

Specimen of a poem on God and nature / Translated from Card. Polignac's Anti-Lucretius: sive de Deo et natura libri novem ad Quintium. To which are added an account of the work, and proposals from printing a translation ... with the Latin original.

Contributors

Polignac, Melchior de, 1661-1742?

Publication/Creation

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S P E C I M E N

O F A

P O E M

On GOD and NATURE.

Translated from Card. *POLIGNAC's*

ANTI-LUCRETIUS:

S I V E

*De DEO et NATURA Libri
Novem ad QUINTIUM.*

To which are added

An Account of the WORK, and

P R O P O S A L S

For PRINTING

A TRANSLATION of the Whole,

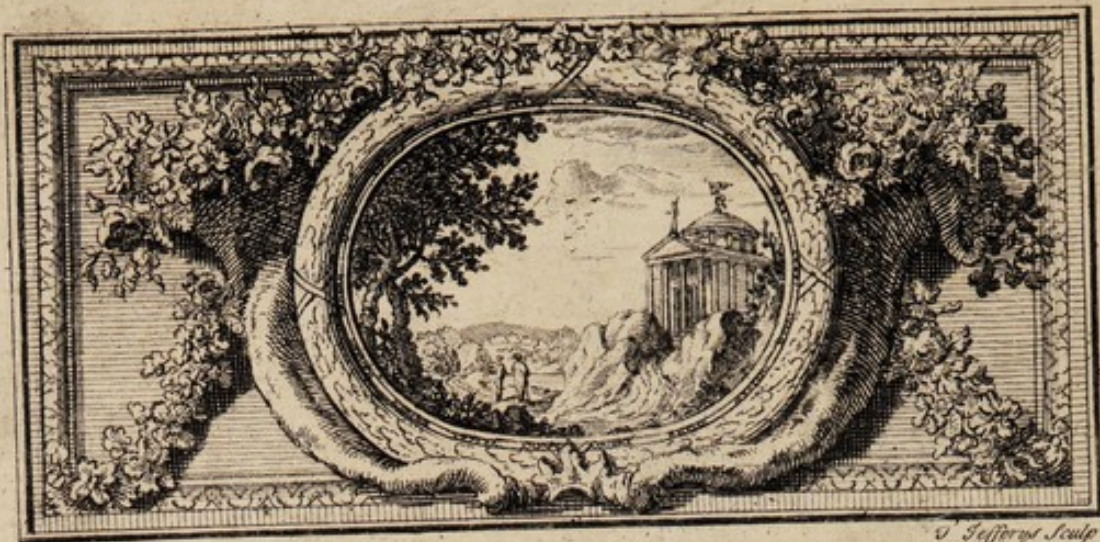
With the *Latin* Original in the opposite Pages.

LONDON, *May 4, 1748.*

Published by *M. Poyne*, in *Pater-noster-Row*, where
Orders are taken in for this Work.

[LARGE PAPER.]

107 . B. 86.



De DEO et NATURA.

LIB. I. *De Voluptate.*

MAGNUM opus aggredior, Quinti, de
numine summo

Dicturus. Quid enim toto præstantius orbe est
Quàm fator et princeps orbis? Quid dignius omni
Et curâ et studio et nostræ conamine mentis?

Quid, si metimur vires, magis arduum et audax,
Quàm rem infinitam brevibus comprehendere chartis?
Rem, causam rerum, veram Rem: quam sua partim
Ostendunt celantque opera; et caligine luci
Permixta, veluti solem trans nubila monstrant.

INDE hominum mentes sæpe in diversa trahun-
Num fati nexu, an positæ vi legis eant res. [tur,
Hinc alios dubitare quidem, at nescire videmus
Cur dubitent; optare tamen ne funditus esset
Arbitr humani generis, judexque tremendus.
Quin alios pellax Epicuri dogma secutos, 15
Fortunæ arbitrio mundum permittere, et omnem
Conculcare metum, vitæ mortisque futuræ.



Of GOD and NATURE.

BOOK I. *Of Pleasure.*

A MIGHTY work, O *Quintius*, I essay!
God the high subject of my daring lay!
For what so great in nature's ample whole,
As nature's cause, her quick'ning ruling soul?
On what more worthy can our bounded mind
Exhaust its utmost pow'rs, improv'd, combin'd?
To what more arduous can those pow'rs pretend,
To what more bold, not rashly to offend,
Than in these pages, scarce a point in space,
The pow'r that fills infinity to trace?
Sole Source of being! underiv'd! unmade!
Half in his works conceal'd, and half display'd;
Who, like the sun, when vapours intervene,
By light with darkness mixt, from earth is seen.

