

No Acherousian temples do they see; 30
And yet the earth's no check to everything
That's visible, whatever's happening
Throughout the world beneath us; and when I
Then gaze upon these things, I'm captured by
A sort of holy joy, but also dread
Since Nature manifestly has been spread
By you in every part so openly.
And since I've shown the great variety
Of origins of every living thing,
The difference in their shape, how varying 40
They are and how they of their own accord
In everlasting motion fly abroad,
Creating everything, I must make clear
How mind and spirit work and oust the fear
Of Hell, which troubles man with thoughts of death
And darkness, leaving him with not a breath
Of clean and pure delight. When men proclaim
That bodily illness and a life of shame
Frightens men more than Hell and that the mind
Is blood or even air, if they're inclined 50
That way, and that they have no need to hear
Our reasoning, my words will make it clear
That they are merely supercilious,
Not facing facts. They're driven far from us,
Disgraced and suffering many miseries,
And yet they still perform their obsequies
To their ancestors, wherever they've fled,
And slay black cattle, offering to the dead

Their sacrifices, with more eagerness
Reverting to religion. It's no less 60
Of use to scrutinize a man attacked
By peril and to comprehend in fact
The kind of man he might turn out to be;
For only then will he speak verity
Elicited from his very heart and soul:
The mask's torn off, the truth remaining whole.
Greed and ambition, which drive men to spurn
The law and sometimes be prepared to burn
The midnight oil to reach the very height
Of power are instruments which feed their fright 70
Of death. Contempt and need are seen to be
Far from delight and the stability
Of life; before the gates of death they stray,
It seems, whence men desire to flee away:
Spurred by false hope, with civil blood they heap
Up riches after riches as they keep
On slaughtering, rejoicing cruelly
Upon a brother's death, while enmity
And fear possesses them at the appeal
Of a kinsman who invites them to a meal. 80
They envy him his influence as well
Since everyone perceives him as a swell,
While they themselves complain that they are stuck
With wallowing in obscurity and muck.
Some sweat and toil just for an effigy
And a name. It happens, too, that frequently

That fear of death develops as a hate
Of life and in their grief they fabricate
Their own demise because they don't recall
That this fear was the origin of all 90
Their miseries, because this fear can make
This man to lose his honour, that to break
His bond and all to topple piety.
For often one betrays his family
Or country while he's trying to evade
The land below. As children are afraid
Of darkness, sometimes we're afraid of light
More than those things that children in the night
Fear will appear. And therefore this dark fright
Must be dispersed but not by shafts of light 100
Nor the sun's rays but by the stern decree
Of Nature. I must say primarily
Intelligence, more normally called the mind,
Where wisdom and control of life you'll find,
Is no less part of the human frame than eyes
Or hands or feet or other things that comprise
One's being. But there are some men who say
The feeling of the mind will never stay
In one fixed place but that it's meant to be
The vital force the Greeks call 'harmony' - 110
It gives us sense, though perspicaciousness
Is nowhere to be found, as healthiness,
Though said to be within us, does not dwell
In any part of someone who is well.
But I imagine that in what they say

Of this they wander very far astray.
There's an unhealthy man before our face,
Though he is happy in some hidden place;
The opposite's often true, though, when we find
A man whose body's fit, though not his mind, 120
As when a man whose foot aches feels no pain
Meanwhile within his head. And yet again,
In heavy sleep where there is no sensation
There's something yet that's feeling agitation
In joys and empty cares. Our spirit lies
Within our frame, which does not realize
Feeling through harmony - when a great part
Of a body is removed, still at the heart
There's life; but then again, when just a few
Particles of heat desert the frame and through 130
The mouth the air's thrust out, immediately
That same life will desert each artery
And bone, and by this you may recognize
Each particle differently fortifies
One's life, and wind and heat provide the seeds
To cater to it, seeing to its needs.
And it's the seeds of wind and heat that see
That life still lingers on. Accordingly
They quit the frame at death. Therefore we find
The nature and the spirit of the mind 140
Are part of man, so call them harmony,
Brought down from lofty Helicon to be
Used by musicians, or perhaps they drew
It from another source and gave it to

Something that lacked a name. So anyway,
It's theirs! Now hear what else I have to say:
I say the mind and spirit are both bound
And interlocked together and compound
One nature, but the head is lord of all
And it is understood that we now call 150

It mind and wit, which in the breast is placed,
Where throbbing terror, fear and joy are based:
There, then, are mind and wit. Dispersed around
The frame, the rest of the spirit may be found,
Obeying both. It has the faculty
Of sense when nothing simultaneously
Affects the frame and soul. As when the head
Or eye is aching, torment is not spread
Elsewhere, sometimes the mind is injured too,
Though glad when the other parts of the spirit do 160

No harm. But when the wit is stirred by dread
We see the total spirit now will spread
Throughout the frame, which turns a pallid grey
And sweats, the voice falters and dies away,
The eyes grow dim, there is a buzzing sound
Inside the ears, the limbs fall to the ground,
And thus the mind and spirit we may see
Are unified, and when the energy
Of mind attacks the spirit, straightaway
It buffets it and sends it on its way 170

Towards the body. Therefore we may see
The nature of both things is bodily:
It drives our limbs, it rouses us from sleep,

It changes our expressions, thus to sweep
Us onward, which cannot occur without
Touching, and furthermore there is no doubt
That touch needs body – thus we must agree
The nature of them both is bodily.

