

had stolen in among them took their procession through all their Coun-
 trey, beating and scourging the Air along as they went;) No, for all this,
Superstition may enter into our chambers, and creep into our closets, it
 may twine about our secret Devotions, and actuate our Forms of belief
 5 and Orthodox opinions, when it hath no place else to shroud itself or hide
 its head in; we may think to flatter the Deity by these, and to bribe it with
 them, when we are grown weary of more pompous solemnities: nay it
 may mix itself with a seeming Faith in Christ; as I doubt it doth now in too
 many, who laying aside all sober and serious care of true Piety, think it
 10 sufficient to offer up their Saviour, his Active and Passive Righteousness,
 to a severe and rigid Justice, to make expiation for those sins they can
 be willing to allow themselves in.

3

3 We have now done with what we intended concerning *Superstition*,
 and shall a little consider and search into the *Pedigree* of ATHEISM, which
 indeed hath so much *affinity* with *Superstition* that it may seem to have
 the *same Father* with it. Οὐκ οἶεται θεοὺς εἶναι ὁ ἄθεος, ὁ δὲ δεισιδαίμων οὐ
 5 βούλεται. *Superstition* could be well content that there were no God to
 trouble or disquiet it, and *Atheism* thinks there is none. And as *Super-*
stition is engendred by a base opinion of the Deity as cruell and tyran-
 icall (though it be afterwards brooded and hatcht by a *slavish fear* and
 abject thoughts) so also is *Atheism*: and that sowre and ghastly appre-
 hension of God, when it meets with more stout and surly Natures, is apt
 to enrage them, and cankering them with Malice against the Deity they
 so little brook, provokes them to fight against it and undermine the No-

4–5 Οὐκ οἶεται θεοὺς εἶναι ὁ ἄθεος, ὁ δὲ δεισιδαίμων οὐ βούλεται] “The atheist thinks there
 are no gods; the superstitious man wishes there were none”; Plutarch, *de superstitione*,
 170f

together as fas as the boundaries of Calynda, smiting the air with their spears and saying
 that they were casting out the stranger gods.” cf. More, *A Modest Inquiry in the Mystery*
of Iniquity, the First Part, a5verso.

1 3] This marks the start of Worthington’s *Third Discourse*.

9–1 that sowre and ghastly apprehension ... the Notion of it] The political resonances
 are obvious.

tion of it; as this *Plastick* Nature which intends to form Living creatures, when it meets with stubborn and unruly Matter, is fain to yield to it, and to produce that which answers not her own *Idea*; whence the *Signatures* and impressions of Nature sometimes vary so much from that Seal that
 5 Nature would have stamp'd upon them. Ὁ δεισιδαίμων τῆ προαιρήσει ἄθεος ὢν, ἀσθενέστερός ἐστιν ἢ τοῦ δοξάζειν περὶ θεῶν ὃ βούλεται. If these Melancholick Opinions and disquieting Fears of the Deity mould not the Minds of men into Devotion, as finding them too churlish and untameable to receive any such impressions; they are then apt to exasperate men against it, and stir them up to contend with that Being which they cannot bear, and

5–6 Ὁ δεισιδαίμων τῆ προαιρήσει ἄθεος ὢν, ἀσθενέστερός ἐστιν ἢ τοῦ δοξάζειν περὶ θεῶν ὃ βούλεται] “the superstitious man by preference would be an atheist, but is too weak to hold the opinion about the gods which he wishes to hold”; Plutarch, *de superstitione*, 170f.

1 *Plastick* Nature] The phrase needs to be considered in the light of Cudworth’s later use of the term. cf. Cudworth, *The true intellectual system of the Universe*, pp.146ff for his account of the idea, which he derives through Plato and Plotinus from Empedocles; cf. William.B. Hunter Jr., “The Seventeenth Century Doctrine of Plastic Nature”, *Harvard Theological Review*, XLIII (1950), pp.197-213. Amongst recent discussions of the idea, see Alexander Jacob, “De Naturae Natura: A Study of the Idealistic Conceptions of Nature and the Unconscious”, *Arktos Media*, 2011, pp.41-48, 48-52; Diana Stanciu, “The Sleeping Musician. Aristotle’s Vegetative Soul and Ralph Cudworth’s Plastic Nature” pp 713 - 748 in “Blood Sweat and Tears: The Changing Concepts of Physiology from Antiquity into Early Modern Europe”, Brill, Leiden, 2012; Udo Thiel, “The Early Modern Subject: Self-Consciousness and Personal Identity from Descartes to Hume”, pp.67-71, Oxford UP, 2011.

2 stubborn and unruly Matter] A widespread view of matter; cf. Glanvil, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, p.15; “’tis easie enough to imagine, that the power of *imagination* may form those *passive* and *pliable vehicles* into those *shapes*, with more ease than the fancy of the *Mother* can the stubborn matter of the *Foetus* in the womb, as we see it frequently doth in the instances that occur of *Signatures* and *monstrous Singularities*.”

3–5 *Signatures* and impressions of Nature sometimes vary so much from that Seal that Nature would have stamp'd upon them] for the context of Smith’s terms, cf. Cudworth, *The true intellectual system of the Universe*, p.156, translating *Enneads*, 4.4.13: “Nature is but an Image or Imitation of Wisdom, the Last thing of the Soul, which hath the lowest Impress of Reason shining upon it; as when a thick piece of Wax, is thoroughly impressed upon by a Seal, that impress which is clear and distinct in the superiour Superficies of it, will in the lower side be weak and obscure; and such is the Stamp and Signature of Nature, compared with that of Wisdom and Understanding”

