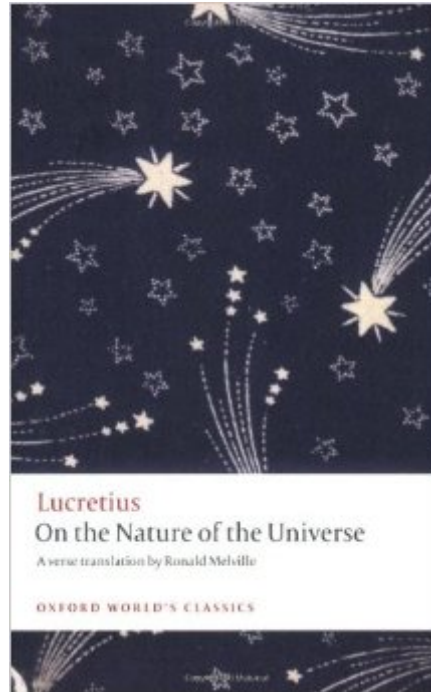


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On The Nature Of The Universe (Oxford World's Classics)



Synopsis

This is a new verse translation of Lucretius's only known work, a didactic poem written in six books of hexameters. Melville's particularly literal translation of the use of metaphor is especially helpful to those looking at the text from a scientific or philosophical point of view. About the Series: For over 100 years Oxford World's Classics has made available the broadest spectrum of literature from around the globe. Each affordable volume reflects Oxford's commitment to scholarship, providing the most accurate text plus a wealth of other valuable features, including expert introductions by leading authorities, voluminous notes to clarify the text, up-to-date bibliographies for further study, and much more.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I bought 3 copies by 3 different translators of "The Nature of Things" by Lucretius Carus, a Roman scholar during the first century BC. The comparison has been fun but Ron Melville won out as the clearest and most engaging writer in bringing this ancient manuscript (poem) to the understanding of a 21st century audience. One has to have the curiosity and love of history to want to read it in the first place. There is nothing in our world that has not its origin in the past. But learning in the news of today the discovery of Higgs boson, the "god particle", during my reading of "The Nature of All Things" superseded all links from past to present. Since Lucretius' writing is based on the theories of the Greek philosopher Epicurus (4th century BC) the thought of particles as essential building

blocs in our Universe and life itself has been present in human thought over 2600 years! No matter how far nuclear physics has come today - the germ of this research can be traced to the 4th century BC. I find this awe-inspiring and a great help to revise my concept of life and death, our planet as part of large universe and recorded history by men limited by world views that can be questioned today. How much more potential do we humans have in perceiving, thinking and understanding than our prescribed curricula over the last 600 years has us allowed to realize? Erika Feulner

Lucretius, the Epicurean poet of the first century BC, was immortalized for his work "On the Nature of the Universe," which is a brilliant manifestation of Epicurus' atomic theory by a means of hexametrical verse tinged with lucid philosophy. This work has stood for so long as a classic monument of Latin poetry not only since it contains such a bounty of sweet verse and song, but also for the simple fact that Lucretius' work was the most modern for its time. This furthermore allowed "On the Nature of the Universe" to hold the reins of superiority--with regards to its modernity of course--for many subsequent generations. Lucretius' stark conviction that the world is not controlled by the gods, that man is solely in control of his destiny on earth, and that the soul perishes with the body, no doubt aroused the conservative sentiments of the time; and for this reason the work endures due to the epic and timeless battle between Science and Religion. For anyone interested in the Greco-Roman Classics, poetry, or just good literature, Lucretius' masterpiece will be an excellent choice.

Lucretius's poem is unique among didactic poems in the way in which the poetry reinforces the content. If the conveying of Epicurus's message had been left to his own and his followers' prose, rather than Lucretius's, it may be questioned whether the Epicurean philosophy would have had the same impact. According to Melville, he translated Lucretius' poem into English verse "between May 1994 and November 1995, working for a couple of hours in the evening after dinner, with a glass of port at hand in case I got stuck" (p. xxxv). To accompany his translation Don and Peta Fowler have provided an excellent 35-page introduction and notes which, though relatively brief (58 pages of notes to 215 pages of the translation) and concentrating on explanation rather than on criticism of the argument, are particularly informative on the ancient literary parallels. The translation is into un-rhymed English iambic pentameters, with relatively short sentence structures (five lines or so) whose ends tend to coincide with line-breaks. This indeed follows Lucretius's own practice. The Fowlers' intro sets out the historical context in which Lucretius's poem was composed. They rightly note that the use of metaphor in scientific explanation is not confined to Lucretius or to antiquity (p.

xxv), and emphasizes the complexity of the appeal to simplicity (p. xxviii). Their identification of desire for sex as natural but not necessary (p. xx) is questionable, however; it may be, in the terms of Epicurus's "Letter to Menoeceus", necessary "for freedom from bodily disturbance" though not "for life itself". This is an accurate, readable, wonderful edition of Lucretius's "On the Nature of the Universe".

This version of On the Nature of The Universe is very high quality and quite readable for beginners like me. The translation is just modern enough to bridge the language of old to our modern conventions. I highly recommend this book.

I read this for classics in translation at Queens College. I had no idea theories about atoms and matter were so old. Older than the Bible. I found that Lucretius's beliefs and philosophies were similar to my own and made a lot of sense.

I had to read this for my final capstone course in my undergraduate program at Georgetown University. I wish I had known about Lucretius and his works many years before. This book is deeply interesting!

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