The mind, then, can experience as well

The feelings that within our bodies dwell. 180

If bones and sinews are divided by

A grim sword but the victim does not die,

Languor occurs, and then a blissful swoon,

But then he feels a turmoil very soon

And sometimes an uncertain urge to rise.

Thus by these precepts you must realize

The mind's corporeal, because it knows

What it must feel when buffeted by blows

And bodily weapons. Now I'll say what kind

Of body is implanted in the mind 190

And how it's formed. It is exceedingly

Delicate and made of remarkably

Minute atoms. So try to realize

That nothing that appears before our eyes

Moves faster than the mind. It has been found

Therefore that all its seeds must then be round

And tiny, so that a small energy

May move and touch it. All Liquidity

Is moved thus since it's made of shapes that flow

And are but tiny. Honey's nature, though, 200

Is more deep-rooted, flowing tardily

Because its stock cleaves more compressedly,

Its atoms not so smooth or fine or round.
Indeed the gentle breeze, we all have found,
Can blow high heaps of poppy-seed way.
And yet, contrariwise, we cannot say
That stones or wheat-ears can do this at all.

So, insofar as entities are small

And even, so is their mobility;

A thing more rough and heavy proves to be 210

More rigid. Since the nature of the mind

Is movable, it must be confined

To tiny, smooth, round seeds. You, best of friends,

Will find these things will pay you dividends

Elsewhere. It's delicate and it can place

Itself into a very tiny space

If once compacted. When death's tranquil peace

Gets hold of man and mind and soul both cease

To be, you'll see no form or weight remains

Inside the total frame. Everyone gains 220

All things from death excepting warming breath

And vital sense, both carried off by death.

Twined in the vital organs thus the soul

Requires the tiniest seeds. For when the whole

Body is gone, the limbs' contours must stay

Uninjured and no weight must slip away.

In the same way, when we have lost the scent

Of Bacchus' gift or some emollient

Has shed its perfume or a savour's gone

From someone's body, yet it lingers on 230

Before our eyes, its heaviness intact –

This is no marvel, for the seeds in fact,
So many and minute, produce the smell
And redolence which in the body dwell.
Yet Nature's not that simple, you must learn –
An aura, mixed with heat, will in its turn
Desert the dying, and the heat will drain
The air away, for heat cannot remain
When lacking air. The nature of heat is rare
And therefore through it many seeds of air

240

Must move. This triple nature of the mind
Cannot engender sense of any kind
Or thoughts or motions. Therefore there must be
An added fourth, which has been totally
Denied a name: nothing's more animated
Or more impalpable or more created
So even and so rounded and so small:
It gave sense-bearing motions to us all.
Composed of little shapes, it stimulated
The first; the motions were appropriated

250

By heat and wind, then air, and finally
The blood is struck and every entity
Begins to feel and now there is sensation
Within the marrow – joy or irritation.
And pain will not for nothing penetrate
The frame but all will at a certain rate
Begin to be discomfited and flee
The frame hither and yon. But usually
It's on the skin motions come to an end
And that's the reason why we can extend

260

Our life. I'm keen to tell you how they're blent
And with what combinations they are meant
To function, but I lack the words to tell
You this, but I will persevere as well
As I am able briefly. For there's none
That can be sundered from another one:
They act as one, though many. We know well
All creatures have a savour and a smell
And warmth, but one great bulk is made intact
From these: for wind and warmth and air all act

270

As one to make one nature, and that great
And mobile energy will then create
Sense-bearing motions throughout the insides,
Because this essence in our body hides,
More deeply than all else, soul of the soul
Itself, throughout our members and our whole
Body: the energy of soul and mind
Is mixed and latent, for it is combined
Of bodies small and few and thus created,
By which the body has been dominated.

280

And by this reason wind and heat and air
Must act thus, each one taking on its share
Of rule, and thus one nature has been made
Lest by disseverment the sense should fade
Because of them. The mind will seethe with spleen
When struck by heat, and then the eyes are seen
To flash with fire; cold wind, that friend of dread,
Will through the shaken frame arouse and spread
A shudder, while a gentle air will grace

A breast with peace and make a tranquil face. 290

But those with restive hearts are hotter yet,
Possessing minds of passion quickly set
In rage, of which lions primarily
Are seen, often displaying thunderously
Their fierceness, quite unable to withhold
Their anger, while the mind of stags is cold
And windier – those icy currents make
Their innards cold while all their members quake.

The oxen, though, live by the tranquil air,
Nor does the torch of wrath cause them to flare; 300

Not pierced by icy javelins of fear,
They don't grow stiff – halfway between the deer
And lions thus they're placed. Thus, too, the nation
Of men – though they're refined by education,
Yet it has left those pristine marks behind
That represent the nature of each mind.