9–1 they are then to exasperate ... their own liberty] Again, Smith’s language reflects the politics of his times

to destroy that which would deprive them of their own Liberty. These unreasonable *fears* of a Deity will alwaies be moving into *Flattery* or *Wrath*. *Atheism* could never have so easily crept into the world, had not *Superstition* made way and open'd a Back-door for it; it could not so easily have banish'd the Belief of a Deity, had not that first accused and condemn'd it as destructive to the *Peace* of Mankind; and therefore it hath alwaies justified and defended itself by *Superstition*: as *Plutarch* hath well exprest it, ἡ δὲ δεισιδαιμονία τῆ ἀθεότετι καὶ γενέσθαι παρέσχεν ἀρκὴν, καὶ γενομένη δίδωσιν ἀπολογίαν, οὐκ ἀληθῆ μὲν οὐδὲ καλὴν, προφάσεος δὲ τινος οὐκ ἄμοιρον οὔσαν. *Superstition afforded the principle of Generation to Atheism, and afterwards furnish'd it with an Apology, which though it be neither true nor lovely, yet wants it not a specious pretence.* And therefore *Simplicius* (as we heard before) calls the Notion of *Superstition* ἀθείας λόγον, as having an ill savour of *Atheism* in it, seeing (as he gives an account of it) it disrobes the Deity of true Majesty and Perfection, and represents it as weak and infirme, cloth'd with such fond, feeble and impotent passions as men themselves are. And *Dionysius Longinus*, that noble Rhetorician, fears not to challenge *Homer* as *Atheisticall* for his unsavoury language of the Gods, which indeed was only the Brat of his *Superstition*. If the

8–10 ἡ δὲ δεισιδαιμονία τῆ ἀθεότετι καὶ γενέσθαι παρέσχεν ἀρκὴν, καὶ γενομένη δίδωσιν ἀπολογίαν, οὐκ ἀληθῆ μὲν οὐδὲ καλὴν, προφάσεος δὲ τινος οὐκ ἄμοιρον οὔσαν] “superstition provides the seed from which atheism springs, and when atheism has taken root, superstition supplies it with a defence, not a true one or a fair one, but one not destitute of some speciousness”; Plutarch, *de superstitione*, 171a
 13 ἀθείας λόγον] “godless ideas”; cf. above page 134.

17 *Dionysius Longinus*] More properly, Cassius Longinus (c. 217-273 AD) was a rhetorician and philosopher of the Platonic school. He may not have been the author of the treatise *On the Sublime* once ascribed to him. Perhaps Smith was prompted to read Longinus by Nicolas Caussin (1583-1651), whose *de eloquentia sacra et humana* (Paris, 1623) was a standard text for students at Emmanuel. Caussin approved Longinus and cited him throughout the work. As ever, Smith is sensitive to the theological implications of art, and selects from Longinus a criticism relevant to his own - the problem of discovering suitable language in which to represent spiritual realities.

18–19 to challenge *Homer* as *Atheisticall* for his unsavoury language of the Gods] cf. *de sublimate*, IX, where, after quoting *Iliad*, 22, 61-5, Longinus comments that “these things are terrifying; yet from another point of view they are, unless understood allegorically, altogether impious and transgress the boundaries of good taste.” He adds that “Homer’s stories ... make the men of the Trojan War as far as possible into gods and the gods into men.” Homer, he claims, immortalised the gods’ miseries rather than their divine nature.

Superstitious man thinks that God is altogether like himself (which indeed is a character most proper to such) the *Atheist* will soon say in his heart, *There is no God*; and will judge it not without some appearance of Reason to be better there were none; as *Plutarch* hath discours'd it, οὐκ ἄμεινον ἦν
 5 Γαλάταις ἐκεῖνος καὶ Σκύθαι τοπαράπαν μῆτε ἔννοιαν ἔχειν θεῶν, μῆτε φαντα-
 σίαν, μῆτε ἱστορίαν, ἢ θεοὺς εἶναι νομίζειν χαίροντας ἀνθρώπων σφαττομένον
 αἵμασι, καὶ τελειοτάτην θυσίαν καὶ ἱερουργίαν ταύτην νομίζοντας; *Were it not*
better for the Gauls and Scythians, not to have had any Notion fancy or
 10 *History of the Gods, then to think them such as delighted in the Blood of*
men offered up in sacrifices upon their Altars, as reckoning this the most
perfect kind of Sacrifice and consummate Devotion? For thus his words
 are to be translated in reference to those ancient *Gauls* and *Scythians*,
 whom almost all Histories testifie to have been ἀνθρωποθύται· which hor-
 rid and monstrous Superstition was anciently very frequent among the
 15 Heathen, and was sharply taxed by *Empedocles* of old,

Μορφὴν δ' ἀλλάξαντα πατὴρ φίλον υἱὸν ἀείρας

Σφαζει, ἐπευχόμενος μέγα νήπιος—

This made *Lucretius* cry out with so much indignation when he took notice
 of *Agamemnon's* Diabolically devotion in sacrificing his Daughter *Iphigenia*

4–7 οὐκ ἄμεινον ἦν Γαλάταις ἐκεῖνος καὶ Σκύθαι τοπαράπαν μῆτε ἔννοιαν ἔχειν θεῶν, μῆτε
 φαντασίαν, μῆτε ἱστορίαν, ἢ θεοὺς εἶναι νομίζειν χαίροντας ἀνθρώπων σφαττομένον αἵμασι,
 καὶ τελειοτάτην θυσίαν καὶ ἱερουργίαν ταύτην νομίζοντας] “Would it not then have been
 better for those Gauls and Scythians to have had absolutely no conception, no vision, no
 tradition, regarding the gods, than to believe in the existence of gods who take delight in
 the blood of human sacrifice and hold this to be the most perfect offering and holy rite?”;
de superstitione, 171b.

13 ἀνθρωποθύται·] “human sacrificers”; cf. *Plutarch, de defectu oraculorum*, 417c

16 Μορφὴν δ' ἀλλάξαντα πατὴρ φίλον υἱὸν ἀείρας] “The father having lifted up the son
 slaughters him with a prayer, in his great folly”; *Freeman, Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic*
Philosophers, p.67. It is fragment 137 in *Diehls, Die Fragmente Der Vor-Sokratiker*, I, p.
 367. *Smith* takes the quotation from *de superstitione*, 171c.

15 Heathen] At this point the pagination of the 1660 edition goes astray. Page 45
 should be page 44, and the first of the two pages numbered 46, should be 45.

15 *Empedocles*] The pre-Socratic philosopher (c. 490-430 BC). cf. *Cudworth, The true*
intellectual system of the Universe, pp.155, 156.

18 *Lucretius*] The Roman poet and philosopher (c.99-55 BC), who represented, for the
 Cambridge Platonists, perhaps the most powerful expression of Epicurean atheism.

