicurus, *Sententiae Vaticanae* 41

γελᾶν ἅμα δεῖ καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν καὶ οἰκονομεῖν καὶ τοῖς
λοιποῖς οἰκειώμασι χρῆσθαι καὶ μηδαμῇ λήγειν τὰς ἐκ
τῆς ὀρθῆς φιλοσοφίας φωνὰς ἀφιέντας.

It is necessary at the same time to laugh and philosophize
and run one's house and use one's other resources and in
no way cease putting forth the sayings of true philosophy.

7. Lucretius, *De Rerum natura* Bk. 1, vv. 6-9

te, dea, te fugiunt venti, te nubila caeli
adventumque tuum, tibi suavis daedala tellus
summittit flores, **tibi rident aequora ponti**
placatumque nitet diffuso lumine caelum.

You, goddess, you the winds flee, you and your arrival
the clouds of the sky flee, to you the variegated earth submits
sweet flowers, the spans of the sea laugh for you,
and the peaceful sky shines with poured-forth light.

<p>8. Lucretius, <i>De Rerum Natura</i> Bk. 4, vv. 81-83 et quanto circum mage sunt inclusa theatri moenia, tam magis haec intus perfusa lepore omnia conrident correpta luce diei.</p>	<p>--- And the more that the walls of the theater are closed around, so much more does everything inside, bathed in charm, <u>laugh together with the appropriated light of day.</u></p>
<p>9. Lucretius, <i>De Rerum Natura</i> Bk. 3, vv. 21-24, 28-30 [...] semperque innubilis aether integit, et large diffuso lumine ridet. omnia suppeditat porro natura neque ulla res animi pacem delibat tempore in ullo. 24 [...] his ibi me rebus quaedam divina voluptas percipit atque horror, quod sic natura tua vi tam manifesta patens ex omni parte resecta est. 30</p>	<p>--- [...] and the cloudless air always covers [the gods' abodes] <u>and laughs with widely poured-forth light.</u> Nature hereafter supplies everything nor does any thing diminish the peace of mind (<i>sc.</i> of the gods) at any time. [...] And so from these things a certain divine pleasure possesses me and an awe, because in this way, by your power, nature being so open has been uncovered in every part.</p>
<p>10. Lucretius, <i>De Rerum Natura</i>, Bk. 5, vv. 1390-1404 haec animos ollis mulcebant atque iuuant 1390 cum satiata cibi; nam tum sunt omnia cordi. saepe itaque inter se prostrati in gramine molli propter aquae rivom sub ramis arboris altae non magnis opibus iuuante corpora habebant, praesertim cum tempestas ridebat et anni 1395 tempora pingebant viridantis floribus herbas. tum ioca, tum sermo, tum dulces esse cachinni consuerant. agrestis enim tum musa vigebat; tum caput atque umeros plexis redimire coronis floribus et foliis lasciuiam laeta movebat, 1400 atque extra numerum procedere membra mouentis duriter et duro terram pede pellere matrem; unde oriebantur risus dulcesque cachinni, omnia quod nova tum magis haec et mira vigebant.</p>	<p>--- These laments soothed their spirits and <u>delighted them</u> <u>after the satisfaction of food, for then are all things pleasant.</u> Often in this way, lying down together in the soft grass near a stream of water beneath the branches of a high tree, at minimal expense <u>they kept themselves pleased,</u> <u>especially when the weather laughed</u> and the year's seasons were coloring the greening fields with flowers. Then <u>jokes</u>, then <u>conversation</u>, then <u>sweet cackles</u> were wont to happen. For then the rural muse was flourishing; then glad playfulness moved them to encircle head and shoulders with crowns woven from flowers and leaves, and to proceed unrhythmically, dancing harshly, and to strike the earth mother with a harsh foot; From which arose <u>laughs and sweet cackles,</u> because all these things, newer and wondrous, were flourishing.</p>
<p>11. Lucretius, <i>De Rerum Natura</i>, Bk. 5, vv. 1430-1433 ergo hominum genus incassum frustraue laborat 14 semper et in curis consumit inanibus aevom, nimirum quia non cognovit quae sit habendi finis et omnino quoad crescat vera voluptas.</p>	<p>--- Therefore, the race of men toils uselessly and in vain and always consumes time in empty concerns, <u>evidently because it does not know what is the limit of</u> <u>possession and altogether how far true pleasure grows.</u></p>

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