And evil can't be, it must be supposed,
So purged from them that one is not disposed
To tempers, while another easily
Is touched by terror, while a third may be 310

More mild. The traits and natures of mankind
Must differ very much, but I can't find
A name for the shape of each prime entity
Or whence has come this great variety
Nor treat the hidden causes, but I can
Say this; these marks which show the traits of man,
Which reason won't take from us, are so small
That nothing can't prevent a man at all

From living like the gods above. Therefore
This soul is kept within the body's core 320

As guardian; with common roots they cleave
Together and cannot, unless they leave
This world, be torn apart. One can't with ease
Tear off the fragrance from small quantities
Of frankincense unless the body dies –

The nature of the mind and soul likewise:
Their seeds have been from birth so intertwined
While with a partner they have been combined;
If it should lack its partner's faculty,
The other would possess no energy 330

Or feel; our sense, though, is intensified
By mutual motions placed on either side.
Besides, alone the body's not begotten
Nor grows nor after death is nought but rotten.

Though water sometimes gives off heat whereby
We gain advantage, yet it does not die,
Remaining safe; it is not in this way
Our limbs, deserted quite, can bear, I say,
That they have lost the soul, but they must die,

All mutilated, and then putrefy. 340

From early days, by joint communication,
The soul and body gain an education
In vital motions; even when they're still
Within the womb, they'll not, unless by ill
And pestilence, be harmed; so you may see
That, as the source of their security
Is linked, so must its nature be as well.

Moreover, if somebody dared to tell
You that the body does not have sensation,
Opining that the soul, in combination 350
With body, takes on motion which we call
'Sense', he is clearly battling with all
The proven facts, for it would be in vain.
For who is there who's able to explain
The feelings of the body unless he
Has learned what we've been told of openly?
"But when the soul has gone, the frame's bereft
Of sense." Indeed! For when the soul has left,
It loses what it never owned at all,
And more besides, after soul's downfall. 360
To say the eyes see nothing and yet through
The same the mind can see is hard to do.
For sense itself forces our eyes to be
Aware of consciousness, especially
When we can't see things that are very bright
Because our eyes are hampered by the light.
With doors this is not true – with eyes we see,
So doors don't undertake the drudgery.
If eyes should act as doors, I would declare
That, with our sight removed, our mind would fare 370
Yet better at seeing what they would survey
When even the door-posts had been cleared away.
Don't take up what the sage Democritus
Has in this discipline laid down for us,
That prime germs of the body and the mind,
Each super-imposed on each, all weave and wind

Our members. For the elements of the soul
Are smaller far than those which form the whole
Outer and inner body. Also they
Are less in number as they sparsely stray 380

Throughout our frame. And so it may be seen
That all the soul's prime germs maintain between
Themselves large intervals, though in contrast
There are the smallest bodies which are cast
Against us, rousing motions which have sense
That they apply within our bodies. Hence
We sometimes cringe to see the dust alight
On us, or chalk or vapours of the night
Or spiders' webs which, while we're travelling,
Drop down, their withered strands entangling 390

About our head or feathers that alight
On us or plant-seeds, which, being so slight,
Seem barely to descend: each crawling thing
We do not feel nor traces settling
Upon us made by midges and their kin.
Thus many prime germs must be stirred within
Ourselves once the soul's seeds that through our frame
Are mixed begin to realize that those same
Prime germs have been attacked and then pulsate
Between the gaps and clash and integrate, 400

Then leap apart. The mind, though, we may say,
Is keeper of the gates and holds more sway
Over the soul. Sans intellect and mind,
No part of any soul can ever find
Rest in our frame, because it flies away

And thus the icy limbs must ever stay
In death's cold grip. However, he whose mind
And intellect have both remained behind
Lives on. Although he may be mutilated
And from the limbs the soul's been extricated, 410
He breathes the life-sustaining air, and when
Most of the soul has vanished, even then
He lingers on, as in an injured eye
The pupil is unharmed and does not die,
The sight still strong: but do not harm the ball
That forms the eye but make incisions all
Around the pupil, leaving it behind,
For vision will be ruined, you will find,
If more is done. But if that tiny piece,
The centre, is destroyed, the eye will cease 420
To function, though elsewhere the ball, you'll find,
Is clear. And thus it is that soul and mind
Are linked forevermore. Now I shall tell
You that the minds and souls of all that dwell
On earth are born and die, and in my verse,
Written with lyric toil, I will rehearse
My rule of life for you, but I shall frame
The two of them in but one single name;
Thus when I speak of soul while telling you
That it is mortal, think that I speak, too, 430
Of mind, since they're the same, concatenated
Together. Now I have communicated
To you that soul is subtle, a compound
Of tiny particles, and you have found

