

## The *animus-anima* Complex in Lucretius

Death is the end of our existence, Lucretius teaches, and we have nothing to fear from it. His proof? To use today's parlance: we have no immortal soul. We are made entirely of atoms and void; at death we return to that. Readers of *De rerum natura* have agreed upon this general interpretation of Lucretius' meaning for thousands of years.

However, for all of Lucretius' explication of the nature of the *animus* and *anima*, scholars still disagree about what they are and how to translate them. Perhaps the biggest stumbling block is the assumption that Lucretius generally uses *anima* and *animus* to render the Greek τὸ ἄλογον and τὸ λογικόν (τῆς ψυχῆς) - and thereby means the irrational and the rational parts of the soul, often translated as the spirit and mind, respectively. This conventional distinction is adopted, for example, by Bailey, Konstan and Mehl; Gill and Long have cast doubt on it. The roots of the assumption lie in an interpretation of Epicurus which has been mapped onto Lucretius.

On the basis of the literary and philosophical evidence in *De rerum natura*, this paper argues that *animus* and *anima* refer to the same physical and metaphysical entity and that this structure is neither mind nor spirit. There is no suitable translation for their combined meaning in Lucretius. This entity should be termed the *animus-anima* complex. It designates something comparable to the modern conception of a central nervous system and its integrity is essential to life and to other properties of living creatures. In the process, this paper not only challenges the idea that Lucretius conceived of a 'soul' with 'parts', it also challenges the application of labels like rational and irrational. This interpretation has profound consequences for our understanding of Epicurean philosophy of mind, the scholion to Epicurus' *Letter to Herodotus* 66, and Lucretius' arguments against the fear of death.

## Bibliography

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