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# I

DAVID J. FURLEY

## LUCRETIUS THE EPICUREAN

### On the History of Man

I propose to distinguish two senses of the word "Epicurean": (1) one who subscribes to the doctrines of Epicurus; (2) a follower of Epicurus<sup>1</sup>.

A distinction hardly worth making, perhaps? On the contrary, there is an important point in it. To be an Epicurean in the first sense is an attribute shared by both Epicurus and Lucretius; but Lucretius was, while Epicurus was not, an Epicurean in the second sense. If we seek to understand the individual philosophical personality of the Latin poet, it may

<sup>1</sup> I believe the original stimulus for this paper, which I acknowledge gratefully, came from an essay contributed to one of my graduate seminars by Dr. Gregory Staley.

In preparing the paper, I have consulted the following works, apart from the standard editions and commentaries, which it seems unnecessary to list here:

J. WOLTJER, *Lucretii Philosophia cum fontibus comparata* (Groningen 1877).

M. GUYAU, *La morale d'Épicure* (Paris 1878).

K. REINHARDT, "Hekataios von Abdera und Demokrit", in *Hermes* 47 (1912), 492-513.

L. ROBIN, "Sur la conception épicurienne du progrès", in *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 22 (1916), 697 ff.

E. BIGNONE, *Storia della letteratura latina* II (Firenze<sup>2</sup> 1945).

G. VLASTOS, "On the Prehistory in Diodorus", in *AJPh* 67 (1946), 51-59.

M. TAYLOR, "Progress and Primitivism in Lucretius", in *AJPh* 68 (1947), 180 ff.

well be useful to concentrate on something that unquestionably distinguishes him from his master. At any rate, in the hope that this is so I shall focus attention in this paper, not on comparisons between Epicurus' and Lucretius' philosophical arguments, treated timelessly, but on Lucretius' sense of himself and his readers as followers of Epicurus.

I shall begin with a short discussion of what seem to me the difficulties and hazards of other approaches to Lucretius the Epicurean.

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- Ph. MERLAN, "Lucretius, Primitivist or Progressivist?", in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 11 (1950), 364 ff.
- A. C. KELLER, "Lucretius and the Idea of Progress", in *The Classical Journal* 46 (1951), 185-188.
- A. GRILLI, "La posizione di Aristotele, Epicuro, e Posidonio nei confronti della storia della civiltà", in *Rendiconti dell'Istituto Lombardo, Classe di Lettere...* 86 (1953), 3-44.
- P. GIUFFRIDA, "Il finale (vv. 1440-1457) del V libro di Lucrezio", in *Epicurea in memoriam Hectoris Bignone* (Genova 1959), 129-165.
- W. SPOERRI, *Späthellenistische Berichte über Welt, Kultur und Götter*, Schweizerische Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft, 9 (Basel 1959).
- J.-P. BORLE, « Progrès ou déclin de l'humanité ? », in *MH* 19 (1962), 162-176.
- Ch. R. BEYE, "Lucretius and Progress", in *The Classical Journal* 58 (1963), 160-169.
- Th. COLE, *Democritus and the Sources of Greek Anthropology*, American Philological Association Monographs, 25 (1967).
- L. EDELSTEIN, *The Idea of Progress in Classical Antiquity* (Baltimore 1967).
- W. R. NETHERCUT, "The Conclusion of Lucretius' Fifth Book: Further Remarks", in *The Classical Journal* 63 (1967), 97-106.
- L. PERELLI, "La storia dell'umanità nel V libro di Lucrezio", in *Atti della Accademia delle Scienze di Torino...* 101 (1967), 117-285.
- M. RUCH, "Lucrèce et le problème de la civilisation", in *Les Études Classiques* 37 (1969), 272-284.
- V. BUCHHEIT, "Epikurs Triumph des Geistes", in *Hermes* 99 (1971), 303-323.
- J. C. FREDOUILLE, "Lucrèce et le double progrès contrastant", in *Pallas* 19 (1972), 11-27.
- E. J. KENNEY, "The Historical Imagination of Lucretius", in *G & R* 19 (1972), 12-24.

Of these, the closest to my own position is the article by J. C. Fredouille, and I wish I had known of it earlier in the preparation of this paper.

In the first place, it is perfectly obvious, although often temporarily forgotten, that Lucretius had access to much more of the written work of Epicurus than we have. If we seize upon some nuance, in the exposition of a piece of doctrine, that appears to differentiate Lucretius from the *Letter to Herodotus*, we must always try to rest content with frustrating conditionals, because we do not know whether Epicurus wrote with the same emphasis and the same tone in his book *On Nature*<sup>1</sup>. There is no need to say more about this.

There is plainly more hope, if we wish to compare Lucretius with Epicurus doctrinally, in fixing upon intellectual developments that belong without any doubt to the two and a half centuries between Epicurus and Lucretius. If we can find Lucretius defending an attitude to such developments, then clearly his defence could not have been learnt directly from Epicurus, and we can begin to collect evidence that might reveal Lucretius' own enrichment of Epicurean doctrine.

The most significant feature in the history of philosophy in this period was the rise of Stoicism. Although Epicurus lived and taught in Athens alongside Zeno's school for many years, his philosophical doctrines appear to have been worked out before he came to Athens, and no one will suggest that Zeno was a major factor in their formation. Of developments of Stoicism by Cleanthes and Chrysippus, of course, he knew nothing. On the other hand, Lucretius wrote at a time when Stoic literature was extensive, Stoic doctrines were well known to the literate world, and to a great extent Stoicism had displaced the Academy and the Peripatos from the position of authority that they held in the time of Epicurus. If Lucretius, then, could be shown to respond precisely to Stoic positions, to show knowledge of Stoic arguments and to frame reasoned replies

<sup>1</sup> Cf. William E. LEONARD, in his General Introduction to the Leonard and Smith edition of Lucretius, p. 32: "The very different temperament of Epicurus, so imperturbable and unimaginative, so self-secure beyond debate or boast ...". How does he know?



to them, that would be a fairly reliable proof that he advanced beyond the position of Epicurus.

If one asks what were the peculiar physical doctrines of the Stoics—doctrines not shared by the fourth century Academy and Peripatos—those which come to mind at once are the periodic conflagration of the cosmos and its rebirth out of the fire, the fiery creative pneuma which permeates everything in the cosmos, the special kind of mixture (κρᾶσις δι' ὅλου) exemplified by the permeation of pneuma, the tension (τόνος) imparted by the pneuma which gives each thing its individuality, the *seminal formula* or *spermatic reason* (σπερματικὸς λόγος) which accounts for the generation of each new thing, and Fate. I cannot find any passage in Lucretius where one of these doctrines receives special attention<sup>1</sup>. If we turn to ethical questions, the list of characteristic Stoic doctrines would, I suppose, include the “indifferents” (ἀδιάφορα), the equality of vices, the intellectual interpretation of the emotions, and the “apathy” of the wise man. Again, I can find nothing in Lucretius that takes particular notice of these peculiarities. Lucretius’ editors and commentators commonly point to particular passages of the poem with the claim that “no doubt” he had the Stoics particularly in mind here. But on examination it appears that these passages always may, and often must, be directed at other targets<sup>2</sup>.

If the Stoics will not serve as a touchstone for testing Lucretius’ use of his philosophical legacy from Epicurus, are there not other intellectual advances, post-Epicurean but pre-Lucretian, that might serve the purpose? The special sciences made great strides in this period, and one might perhaps expect

<sup>1</sup> The doctrine of Fate might appear to be an exception, because of Lucretius II 251-293. I have tried to argue that the philosophical background of this passage is Aristotelian, rather than Stoic, in *Two Studies in the Greek Atomists* (Princeton 1967), Part II.

<sup>2</sup> See my article “Lucretius and the Stoics”, in *BICS* 13 (1966), 13-33, where I have attempted to argue this in detail.

Lucretius to take some notice of the astronomy of Eratosthenes, Hipparchus, or Archimedes, or of the physiology of Herophilus and Erasistratus, or of other similar work. In fact, we find no clear evidence in Lucretius of any acquaintance with this work. Lucretius seems to take more notice of Presocratic theories than of Hellenistic ones. The sixth book of *De rerum natura* evidently uses material from earlier meteorology—but the closest connections seem to be with no one later than Theophrastus<sup>1</sup>. Although the subject of astronomy—or rather of astrophysics—was important to Epicureans, for obvious reasons, their attitude to astronomical science was cavalier. The study of Book V 416-770 shows Lucretius to be a good poet and a good Epicurean, but it does not throw any special light on the nature of his Epicureanism.