THIS doubtful view to various judgment led,
As various minds were sway'd by hope or dread;
Hence 'rose the question, if effect and cause
Were link'd by fate, or fixt by sapient laws;
Hence some, a wretched race! with specious show,
Affect to doubt, because they will not know:
With fear they wish no arbiter to find,
No judge tremendous of deprav'd mankind.
But some, more proudly weak, more blindly bold,
The tempting lore of *Epicurus* hold,
To fortune give the world, as once he gave,
And spurn the fears of all beyond the grave.

4 DE DEO ET NATURA.

Securos. Tantum potuit suadere Libido!

Hos contra bellum gerimus; sectæque superbæ
 Reliquias vanâ pro libertate rebelles, 20
 Et celebrem, quo se jactat mala turba, poëtam
 Obruere est animus, Musasque ad vera vocare.
 Sed quid ego hic Musas? Te, causa et regula
 mundi

Omnipotens! æterna Dei sapientia! virtus!
 Et mens! et ratio! vitæ dux optima nostræ!
 Ipsaque lux animi! Te solam in vota vocabo.
 Huc ades, et vati longum da ferre laborem.
 Per Te cuncta suo stant ordine, cuncta videri
 Tandem, et nativis possunt emergere ab umbris.
 In Te discendi nobis innata voluntas 30
 Pascitur, et veri nunquam satiata cupido.
 Incute vim dictis, propriamque ulciscere causam.

Tu verò, Quinti, præceps quem fortè juvenus
 Incautum abripuit, legique inimica voluptas;
 Aut acris vigor ingenii, plerumque recusans 35
 Cum populo sentire, jugo subduxit, et ævi
 Impulit

Such are the schemes Impiety has taught!
Such faith has Passion in her vassals wrought!

WE combat these, determin'd to o'erthrow
The scatter'd remnant of the haughty foe,
The rebel faction, for vain Freedom loud,
The bard, still boasted by the lawless crowd;
Truth's radiant standard to the wind we spread,
To Truth re-call the Muse, wherever fled:
But why the Muse? Thee, Father, Lord of all!
Whose pow'r sustains, whose wisdom rules the ball,
Immense! eternal! virtue, reason's ray!
Best guide of life! bright source of mental day!
Thee I invoke! here shed thy sacred light,
And thro' long toils sustain me with thy might.
By Thee subsists fair order, yet unknown,
Down to thy foot-stool reaching, from thy throne;
By Thee, at length commanded from the shade,
The bursting glory shall on all be ray'd;
In Thee, the soul, with thirst for ever bred,
Shall drink of knowledge from the fountain head;
In Thee, for truth her hunger still renew'd,
Shall taste, with sweet refection, angel's food:
Oh! to my words add more than human sense,
And lend me heav'nly arms in heav'n's defence!

THEE, *Quintius*, whom perhaps tumultuous
youth,
Or lawless passions, wildly snatch'd from truth;
Whom wit, that vulgar modes of faith disdains,
Hath freed from painful servitude and chains,

Hath

6 DE DEO ET NATURA.

Impulit æterni magnum tentare periculum ;
 Pone modum, quæso. Ne te auferat ebrius ardor,
 Neu clausos radiis oculos opponat apertis.
 Indociles animi primùm compeſce tumultus.
 Utere mente tuâ. Procul anticipata repelle 40
 Judicia ; et, recto librans examine lances,
 Hanc demum, auditâ cauſâ, complectere partem,
 Quam mens, et ratio veri ſtudioſa probabit.

O utinam, dum te regionibus infero ſacris,
 Arentem in campum liceat deducere fontes
 Caſtaliſ, verſis læta in viridaria dumis,
 Ac totam in noſtros Aganippida fundere verſus !
 Non mihi, quæ veſtro quondam facundia vati,
 Nec tam dulce melos, nec par eſt gratia cantûs.
 Reddidit ille ſuâ Graïorum ſomnia linguâ ; 50
 Noſtra peregrinæ mandamus ſacra loquelæ.
 Ille Voluptatem et Veneres, Charitumque choreas
 Carmine concelebrat : nos veri dogma ſeverum :
 Trifte ſonant pulſæ noſtrâ teſtudine chordæ.
 Olli ſuppeditat dives natura lepôris
 Quidquid habet, lætos ſummittens prodiga flores.
 Illius ad plectrum ſuſpirant molliùs auræ ;
 Grator et cœlo radius deſcendit ab alto.
 Si terram aſpicias, nemorum tibi porrigit umbram ;
 Garrula per clivos elabitur unda virentes ; 60

OF GOD AND NATURE. 7

Hath urg'd to sport on *Tophet's* burning brink,
 Thee, I conjure to stop, to turn, to think—
 O! let no frantic ardor wing thy flight,
 Nor shut thine eyes against surrounding light!
 First calm thy passions, which can ne'er be taught,
 And change blind prejudice for searching thought;
 Then poize the scale—be Reason judge supreme,
 And fix thy choice as Truth shall turn the beam.