Its parts much smaller in capacity
Than water, fog or smoke, mobility
Being therefore more functional by far,
So they're more prone to move, although they are
Struck by less cause: they're moved apparently
By images of smoke and fog, as we, 440
When we're asleep, see shrines exhaling steam
And smoke, for there's no doubt that as you dream
These images come to you from afar.
Therefore when you discern, when pitchers are
Demolished, all the water flows away:
The fog and smoke will also in this way
Depart – therefore believe the soul also
Is shed abroad and will more quickly go,
Then be destroyed, dissolving once again
Back into its own fundamentals, when 450
It leaves the body; if that body's split,
Just like the jar I've spoken of, and it,
By loss of blood, has now been rarefied
And can no longer hold the soul inside.
How could you think that stuff that is more rare
Than bodies can be held by any air?
Besides, along with body mind we hold
Is born and with it grows up and grows old.
When little children totter all around
With weakling frames, a weaking wisdom's found 460
Within them: with the years their powers grow
With understanding as they come to know
More things, but then, as they grow old, they find

That with a shattered body they're defined
By feebleness, the mind itself gives way,
Thought hobbles and the tongue begins to stray;
At the same time one fails and loses all.
It makes sense likewise that the soul will fall
Apart, dissolving high into the air;
And we have seen the body come to fare 470

In the same way. The body, it is plain,
Has dread diseases and appalling pain –
So mind feels grief and fear and bitter care,
Wherefore the mind, as we must be aware,
Will taste of death, for it will frequently
Wander around a body's malady,
Beside itself, crazily babbling,
And often sinking, eyelids languishing,
Head nodding, till in endless sleep it lies,
Where it's unable now to recognize 480

Those who stand round about it, cheeks bedight
With tears, and vainly calling it to the light
Once more. That mind dissolves, therefore, we need
To say, since grief and illness both may lead
To death, as we well know. A strong wine's force
Enters a man and scattered fires course
Around his veins, then comes a lethargy
Within his limbs as he precariously
Staggers about, his mind awash, his speech
Sluggish, and one can hear him brawl and screech, 490
Eyes all aswim and all else that ensues.
Why is this? Well, it happens when strong booze

Perturbs the soul. If a thing more vigorous
Got in, therefore, it would be poisonous
And kill the soul. It happens frequently
That someone has a seizure suddenly,
As from a lightning-bolt, before our eyes –
He falls down, foaming, and, as there he lies,
Groans, shakes, talks nonsense as he twists about,
His gasps in fits and starts, and he wears out

500

His limbs. These ills disturb the soul as well,
As winds disturb the salt sea's billowing swell.

A groan's forced out because his misery
Has gripped his limbs: however, generally
The voice's seeds are driven outwards through
The mouth as they are always wont to do.

He's made inane, because, as I have shown,
The energy of mind and soul are thrown
Apart by the same pestilence, although
When the cause of the disease turns back to go

510

Into its shadowy lairs, the man will rise,
Though reeling, and will come to recognize
His senses slowly, and his soul he'll find,
Because within his body soul and mind
Are shaken by diseases and distraught
By labour. Wherefore, then, should it be thought

That in the open air they both can spend
A bodiless life which promises no end,

In battle with the winds? Ans since we see

520

That for the sick mind there is remedy,
As for the body, this must clearly show

Mortality is in the mind also.
For he who aims to modulate the mind
Or change a single thing of any kind
Should add new parts or redress the array
Or from the total take something away;
But what's immortal does not wish to be
Increased or rearranged, no entity
Removed from it, since change of anything
Beyond its boundaries ends in the sting 530
Of death: therefore, whether the mind is ill
Or else restored by medicine, it still
Gives notice of its own mortality,
As I have taught. Such is veracity,
Opposed to other theories, sheltering
From refuge all those adversaries who bring
Two-edged rebuttals. Someone we may see
Who loses vital senses gradually –
First toes, then nails, then feet, then legs turn blue
And fail, then all his other members, too, 540
Show signs of frigid death, and, since the soul
Is split and can't at any time be whole
Alone, it must then have mortality.
But if perhaps your rationality
Claims that it can bring all the parts inside
The frame so that sensation can abide
Throughout, where much of the soul exists, it ought
To have more more feeling but, as I have taught,
A place like this does not exist, and thus
The soul is torn apart – that's obvious. 550

Dispersed outside, it dies. Do not suppose
The soul survives inside the frames of those
Who slowly die – the soul, one has to say,
Is mortal, should it fly, dispersed, away
Or shrink as it becomes stationary –
The more a man lacks sensitivity
The less is life within him. For the mind
Of man is just one part which you may find
In one fixed place, just like the ears and eyes
And other senses, which all supervise 560
Man's life; as eyes and hands, when cut apart
From us, can't feel at all or even start
To be but quickly rot, similarly
The mind without the man can never be,
Because the man and body both contain
The mind (or you, perhaps, to make it plain
May use another metaphor), the mind
And body being so closely entwined.

Together they thrive. The mind alone, without
The frame, cannot send vital motions out, 570
Nor can the body, wanting soul, endure
And use the senses. And you may be sure
The eye, uprooted from the face, can't see
A blessed thing, and so, similarly
The soul and mind, it seems, when they're alone,
Possess no actual power of their own,
Mixed in with veins, guts, bones and ligaments,
Possessing, too, primordial elements
Which through great spaces cannot leap apart,

One from another, thus able to start 580

Life-motions which, after a body's dead,
They could not do because they then have sped
Outside the body, thus no longer bound.
For air will be a body, breathing, sound,
If the soul can hold itself within the air,
Enclosing all the motions living there,
Which in the frame itself it used to do.