\* \* \*

I turn now to the main subject of this paper—to Lucretius the Epicurean in the second sense.

It needs no long argument to show that Lucretius was indeed conscious of the philosophical activity of Epicurus as an event in history.

*humana ante oculos foede cum vita iaceret*

. . .

*primum Graius homo mortalis tollere contra  
est oculos ausus, primusque obsistere contra.*

(I 62-67)

In just the same way, in the lines that Lucretius imitates here, Empedocles picked out a particular event (the philosophical activity of Pythagoras, according to the ancient source) as crucial to the growth of understanding:

<sup>1</sup> See E. REITZENSTEIN, *Theophrast bei Epikur und Lukrez* (Heidelberg 1924), and the Appendix to Book VI in C. BAILEY's 1947 edition of Lucretius.

ἦν δέ τις ἐν κείνοισιν ἀνὴρ περιώσια εἰδώς. . .

(*Vorsokr.* 31 B 129)

At the beginning of Book III, Lucretius reiterates the same theme:

*E tenebris tantis tam clarum extollere lumen  
qui primus potuisti inlustrans commoda vitae  
te sequor, o Graiae gentis decus...*

And again, climactically, at the beginning of Book V (8-10):

*dicendum est, deus ille fuit, deus, inclute Memmi,  
qui princeps vitae rationem invenit eam quae  
nunc appellatur sapientia...*

There was a time *before*, when human life was tainted with fear and greed, then came the teaching of Epicurus, and now *we*—Lucretius, Memmius, and all of mankind—have been taught the wisdom (if we will listen to it) that will enable us to live in peace and purity of mind.

Now, when Lucretius expounds the tenets of Epicurean atomism, about the elements of the physical world, or cosmology, or even morality, there may well be no particular significance in the chronological distance between himself and Epicurus. But there is one context in which it can hardly fail to be significant: namely, in the long account, at the end of Book V, of the *history* of human civilization. It would have been difficult for Epicurus to view himself and his work as a point of discontinuity between earlier and later time. At least, if Epicurus made such a claim for himself (and there is no evidence that he did), he plainly could not make it with the same air of proclaiming a *fact*—a piece of good news—with which Lucretius invests it. Epicurus rarely refers to himself in the first person singular in the extant letters when he is expounding his philosophy; in the introductions, where he

does refer to himself, he seems to me to adopt the tone of one who seeks for the truth along with his readers. There is, of course, a well known tradition that Epicurus was the most ungenerous of all Greek philosophers in his treatment of his predecessors, and went to great lengths to dissociate himself from all "influences". But this tradition itself rests on shaky ground, and it seems to me to have been grossly exaggerated by the commentators<sup>1</sup>. The tradition rests very largely on Diogenes Laertius X 7-8, where the tales of Epicurus' rudeness about other philosophers are retailed along with other tales that Diogenes explicitly declares to be slanders on Epicurus; and Diogenes follows with the remark: "But all these people [*sc.* who tell these tales] are crazy, since there are abundant witnesses to Epicurus' unsurpassed kindness to all men." Moreover, where the slanders can be checked, they get no confirmation. "Run away from all *paideia*" is quoted from "the Letter to Pythocles", but it cannot be found in the extant *Letter*. "Lerocritus" is said to be Epicurus' contemptuous nickname for Democritus, but this contempt finds no expression in the *Letter to Herodotus*. The evidence does not suggest that Epicurus himself claimed to be a divinely inspired prophet with a totally new message.

Lucretius, however, committed himself to such a view of Epicurus, in the passages quoted above, and thereby found himself confronted with a problem, if he was to save his consistency in his account of the development of human civilization. Following Epicurus' own doctrine, he must explain the history of man as a continuous development, wholly dependent on natural causes, from the first natural growth of men from the earth to contemporary civilizations. The important thing will be to eliminate the need for supernatural breaks in the con-

<sup>1</sup> For example, Cyril BAILEY, *The Greek Atomists and Epicurus* (Oxford 1928), 226. For a detailed criticism of the tradition, see now David SEDLEY, "Epicurus and his Professional Rivals", in *Études sur l'Épicurisme antique*, éditées par J. BOLLACK et A. LAKS (Lille 1976), 119-159.

tinuity, so as to combat rival theories involving a δημιουργός or νομοθέτης. But then the happy condition of the Epicurean community, accessible to all mankind if they will only listen, needs precisely this to explain it—a break away from previous history, produced by a kind of νομοθέτης, Epicurus himself.

To put it another way, Lucretius must show that the well known achievements of mankind—the progressive stages of technology, political and social institutions, and so on—were learnt from nature<sup>1</sup>. But he must bear in mind all the time that nature *uninterpreted* or wrongly interpreted produces not Epicurean enlightenment, but only the impoverished and darkened mentality of pre-Epicurean society. As he puts it himself in a phrase that he liked well enough to use four times, the pre-Epicurean terror and darkness of mind must be dispersed by *naturae species ratioque* (I 146-148; II 59-61; III 91-93; VI 39-41)—that is, by looking at nature *and interpreting it*. The commentators have not always seen the point of this fully. Bailey's translation "the outer view and the inner law of nature" does not quite get it right, and his analysis in the note on I 51 does not justify the translation. C. Giussani glosses the word *ratio* with φυσιολογία, which is correct, and A. Ernout quotes Cicero *Fin.* I 19, 63 *omnium autem rerum natura cognita levamur superstitione, liberamur mortis metu, non conturbamur ignoracione rerum*, where the word *cognita* makes the right point.

That is not to say, of course, that Lucretius was committed to the idea of an *opposition* between the tendencies of nature and the doctrines of Epicurus. The relationship is a good deal more subtle than that. Epicurean doctrine is not unnatural or antinatural—and of course not supernatural: *deus ille fuit* is not to be taken literally. Nature without Epicurean interpretation taught mankind how to make clothes, fires, metals,

<sup>1</sup> There was of course a long tradition of imaginative histories of the development of man, beginning perhaps as far back as Anaxagoras. For bibliography and a recent account, see Thomas COLE, *op. cit.* (*supra* p. 2 n.).



language, cities, music; and the Epicurean is not required to reject any of these things. What, then, is inadequate about nature's teaching? Chiefly, it may be that it is *endlessly* suggestive. Man is apt to pick up from nature a line of progress, without picking up the realization that the line has an end, or, to change the metaphor, that although one may continue along the same path, at a certain point one ceases to climb and starts going downhill. Thus the invention of metals is good in that it provides man with a means of security against wild beasts, but bad when it leads to a greed for gold.

Epicurus' understanding of nature, according to Lucretius, was superior in just this, that he understood the *limits* of things:

*atque omne immensum peragravit mente animoque,  
unde refert nobis victor quid possit oriri,  
quid nequeat, finita potestas denique cuique  
quanam sit ratione atque alte terminus haerens.*

(I 74-77)

Nature herself is given a voice by Lucretius to protest at being misinterpreted by men who believe that life offers a *limitless* variety of pleasures:

*nam tibi praeterea quod machiner inveniamque,  
quod placeat, nihil est: eadem sunt omnia semper.*

(III 944-945)

Nature speaks, and with an Epicurean accent. The good Epicurean *interprets* the message of nature. There is no clash of motives between nature and Epicurus, but nature needed the life and work of Epicurus to make its message clear.

If this idea is right, then we can conclude at once that the question so often posed about Lucretius' history of civilization, "primitivist or progressivist?", is quite beside the point. It

could hardly be, for him, either a matter of a "natural" decline from a primitive golden age, or of a progression to higher and higher levels of prosperity and happiness. What we would expect, rather, is a step by step account of the growth of civilization with a mainly negative emphasis—to show that *no* step requires supernatural agencies for its explanation—together with Epicurean reflexions about the spiritual impoverishment of any or perhaps each of the stages.

Let us probe a little more deeply into what we might expect of Lucretius in this situation, first stating our hypothesis somewhat more exactly.