19 *Agamemnon's* Diabolically devotion in sacrificing his Daughter *Iphigenia*] The story
 of how *Agamemnon* sacrifices *Iphigenia* to secure favourable winds for the Trojan fleet
 to sail to Troy is told in *Aeschylus' The Libation Bearers*

to make expiation at his *Trojan Expedition*, *Tantum Relligio potuit suadere malorum*. And indeed what sober man could brook such an esteem of himself as this blind *Superstition* (which overspread the Heathen world and (I doubt) is not sufficiently rooted out of the Christian) fastned upon
 5 God himself? which made *Plutarch* so much in defiance of it cry out, as willing almost to be an *Atheist* as to entertain the Vulgar *Superstition*, *As for me (saith he) I had rather men should say that there is no such man nor ever was as Plutarch, then to say that he is or was* ἄνθρωπος ἀβέβαιος, ἐυμετάβολος, ἐυξερῆς πρὸς ὀργήν, ἐπὶ τοῖς τυχοῦσι τιμωρητικὸς, *an inconstant*
 10 *fickle man, apt to be angry, and for every trifle revengefull &c.* as he goes on farther to expresse this *Blasphemy of Superstition*.

But it may not be amisse to learn from *Atheists* themselves what was the *Impulsive cause* that mov'd them to banish away all thoughts and sober fear of a Deity, what was the *Principle* upon which this black Opinion
 15 was built and by which it was sustein'd. And this we may have from the confessions of the *Epicureans*, who though they seemed to acknowledg a Deity, yet I doubt not but those that search into their Writings will soon embrace *Tully's* censure of them, *Verbis quidem ponunt, reipsa tollunt Deos*. Indeed it was not safe for *Epicurus* (though he had a good mind to let the
 20 World know how little he cared for their Deities) to profess he believed there was none, lest he should have met with the same entertainment for it that *Protagoras* did at *Athens*, who for declaring himself doubtfull εἴτε

1–2 *Tantum Relligio potuit suadere malorum*] “Such evil deeds could religion prompt”; *de rerum natura*, 1.101.

8–9 ἄνθρωπος ἀβέβαιος, ἐυμετάβολος, ἐυξερῆς πρὸς ὀργήν, ἐπὶ τοῖς τυχοῦσι τιμωρητικὸς] “Why, for my part, I should prefer that men should say about me that I have never been born at all, and there is no Plutarch, rather than that they should say ‘Plutarch is an inconstant fickle person, quick-tempered, vindictive over little accidents, pained at trifles.’” *de superstitione*, 170a

18 *Verbis quidem ponunt, reipsa tollunt Deos*] “Some assert them verbally, but actually eliminate the gods”; not a quotation from Cicero, but in line with his views. cf. *de natura deorum*, 1,85 and 123.

19 it was not safe for *Epicurus*] doubtless derived from Cicero, *de natura deorum*, 1, 85: “according to some people’s view Epicurus really abolished the gods, but nominally retained them in order not to offend the people of Athens”.

22–1 εἴτε εἰσι, εἴτε μὴ εἰσι θεοὶ] “whether the gods exist or not”; many versions of this

22 *Protagoras*] According to Plato, Protagoras (c.490-420 BC) was the first professional Sophist. The story of how his books were burnt in the Athenian market-place was

ἔισι, ἔϊτε μή ἔισι θεοὶ, was himself put to Death, and his books burnt in the streets of *Athens*, ὑπὸ κήρυκα *sub voce Præconis*, as *Diogenes Laertius* and others record: and indeed the world was never so degenerated any where as to suffer *Atheism* to appear in public View.

- 5 But that we may return, and take the Confessions a little of these *secret Atheists* of the *Epicurean sect*: and of these Tully gives us a large account in his Books *de Finibus* and other parts of his Philosophy. *Torquatus* the *Epicurean* in his first book *de Finibus* liberally spends his breath to cool that too-much heat of Religion, as he thought, in those that could not
 10 apprehend God as any other then *curiosum & plenum negotii Deum* (as one of that Sect doth phrase it *Lib.I. de Nat. Deor.*) and so he states this Maxim of the Religion that then was most in use, *Superstitione qui est imbutus, quietus esse nunquam potest*. By the way, it may be worth our observing, how this monstrous progeny of men, when they would seem to

remark were already current, but Smith appears to have added another to the list. The version closest to that quoted here is in Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists*, 494.1.10.

24 ὑπὸ κήρυκα] "by a herald"; the phrase is from Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 9.8.52.

24 *sub voce Præconis*] "by public auction"

32 *curiosum & plenum negotii Deum*] lit. "a painstaking god, full of business", the Loeb translation reads "a prying busy-body of a god"; cf. *de natura deorum*, 1.54

34–35 *Superstitione qui est imbutus, quietus esse nunquam potest*] "he who is steeped in superstition can never be at peace"; Smith adapts *de finibus*, 1.60: "Accedit etiam mors, quae quasi saxum Tantalos semper impendit, tum superstitione, qua qui est imbutus, quietus esse nunquam potest": "There is also death, which always hangs over them like the stone over Tantalus, and again, superstition, which prevents those who are tinged with from ever being able to rest." HGW emended the text to conform with the above. The practice masks Smith's ability to reveal a latent aphorism.

told by Diogenes Laertius in his *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 9.8.52, and repeated by Cicero (*de natura deorum*, 1.63).

24 *sub voce Præconis*] Thomas Cooper translated "voci praeconis bona civium subiicere" as "to cause a cryer or common officer openly to sell the citizens goods, as if they had been taken in war" T. Cooper, *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae et Britannicae*.

24 *Diogenes Laertius*] A writer in Greek, probably flourishing in the third century, whose *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* is an important source for the history of Greek philosophy.

28 Tully] Cicero

29 *Torquatus*] Lucius Manlius Torquatus, died 46 BC

30 in his first book *de Finibus*] cf. *de finibus*, 1.7ff.

33 one of that Sect] Gaius Velleius

acknowledge a Deity, could not forget their own beloved Image which was always before their eyes; and therefore they would have it as careless of any thing but its own pleasure and idle life as they themselves were. So easy is it for all Sects some way or other to slide into a compliance with
 5 the *Anthropomorphitæ*, and to bring down the Deity to a conformity to their own Image.