Once more, therefore, we must say that it's true
That once the body's opened and its breath
Spills out, the senses of the mind meet death, 590

The soul as well, since they are spliced together.
And once again, since body cannot weather
The split between them both without decay
And loathsome stench, then we would have to say
That from deep down the soul has been dispersed
Like smoke, the body totally immersed
In dissolution: every deep foundation
Within it has been moved, leaving its station,
The soul through every body's winding way
And orifice out-filtering away. 600

By many means, then, you are free to know
The nature of the soul – that it must go
In fragments from the body and is rent
In tatters even before it then is sent
To float away into the windy tide.
Often, when life yet lingers on inside
The frame, the souls seems anxious to be free
And quit the body's confines totally,

By something agitated, and, as though
The soul is close at hand, its features go 610
Inert, the bloodless limbs hang down (the kind
Of case when one says, "He's out of his mind"
Or "He's quite gone", while others stand and quake
With trepidation, anxious now to make
The best of all the days that yet remain
To them before life cuts away her chain).

For then the mind and soul are shaken so
As with the frame itself they, tottering, go,
Near death. Thus, with its wrappings stripped away,
Why would you doubt the soul could ever stay 620

The course, so weakened, for eternity,
More likely to dissolve immediately?
Nobody feels his soul leave, as he dies,
All in one piece, nor does he feel it rise
Up to his throat and jaws, but rather he
Can sense it fail in one locality
That's fixed, as he is very well aware

That all his other senses founder where
They yet remain. If our souls truly were
Immortal, then they would not so demur, 630

At death, to be dispersed but they would take
Their leaving as release and, like a snake,
Throw off their garb. Again, why is it so
That our intelligence and minds don't grow
From head or feet or hands but that they cling
To one fixed place, unless for everything
One place has been assigned that it may stay

Unharm'd, all limbs set in the same array?
One thing's born of another – flames, therefore,
Are not created out of streams, nor more 640
Likely comes cold from fire. Plus, if we
Affirm a soul has immortality
And, even when disjointed from our frame,
Able to feel, I fancy we may claim
They have five senses, for there is no way
But this that we may picture that they stray
In Hell. Painters and bards of days gone by
Have seen them thus. No nose or hand or eye
Includes a soul while bodiless: it's clear
That this is so for any tongue or ear 650
As well. Alone, then, they can't feel or be.
And since it is a vital sense we see
In the whole body, if a sudden blow
Should strike it with a mighty force and go
Clean through it, then the soul without a doubt
Would be divided , too, and flung far out
Along with body. But whatever's cleft
In many parts admits that it's bereft
Of an eternal nature. For they say
Scythe-bearing chariots so swiftly slay 660
The foe that as their limbs lie on the ground,
Dissevered from the trunk, they have been found
To quiver, while their owner feels no pain
Due to the blow's speed, but he roams the plain
To carry on the slaughter, unaware
His shield and left arm are no longer there,

Snatched by the scythes the steeds have dragged away.

Another struggles to renew the fray,

Blind to his lost right arm. Another tries,

One of his legs now lost, again to rise, 670

While on the dying foot the toes are spread,

Twitching. When lopped away, even the head

Retains a look of life, eyes open wide,

Until the remnants of the soul have died.

If, when a snake lashes its tail and darts

Its tongue, you sever it in many parts,

You'll see each part begin to writhe around

With its new wound and spatter up the ground

With gore, its fore-part turning back to strain

Its jaws that it might bite away the pain. 680

Does each part hold a soul? But if that's so,

That self-same reasoning would surely show

Each beast has many souls. There's one alone,

However, which has now been overthrown

Along with body. So mortality

Belongs to both and each of them can be

Cut into many parts. If one can say

The soul's immortal as it winds its way

Into a child that's newly born, then why

Can't we remember things from days gone by 690

Before our birth? But if the faculty

Of mind has changed so much that memory

Has failed, that's just like death, I think. Therefore

That death has come to what once lived before

And what is living now has been created

Anew. If, once the frame's been generated,
The powers of the mind are introduced
Just at the moment when we are produced,
It should not with the limbs and body grow,
Or even in the body's bloodstream. No, 700

It ought to live alone within a cell
(Yet all the body throngs with sense as well).

Souls must have origins, we must agree,
Nor ever be immune from Death's decree.