It is, first, that Lucretius found in the writings of Epicurus an account of the growth of the institutions of human civilization, following upon the description of the origin of life on earth. It hardly needs to be proved that Epicurus would interest himself in this topic, in view of the clear indications that it had long been a point of contention between those who believed the world had an origin, like Anaxagoras and Democritus, and supporters of an eternal cosmos, like Aristotle. But in any case the very brief account in *Letter to Herodotus* 75-76 is proof enough. Some, like Giussani and Bailey, believed that a fuller version of Epicurus' theory is to be found in Diodorus Siculus I 7-8, but this belief had already been shown to be dubious by Reinhardt, and it looks still more threadbare after Cole's careful analysis<sup>1</sup>. If we cannot use Diodorus to fill out our picture of Epicurus' theory, we must make the most of the slight indications that we find in the *Letter to Herodotus*.

"One is to assume" says Epicurus, "that nature itself was instructed and constrained as to many and various matters by the very facts (ὕπ' αὐτῶν τῶν πραγμάτων), and that reasoning later sharpened up and added further discoveries to the lessons passed on by nature, in some matters more quickly and in some more slowly" (*Ep. ad Hdt.* 75).

<sup>1</sup> See K. REINHARDT and Th. COLE, *opp. citt.* (*supra* pp. 1-2 n.).



The first point that receives special emphasis here is that the opening move is accomplished by the sheer physical interaction between man and the environment: this is what provides the material for human reason to work on. With this simple move, Epicurus countered three different rival theories. There is, first, the naive idea that an Athena or a Hermes made a gift of the arts to man—the idea that is explicitly denied in the parallel passage of Diogenes of Oenoanda (Fr. 10). Secondly, Epicurus' theory undermines the argument of Plato in *Laws* X that art is prior to nature and chance as a source of motion. Thirdly, it shows that the complicated hypothesis that apparently featured in Aristotle's dialogue *On Philosophy*—that the cosmos is liable to periodic floods and conflagrations, after which the arts grow all over again from ideas preserved by a few survivors—is quite unnecessary<sup>1</sup>.

Secondly, we must notice that Epicurus distinguishes two steps in the development process: an irrational effect of the environment, and a rational use of the lessons taught by the environment. But it would be wrong to think of these as two successive chronological periods. The only point of importance is that the intelligent development of the arts presupposes the unplanned effect of the environment.

Thirdly, Epicurus mentions that the contribution of reason was a gradual process that took more time in some fields than in others.

These general principles are then exemplified in the famous description of the development of languages<sup>2</sup>.

There are no moral reflections in this part of the *Letter*. The following sections deal with the motion of the heavens,

<sup>1</sup> Arist. *De philosophia* Fr. 8 Ross.

<sup>2</sup> I take it that this passage is to be thought of as an example. A summary letter has no room for more than one example, and the general point is made more clearly by setting out one theme in some detail than by surveying many themes. There is no great significance, then, in the fact that Lucretius gives equal weight to many other matters. There may yet be significance, of course, in the detailed differences of treatment of the theme of language, but we shall not discuss that here.

and in this connection Epicurus frequently refers to the moral principle familiar from *Kύριαι δόξαι* 11 and 12: that freedom from fear of the gods can come only to one who has the right philosophy of nature (*φυσιολογία*). There is no trace, however, so far as I can see, of the idea that this philosophy of nature is itself a feature to be fitted into the scheme of development that was sketched in §§ 75-76. Epicurus suggests neither that his philosophy of nature started from a natural impulse and progressed by stages, like other arts, nor that he himself, the inventor, was responsible for bringing about an exception to this gradualism. He simply does not consider the question <sup>1</sup>.

Our hypothesis is, then, that Lucretius found in his collection of works of Epicurus a fully worked out theory of the history of civilization and the arts, written in the same spirit as the relevant passage of the *Letter to Herodotus*. He himself worked this material into a new shape. That it was Lucretius who was the author of this new shape, and not some unknown intermediate source (the unwanted standby of those who hate to impute originality to any writer), seems to me a reasonable supposition. The focus of this reworking is the rhetorical elevation of the role of Epicurus in the history of civilization; and that is surely something that belongs to the structure of Lucretius' poem. The reworking must preserve the principles of the original—that the initial move in each process comes from the environment itself, and that the development takes place by gradual stages, as human reason deliberates about the natural facts. But the whole development is now to be studied in its relation to the discoveries (*divina reperta*) of Epicurus, which took place at a particular time in this development but stand out as an exceptional event, neither caused by the automa-

<sup>1</sup> There are two other Epicureans whose writings in this field have been partially preserved (apart from Lucretius): Diogenes of Oenoanda, and Hermarchus, the first scholar, whose account of the origin of laws against homicide is reproduced in Porphyry, *De abstinentia* I 10-11. There is nothing in either of these that is similar to Lucretius' *primum Graius homo*....

tic necessity of the environment like the first communicative noises of animals, nor prepared by gradual stages in earlier history like the use of iron for ploughshares. The philosophy of Epicurus thus provides Lucretius with a new viewpoint from which to study the history of man; and it is just this viewpoint that gives the moral perspective to Lucretius' "anthropology".

Of course, in the Epicurean system the development of human society and technology is necessarily a progression of a certain sort. There was first a simple way of life, when the human species first emerged from earth, now a highly complex one, and the task is to describe the gradual progression from one to the other. But neither simplicity itself, nor complexity itself, gives a *morally better* way of life: which of the two is better is simply something that has to be determined by looking at both in the light of Epicurus' moral principles. What we should expect of Lucretius, therefore, if this hypothesis is correct, is that he would describe the development, by exercising his imagination on the theory of human history laid down by Epicurus, and take care to point out the moral inadequacies of each stage<sup>1</sup>. We should add that since what he describes is inevitably a progression of a sort, as we have said, we might think he would especially emphasize, to avoid misunderstanding, that this progression is not a moral one—that the later stages are not better, and can be worse, than the earlier.

\* \* \*

The next step is to test this hypothesis by looking for confirmation or refutation of these expectations in Book V of *De rerum natura*. The outcome—to anticipate—is that there is nothing in the text, so far as I can see, that falsifies our hypothesis. Furthermore, what is found in the text is accounted for more plausibly by this explanation than by any of the others

<sup>1</sup> There is a stimulating tribute to Lucretius' historical imagination by E. J. KENNEY, *art. cit.* (*supra* p. 2 n.).

that have been advanced: for example, that Lucretius was really a progressivist, because that was the teaching of Epicurus, but was inhibited from being wholeheartedly a progressivist because of his misanthropy, pathological fears, or compassionate poetic sensibilities; or that he was really a primitivist, because he was committed to the thesis that the world is now past its prime and is proceeding downhill towards ultimate dissolution, but was sometimes distracted from this thesis by the beauty of nature's lessons and the ingenuity of human art; or that Epicureanism was optimistic but Lucretius was a pessimist.

Although the whole passage must be carefully examined before we can accept our hypothesis as the best available explanation, that will not be possible within the limits of this paper. I propose to comment on three sections only: the description of the life of primitive man (925-1010), the origin of wrong beliefs about the gods (1161-1240), and the end of the book.

\* \* \*

On the subject of primitive man, I shall be as brief as possible, since so much has already been written. The first point to note is that the passage follows closely upon a description of the origin of living species from the earth, and the process of natural selection of the fittest to survive, from the large (although limited) variety of spontaneously produced creatures. Although Lucretius interposes a forty-seven line paragraph explaining the limits imposed on this variety by the facts of nature (878-924), we should remember that initially the subject under discussion at 925 ff. is *survival*. We have already heard that lions survive because of their *virtus*, foxes because of their *dolus*, deer because of their *fuga*, and dogs, sheep, and cattle because their services have earned them protection at the hands of men. But man, as we can see, has none of these advantages, and it is obvious that contemporary men and women, thrust out into raw nature without any of their technology, would have a poor



chance of survival. So in this case the historical imagination of Lucretius must go to work within strict limits: he could hardly do other than give primitive men a stronger, hardier constitution than men of the Roman Republic (*multo durius, solidis magis ossibus* 925-927).

Having made this point, Lucretius stresses what they lacked: ploughing, iron, agriculture, fire, clothes, houses, politics, laws, legal marriage. They ate berries, drank water, lived in caves, slept under brushwood, mated through love, rape, or barter, defended themselves against animals with stones. There is nothing, so far, that is not an almost inevitable consequence of Epicurean physical theory. This is the first stage on the (non-moral) progression towards the complexity of civilization.