O! while I guide thy steps o'er hallow'd ground,
 With sudden verdure be the desert crown'd!
 Let me, not careless of inferior things,
 O'er the dry soil diffuse *Castalian* springs!
 Here all her flow'rs let Eloquence bestow!
 All *Aganippe* in my numbers flow!
 Yet vainly emulous, my verse essays
 Your fav'rite Bard's harmonious easy lays;
 The dreams of *Greece* in native strains he sung,
 Here sacred myst'ry speaks a foreign tongue.
 The Loves, the Graces, Pleasure's wanton train,
 Rise at his voice, and revel in his strain;
 With truth's stern precepts my hoarse numbers swell,
 And mournful, sounds my deep responding shell:
 To him her charms luxuriant Nature spreads,
 And all her flow'rs with joy around him sheds;
 Responsive to his lyre her breezes sigh,
 And a mild radiance glitters from her sky.
 Is earth the theme? her shady groves are lent,
 The gurgling wave glides o'er the green descent;

Rich

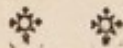
8 DE DEO ET NATURA.

Lactea fertilibus decurrunt flumina campis ;
Suave canunt pictæ volucres ; perque humida prata
Nil nisi fecundosque greges, armentaque monstrat
Læta boûm ; saltant pecudes, pecudumque magistri.
Æneadûm genetrix felicibus imperat arvis, 65
Aëriasque plagas recreat, pelagusque profundum.

Sic rident Musarum hilari fucata colore,
Quæ de Cecropio mendacia fonte propinat.
Talia et hospitibus præbebat pocula Circe
Littore in Aufonio, fugit quæ cautus Ulysses.
Cujus ad exemplum potiori jure monemus,
Quem tenet illecebris captum sapientia mendax,
Soligenæ spernat fallacia munera nymphæ ;
Ne rudat in stabulis, demens, sub pelle ferinâ :
Hortamur, fugiat Circen, ac se sibi reddat. 75
Numinis hîc laudes, hîc numinis omnia plena.
Pieridum si fortè lepos austerâ canentes
Deficit ; eloquio victi, re vincimus ipsâ.
Tu modò non surdam nostris da cantibus aurem.

Rich plenty crowns the field ; the feather'd throng
 Enchant at once with beauty and with song ;
 The flocks here whiten all the dewy mead,
 There joyful herds with guiltless lux'ry feed ;
 Mad with superfl'ous health, and stung with joy,
 Lo! man and beast in dance their hours employ.
 Love's smiling goddess rules these happy fields,
 And bliss thro' air, thro' boundless ocean yields.

THUS, from his *Attic* vein indulg'd, arise
 Gay scenes that glow with all the Muse's dyes ;
 Such vain allurements, on th' *Ausonian* shore,
 When *Circe* spread, *Laertes'* son forbore ;
 With better right, by his example taught,
 All by false wisdom's smooth inticements caught,
 Sincere we warn to shun each flatt'ring joy
 Dealt by the sun-born Sorc'ers to destroy ;
 Lest bellowing from the stall, a brute in show,
 The man, to men now lost, no more we know :
 Fly *Circe*, tho' the smiling cup run o'er,
 We cry, and, to thyself, thyself restore !
 Here, full of deity, my awful lays
 Assert his being, and resound his praise :
 If, haply, to the greatly solemn song
 No lighter grace of poetry belong,
 Tho' vanquish'd thus, in eloquence we seem,
 We more than vanquish in our lofty theme.
 Come then, attend such numbers as I sing !
 Nor the deaf ear of proud irreverence bring.



ACCOUNT of the WORK.

AS some account of the *Anti-Lucretius* may be expected to accompany this specimen of its translation, the following is chiefly extracted from the preface, written by M. de Beau, Professor of Rhetoric in the University of Paris; who says, “it is greatly to be wished, that *Lucretius* may never be read without this antidote.”

The author, Cardinal *Polignac*, had in 1697, frequent disputes with the late celebrated Mr *Bayle* on the subject of religion, from which being animated with a zeal for truth and virtue, he conceived the first design of this great work.

As *Lucretius* had embellished the fallacious reasonings of the *Epicurean* philosophy, with all the beauties of poetry, so *Polignac* was desirous to enforce and adorn with all the power of eloquence, and all the harmony of numbers, the invincible arguments which prove the existence of a deity, and totally to overthrow the hypothesis of *Epicurus*.