We must not think something's so closely tied
Up with our frames if it has slipped inside:

The facts we know, though, prove the opposite,
For soul throughout the veins is such a fit,

As well as through the sinews and the skin

And all the bones, that even the teeth share in 710

Sensation as in toothaches we may see

And ice and when one bites down suddenly

On a stone in bread. Since souls are so combined

With all those bodily parts, they cannot find

A means to save themselves and steal away

From nerves and bones and joints. But should you say

A soul enters a body from outside,

It is more prone to die since it's allied

So closely with the flesh; what usually

Enters dissolves and dies accordingly. 720

It permeates the frame, as nourishment,

Which, once throughout the limbs and frame it's sent,

Dissolves but yields up something new. And so

The spirit and the mind, although they go

Into a new whole body, even as they
Seep into it, yet are dissolved away.
The particles that make the mind, those same
That exercise dominion in the frame,
Rose up out of the mind that permeated
The flesh and at its time deteriorated 730
And died. Therefore it seems that we may say
That there's a natal and a funeral day
For the spirit. Are its seeds, then, left behind
Or not? If they are not, we'll have to find
Them mortal for they are diminished by
The parts they've lost: however, if they fly
Away with all their parts completely sound,
Why is that the rotting flesh is found
Disgorging worms, and wherefore do we see
A boneless, bloodless multiplicity 740
Of living things that teem and crawl about
The bloated corpse? But if perhaps you doubt
All this and think that souls can seep inside
Each worm and don't reflect how such a tide
Of living things assembled in one spot
Whence only one crept out, should you then not
Consider whether souls actually chase
Small worms' seeds and therefrom erect a place
To make a home or if they rather find
A ready-made home? But why this toil and grind? 750
It's hard to say. They're bodiless, and thus
They flutter round, in no way tremulous
Nor pained by hunger, cold or any blight;

But rather it's the body that must fight
Against these flaws of life, as must the mind
Since with the body It has been combined.
Though it is useful for those souls to make
A bodily home, it's still a big mistake –
They can't and therefore don't. There is no way,
Moreover, that these souls can make their stay 760

In ready-made bodies, for if that were so
They could not forge the subtle to and fro
Of feeling. Why has violence been bred
In brooding lions? Why do deer feel dread,
Subject to flight? And why are foxes sly?
And speaking of all other creatures, why
Are they at birth endowed with qualities
If not since mind, with all its faculties,
Proliferates with its own seed and kind
Along with the whole frame? But were the mind 770

Immortal, able, too, to change around
Its bodies, earthly creatures would be found
Confused in nature – savage hounds would fly
From deer, a hawk would tremble, frightened by
A dove's approach, wisdom would fail mankind,
Fierce creatures would be wise. If you'd a mind
To think soul, blessed by immortality,
Mutates along with body, you would be
Quite wrong, for what is changed will melt away
And die, since parts are moved and their array 780
Is altered; they must melt away as well
And die with body. There are those who tell

That always will the souls of mankind fly
To human frames to make their homes, but I
Will ask: How can a stupid soul arise
And be created from a soul that's wise?
Why does a child's soul have no commonsense?
And why can foals not leap a lofty fence
As sturdy steeds can do? They'll try to claim
That mind becomes a weakling in a frame 790
That's weak. That being so, though, nonetheless
It's necessary, too, that they confess
The soul is mortal, since it thoroughly
Changes and dies, the sense it previously
Possessed now gone. Or how can mind grow strong
And gain the flower of life it craves along
With body unless it had always been
Its consort from the start? What would it mean
To leave on ancient limbs? Did it fear to stay
Inside a putrid corpse or feel dismay 800
His house, exhausted with longevity,
Would tumble down? There is no jeopardy
For what's immortal. And, as wild beasts mate,
It's daft to think immortal souls would wait
To see what bodies they might occupy,
A countless number of them, piled up high,
Contending to be first – unless maybe
There is among the souls a strict decree
Allowing just the first to reach its home.
No trees live in the air, and in the foam 810

Of ocean are no clouds, nor in the ground
Can fishes live, while blood cannot be found
In wood, nor sap in stones: each entity
Will grow in its own fixed locality.
Without the body, then, the nature of mind
Can rise alone, nor will we ever find
It far from blood and sinews. If it could,
However, rise alone, you rather should
Find it in heads or shoulders or the base
Of the feet, or born in any other place,
Although within the self-same human frame
It yet abides, residing in the same
Vessel. But since within that frame we find
A fixed and separate place wherein the mind
And soul may grow, so all the more we should
Say that outside the frame they never could
Be born and then survive. When the frame dies,
It's necessary that the soul likewise
Will perish since within it it's embedded.

820

For if you claim the mortal has been wedded
To the immortal, thinking they agree
Together, that's a gross absurdity.

830

For what's more stupid and incongruous
Than thinking that they are harmonious
As they together weather every squall?
For everything eternal must block all
And every stroke, since they are strong and stout
And must be able also to keep out
Whatever powers that might lacerate
Their well-fixed parts (as I have said of late, 840
Seeds are like that); or through eternity
They're able to survive since they are free
Of blows, just like the void, which remains sound,
Or else because there is no room around
Them all that they may fly off and disperse,
Just like that sum of sums, the universe:
There is no place beyond whither things might
Asunder fly and nothing that can smite
Them with great blows. But if you should decide
The soul's immortal, mainly since it's tied 850
Securely by dynamic forces, never
Assailed by any danger, or, if ever
They were, those dreadful threats would fly away,
Repelled ere we could feel the harm that they
Might do, [it has been found this is not true].
For when the body's sick, the soul is too,
Often distressed by what's not happened yet,
Beset by dread and wearying with fret,
And even by transgressions formerly
Committed it is gnawed at bitterly. 860
Add madness, also, and forgetfulness

That drowns in murky waves of sluggishness.