But of course there is more to it than that. A quite different picture can be presented, as many have shown<sup>1</sup>. Lucretius goes on to say that the first men suffered no fear that the sun would fail to return in the morning, and experienced only the same mortality rate, from wild beasts or famine, as men of the present day do from war, shipwreck, and surfeit. Moreover, much of the description of primitive conditions is deliberately contrasted with later passages. Thus primitive man was hardy (*durius* 926), but later began to soften (*mollescere* 1014). At first sexual desire was associated with manly strength (962-965), later with weakness (1017). At first, they could withstand cold (929), later the discovery of fire made them less tolerant (1015). Observation of such contrasts led one scholar to claim that for Lucretius "primitive man is living the ideal existence, free of entangling human commitments; his sexual encounters can be considered auspicious by virtue of the asocial, antiseptic and atomic implications in the phrase ... '*Venus ... iungit corpora amantum*' ... The final contrast becomes one of innocence and serenity in ignorance, set beside viciousness and misery in knowledge."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Especially L. Robin, Ch. R. Beye, and P. Boyancé.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. R. BEYE, *art. cit.* (*supra* p. 2 n.), 166.

Now, I submit that this is exaggerated nonsense. It is both ludicrous and unnecessary to think that Lucretius commends to us a life without clothes, houses, fire—or poetry; or that he wants us to return, as to a lost ideal, to fighting for our lives, in constant fear (*paventes* 986), against wild beasts. It is notorious, of course, that he warns the reader against deep sexual feelings; but that is not to say that he wants to commend rape as an alternative, still less that he wants us to regard even friendship with disapprobation because it first arose in the “softer” stage of human development (1019). Nor is there any contrast between “serenity in ignorance” and “misery in knowledge”. The lines that have been supposed to suggest such a contrast (973-981) in fact make a quite different point: namely, that primitive men lacked those *false superstitions* about the sun which might give rise to the fear that daylight would never return to earth. There is absolutely no warrant for generalizing the passage into a commendation of ignorance and rejection of knowledge.

The hypothesis that I am suggesting, on the other hand, leads to a perfectly consistent and unforced view of the passage. We find in it just that kind of texture that we should expect—on the one hand, the description of a primitive, simple state of unthinking interaction with nature, to be contrasted with more complex and more deliberate ways of life; and on the other hand, a clear moral perspective that surveys both stages, without indentifying either of them as worse or better in their own nature. There is much that is morally praiseworthy about the primitive life; and Lucretius praises it in effect, as Robin and others have demonstrated. There is also much that is deplorable, and Lucretius makes that clear too: they were *miseri* (944 and 983), they were afraid (986), they died agonizingly from wounds because of ignorance (998), they suffered from famine (1007), they often died from accidental poisoning (1009). As an Epicurean, Lucretius’ criterion for the good life was freedom from anxiety and pain. Admittedly, he contrasts their wounds,

caused by wild beasts, with war wounds, their hunger with modern over-indulgence, their accidental poisoning with the wilful murders of modern times. But it is only dedication to a false theory about his intention that has persuaded critics to believe that he meant us to envy and emulate these poor people.

\* \* \*

The origin of religion is discussed after an account of the development of social and political structures. In passing, it is worth observing in that account a particularly clear instance of the pattern that confirms our hypothesis—a natural development that is non-moral, assessed by moral criteria drawn from outside that development. At first, Lucretius says (1110 ff.), men of power distributed property to others according to their beauty, strength, or intelligence. But then property and wealth supplanted these natural talents, because the beautiful and strong people—he carefully omits intelligence this time—normally (*plerumque*) pursue wealth. Then he comments on the folly of this development from the point of view of the true philosophy of life (*siquis vera vitam ratione gubernet* 1117). But before claiming this as another bit of evidence for the “primitivist” interpretation, one should notice that a few lines further on the natural progression, as it continues, produces a change that must be thought of as better, when unbridled rivalry for power led to a greater reliance on law and punishment. “Thenceforward, the fear of penalties taints the prizes of life” (1151). Bailey comments<sup>1</sup>: “... There arose a new disturbing influence in men’s lives, the fear of punishment”—as if this were an *added* misery, another step on the downward path. But that seems to distort the sense somewhat. As an Epicurean, Lucretius would unquestionably prefer the institutions of the law to the violence of anarchy. He makes his moral comment, not by deploring the change in motivation from rivalry and anger to fear of

<sup>1</sup> C. BAILEY, vol. III, p. 1504.



punishment, but by noting simply that because of the fear of punishment one cannot live unjustly and be happy<sup>1</sup>.

The notion that Lucretius intends to present some kind of steady moral progression or decline—especially one from “innocence in ignorance” to “misery in knowledge”—is impossible to reconcile with the way he describes the origin of religious beliefs and practices. For he puts together, in the same context, both a theory about true beliefs (according to Epicurus), and one about false beliefs. Visions, waking and sleeping, led men to the notion of gods, in human form, everlastingly alive and supremely happy (1169-1182). Beyond that, they observed the seasonal changes of the sky, and in ignorance of the true causes they attributed all the workings of the heavenly bodies and meteorological phenomena to the will of the gods (1183-1193). There is no suggestion here that the second of these arguments is a decadent successor to the first, nor even that one preceded the other. Lucretius is vague about the timing: he introduces the first reason with the adverb *iam tum* (1169), which presumably means that it was contemporaneous with the early stages of civilization that he has been describing; and he continues with the second reason in the same imperfect tense with no temporal adverb but simply *praeterea* (1183).

He follows this description, morally neutral, as we have seen, with his moral comment:

*o genus infelix humanum, talia divis  
cum tribuit facta...*

(1194 ff.)

The structure of this passage needs some clarification: its logic has been much misunderstood.

<sup>1</sup>

*inde metus maculat poenarum praemia vitae.  
circumretit enim vis atque iniuria quemque  
atque unde exortast ad eum plerumque revertit,  
...*

(1151-1153)

I suggest that instead of taking this as a general comment on the folly of mankind, we take full note of *quemque* and *plerumque*, and interpret the lines thus: this is the

We have first an exclamation about the miserable folly of mankind in supposing that the phenomena of the sky express the anger of the gods: they thus stored up grief for all future generations (1194-1197). There is no piety in maintaining rituals at the altars: piety lies rather in being able to view everything with a mind at peace (1198-1203). For (*nam* 1204—this is the word that has been seen as a source of trouble) when we contemplate the motions of the stars and planets, “then into our hearts weighed down by other ills this misgiving too begins to raise up its wakened head” (*tunc aliis oppressa malis in pectora cura | illa quoque expergefatum caput erigere infit* 1207-1208)—the misgiving that perhaps there is some immense divine power that turns the stars. “For lack of reasoning assails the doubting mind” (*temptat enim dubiam mentem rationis egestas* 1211), that perhaps the world after all had no natural origin and will have no end, but is endowed with eternal being by the will of the gods.

At first sight, the lines introduced by *nam* (1204 ff.), since they give an explanation of how human beings are led to a belief in powerful, executive gods by the movements of the stars and planets, seem to follow more naturally upon the description of this belief in 1194-1197. Hence Giussani, followed by H. Diels, bracketed the intervening lines 1198-1203 as a later addition. Bailey kept the lines in the text in his 1947 edition, but explained the passage as involving either an ellipse, or (Bailey’s own personal favourite) “another case of Lucretius’ ‘suspension of thought’.” In his paraphrase (p. 1512) he ruthlessly supplanted *nam* with “yet”.

Editors have been led astray especially, I believe, by misunderstanding two expressions: *aliis oppressa malis* (1207) and *dubiam mentem* (1211). Ernout and Robin (also Leonard and Smith) in line 1207 preferred the reading of the Italian manu-

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origin of the fear of punishment, which taints all the good things in the lives of those who suffer from it; their own violence and wrong-doing has a tendency to recoil upon them.

scripts *in pectore* to *in pectora* (O and Q), alleging that "*in pectora... caput erigere infit*" tortures the sense and the grammar<sup>1</sup>. *Oppressa* must therefore agree with *cura*, and has to be read simply as an antithesis to *caput erigere infit*: "cette inquiétude, étouffée jusque-là sous d'autres maux, commence elle aussi à redresser la tête." But why should this anxiety have been hitherto suppressed in this way? And what does that idea add to the sense? Bailey, following Giussani, retains the reading *in pectora*, and takes *oppressa*, correctly, to agree with *pectora*. Yet both he and Giussani miss the point of the phrase. It is not just otiose description, but states the cause of superstitious belief: if the mind is not at peace but oppressed already by other anxieties (i.e. other than superstitious fear), then this fear too begins to raise its head. Having failed to understand this emphasis, the editors also overlook the force of *temptat dubiam mentem* (1211). We should take *dubiam* not proleptically, as Bailey does ("lack of reasoning assails our mind with doubt, whether..."), but conditionally: "if the mind is in doubt, then lack of reasoning troubles it, as to whether...".