But we shall rather chuse a little to examine *Lucretius* in this point, who hath in the name of all his Sect largely told us the *Rise* and *Originall* of this Design. After a short Ceremony to his following Discourse of *Nature*,
 10 he thus begins his Prologue in commendation of *Epicurus* his exploit, as he fancies it.

*Humana ante oculos fœdè cùm vita jaceret,
 In terris oppressa gravi sub Relligione,
 Quæ caput è cœli regionibus ostendebat
 15 Horribili aspectu semper mortalibus instans;
 Primùm Graius homo mortales tendere contra
 Est oculos ausus, primûsque obsistere contra:
 Quem nec fama Deûm, nec Fulmina, nec minitanti
 Murmure compressit Cœlum -*

20 And a little after in a sorry Ovation, proudly cries out,
*Quare Relligio pedibus subjecta vicissim
 Obteritur; nos exæquat victoria cœlo.*

But to proceed; our Author observing the *timorous minds* of men to have

11–19 *Humana ante oculos ...Murmure compressit Cœlum -*] “When the life of man lay foul to see and grovelling upon the earth, crushed by the weight of religion, which showed her face from the realms of heaven, lowering upon mortal with dreadful mien, ’twas a man of Greece, who dared first to raise his mortal eyes to meet her; him neither the smiles of the gods, nor thunderbolts checked, nor the sky with its revengeful roar”; *de rerum nature*, l.62-9.

21–22 *Quare Relligio pedibus subjecta vicissim
 Obteritur; nos exæquat victoria cœlo.*] “And so religion in revenge is cast beneath men’s feet and trampled, and victory raises us to heaven”; *de rerum natura*, l.78-9.

5 *Anthropomorphitæ*] Blount explains “*Anthropomorphites*, (Gr.) a sect of Hereticks that appeared in *Ægypt* A.D. 395. they were so called from the chief of their Tenets, viz. that God had a Bodily Shape.” Blount, *Glossographia*. Clement of Alexandria warned that “the Greeks assume their gods to human in passions as they are human in shape” in *Stromata*, VII.4.22. For a contemporary view, see Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica: or, Enquiries into Very many Received Tenents And commonly presumed Truths*, V.22.4.

been struck with this dreadful *Superstition* from the observation of some *stupendious Effects* and *Events* (as he pleaseth rather to call them) *in Nature*; he therefore, following herein the steps of his great Master *Epicurus*, undertakes so to solve all those knots which *Superstition* was tied
 5 up into, by unfolding *the Secrets of Nature*, as that men might find themselves loosened from those *sævi Domini* and *crudeles Tyranni*, as he calls the vulgar Creeds of the Deity. And so begins with a simple Confutation of the Opinion of the *Creation*, which he supposed to contain a sure and sensible Demonstration of Deity, and to have sprung from an admiring
 10 ignorance of Natural productions.

*Quippe ità Formido mortales continet omnes,
 Quod multa in terris fieri cæloque tuentur,
 Quorum operum Causas nullâ ratione videre
 Possunt, ac fieri Divino numine rentur.*

15 And towards the end of this first Book,
*Primùm quòd magnis doceo de rebus, & arctis
 Relligionum animos nodis exsolvere pergo.*

But herein all the *Epicureans* (who are not the true, but foster-fathers of that *Natural Philosophy* they brag of, and which indeed *Democritus* was
 20 the first Author of) doe miserably blunder themselves. For though a lawful

6 *sævi Domini* and *crudeles Tyranni*] “savage lords” and “cruel tyrants”. The phrases do not occur in Lucretius.

10–14 *Quippe ità Formido...Divino numine rentur*] “Fear, forsooth, so constrains all mortal men, because they behold many things come to pass on earth and in the sky, the cause of whose working they can by no means see, and think that a divine power brings them about”; *de rerum nature*, l.151-5

15–17

*Primùm quòd magnis doceo de rebus, & arctis
 Relligionum animos nodis exsolvere pergo*] “First because I teach about great things, and hasten to free the mind from the close bondage of religion”; *de rerum natura*, l.931-2.

2 *stupendious*] “*Stupendious*, (Lat.) prodigious or wonderful.” Blount, *Glossographia*
 19–20 *Democritus* was the first Author of] The Cambridge Platonists’ view of the development of Western thought was not to be firmly codified until 1678, when *Democritus* was seen in a rather different light. Cudworth allows him some originality as a father of atheistical physiology, but pushes the origin of the “Atomical Philosophy” back to “one *Moschus a Phoenician*, who ... lived before the *Trojan Wars*” (Cudworth, *The true intellectual system of the Universe*, p.12). Smith’s is the more traditional view.

19 *Democritus*] *Democritus* of Abdera (c. 460 - 370 BC) was a pre-Socratic philosopher who promulgated the atomic theory proposed by his teacher, Leucippus. According

acquaintance with all the *Events* and *Phænomena* that shew themselves upon this mundane stage would contribute much to free mens Minds from the slavery of dull *Superstition*: yet would it also breed a sober & amiable Belief of the Deity, as it did in all the *Pythagoreans*, *Platonists* and other
 5 Sects of Philosophers, if we may believe themselves; and an *ingenuous* knowledge hereof would be as fertile with *Religion*, as the ignorance thereof in *affrighted* and *base* Minds is with *Superstition*.

For which purpose I shall need onely to touch upon *Epicurus* his master-
 10 notion by which he undertakes to salve all difficulties that might hold our thoughts in suspence about a δημιουργός, or a Creator, which is that *Plenum* (which is all one with *Corpus*) and *Inane*, that this *Body* (which in his Philosophy is nothing else but an *Infinity of Insensible Atomes moving to and fro in an Empty Space*) is, together with that *Space* in which it is, sufficient to beget all those *Phænomena* which we see in Nature. Which,
 15 however it might be true, *Motion* being once granted, yet herein *Tully* hath well scotcht the wheel of this over-hasty Philosophy, *Lib.I. de Finibus, Cùm in Rerum natura duo sint quærenda, unum, quæ Materia sit ex qua quæque res efficiatur; alterum, quæ Vis sit quæ quidque efficiat: de Ma-*

10 δημιουργός] “demiurge”; the term originally signified a skilled maker or artisan. The primary source is *Timæus* 28ff.