Death's nothing to us since forevermore

It will be mortal: as in times before

Our birth we felt no ill, when all around

The Carthaginians with their battle-sound

Assailed us, and the whole world trembled so

With war which under heaven's vaults brought woe

And in the balance stood the victory,

As mankind held its breath on land and sea, 970

When we're no more and there arrives a breach

Of soul and body, by the work of each

Of which into one state we are combined,

We'll have no more experiences, blind

To everything, not even if the sea

Mingled with earth and there were unity

In sea and heaven. But if we could say

That, after they had both been stripped away

From body, mind and soul still had sensation,

What would it be for us, a combination 880

Of flesh and soul? Even if after death

We were remade, rewarded with the breath

And light of life, it would mean nought at all

After the interruption of recall.

We'd not be as we were in former days

And feel no more distress. For when you gaze

On all the years gone by and think about

How many motions matter can send out,

You'd well believe the seeds from which we grow

Have the same order just as long ago, 890

Though this we can't remember, since we've found
A break in life's been made, and all around
Have motions wandered from our faculties.
For if one is expecting maladies,
At the same time he must be present too.
Death won't allow these ills that may seem due
To fall on him. Thus not in any way
Should we fear death, nor should there be dismay
For him who's dead, because, once he's no more,
Why should he care if he was born before? 900
When you observe a man who is distressed
Because his corpse will rot once laid to rest
Or he will die in flames or in the jaws
Of wild beasts, know that this should give you pause –
The note sounds false, for in his heart there lies
An unseen sting, however he denies
That there's no feeling after he is dead,
Because he contradicts what he has said:
He won't uproot himself and cast away
His erstwhile self but thinks something must stay 910
Within him. Picturing himself deceased,
His body torn by vultures or some beast,
A man weeps for his state, his fantasy
Still substituting for reality.
He grieves that he is mortal, for he spies
No second self that's placed in his demise
To grieve his own self's passing now he's fated
To lie there, burned by flame or lacerated.
But if it's evil to be mangled by

The jaws of brutal beasts, I don't see why 920

It pains you less if flames incinerate

Your body or if you should suffocate

On honey or lie on an icy rock,

Stone-cold, or be the victim of the shock

Of earth piled on you. "Now no loving spouse,"

They say, "shall greet you in your happy house,

No little ones will run to you to snatch

A kiss, a silent happiness to catch

Your heart. No longer will you oversee

Your business or protect your family. 930

So many joys of life in one vile day

Are taken from you." But they do not say

As well, "Your yearning for them, too, has fled."

Had they considered this and further said

Some words on this, you would be free of fear

And anguish. "Even as you're lying here,

Asleep in death, you also shall be free

Of all your future griefs and misery.

But we have wept insatiably beside

Your ashes: never will our grief subside." 940

But we must ask the cause of bitterness

When what is mourned reclines in quietness.

Why grieve forever? Guests will raise a glass,

Their temples wreathed, and say, "How soon they pass –

Those golden days we never can redeem!"

The feelings of those people, it would seem,

Are that in death the greatest ill would be

A ravenous thirst that leads to misery

Or else another craving. For in fact,
When mind and body are at rest, intact, 950
No-one rues death; indeed this sleep could last
Forever, since we don't yearn for the past,
For those primordial germs don't go astray
And from sense-giving motions move away
Too far, since when a man is suddenly
Jolted from sleep, he makes a recovery.
Thus death means much less to us, if that *less*
Stands for that which we see as nothingness.
For germs diffuse more widely at one's death,
For none will rise again or take one breath 960
At life's chill pause. If Nature suddenly
Upbraided us: "Why this anxiety,
Mortals, these weak complaints? Why do you weep
At death? For if your goods you did not heap
In piles so that they leaked, as in a sieve,
And if before your death you got to live
A pleasant life, why do you not then play
The guest who after dining, goes away
Content, you fool? Go, seek eternal rest!
But if you waste that with which you were blessed 970
And life offends you, why would you then try
To add more ills than in the days gone by?
No, rather end your life of drudgery!
For nought can I devise of gaiety
For you. For everything is just the same
Forever. Even with your wrinkled frame
And weak limbs nothing changes. Should you go