The logic is now perfectly straight forward. Early in their history, says Lucretius, men were led to belief in gods, firstly because of dream images and other visions, and secondly because they could not otherwise explain the phenomena of the sky (1169-1193—all without moral comment). Wretched creatures! This belief involved them in misery and impiety. True piety does not lie in ritual observances and sacrifices, but in being able to contemplate everything with a mind at peace (1194-1203). For (*nam* 1204) if the mind is assailed by other ills, then it is easy to fall also into terrifying *and impious* beliefs about the gods—namely, that they taint their perfect happiness with the work of rolling the heavens around and expressing their anger in thunder and lightning. For if the mind is in doubt,

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps they were convinced by A. Brieger's astonishing comment, quoted by Bailey (p. 1517): *in pectora nihil caput erigere possit nisi infra pectus sit, i.e. in ventre.*

lack of a true philosophy of nature (*rationis egestas*)—the source of this doubt—makes one wonder whether after all the (Epicurean) theory of the mortality of the world must be wrong and the (Platonic-Aristotelian) theory of an everlasting cosmos maintained by divine powers may be right <sup>1</sup>.

This reading of the passage <sup>2</sup> reflects a normal Epicurean view of the nature of true piety and gives us a perfectly rational and coherent sequence of thought, in which the sentences introduced by *nam* in 1204 explain the thought that immediately precedes them. It is confirmed by the following lines 1218-1225: it is an uneasy conscience (*ob admissum foede dictumve superbe* 1224) that makes men fear that thunder and lightning are an expression of the gods' wrath—thus again *other* psychological troubles, of the kind that Epicureanism professes to cure, are the source of impious beliefs. Lucretius' next thoughts are similar: the admiral of a fleet—*ipso facto* disobeying the Epicurean command to live a quiet life—prays vainly to the gods in a storm. There is a certain unseen force (*vis abdita quaedam* 1233) that frustrates the ambitions of men. I take this to be a generalizing comment: nature, of itself, brings some evils to men <sup>3</sup>, and if they are ignorant of the true philosophy of nature, which teaches them that these evils are limited and bearable, they allow these experiences to overwhelm them with anxiety; this anxiety makes them fall prey also to the superstitions that are the topic of the whole passage.

Now we may ask what is the relationship between this passage and our hypothesis about the composition of the history

<sup>1</sup> It may be pointed out in passing that the everlasting cosmos was not an item of Stoic belief. See *supra* p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> One interpreter who comes very close to this same reading is J. H. WASZINK, «Zum Exkurs des Lukrez über Glaube und Aberglaube (V 1194-1240)», in *WS* 79 (1966), 308-313. But even he does not quite bring out the significance of *aliis oppressa malis*, and speaks (p. 312) of 1203-1204 as "ein allerdings nicht mit scharfer Logik konstruierter Satz."

<sup>3</sup> Cf. VI 29-31.

of man as a whole. There is a difference in emphasis—a slight and subtle one, but perhaps of some significance—between the rejected reading of the passage and the interpretation I have just proposed. Here is Giussani's summary of the whole section from 1181 onwards: "Vedendo ciò e ciò, gli uomini naturalmente pensarono questo e questo; infelici! ma come poteva essere altrimenti? come mai vedendo ciò e ciò non avrebbero pensato questo e questo?" Thus he points out and attempts to make sense of the repetition of the sense of 1183-1193 in 1204-1225. The moral comment ("infelici!"—actually lines 1194-1203) is a brief section sandwiched between two expressions of the same psychological explanation.

I suggest we should rather summarize thus: "Observing the sky, men came to believe such and such. Poor creatures! It led them to think piety lies in placating the gods with rituals, whereas true piety is rather to be found in Epicurean philosophy, which enables one to observe the sky without forming impious beliefs."

Thus the passage represents exactly the pattern our hypothesis leads us to expect. We have a description of a development in human society, followed by a long moral comment which explains the nature of true piety on principles drawn from outside that development. We must recall again that the whole of this theory about superstition follows an account of the origin of *true* religious belief (1169-1182). Lucretius' meaning is that nature by itself suggests to the human imagination both the right and the wrong idea of gods. Which is right and which is wrong? Only the discoveries of Epicurus can teach men that.

\* \* \*

The last twenty-two lines of Book V have for a long time been a point of contention among scholars. They consist, it seems, of repetitions of ideas from earlier lines, together with some scrappy and inadequate comments that do not correspond



with anything earlier<sup>1</sup>. Repeated motifs are the fortification of cities (1440), the distribution of land (1441), the formation of alliances (1443), the origin of agriculture (1448), of weapons (1449), of garments (1449), of poetry (1444 and 1451), of laws (1448). The only new idea of any importance is that since writing is a recent discovery, the historian of early times has nothing but *ratio* to guide his inquiries (1445-1447).

Of course, a conclusion may appropriately repeat in summary form the ideas already developed. But this list is rather unsatisfactory in that role, since it has the appearance of being an arbitrary and uncoordinated selection.

Yet the last ten lines, taken by themselves, do look like a concluding summary. We have first a list of technological achievements, then a statement about the manner of their origin:

*usus et impigrae simul experientia mentis  
paulatim docuit pedetemptim progredientis.  
sic unum quicquid paulatim protrahit aetas  
in medium ratioque in luminis erigit oras.  
namque alid ex alio clarescere corde videbant,  
artibus ad summum donec venere cacumen.*

What is striking about the last ten lines is that they present a totally *non-moral* conclusion. Without discrimination Lucretius mentions inventions that are useful in catering to human needs, such as agriculture and clothing, and superfluous ornaments such as sculpture. What he stresses is the gradualness of discovery, and the fact that its origin lies in experience (*usus*) and human ingenuity. We are back, in other words, in the world of ideas that we found in the *Letter to Herodotus* 75-76 (see *supra* p. 10).

But we have what looks like a different conclusion in 1379-1435, immediately before the last twenty-two lines. And this

<sup>1</sup> For details, see Ph. MERLAN, *art. cit.* (*supra* p. 2 n.).

conclusion is a moral one. It is worth examining it more closely. Merlan, in an otherwise valuable article on the conclusion of Book V<sup>1</sup>, dismisses it as one of "two jottings" incorporated here by an editor; Bailey (p. 1540) defends it against editors who called it "incoherent", but only by allowing it to be "discursive... typical of Lucretius' mind with its habit of accepting one thought after another, as they occur to him." If it is seen, however, as the conclusion to the history of civilization, I believe it can be shown to be one of the most carefully and beautifully composed sections of the poem.

The ostensible subject is the development of the art of music, from the first natural impulse of birdsong. But it is crucial to notice the remarkable frequency of occurrences of the idea of *pleasure*. We have *iuvare* (1381), *dulcis* (1384), *otia dia* (1387), *iuvabant* (1390), *cordi* (1391), *iucunde* (1394), *dulces cachinni* (1397), *laeta* (1400), *risus dulcesque cachinni* (1403), *solacia* (1405), *dulcedini' fructum* (1410), *suavius* and *placet* (1413), *vera voluptas* (1433). This strikes one even more significantly when one notices that in the whole preceding section 925-1378 there is no occurrence of any of these words except *dulcis* and *laetus*: *dulcis* appears once in a formula (*dulcia lumina vitae* 989), and twice in the passage about horticulture which may be seen as preparing the way for our conclusion (1367; 1377); *laetus* appears once in the same context (1372). In all the long description of the history of civilization and the moral comment upon it so far nothing has been said explicitly about the goal of all moral endeavour according to Epicurean philosophy: pleasure. It would be superbly appropriate if, by way of conclusion, something were at last said about how much pleasure the human race had achieved.

