LUCRETIUS 1.921–50

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This passage,[1] much debated as to the proper and original position of its lines,[2] offers in itself a considerable insight into the poet's concept of himself, his art, his philosophy, and the relationship of these three. This insight can and must be broadened from other passages, but since 1.921–50 represents the fullest statement Lucretius provides about himself and his mission, it deserves primary consideration.[3] It is not my intention here to present an exhaustive treatment of the controversy concerning the position of the lines. I wish, however, to show that in the context of the preceding and succeeding text this passage makes excellent sense where it is, and I would like further to discuss, at least in part, the poetic-philosophic attitude that emerges from it. These lines follow the introductory treatment of atoms and void, in the course of which a description of the characteristics of the atoms has led to a

[1] The text cited throughout is that of C. **Bailey**, *T. Lucreti Cari De rerum natura libri sex* (Oxford 1947), 3 vols.; unless otherwise noted, references are to the page numbers of the commentary. **Leonard and Smith** refers to the edition of W. E. Leonard and S. B. Smith, *T. Lucreti Cari De rerum natura libri sex* (Madison 1942).

[2] The question is whether the lines belong here or rather constitute the proper prooemium of Book 4. If a choice must be made, that choice has significant implications for the original order of the books and the relative importance of the topics treated. For a discussion of recent opinion, beyond the survey and evidence presented by Bailey (756–58), see K. Büchner, *Lukrez und Vorklassik = Studien zur römischen Literatur* 1 (Wiesbaden 1964) 57–120, 197–200.

[3] I deliberately exclude from this paper the consideration of Lucretius' position in regard to the Epicurean aesthetic and in particular to Epicurean dogma on the practice of poetry. This topic is vigorously discussed by P. Boyancé, "Lucrèce et la poésie," *REA* 49 (1947) 88–102; "Études Lucrétiennes," *REA* 62 (1960) 438–47; "Épicure, la poésie et la Vénus de Lucrèce," *REA* 64 (1962) 404–10; and F. Giancotti, *Il Preludio di Lucrezio* (Messina 1959); "La poetica epicurea in Lucrezio, Cicerone ed altri," *Ciceroniana* 3 (1960) 3–31; *Lucrezio poeta epicureo* (Rome 1961); "Epicurea et Lucretiana," *RFIC* 91 (1963) 369–73. Cf. the rationalization offered by A. Ronconi, "Appunti di estetica epicurea," *Miscellanea di studi alessandrini in memoria di A. Rostagni* (Turin 1963) 7–25.

discussion of the erroneous views of representative rival philosophers. Then, Lucretius, having terminated his refutation—the emotional equivalent of a proof of his own theories—proceeds, with the formulaic admonition *nunc age*,[4] to state his own claims and position.

He admits that the obscurity of his subject matter creates difficulties,[5] but enthusiasm urges him forward, and under its influence he traverses hitherto untrodden grounds of the Muses and delights in the novelty of the poetic landscape. He aspires to a new crown from the Muses, not only because of the greatness of his subject and the effort of his task, but also because of the clarity of his treatment.[6] Touching all things with the charm of the Muses, he is like the doctors who put honey around the bitter cup of medicine for children and so deceive them for the sake of their cure. Since the uninitiate crowd may shrink back from his unfamiliar philosophy, Lucretius has set it forth in honeyed poetry so that he may hold the reader's attention until he sees clearly the nature of things, how it is fixed.

Considering the passage first as a whole, we observe several different modes of thought. We note Lucretius' implied differentiation of himself from the other philosophers; his representation of himself with the aloofness of Callimachus,[7] although simultaneously with the more conventional attributes of inspiration and hope for reward;[8] his notion of the poet as religiously inspired, as a healer, and lastly as a

[4] For the formula *nunc age*, see below, note 69.

[5] In an earlier mention of difficulties, *novitas rerum* (cf. 2.1024) is coupled with *egestas linguae* (1.136–39; cf. 3.260), but Lucretius is not consistent. The problem of finding Latin words for Greek concepts in the case of Anaxagoras is only a superficial one, since the subject matter can be readily explained (1.830–33).

