

## When Anxiety Becomes Desire: Lucretius and Lacan

Lucretius presents the impossibility of fulfilling our desires—they are always changed in the moment that we obtain it. At the end of book three of *De rerum natura*, he writes: “But while the thing we desire is absent, it is seen to exceed all else; once one takes it, we desire after something else, and an equal thirst for life always holds us agape.” (*DRN* III.1082-1084, translation my own). This quality of desire, namely our inability to satiate it, is presented in modern psychoanalytic thought. Lacan proposes that man’s desire is the desire of the Other, and that knowing what the Other desires is impossible (Lacan, 59, 66). For Lacan, desire is equally insatiable as Lucretius proposes, and in both systems this desire causes anxiety. By linking Lucretius’ ideas of desire to Lacan, we can approach the concept of anxiety in Lucretius in a psychoanalytic method. The purpose of this presentation is to explore the source of desires, the results of desire, and how Lucretius and Lacan intersect.

### Works Cited

- Kenney, E. J., editor. *Lucretius: De Rerum Natura Book III*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Lacan, Jacques. *On the Names-of-the-Father*. Translated by Bruce Fink. Malden: Polity Press, 2013.