After his discourse about the pleasures of music, Lucretius therefore generalizes his moral comment in a brief glance over the whole development. He prepares for this carefully: there

<sup>1</sup> *Art. cit.* (*supra* p. 2 n.).



is first a description of the simple pleasures of music among country people, all expressed in a past tense, then a sentence or two remarking that watchmen of the present day, seeking to keep themselves awake, stimulate themselves with pleasant music. This pleasure is constant in quantity, he observes, not any greater now than it was in early times. It is what is at hand that gives pleasure, provided that one does not remember something more pleasant that is now lost (1412-1413), and the present object of pleasure drives out of mind what one used to enjoy. Thus the objects enjoyed change through the course of history, but the sum of pleasure does not grow. Once acorns and skins and beds of leaves were men's delight, then they were supplanted by other foods and clothes and more luxurious bedding. Both the simple and the more complex goods give rise to senseless rivalries and covetousness, but our fault, in modern times, is greater than that of the ancients, because the things we allow to torture us are unnecessary desires. Lucretius, the Epicurean, concludes (if this is truly the conclusion) with a comment that applies to the history of all humanity, insofar as it has failed to learn the moral lessons of Epicurus:

*ergo hominum genus incassum frustra laborat  
semper et in curis consumit inanibus aevum,  
nimirum quia non cognovit quae sit habendi  
finis et omnino quoad crescat vera voluptas  
idque minutatim vitam provexit in altum  
et belli magnos commovit funditus aestus.*

(1430-1435)

This ignorance has both goaded men to seek greater technological achievement, and plunged them into wars of rivalry.

This is, of course, totally incompatible with a "final contrast . . . of innocence and serenity in ignorance, set beside viciousness and misery in knowledge" a description that we quoted on p. 15. It is also quite incompatible, if these last few lines are read in their context, with Robin's more moderate comment:

"L'esprit de ce morceau [sc. 1408-1435] est tout à fait analogue à celui du développement 925-1010: chaque progrès suscite en nous de nouveaux besoins et nous éloigne davantage de l'heureuse simplicité de la vie de nature."<sup>1</sup> Lucretius explicitly rejects such an interpretation, in spite of the gloom of the last six lines, by pointing out that rivalry was just as great, in primitive times, for skins, as it is now, for purple embroidered robes (1423-1427). He has just painted a charming picture of the innocent delights of a *cultivated* orchard (1370-1378). He does not argue for a gradual moral decline, any more than for a gradual moral progression. He argues for a non-moral progression, and comments on it from his post-Epicurean moral standpoint.

The appropriateness of this passage (1379-1435) as a conclusion of the book convinces me that it *was* the conclusion, in Lucretius' mind. The sudden and striking emergence of the theme of pleasure (which is not noticed in the commentaries that I have consulted) shows that something different is intended here from the earlier moral comments; and the fact that pleasure is the Epicurean τέλος shows that this difference marks a climax. We finish with that crucial Epicurean moral lesson, that *vera voluptas* has a limit, in spite of its changing objects throughout the course of human history, and ignorance of this limit means the end of peace.

The presence of a second, non-moral conclusion (1448-1457) tempts one to guess. That it *is* an alternative is suggested by the repetition at 1454-1455 of two lines that occur in good order in the argument at 1388-1389. Repetition by itself does not entail that one of the two occurrences is to be treated with suspicion, but this particular repetition seems too close and too pointless. My guess—and it is only a guess, and there may be others just as well based—is that at one time Book V was of approximately the same length as the other five books; it

<sup>1</sup> A. ERNOUT et L. ROBIN, Tome III, p. 182.

contained a fairly brief, non-moral account of the progression of human institutions, similar in spirit to *Letter to Herodotus* 75-76, which included the two displaced scraps 1436-1439 and 1440-1447, and ended with 1448-1457. Lucretius, the Epicurean, rewrote it at greater length, adding his own extensive moral assessments of each step in the history of man <sup>1</sup>.

\* \* \*

One final comment: if my hypothesis is correct, then it is no accident that the prologue to Book VI says what it does. Athens was the first to give man corn, a civilized life, laws—and then “the pleasant comforts of life”, when she gave birth to Epicurus. He understood that men had now acquired all that was necessary for life: they had security, wealth, good reputation, and worthy children—and yet they were anxious. The fault lay in the mind itself, like a dirty, leaky pitcher (a picturesque way of describing the condition that we have discovered in Lucretius’ account of superstition, in 1204 ff.: the mind *aliis oppressa malis* finds new sources of anxiety). Epicurus taught the limits of desire and fear (VI 25), and showed how the vain desires and fears that tormented mankind could be cured by the study and right interpretation of nature (*naturae species ratioque* 41).

The moral perspective that informs Lucretius’ history of civilization, set out finally in what I take to be the conclusion of the book (1430-1435), is thus attributed to its author. The life and work of Epicurus came at the end of the development described by Lucretius, but it was neither a culmination nor a reversal of it. Epicurus stood above it, and shed the light of his philosophy on all that happened.

<sup>1</sup> I have been greatly helped, in framing my thoughts about the conclusion of Book V, by conversations with Prof. John Jacobson.

## DISCUSSION

*M. Schmid:* Im Hinblick auf die von Mr. Furley an den Anfang gestellte Distinktion betr. den möglichen Doppelsinn des Wortes « Epikureer », möchte ich bemerken: sehr oft steht es doch wohl gerade so, dass ein « follower of Epicurus » sich voll und ganz zu den Lehren des Meisters bekennt. Andererseits kann es freilich auch vorkommen, dass ein Nachfolger Epikurs wie Lukrez im einen oder anderen Punkt wenn nicht geradezu vom Meister abweicht, so doch — in sachlicher Hinsicht oder auch nur ausdrucks-mässig — einen neuen Zug hinzubringt, und das sind dann stets besonders interessante Fälle. In diesem Zusammenhang möchte ich auf die von Mr. Furley zitierten Verse I 74-77 hinweisen: hier ist von der unveränderlich feststehenden Satzung die Rede, und trotz des Bildes, das an die Rolle des Terminus im römischen Lebensbereich denken lässt, stehen gewiss gedanklich die ἐξ ἀρχῆς παγόντες ὅροι des Kritolaos (bei Philo, *De aet. mundi*) dahinter: « unwandelbar ist, was von der Natur des Alls ausgeht, da sie bei der Unverbrüchlichkeit der einmal gefassten Beschlüsse die ursprünglich eingesenkten Marksteine unverrückbar bewahrt » (die Formulierung also bezogen auf die Natur des Alls). Zumindest ausdrucks-mässig findet sich das (wie Klaus Reich in einem Aufsatz zur Geschichte des Naturgesetzes in der *Festschrift Ernst Kapp* gezeigt hat) so noch nicht bei Epikur; wir stehen hier somit vor dem interessanten Fall, dass gerade bei der Charakteristik der Verdienste des Meisters durch seinen Nachfolger Lukrez eine gewisse Besonderheit gegenüber Epikur fassbar wird.

*M. Furley:* Thank you for the reference to Critolaus. It seems plausible that the expression *alte terminus haerens* may derive some special force for Lucretius from the development of this τόπος by post-Epicurean philosophers. But it is important to bear in mind,

I think, that the doctrine of limits in nature was fundamental to the physical theory of Epicurus himself. I can refer to Phillip De Lacy's article on the subject: "Limit and Variation in the Epicurean Philosophy", in *Phoenix* 23 (1969), 104-113.

*M. Grimal*: Je commencerai par approuver entièrement l'interprétation proposée par M. Furley du vers V 1207, lorsqu'il lit: *tunc aliis oppressa malis in pectora cura*. Les souffrances et les angoisses de la vie primitive contribuent à créer chez les hommes un état de moindre résistance en face de la crainte des dieux. La crainte des dieux n'est pas «jusque-là étouffée en notre cœur sous d'autres maux» (Ernout): elle se dresse par-dessus les autres terreurs, comme un mal supplémentaire.

Pour découvrir une pensée propre à Lucrèce, par rapport à la pensée d'Epicure lui-même, M. Furley a très justement estimé que le domaine couvert par le chant V était particulièrement susceptible de fournir des matériaux précieux. En effet, le temps de Lucrèce est aussi celui où les penseurs se préoccupent des problèmes que pose la situation de l'homme face au monde extérieur. On peut distinguer trois points:

Salluste, dans les prologues de ses deux monographies, affirme que la valeur de l'homme réside dans son activité spirituelle; il refuse de lier cette valeur à l'action matérielle (politique, en particulier). Il oppose ainsi un domaine de l'esprit (*animus*) au domaine du corps (celui des passions, de la vanité, des plaisirs corporels, etc.). Reflet de l'opposition platonicienne entre l'âme et le corps.