11 *Plenum*] “fullness”

11 *Inane*] “emptiness”; cf. *de rerum natura* I, 440ff. Smith perhaps draws also on Cicero’s account of the differing theories of creation in *academica*, I.xxxvii.118.

17–1 *Cùm in Rerum natura duo sint quærenda, unum, quæ Materia sit ex qua quæque res efficiatur; alterum, quæ Vis sit quæ quidque efficiat: de Materia disseruerunt Epicurei; Vim & causam efficiendi reliquerunt*] “as in the nature of things there are two points which must be enquired into, - one, what the material out of which everything is made, is; the other, what the power is which makes everything, - they discussed only the

to Aristoxenus of Tarentum, Plato wished to burn the works of Democritus (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 9.40).

12 his Philosophy] Smith’s critique of Epicurean philosophy has received comparatively little attention, but Robert Kernon, in his article “Walter Charleton, Robert Boyle and the Acceptance of Epicurean Atomism in England” (*Isis*, 55 [1964], pp.184-192), speaks of it as “influential”; and C.T. Harrison attributes to Smith “a correct understanding of Epicureanism” (“The Ancient Atomists in English Literature”, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, XIV [1934]m pp.1-80). W.B. Fleischman (*Lucretius and English Literature 1680-17440* [Paris, 1964], merely reports Harrison’s findings. See also George A. Panichas, *Epicurus* (New York, 1967), pp.139ff. For a more general, recent survey, see Catherine Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity* [Oxford, 2008].

teria disseruerunt Epicurei; Vim & causam efficiendi reliquerunt. Which is as much as if some conceited piece of Sophistry should go about to prove that an *Automaton* had no dependency upon the skill of an Artificer, by descanting upon the several parts of it, without taking notice in the mean-
 5 while of some external Weight or Spring that moves it: or, to use his own Similitude, as if one that undertakes to Analyse any Learned Book, should tell us how so many Letters meeting together in several Combinations, should beget all that sense that is contained therein, without minding that Wit that cast them all into their several Ranks. And this made *Aristotle*,
 10 otherwise not overzealous of Religion, soberly to acknowledge some *First mover*, τὸ πρῶτον κινουῦν ἀκίνητον.

And yet could we allow *Epicurus* this *power of Motion* to be seated in *Nature*, yet that he might perform the true task of a *Naturalist*, he must also give us an account how such a *force* and *power* in *Nature* should
 15 subsist: which indeed is easy to doe, if we call in Θεὸν ἀπὸ μηχανῆς, God

material, and omitted all considerations of the efficient power and cause"; cf. *de finibus*, I.6.18.

11 τὸ πρῶτον κινουῦν ἀκίνητον] "the first unmoved mover"; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1012b.
 15 Θεὸν ἀπὸ μηχανῆς] "a god from the machine" or "deus ex machina"; the phrase occurs most memorably in Aristotle's *Poetics*, 1454b. Compare Cudworth's report of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, I.4., where he says that "Anaxagoras useth *Mind and Intellect, that is, God*,

3 an *Automaton* had no dependency upon the skill of an Artificer] cf. Cicero, *de natura deorum*, II.34.87-88 for a similar argument from mechanical devices. Add Descartes and Cudworth For a broad view of automata, see Wendy Beth Hyman (ed.), *The Automaton in English Renaissance Literature*, Farnham 2011.

5–9 to use his own Similitude ... into their several Ranks] cf. Cicero, *de natura deorum*, II.37.93, for a similar argument about Ennius' *Annals*.

9 *Aristotle*] As Simon Patrick noted, Aristotle was "out of request" with the Cambridge Platonists (Patrick, *A Brief Account of the New Sect of Latitude-Men*). Cudworth's remarks on him in Cudworth, *The true intellectual system of the Universe*, pp.53ff. are perhaps the kindest. He said that Aristotle "trode in *Plato's* footsteps ... in asserting an Incorporporeal Deity, and an Immoveable first Mover", while granting that he "often contradicteth *Plato*, and really dissents from him in several Particularities." Cudworth agreed with Smith that "the whole Aristotelical System of Philosophy is infinitely to be preferred before the whole Democritical; though the former hath been so much disparaged, and the other cried up of late amongst us." The main problem was that Aristotle did not so clearly assert "the Immortality of the Humane Souls, and Providence over men, as he ought to have done, and as his Master *Plato* did".(Cudworth, *The true intellectual system of the Universe*, p.55).

himself as the Architect and mover of this Divine Artifice; but without some Infinite power, impossible.

And we should further inquire, How these moveable and rambling *Atomes* come to place themselves so orderly in the Universe, and observe that absolute Harmony and *Decorum* in all their Motions, as if they kept time with the Musical laws of some Almighty Mind that compos'd all their lessons & measured out their Dances up and down in the Universe; and also how it comes to pass, if they be only mov'd by *Chance* and *Accident*, that such *Regular* mutations and generations should be begotten by a *fortuitous* *concourse* of *Atomes*, as sometimes they speak of, they having no centre to seat themselves about in an infinite Vacuity, as *Tully* argues; and how these Bodies that are once mov'd by some impulse from their former station, return again, or at least come to stay themselves, and doe not rather move perpetually the same way the First impulse and direction carried them; or why they doe not there rest where their Motion first began to cease, if they were interrupted by any thing without them: or again, if the proper motion of these *Atomes* be alwaies toward some Centre, as *Epicurus* sometimes is pleased to state the business, *Lineis Rectis* , as he saith, then how comes there, as *Tully* replies, to be any

as a *Machin* in the *Cosmopoiea*" (Cudworth, *The true intellectual system of the Universe*, p.153).

11–12 as *Tully* argues] Smith has in mind *de finibus*, 1.17, where Cicero says that Epicurus' doctrines "are those of Democritus, with very few modifications ... Democritus believes in certain things which he terms 'atoms', that is bodies so solid as to be indivisible, moving about in a vacuum of infinite extent, which has neither top , bottom, nor middle, neither centre nor circumference."