He retired, therefore, to his abbey *de Bon Port*, and in four years composed his *Anti-Lucretius*, then consisting of five books; after this repairing to *Paris*, he read his poem to several learned men, among whom were *Mallebranche* and *Boileau*, from whose praise and remarks he drew great honour and advantage.

He consulted also the most eminent *Cartesians*, that philosophy, on which he had in a great measure built his poem, being then almost universally received with the highest applause; and indeed, as there was not any person celebrated for learning or genius in *Europe*, to whom M. *Polignac* did not communicate his *Anti-Lucretius*, it is not strange that it obtained an extensive and early fame; and that it was every where sought after to be heard, read, or copy'd. A personal knowledge of the author, was a new motive to the curiosity of the court. Princes who were then entering upon, or returning from their studies, desired the *Anti-Lucretius* for the subject of their meditation, or exercise. M. *le Duc de Maine* translated the first book into *French*, and M. *le Duc de Bourgogne* several other parts; these versions were shewn to the late *Louis XIV.* who took great pleasure in reading them, got some passages by heart, and occasionally repeated them.

Pope

Pope *Clement XI.* one of the greatest men that ever filled the chair, read it to gratify a curiosity excited by the fame it had acquired, testified his opinion of its merit in the highest terms, and tho' he was not a friend to the *Cartesian* philosophy, yet he could not but admire the skill and address with which the poet had rendered that system subservient to religion in general ; for he no where mentions, or favours *popery*.

The cardinal, while he filled several public and important characters with diligence and assiduity, still kept his poem in mind, and continued his conferences with men of letters with a view to improve and enlarge it ; he read the first book to *M. le Clerc*, who retaining some verses in his memory, inserted them in his *Bibliothèque*. The author's ideas still multiplied as he proceeded, and in proportion as the work increased, his views became more extensive ; he soon perceived that the *Epicureans* were not the only atheists to be subdued, and accordingly he attacked *Spinoza* and *Hobbes* ; nor did he spare philosophers, whose tenets were, even in his opinion, much less dangerous.

The work, which during the greatest part of his life had been the chief object of his attention, kept possession of his mind to the last ; a few days before he died, he put the manuscript into the hands of *M. le Abbe Rothelin*, his friend, leaving him at full liberty either to publish or suppress it, as he should judge best.

M. Rothelin has shewn himself worthy this confidence, for he applied the whole remainder of his life, to render the *Anti-Lucretius* fit for the press ; and in this labour exerted a zeal and assiduity, of which the author himself would not have been capable.

He did not however trust entirely to his own judgment, but submitted the manuscript to a great variety of persons eminent for genius and learning ; the most celebrated Linguists and Poets were consulted on the purity of the language, and the elegance of the verse ; and the advice of all the literati in *Europe* was taken on those passages, which relate to the favourite object of their studies, and the sciences in which they principally excelled.

M. Rothelin did not live to gather the fruit of his labour, but having dedicated the remains of his deceased friend to the present Pope, he left it to the care of *M. de Beau*, under a special contract to publish it, without any alteration ; he also engaged *M. de Bourgonville* to translate it into *French*.

As, besides translations, several *Latin* editions of this work are printing in every nation, there can scarce be a doubt, but the fame of the original, which is followed as near as poetical language permits, will render an *English* edition not less acceptable in a country, where the work to which it is reckoned an *Antidote*, has been so long familiarly read, and is so industriously published. It is proposed on the following

C O N D I T I O N S.

I. **T**HAT the whole work, which will amount to between fourteen and fifteen thousand lines, be published in *fifteen numbers*, stitched in blue covers, at *one shilling* each, *common paper*; the *large* at one shilling and six-pence; translated and printed as the specimen, which is on the same siz'd type as the *Paris* edition, that sells for 12 shillings, though not 31 sheets.

II. That each number consist of four sheets and an half in 8vo, each of which except the last that is to have the prefaces, &c. will contain about one thousand verses.

III. That to each of the nine books will be prefixed an head-piece, and, to the last number, the author's pourtrait, copied by the best hands from the beautiful engravings in the *Paris* edition.

IV. The work will be put to the press, as soon as it can be determined whether a small or larger impression, and how many large paper, will be required: For this end, gentlemen and ladies who approve of the translation, are desired to send to the publisher, without delay, their names only, or give *proper* orders to their own booksellers, as there will be printed no more large paper than desir'd.

V. That from the publication of Numb. I. the work will be continued monthly, so as to be finished in fifteen months at farthest, *Deo volente*.

P. S. As, besides the *Latin*, each number, at *one shilling*, will contain more lines than are sold in poetical pamphlets for *two shillings*, without a suitable and speedy encouragement, this work *cannot* proceed.