Un second point concerne l'autonomie du sage; problème déjà posé par Aristote dans l'*Ethique à Nicomaque* et souvent repris par Cicéron, qui reproche aux épicuriens de faire dépendre le Souverain Bien de conditions matérielles.

Un troisième point concerne la notion de progrès matériel. Comment les hommes sont-ils sortis de leur condition quasi animale pour parvenir à un état de civilisation qui leur assure une vie matérielle meilleure? Problème agité tout particulièrement par Posidonius.



Or, il semble que, dans le chant V, Lucrèce apporte une réponse à ces préoccupations des penseurs contemporains :

1) Lucrèce affirme que les conditions de la vie primitive ne sont pas, fondamentalement, malheureuses : il dit expressément que nos ancêtres pouvaient parvenir au « bonheur épicurien » (V 1390 sqq.), et la reprise des vers 29-33 du chant II est significative à cet égard. Quelles que soient les conditions matérielles, l'homme peut, par la seule puissance de son esprit, échapper à la fatalité de la matière (*necessitas*) et s'élever, même inconsciemment, jusqu'à une vie « philosophique ». Dès qu'intervient le « progrès » (V 1412 sq.), intervient en même temps la « nécessité », les lois mécaniques jouent (V 1418-1419). Donc, ce n'est pas dans un devenir historique que se place la découverte de la Vie Heureuse ; le Souverain Bien est « anhistorique », il appartient à l'ordre de l'Esprit, et celui-ci est transcendant par rapport à l'ordre de la matière.

2) Lucrèce affirme à plusieurs reprises que l'homme est, s'il le veut, indépendant des conditions matérielles. L'analyse du bonheur des premiers hommes en est la démonstration. Ce qui suffit pour le bonheur, c'est seulement le fait que notre naissance ait été rendue possible par un certain état du Monde. Le Sage est donc entièrement autonome.

3) Posidonius pensait que le progrès résultait de la découverte, puis de l'imitation de la rationalité du monde. Lucrèce répond que cette limitation de la Nature résulte seulement de l'utilité, mais, sur le reste il est d'accord avec le philosophe stoïcien.

Même si, ce qui est certain, les développements et les positions de Lucrèce au chant V sont conformes à la doctrine d'Epicure, il n'en reste pas moins que ses analyses se situent dans le contexte de la philosophie contemporaine ; à partir des mêmes éléments, c'est une structure nouvelle qu'il dessine, reflet de ses propres réflexions.

*M. Schrijvers* : Au début de votre exposé, vous avez dit que l'on ne trouve chez Lucrèce aucun passage dirigé clairement et sans équivoque contre la Stoa et que son poème ne révèle pas la moindre

trace d'une influence des écoles médicales hellénistiques. Je ne pense pas que l'état de nos connaissances permette de résoudre le problème des rapports entre Lucrèce et la science médicale d'une manière aussi catégorique, faute de travaux récents sur la biologie et la physiologie lucrétiennes. Je signale ici le problème que pose l'interprétation de *vias oculorum* (IV 344; cf. Bailey *ad loc.* et Cic. *Tusc.* I 20, 46). Au vers IV 529 l'expression *asperiora arteria* correspond sans doute au grec *τραχεῖα ἀρτηρία*. Or, nous avons le témoignage d'Aulu-Gelle (XVII 11, 1-3, cf. Cic. *Nat. deor.* II 54, 136), selon lequel la découverte ou, du moins, l'expression *τραχεῖα ἀρτηρία* est d'Erasistrate. Signalons aussi l'opinion de J. Bayet dans ses « Etudes lucrétiennes » (*Mélanges de littérature latine* (Roma 1967), 51), selon laquelle Lucrèce témoigne d'une curiosité éveillée aux plus récentes découvertes (exemples cités: V 720-730; VI 1114).

Vous êtes d'avis que la Stoa n'est pas un « touchstone ». Je voudrais d'abord vous citer vous-même, en votre qualité d'éditeur du *De mundo* dans la collection Loeb (p. 335): « it would be surprising if a work written after the time of Posidonius were not considerably influenced by him. » J'approuve la tendance générale de cette remarque et je voudrais bien l'appliquer également aux rapports entre Lucrèce et la Stoa.

Je voudrais encore attirer votre attention sur un passage de Lucrèce dont vous avez longuement parlé dans votre article « Lucretius and the Stoics » (*BICS* 13 (1966), 13 sqq.), à savoir les vers I 1052-1113. Dans les vers I 1092-1093, vous repérez une doctrine stoïcienne: vous dites vous-même: « I have been unable to find out anything significant [*sc.* chez Aristote] about the theory of plant growth mentioned here. » Pourquoi nier que Lucrèce s'oppose à une doctrine stoïcienne? Votre hypothèse sur un lieu commun, qui ne serait pas attesté dans nos textes en dehors de la Stoa, me paraît excessive.

Je passe à un autre sujet: sans doute avez-vous raison de distinguer à la fin de la « Kulturgeschichte » de Lucrèce deux conclusions: la conclusion morale (V 1379-1435) et la conclusion scientifique (V 1436-1457). Mais avez-vous raison de penser qu'il s'agit de deux



conclusions alternatives proposées à choix par le poète ? Pour ma part, je suis plutôt d'avis que ces deux conclusions font partie d'un seul et même schéma structural. Tout d'abord, dans la partie précédente sur l'histoire de la civilisation, des raisons éthiques se mêlent aux énoncés purement scientifiques (p. ex. V 898-1010; 1105-1175; 1194 sqq.); il est naturel, dès lors, que ces deux genres de raisonnement soient couronnés par deux conclusions. Vous avez souligné à juste titre que dans les vers 1379-1435, le rôle de la *voluptas* est fortement marqué. Je voudrais signaler à ce propos la reprise très révélatrice des vers II 30-33, qui décrivent la vie idéale des épicuriens, dans le « finale » éthique du chant V (1393-1396). Notons aussi que la vie de volupté est localisée par Lucrèce à la campagne, tandis que les deux développements sociaux qui entraînent des fléaux pour le genre humain (la vie politique, la religion) sont situés dans les villes (cf. *urbis* 1108; *urbis* 1162). L'opposition traditionnelle entre la ville et la campagne semble avoir déterminé dès le début la structure de la « Kulturgeschichte » de Lucrèce. Aux vers 1436-1439 Lucrèce revient au thème de l'origine de l'agriculture (cf. I 174-183 pour les rapports avec les *annorum tempora*), par lequel il introduit la conclusion scientifique. Aux vers 1440-1447, il signale qu'il est arrivé aux débuts de l'histoire; un dernier aperçu de certaines découvertes est présenté sous la forme traditionnelle d'un catalogue (cf. Kl. Thraede, *Fortschritt*, in *RAC* 8 (1972), 141 (culture = *πᾶσαι τέχναι*) et A. Kleingünther, *Πρῶτος εὕρετής* (Leipzig 1933), 54; 116, sur ces catalogues qui concrétisent la notion de culture). Les vers 1452-1457 sont le seul endroit où Lucrèce énumère explicitement les principes qui ont été à la base du développement de la civilisation (*natura*) → *usus* → *ars*; *aetas* (cf. pour la tradition de l'énumération de ces principes Th. Cole, *Democritus and the Sources of Greek Anthropology* (1967), ch. II: « A Pattern of Prehistory », 39-40, et W. Spierri, *Spät-hellenistische Berichte über Welt, Kultur und Götter* (Basel 1959), 144-147).

*M. Furley*: I look forward to hearing more about your researches into Lucretius' biological theories; I agree that there is a need for more work, especially on his relationship with Asclepiades. I cannot

think there is much significance in his use of the post-Aristotelian term *asperiora arteria* (τραχεῖα ἀρτηρία). It was the discovery of the difference between veins and arteries that necessitated the distinguishing epithet τραχεῖα—Erasistratus certainly did not discover the existence of the trachea. It would be extremely interesting if Lucretius showed knowledge of post-Aristotelian discoveries or theories (as opposed to terminology)—for example, the valves of the heart, or the theory that the arteries contain *pneuma*.

I do not want to deny that it is surprising that Lucretius pays so little attention to the Stoics. It *is* surprising, and will remain so even if he shows knowledge of an exclusively stoic theory of plant growth.

You may well be right that there is room for both conclusions in Book V; I do not wish to insist strongly on my guess that one was meant to supersede the other. But I still remain uneasy about the sequence of thought between the three units, 1436-39, 1440-47, and 1448-57.