[6] J. H. Waszink, "Lucretius and Poetry," *Medel. d. koninklijke Ned. Akad. v. Wetenschappen* (Amsterdam 1954), points out the primary importance of his subject matter to Lucretius, in contradiction to those, like Boyancé, *REA* 49 (above, note 3), who feel that Lucretius was first a poet, then a philosopher. R. F. Arragon, "Poetic Art as a Philosophic Medium for Lucretius," *Essays in Crit.* 11 (1961) 371–89, stresses that since the poetry is drawn from the subject matter, there is no divorce; rather, whereas initially poetry enlivens philosophy, in the end philosophy offers comfort in the face of the grim poetic representation of the plague.

[7] *Ep.* 28, *Aet.* 1.25–30; see the discussion by W. Wimmel, *Kallimachos in Rom* (Wiesbaden 1960) 103–11.

[8] Cf. the prooemium of Hesiod's *Theogony*, esp. 27–34, 38–40, 65–69, 94–103. E. Bignone, *Storia della letteratura latina* 2 (Florence 1945) 170–71, calls attention to the similarity with Ennius' *Annales* 215, 216 Vahlen; this is also discussed by J. H. Waszink, "The Proem of the 'Annales' of Ennius," *Mnemosyne* Ser. 3, 4 (1950) 213–40.

rhetorician of sorts, who uses the means of charm to an appropriate, salutary end.[9]

Considering the passage again, this time in detail, we find first that Lucretius stresses clarity, *clarius audi* (921; cf. 933, 949; 2.182; 3.36).[10] It matters little whether *clarius* is taken as an adverb or as a noun. In the former case, the meaning would be "hear more clearly" (than the others, i.e. the unattentive or the uninitiate; or than from the others, i.e. the wrongheaded philosophers and false oracles; or than you heard before, when you were pursuing wrong paths). In the second case, the meaning would be "hear what is clearer" (than what the others tell you, or than what you used to believe). The important point is that Lucretius wishes to emphasize the clarity inherent in his verse. We might compare 1.143–45, where he proposes to set clear lights before the student's eyes so that he may see things that are hidden:

> . . . dictis quibus et quo carmine demum
> clara tuae possim praepandere lumina menti,
> res quibus occultas penitus convisere possis,

or 3.36, where the clarification of the nature of the soul is the prerequisite for the expulsion of the fear of hell. We may conclude that Lucretius' concern with the power of poetry to illuminate dark subjects is serious (cf. 1.137, 4.778, 6.937), and that it is a functional aspect of his all-pervasive preoccupation with the antitheses light-darkness, heaven-hell, life-death.

Secondly, while Lucretius' realization that his philosophy must appear dark (922, cf. 943–45) seems sensible enough, we are hardly prepared for the passion of the lines immediately following. *Percussit* is taken up by *incussit*,[11] a typical Lucretian repetitive device, to be sure; but the vehemence of these words, further intensified by *acri thyrso*, is not what one expects from a calm, detached Epicurean. Moreover,

[9] Although Epicurus opposed rhetoric and rhetorical training, its influence on the Roman Lucretius was inevitable. For the rationale of Epicurus' distrust see P. De Lacy, "The Epicurean Analysis of Language," *AJP* 60 (1939) 85–92; and for illustration of Lucretius' techniques see E. McLeod, "Lucretius' 'carmen dignum'," *CJ* 58 (1963) 145–56.

[10] Epicurus also emphasized clarity (Diog. Laert. 10.13; Cic. *Fin.* 1.15, 71; 2.15).

[11] Previously used with Venus as subject: "omnibus incutiens blandum per pectora amorem" (1.19). For the association of Venus with the creative process, see below, p. 251.

laudis spes is ambiguous. Does it mean the conventional hope of any artist for praise or recognition (cf. 6.92–95), or rather the hope for doing a praiseworthy deed, which might seem a more appropriate goal for a philosopher? In any case, this hope has struck the poet's heart with a thyrsus. This is the ivy or vine clad wand, the emblem of Dionysus, which is carried by the god himself or by his followers, among whom, one might observe in the interest of the present text, may be found Eros/Amor.[12] To treat the thyrsus as an instrument of literary inspiration is unprecedented Latin usage,[13] but Lucretius in representing himself in the dubious guise of a Bacchant, "quo nunc instinctus mente vigenti / avia Pieridum peragro loca,"[14] intended to do more than write a striking phrase. Dionysus was a god of great potential who accommodated himself to a variety of mysteries, and one imagines that he might have appealed to Lucretius, not literally, but in the transferred sense of a force that liberates through ecstasy and offers vision beyond the actual here and now.[15] Allegory was, after all, acceptable to Lucretius (e.g. 1.1–43, 2.991–98, 3.978–1023), provided one did not succumb to wrong belief (2.655–60).

