A NOTE ON LUCRETIUS III 240 ¹)

Lucretius is arguing that in addition to the three constituents of the soul he has enumerated there must be a fourth, which promotes sensation (\textit{sensiferos motus}) and 'thought'—which, it seems generally agreed, must be broadly the meaning of the second part of line 240. Conjectures have been many and various; the fullest discussions are by Bailey and Merrill ²). Frerichs's suggestion, accepted with hesitation by Bailey and Kenney, gives the required sense and may be right. Bailey supposes that \textit{mens quaecumque} became \textit{quaedam mens}; \textit{mens} was then altered to \textit{mente}, and \textit{quaecumque} to \textit{quaedam quae}, for reasons of metre.

I think we can improve this account if we adopt a slightly different reading, taking into account a small but discernible feature of the language Lucretius naturally and commonly uses when describing the special constitution and independent functions of the \textit{mens/animus} as distinct from those of the \textit{anima}. The constitution of the \textit{mens/animus} is of extremely fine and mobile particles; its functions are (1) emotion, thought, reflection, deliberation etc., in isolation from the \textit{anima} (III 145-6, 177 ff.); (2) the origination on its own initiative of impulses to act, for transmission through the rest of the soul to the body (II 251 ff., IV 877 ff.). Consider the following extracts:

(A) II 257-65 and 289-93

\ldots unde est haec, inquam, fatis avolsa voluntas
per quam proqredimur quo ducit quemque voluptas,
declinamus item nec motus tempore certo
nec regione loci certa, sed ubi \textit{ipsa} tuit \textit{mens}?

\textit{Mnemosyne}, Vol. XXVIII, Fasc. 3
nonne vides etiam patefactis tempore puncto
carceribus non posse tamen prorumpere equorum
vim cupidam tam subito quam mens avet ipsa?

sed ne mens ipsa necessum
intestinum habeat cunctis in rebus agendis,
et devicta quasi cogatur ferre patique,
id facit exiguum clinamen principiorum
nec regione loci certa nec tempore certo.

(B) III 177-83
is tibi nunc animus quali sit corpore et unde
constiterit pergam rationem reddere dictis.
principio esse aio persubtilem atque minutis
perquam corporibus factum constare. id ita esse
hinc licet advertas animum ut pernoscere possis.
nil adeo fieri celeri ratione videtur,
quam sibi mens fieri proponit et incohait ipsa.

(C) IV 746-8
facile uno commovet ictu
quaelibet una animum nobis subtilis imago;
tenvis enim mens est et mire mobilis ipsa.

(D) IV 802-6 and 814-5, on mental activity
et quia tendvia sunt, nisi quae contendit, acute
cernere non potis est animus; proinde omnia quae sunt
praeterea pereunt, nisi <si ad> quae se ipse paravit.
ipsa parat sese porro speratque futurum
ut videat quod consequitur rem quamque; fit ergo.
cur igitur mirumt, animus si cetera perdit
praeter quam quibus est in rebus deditus ipse?

These uses of ipsa and ipse serve to focus attention on the
mens/animus as somehow special. In (A) it is marked out as en-
joying a voluntas which is libera from any ‘deterministic’ causal
nexus, and as having the ability to originate motion [which, as
IV 877 ff. tells us, is then transmitted to the body by way of the
anima]. In (B) the mens’ fine composition is inferred from the
speed which it imagines, independently (sibi . . . ipsa) of external
stimulus [which would of course reach it from the anima]. In (C)
it composition and independent powers are again described: 
ipsa conveys the point that mens is mobilis by itself, on its own,
even when not moved by an imago, so that a fortiori we need not