*M. Gigon*: Ich stimme vollständig damit überein, dass im Gedicht des Lukrez stoische Elemente und Polemik gegen die Stoa praktisch nicht vorhanden sind. Epikur hat selbst schwerlich gegen die Stoa polemisiert, und was so aussieht, ist in Wahrheit Polemik gegen Platon, Aristoteles und bestimmte Vorsokratiker. Da Lukrez die Texte Epikurs, die er seinem Werk zugrundelegte, mit Anmerkungen-Kommentaren späterer Epikureer benutzt hat, mögen auf diesem Weg die wenigen, sehr seltenen polemischen Anspielungen auf Stoisches hereingekommen sein.

Interessant ist die Analyse des Schlusses von Buch V, die Unterscheidung eines ethisch-orientierten Schlusses (1414-1435) und eines nicht-ethisch orientierten, neutral berichtenden Schlusses (1436-1457). Wenn ich recht verstanden habe, sehen Sie 1436-1457 als einen genetisch früher formulierten, 1412-1436 als den endgültigen Schluss an. Da habe ich einige Bedenken und wäre für weitere Erläuterungen dankbar.

Nicht zu übersehen ist der Einfluss des Empedokles, und dies in dreifacher Hinsicht: in der Kunstsprache, in manchen Einzelheiten der Doktrin (wie vor wenigen Jahren Herr Furley hervorgehoben hat) und, wie ich glaube, auch im Porträt Epikurs: die Überschwänglichkeit, mit der Lukrez Epikur preist, hat (abgesehen von den Vorbildern in der Schule Epikurs selbst) auch ein Modell in der Überschwänglichkeit, mit der Empedokles von sich selbst gesprochen hat.

*M. Alfonsi:* Trovo molto opportuno il richiamo di Gigon allo stile empedocleo di Lucrezio nella celebrazione come *primus* di Epicuro, tanto più ripensando ai debiti — messi in evidenza recentemente da C. Gallavotti — di Lucrezio verso l'Agrigentino, ed alla tradizione enniana così presente in Lucrezio, di quell'Ennio che, come Ed. Norden e Bignone hanno mostrato, ha tesaurizzato l'insegnamento di Empedocle e ne ha subito un forte influsso.

Giusto mi pare e degno di approfondimento il rapporto eventuale tra Lucrezio e i discepoli di Epicuro in considerazione delle diverse condizioni dell'Atene di Epicuro e della Roma di Lucrezio. E gli Epicurei di Napoli? Tanto più sembrerebbe possibile un certo eclettismo di Lucrezio sia nei riguardi dei Maestri della sua scuola sia di altre scuole, in quanto nonostante la devozione assoluta, religiosa quasi, del poeta romano per il filosofo greco, egli non ci appare legato assolutamente alla « scuola », come è il caso di altri ad esempio dai cataloghi dei filosofi epicurei. E poi si ricordi che negli stessi anni le opere di Aristotele, anche quelle essoteriche, e non solo quelle esoteriche, si diffondevano in Roma ed avevano con lo Stoicismo un divulgatore in Cicerone. Ed in aggiunta a quanto detto da Grimal sul ruolo di Posidonio sia permesso ricordare la introduzione ciceroniana al *De inventione*, che, come già osservato da R. Philippson, interpreta in senso posidoniano il crescere della civiltà, la formazione della cultura, l'umanizzazione dell'uomo da uno stato ferino, modernizzando un vecchio problema di origine sofistico-isocrateo. Per l'antitesi di vita urbana e di contado richiamerei anche la tradizione diatribica *de incommotis* (o *commodis*) *urbis*. Altrettanto mi pare notevole

il senso romano dell'espressione *alte terminus haerens*, quasi con èo religiosa al dio *Terminus*.

*M. Kleve*: Es ist richtig, dass sich, im Lukrez, keine Kritik der stoischen Lehre der ἐκπύρωσις findet, aber das kann erklärt werden, wenn sein Gegner Panaitios war, der mehrere altstoische Doktrinen verwarf (vgl. Fr. 64 ff. van Straaten). Dass Lukrez die stoische Ethik nicht angreift, erklärt sich daraus, dass sein Gedicht eine Einführung in die Physik ist, in der eine ethische Diskussion nur Nebensache sein kann.

Die *rerum finita potestas* dürfte in Verbindung mit Philodems Diskussion mit den Stoikern in *De signis* über Analogieschlüsse gesehen werden. Den Epikureern zufolge kann es keine *unica res* geben. Deshalb kann es erstaunen, dass Lukrez Epikur als ein einzigartiges Phänomen der Geschichte betrachtet. Um atomistisch konsequent zu sein, dürfte man deshalb Epikurs Einsatz eher als ein *clinamen* in der historischen Entwicklung betrachten. Das könnte seine grossartige Individualität erklären, während man ihn doch immer innerhalb der *termini* der natürlichen Gattung behalten kann.

*M. Furley*: It is hard to know how significant Panaetius was in shaping the Stoic cosmology of his time. At least Cicero's presentation of Stoicism, and the Epicurean polemic against Stoicism written by Cicero—all more or less contemporary with Lucretius—do not focus exclusively on Panaetius. For example, note Cicero's expression at *Nat. deor.* II 46, 118: *ex quo eventurum nostri putant id de quo Panaetium addubitare dicebant, ut ad extremum omnis mundus ignesceret.*

*M. Müller*: Ich darf zwei Bedenken Ausdruck geben:

1) Die drei knappen Bemerkungen am Schluss des 5. Buches (ab 1436) sollten im Lichte der negativen Diagnose verstanden werden, der kurz vorher (1430-1435) der moralische Zustand der Menschheit auch nach vielem technisch-kulturellem Fortschritt unterworfen wurde. Statt einer genetischen Auffassung des Nebeneinanders von moralischer und moralfreier Beurteilung am Buch-

schluss ist wohl, nach meiner Meinung, lieber eine Antinomie von Fortschritt und εὐδαιμονία zu verstehen: *corde videbant* 1456 bezeichnet die Denkweise der unerlösten Menschheit, die einen immanenten Sinn im Fortschritt zu sehen geneigt ist.

2) Das *nam* in V 1204, das zu den Ursachen des Weiterlebens falscher Religion überleitet, scheint mir keinen logischen Anschluss an den vorhergehenden Gedanken der Verse 1198-1203 zu besitzen; dieser Passus scheint mir nach rückwärts und nach vorwärts gleichermaßen unverbunden zu sein. Ich halte die Doppelstriche, die Diels vor und hinter ihm druckt, für richtig (ebenso Konrad Müller in seiner Ausgabe). Dass hier etwas fehlt, scheint mir sicher, auch dann, wenn man der Vermutung nicht zustimmt, dass hier der *largus sermo* über die wahren Götter stehen sollte, den Lukrez versprach, aber nicht verfasste. Ferner plädiere ich in 1207 für *in pectore*, da *caput erigere in pectora* stilistisch nicht möglich scheint, weil es gegen Lucrezens Anschaulichkeit verstossen würde. Die intensivierende Verdoppelung *expergefactum caput erigere* spricht stark dafür, dass die *cura* zuerst, d.h. im täglichen Leben, durch andere Übel, nämlich Sorgen, Ängste, Begierden, niedergehalten wurde, dann aber bei Betrachtung des Sternenhimmels aus dieser Stellung *in pectore* heraustritt und sich über die alten *mala* als neues und schlimmstes *malum* erhebt.

*M. Furley*: But there is nothing in the last lines of book V (1436-1457) to suggest that progress is the enemy of happiness. The emphasis in 1448-1457 is simply on the *method* of discovery. The list of discoveries, in 1448-1451, includes both things that cater for men's necessary desires (agriculture, walls, clothing) and things that are unnecessary (paintings, statues). The last two lines seem to me to explain (*namque*) or amplify the previous two, without any implicit suggestion that there is something wrong or inadequate about men's methods of progress in the arts. The expression *alid ex alio clarescet* also occurs in I 1115, where it describes the Epicurean's progress in understanding the truth.



On the passage V 1195-1217, I am afraid that I still disagree with Herr Müller, in spite of the defence of his position set out in his article "Die fehlende Theologie im Lucreztext", in *Monumentum Chiloniense. Festschrift E. Burck* (Amsterdam 1975), 227-295. To attempt to settle the difference would take too much argument for the present occasion. At least I can feel relieved that I have the advantage of defending the text of O and Q—and of M. Grimal's welcome support!