On to the end of time – yes, even though
You live forever –“ what do we reply?
That Nature keeps the law and does not lie. 980
But should a man riper in years bewail
His death more than is fit, should she not rail
At him: “Cease weeping, fool, cease whining, too:
You’re wrinkled, but your life has favoured you;
You crave what’s absent, scorning what is present,
So your unfulfilled life’s not been too pleasant.
Now ere you guessed it death stands at your side
Before you can depart quite satisfied.
But what’s unseemly for your greying hair
Cast off! Make room for others? That is fair!”? 990
That she should reprimand you is her due –
The old concedes when pushed out by the new,
Since one thing heals another, and no-one
Is sent to Tartarus’ dominion:
The future generation needs to grow
With new material; these, too, will go,
Their life completed, even as before
Went others, for eternal is the score
Of generations. One may merely rent
One’s life, not own it. All those lives that went 1000
Before our birth mean nothing to us. Thus
A mirror is by Nature shown to us
Of what lies In the future when we’re dead.
Does any of it fill our hearts with dread?
Is it not more agreeable than sleep?
Indeed, whatever happens in the deep

Of Acheron happens here. No Tantalus
From people's tales, benumbed and timorous,
Fears the gigantic stone while in the air
He hangs, but here on earth a terror, bare 1010
Of reason, of the gods torments us all,
While we fear anything that could befall
Mankind. No flapping vultures rip apart
Prone Tityus, and when they reach the heart
They find no food to feed them endlessly
Despite his outspread limbs' immensity
Of not nine acres only – no indeed,
It covers all the world. He'd never feed
Those birds, nor suffer pain, eternally.

But here on earth that Tityus is he 1020
Who's tortured by Love's biting or outworn
By anxious agony or ripped and torn
By one thirst or another. Sisyphus
On earth is also something else to us –
He thirsts for fame but in the end is glum,
Retiring to his grave quite overcome,
For seeking after power's a useless game,
Not given to everyone, an empty name,
A world of toil. That's what it is to push

A boulder up a hill, which, with a rush, 1030
Rolls back down to the plain, where it will lie
And feed ingrates but never satisfy,
Just as the seasons when they come around
To make the earth with new-grown fruits abound
And other pleasant things. Mortals, however,

Are able to enjoy life's blessings never,
Just as, I think, those virgins, so they say,
Poured water which would always drain away
Since the urn they poured it in possessed a crack.

Now Cerberus, the Furies and the lack 1040

Of light and Tartarus, belching out a swell
Of heat, do not exist, as they might well
Not do! But in this life we mortals quail
At punishment for evil deeds – the jail,
The Rock, the torturers, the whip, the rack,
Pitch, red-hot plates, the torch; although we lack
Such things, they're active in the mind: thus dread
Lives in our conscience and it goes ahead

And plies the goads and lashes us nor sees
What is the end of all these miseries, 1050

And we fear that in death they will expand.
Indeed, a fool's life on this earthly land
Is Acheron! Therefore from time to time
Repeat these words: "Even Ancus the sublime
Has looked his last, who was more virtuous
Than you, you rogue, and there've been numerous
Monarchs and potentates who once held sway
Over great nations but have had their day.

The man who built a path across the sea.
Providing passage for his infantry, 1060

Discrediting with his steeds the ocean's roar,
Poured out his soul and then was seen no more,
His light extinguished. Also Scipio,
War's thunderbolt, he who brought Carthage low,

Ended beneath the earth where he was then
No better than a slave. Add, too, those men
Who were the pioneers of everything
In arts and science, those accompanying
The Muses, too – Homer was one of those,
The finest bard of all, now in repose

1070

With all the others. When senility
Informed Democritus his memory
Was fading, he committed suicide.
Epicurus would no longer here abide,
His course now run, who bettered everyone,
Just as the stars are smothered by the sun.
Will you carp at your death, who, while you live,
Seem as one dead? To slumbering you give
A great part of your life. You even snore

While you are still awake, and, furthermore,

1080

You never cease to dream. Anxiety,
Though baseless, dogs your mind, and constantly
You spurn the cause, beset by cares, and reel
About in endless doubt. If people feel
That heavy load and then can also find
The reason why such burdens fill their mind
They will not live that way. For we can see
They don't know what they want, incessantly
Seeking a new home, thinking that they could
Be happier in a different neighbourhood.

109

A man will leave his splendid mansion, bored,
But comes straight back since elsewhere can't afford
Him comfort. With his ponies he will speed

Down to his villa, as though in a need
To douse a burning house: as soon as he
Has touched his villa's threshold, in ennui
He yawns, or else he seeks oblivion
In slumber, or perhaps he hurries on
To town. Each person seeks his self this way
And yet he cannot ever get away: 1100

He cleaves to it in hate against his will,
Not knowing still the reason for his ill
Should he but see that, he would then ignore
Everything else, beginning to explore
The nature of things because he must debate
All time, not just one hour, for Man's estate
Remains forever in eternity.
What can this evil lust for living be,
Imperilling us like this? We all must die,
We can't shun Death – we'll meet him by and by. 1110

We're busy with the same things day and night
And nothing's forged to bring some new delight;
We don't have what we're longing for and yet
It seems the most important thing to get.
We grab a thing but then want something more:
That equal thirst for life eats at our core.
The future is in doubt, Death's threatening,
Nor do we have a chance for lengthening
Our life and all the years of imminent death
We cannot shorten. So, though while there's breath, 1120
Outlive as many people as you may,
Death waits. The man who died but yesterday

Shall have no briefer time in Death's grim score

Than him who dies so many years before.