18–19 *Lineis Rectis*] "by straight lines"; *de finibus*, 1.18

7 their Dances] For many Platonizing authors, the dance provided a fine example of a reasonable art: thus, Sir John Davies uses it as the fundamental metaphor of universal law in *Orchestra, A Poem of Dauncing* [London, 1596]. The ultimate progenitor of Smith's dances are those in *Timaeus* 40c, the forbears of Plotinus' single, immense dancer. Of the many applications of the metaphor, Plotinus' use of it in *Enneads*, IV.4.33 perhaps lies behind Smith's analogy here.

19 as *Tully* replies] Cicero continues (*de finibus*, 1, 18ff): "Epicurus for his part, where he follows Democritus, makes no serious blunders. ... I come now to lapses peculiar to Epicurus. He believes that these same indivisible sold bodies are borne by their own weight perpendicularly downward, which he holds is the natural motion of all bodies; but then in the very same breath, being sharp enough to recollect that if they all travelled

Generation? or if there be a *Motus declinationis* joyn'd with this Motion of Gravity (which was one of *Epicurus* his κυρία δόξαι which he borrowed not from *Democritus*) then why should not all tend the same way? and so all those Motions, Generations and Appearances in Nature all vanish
 5 seeing all Variety of Motion would be taken away which way soever this unhallowed Opinion be stated?

Thus we see, though we should allow *Epicurus* his Principle and fundamental absurdity in the frame of Nature, yet it is too airy and weak a thing to support that massie bulk of Absurdities which he would build upon
 10 it. But it was not the lot of any of his stamp to be over-wise (however they did boast most in the title of *Sophi*) as is well observed of them; for then they might have been so happy too as to have dispelled these thick and filthy mists of *Atheism*, by those bright beams of Truth that shine in the frame of this inferiour world, wherein, as *S. Paul* speaks, the τὸ γνωστὸν
 15 τοῦ θεοῦ is made manifest.

Atheism most commonly lurks in *confinio scientiæ & ignorantiaë*; when the Mindes of men begin to draw those gross earthly vapours of sensuall and materiall Speculations by dark and cloudy disputes, they are then

1 *Motus declinationis*] “a bending motion”; cf. *de finibus*, 1.19; Cicero, *de fato*, 22ff.

2 *Epicurus* his κυρία δόξαι] “authoritative teachings”

11 *Sophi*] “wise men”, glancing at “sophists”.

14–15 τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ] “that which may be known of God”

15 is made manifest] Romans 1,19: “Because that which may be known of God, is manifest in them, for God hath shewed it unto them.”

16 *Atheism* most commonly lurks in *confinio scientiæ & ignorantiaë*] “on the boundary of knowledge and ignorance”.

downwards in a straight line ...no one atom would ever be able to overtake any other atom, he consequently introduces an idea of his own invention: he said that the atoms make a very tiny swerve - the smallest divergence possible; and so are produced entanglements and combinations and cohesions of atoms with atom, which result in the creation of the world and all its parts, and of all that is in them.”

2 *Epicurus* his κυρία δόξαι] Smith means those statements which have *Epicurus*' own authority behind them, being, as it were, *ex cathedra* pronouncements of the founder of a school. They were ethical as well as philosophical: so Cicero says later in *de finibus* (2.20), “every good Epicurean has got by heart the master's *Kuriae Doxae*, or Authoritative Doctrines, since these brief aphorisms or maxims are held to be of sovereign efficacy for happiness.”

most in danger of being benighted in them. There is *a Natural Sense* of God that lodges in the minds of the lowest and dullest sort of vulgar men, which is alwaies roving after him, catching at him, though it cannot lay any sure hold on him; which works like *a natural Instinct* antecedent to
 5 any mature knowledge, as being indeed the First principle of it: and if I were to speak precisely in the mode of the *Stoicks*, I would rather call it ὄρμην πρὸς τὸν θεὸν, then with *Plutarch* θεοῦ νόησιν. But when contentious disputes, and frothy reasonings, and contemplations informed by fleshly affections, conversant onely about the out-side of Nature, begin to rise
 10 up in mens Soules; they may then be in some danger of depressing all those *In-bred notions* of a deity, and to reason themselves out of their own sense as the old *Scepticks* did: and therefore it may be it might be wishd that some men that have not Religion, had had more Superstition to accompany them in their passage from Ignorance to Knowledge.

15 But we have run out too farre in this Digression: we shall now return, and observe how our former Author takes notice of another piece of *Vulgar Superstition*, which he thinks fit to be chas'd away by *Atheism*, and that is *The terrours of the world to come*, which he thus sets upon in his Third book,
 20 - *Animi natura videtur*

7 ὄρμην πρὸς τὸν θεὸν] “a rush towards god”; the expression may well be Smith’s.

7 θεοῦ νόησιν] “knowledge of god”; Plutarch, *de superstitione*, 167b.

20–4 - *Animi natura videtur ... mortis nigrore* -] “the nature of the mind and the soul must now be displayed in my verses, and the old fear of Acheron driven headlong away, which utterly confounds the life of men from the very root, clouding all things with the darkness of death”; *de natura rerum*, III, 35-9.

6 in the mode of the *Stoicks*] Smith’s view of Stoicism may be placed in some sort of context by Barbour, *English Epicures and Stoics: Ancient Legacies in Early Stuart Culture*.

7 ὄρμην πρὸς τὸν θεὸν] Smith would certainly have been familiar with Cicero’s explanation of the key word in this stunning phrase, as “all those motions of the will, those impulses of conation and desire” in *de natura deorum*, 2,22; cf. *de finibus*, 3,7: “though we are first commended to Wisdom by the primary natural instincts, afterwards Wisdom itself becomes dearer to us than are the instincts from which we came to her. And just as our limbs are so fashioned that it is clear that they were bestowed upon us with a view to a certain mode of life, so our faculty of appetition, in Greek hormē, was obviously designed not for any kind of life one may choose, but for a particular mode of living; and the same is true of Reason and of perfected Reason”.

16 our former Author] Lucretius

*Atque Animæ claranda meis jam versibus esse,
Et metus ille foras præceps Acheruntis agendus
Funditus, humanam vitam qui turbat ab imo,
Omnia suffundens mortis nigrore -*

5 And afterwards he tells us how this *Fear* of the Gods thus proceeding from the former Causes, and from those *Spectres* and gastly *Apparitions* with which men were sometimes terrified, begat all those Fantastick rites and ceremonies in use amongst them, as their Temples, sacred Lakes and Pools, their Groves, Altars, Images, and other like Vanities, as so many
10 idle toys to please these Deities with; and at last concludes himself thus into *Atheism*, as a strong Fort to preserve himself from these cruel Deities that *Superstition* had made, because he could not find the way to true Religion,

*Nunc quæ causa Deûm per magnas numina gentes
15 Pervulgarit, & ararum compleverit urbes,
Susciendâque curarit solennia sacra,
Quæ nunc in magnis florent rebûsque locísque;
Unde etiam nunc est mortalibus insitus horror
Qui delubra Deûm nova toto suscitât orbi
20 Terrarum, & in festis cogit celebrare diebus;
Non itâ difficile est rationem reddere verbis.*

Thus we see how *Superstition* strengthened the wicked hands of *Atheism*; so far is a *Formal* and Ritual way of Religion proceeding from *baseness* and *Servility* of Mind (though back'd with never so much rigour and severity)
25 ity) from keeping it out. And I wish some of our Opinions in Religion in these days may not have the same evil influences as the notorious *Gentile Superstition* of old had, as well for the begetting this brat of *Atheism*, as I doubt it is too manifest they have for some other.

30 Thus we should now leave this Argument; only before we passe from it, we shall observe two things which *Plutarch* hath suggested to us. The

34–41 *Nunc quæ causa Deûm ... rationem reddere verbis.*] “Next what cause spread abroad the divine powers of the gods among great nations, and filled cities with altars, and taught men to undertake sacred rites and yearly festivals, rites which are honoured today in great empires and at great places; whence even now there is implanted in mortals a shuddering dread, which raises new shrines of the gods all over the world, and constrains men to throng them on the holy days; of all this it is not hard to give account in words”; *det natura rerum*, V, 1161-68.

first whereof is, *That howsoever Superstition be never so unlovely a thing, yet it is more tolerable then Atheism*: which I shall repeat in his words, Δεῖ μὲν ἀμέλει τῆς περὶ θεῶν δόξης, ὡσπερ ὄψω λήμην, ἀφαιρεῖν τὴν δεισιδαιμονίαν· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο ἀδύνατον, μὴ συννεκόπτειν, μηδὲ τυφλοῦν τὴν πίστιν ἣν οἱ πλεῖστοι περὶ θεῶν ἔξουσι, *We should endeavour to take off Superstition from our Mindes, as a Film from our Eyes; but if that cannot be we must not therefore pluck out our Eyes, and blind the faith that generally we have of the Deity.* Superstition may keep men from the outward acts of sin sometimes, and so their future punishment may have some abatement. Besides that *Atheism* offers the greatest violence to mens Souls that be may, pulling up the Notions of a Deity, which have spread their Roots quite through all the Powers of mens Souls.

The second is this, *That Atheism it self is a most ignoble and uncomfortable thing*, as Tully hath largely discussed it, and especially *Plutarch* in the above-named Tractate of his, written by way of Confutation of *Colotes* the Epicurean, who writ a Book to prove That a man could not live quietly by following any other other sects of Philosophers besides his own; as if all true good were onely conversant περὶ γαστέρα καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους πορούς τῆς σαρκὸς ἅπαντας, *about the belly, and all the pores and passages of the Body*, and the way to true happiness was σαρκοποιεῖν τὸν ἄνθρωπον ὅλον,

3–5 Δεῖ μὲν ἀμέλει τῆς περὶ θεῶν δόξης, ὡσπερ ὄψω λήμην, ἀφαιρεῖν τὴν δεισιδαιμονίαν· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο ἀδύνατον, μὴ συννεκόπτειν, μηδὲ τυφλοῦν τὴν πίστιν ἣν οἱ πλεῖστοι περὶ θεῶν ἔξουσι] “Now we should, I grant you, remove superstition from our beliefs in the gods like a rheum from the eye; but if this proves impossible, we should not cut away both together and kill the faith that most men have in the gods”; Plutarch, *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum*, 1101c.

18–19 περὶ γαστέρα καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους πορούς τῆς σαρκὸς ἅπαντας] adapted from *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum*, 1087d: “They believe that the good is found in the belly and all other passages through which pleasure and non-pain make their entrance.”

20 σαρκοποιεῖν τὸν ἄνθρωπον ὅλον] “made the whole man of flesh”; adapted from *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum*, 21, 1096e: “They should either have thrown all concealment aside and made man in his entirety of mere thing of flesh, as some do who abolish the substantial character of a soul, or else, leaving in us two natures, they should have left to each its good and evil, what is its own and what is alien to it.”

14 Tully] Cicero

15–16 *Colotes* the Epicurean] *Colotes* of Lampsacus (c.320 -268 BC) wrote a work to show *That it is impossible even to live according to the doctrines of the other philosophers*, which Plutarch refuted in *Contra Colotes* and *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum*.

or else τὴν ψυχὴν ταῖς τοῦ σώματος ἡδοναῖς κατασβωτεῖν, as *Plutarch* hath not more wittily then judiciously replied upon them.

What is all that *Happiness* that ariseth from these bodily pleasures to any one that hath any high or noble sense within him? This gross, muddy
 5 and stupid Opinion is nothing else but a *Dehonestamentum humani generis*, that casts as great a scorn and reproach upon the nature of mankind as may be, and sinks it into the deepest Abyesse of Baseness. And certainly were the *Highest happiness* of mankind such a thing as might be felt
 10 by a corporeal touch, were it of so ignoble a birth as to spring out of this earth, and to grow up out of this mire and clay; we might well sit down, and bewail our unhappy fates, that we should rather be born Men then Brute beasts, which enjoy more of this worlds happiness then we can doe, without any sin or guilt. How little of Pleasure these short lives tast here, which onely lasts so long as the *Indigency of nature* is in supplying, and
 15 after that, onely σκιά τις καὶ ὄναρ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, a *flying shadow, or flitting dreame* of that pleasure (which is choak'd as soon as craving Nature is satisfied) remains in the Fancy, οἷον ὑπέκκαυμα τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν, as *Plutarch* hath well observed in the same Discourse!

And therefore *Epicurus* seeing how slippery the *Soul* was to all Sensual
 20 pleasure, which was apt to slide away perpetually from it, and again how little of it the *Body* was capable of where it had a shorter stay; he and his followers could not well tell where to place this beggarly guest: and therefore, as *Plutarch* speaks, ἄνω καὶ κάτω μεταίροντες, ἐκ τοῦ σώματος εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν, εἶτα πάλιν ἐκ ταύτης εἰς ἐκεῖνο, one while they would place it in

1 τὴν ψυχὴν ταῖς τοῦ σώματος ἡδοναῖς κατασβωτεῖν] “they fatten the soul like a pig with the pleasures of the body”; adapted from *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum*, 1096c: “is it not even thus they would swill the mind with the pleasures of the body, as hogherds do their swine.”

5–6 *Dehonestamentum humani generis*] “a disgrace to the human race”; apparently Smith’s own formulation.

15 σκιά τις καὶ ὄναρ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ] “its shadow or dream in the soul”; adapted from *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum*, 1089b: “the delight does not last when the experience is over, but only a sort of shadow or dream is left behind in the soul, after the pleasure has fled”.

17 οἷον ὑπέκκαυμα τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν] “like fuel for the desires”; adapted from *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum*, 1089b

23–24 ἄνω καὶ κάτω μεταίροντες, ἐκ τοῦ σώματος εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν, εἶτα πάλιν ἐκ ταύτης εἰς ἐκεῖνο] “pouring it back and forth from the body to the soul, back from this one to that one

the Body, and then lead it back again into the Soul, not knowing where to bestow it. And *Diodorus*, and the *Cyreniaici*, and the *Epicureans*, as *Tully* tells us, who all could fancy nothing but a *Bodily happiness*, yet could not agree whether it should be *Voluptas*, or *Vacuitas doloris*, or something
 5 else; it being ever found so hard a thing to define, like that base *Matter* of which it is begotten, which by reason of it's penurie and scantness of Being as the Philosophers tell us, doth *effugere intellectum*, and is nothing
 10 else but a shady kind of Nothing, something that hath a name but nothing else. I dare say that all those that have any just esteem of humanity, cannot but with a noble scorn defy such a *base-born* Happiness as this is, generated onely out of the slime of this earth: and yet this is all the portion of *Atheism*, which teaches the entertainers of it to believe themselves nothing else but so many Heapes of more refine dust, fortuitously gathered together, which at last must be all blown away again.

15 But a true Belief of a Deity is a sure Support to all serious minds, which besides the *future hopes* it is pregnant with, entertains them here with *Tranquillity* and inward serenity. What the *Stoick* said in his cool and

”; adapted from *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum*, 1089d.

4 *Voluptas*, or *Vacuitas doloris*] The reference is to the prolonged discussion in *de finibus*, II, in which the terms *voluptas* and *vacuitas doloris* occur frequently. For example: “For if he (Epicurus) means the same as Hieronymus, who holds that the Chief Good is a life entirely devoid of trouble, why does he insist on using the term pleasure (*voluptatem*), and not rather ‘freedom from pain’ (*vacuitatem doloris*), as does Hieronymus, who understands his own meaning?” *de finibus*, II, 16.

7 *effugere intellectum*] “escape the intellect”.

2 the *Cyreniaici*] Cicero explains that the Cyrenaics, followers of Aristippus “maintain that nothing external to themselves is perceptible, and that the only things that they do perceive are the sensations due to internal contact, for example pain and pleasure” (*Academica*, II, xxiv).

3 who all could fancy nothing but a *Bodily happiness*] cf. Cicero, *Academica*, II, xlii: “Others have held that the end is pleasure ; their founder was Aristippus, who had been a pupil of Socrates, and from whom they get the name of the Cyrenaic school ; after him came Epicurus, whose doctrine is now more famous, although on the actual subject of pleasure it does not agree the Cyrenaics. But Callipho defined the end as being pleasure and moral goodness, Hieronymus as freedom from all annoyance, Diodorus the same combined with moral goodness — both the two latter were Peripatetics.”

17 *Stoick*] Marcus Aurelius

mature thoughts, οὐκ ἔστι ζῆν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ κενῷ θεῶν καὶ κενῷ προνοίας, *it is not worth the while to live in a world empty of God and Providence*, is the sense of all those that know what a Deity means. Indeed it were the greatest unhappiness that might be, to have been born into such a

5 world, where we should be perpetually tossed up and down by a rude and blind Fortune, and be perpetually liable to all those abuses which the savage Lusts and Passions of the world would put upon us. It is not possible for any thing well to bear up the spirit of that man that shall calmly meditate with himself the true state and condition of this world, should that

10 Mind and Wisedome be taken away from it which governs every part of it, and overrules all those disorders that at any time begin to break forth in it. Were there not an *Omniscient* skill to temper, and fitly to rank up in their due places all those quarrelsome and extravagant spirits that are in the world, it would soon prove an *unhabitable* place, and sink under the

15 heavy weight of it's own confusion; which was wittily signified in that Fable of *Phæton*, who being admitted to drive the chariot of the Sun but for one day, by his rude and unskilfull guidance of it made it fall down, and burn the world. Remove *God* and *Providence* out of the world, and then we have nothing to depend upon but *Chance* and *Fortune*, the *Humours* and

20 *Passions* of men; and he that could then live in it, had need be as blind as these Lords would be, that he might not see his own misery alwaies staring upon him; and had need be more senseless and stupid, that he might not be affected with it.

4

1 οὐκ ἔστι ζῆν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ κενῷ θεῶν καὶ κενῷ προνοίας] adapted from Marcus Aurelius, *de seipso*, 2.11.1: “what is it to me to live in a universe devoid of gods or devoid of Providence?” cf. “without God and without providence, there is no living in the world” Whichcote, *Works*, IV, p. 354.

15–16 that Fable of *Phæton*] The “fable” is related in *Timæus*, 22c: “There is a story, which even you have preserved, that once upon a time Phaethon, the son of Helios, having yoked the steeds in his father’s chariot, because he was not able to drive them in the path of his father, burnt up all that was upon the earth, and was himself destroyed by a thunderbolt.” Smith, it should be noted, reads the “fable” through Plato’s interpretation of it, that it signified “a declination of the bodies moving in the heavens around the earth, and a great conflagration of things upon the earth, which recurs after long intervals.”