The idea of ritual, initiation, and mystery introduced by *thyrso* is further sustained by *mente vigenti*, which suggests that Lucretius derives special strength from his emotions, and also by the exhilaration of the double *iuvat*. Moreover, in the phrase "iuvat integros accedere fontis / atque haurire," the adjective *integros* contains the notion of ritual purity as well as the more conventional one of novelty. Finally, the description a little later of the crowd as shrinking back may be taken as an allusion to the shrinking back of those who are not yet properly initiated into the mystery and so cannot look upon it.[16]

The thyrsus has inspired Lucretius with the love of the Muses, imbued with which he roams the haunts of the Pierides. His description of poetic inspiration is not uncommon in itself, except perhaps

[12] A. Furtwängler, "Eros in der Vasenmalerei," *Kleine Schriften* 1 (Munich 1912) 24–27.

[13] Cf. Plato, *Phaed.* 69c. Ovid follows Lucretius in *Am.* 3.1.23, *Tr.* 4.1.43.

[14] Cf. Epicurus 1.74.

[15] For a synoptic discussion, see W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and Their Gods* (Boston 1955) 145–82, 198–202.

[16] This contrasts with Epicurus' distrust of the *vulgus* in any circumstances (Frag. 43, *Sent. Vat.* 29 Bailey).

that *laudis spes* evokes another emotion, *amor Musarum*, rather than action; but it is uncommon that poetic inspiration is not an end in itself, but only a means. We conclude that Lucretius has turned to poetry out of the necessities of his philosophy and, by implication, from the desire to communicate his vision. Subsequently we will see that this is not cold, practical calculation but an act of love. Poetic creativity is then to be rewarded precisely for its success in achieving its end, not for its own excellence. Lucretius takes pleasure in the newness of his achievement (926, 927, 928, 930), but his hope for reward lies first in the value of his intellectual undertaking and then in the clarity of his representation. He finds it ultimately necessary to explain why it is reasonable that he "doctor" his philosophy with the charm of the Muses.[17] *Contingens* (934; cf. 938, 947) and *dulci* (938, 947; cf. *suaviloquenti* 945) are important words: sweetening the bitter medicine (936), or strange philosophy (944), allows the children to be deceived, but not tricked, and thus cured (941–42); and it allows their adult, intellectual counterparts to pay attention and to see[18] the truth (948–49). Lucretius indicates that the trick is not really a trick in the case of the children, presumably because the end is good, and we may infer the same about the therapeutic use of poetry in the case of adults. The goal, *recreata valescat* (942), is explicit only for the children, but antiquity was so accustomed to the parallel of physical and psychic health that to transfer that goal in the spiritual sense to the adults would have caused no difficulty.[19] For the latter, it is clear vision into the totality of things that is the end, but we should note that that totality is defined

[17] Cf. Plato, *Leg.* 659E.

[18] The importance of vision has already been intimated by the adjective in the phrase *puerorum aetas improvida* (939).

[19] In any case, *recreo* is regularly used of both physical and mental recovery in the sense of "restore," "renew." One wonders further if Lucretius did not also wish to incorporate the rarer literal meaning "create anew," since this would extend the religious notions of initiation already expressed. Moreover, the infrequent inchoative *valesco* seems exactly right for the intended meaning: one must begin to get well. Cf. 3.459–61, 510–11, 1070, for other mind-body comparisons in Lucretius. In another application of the physical-spiritual equation, H. S. Commager, "Lucretius' Interpretation of the Plague," *HSCP* 62 (1957) 105–18, shows how Lucretius recasts in moral-psychological terms the historical-medical narrative of Thucydides. For Epicurean parallels see Epicurus, *Sent. Vat.* 54 (cf. 64); Frag. 54 Bailey (cf. 68); and Diogenes of Oenoanda, Frag. 2, col. 2.7 ff., esp. col. 4.2–6.2 Williams.

and limited: "dum perspicis[20] omnem / naturam rerum qua constet compta figura" (949–50). On the whole, Lucretius seems to find attractive the thought that the knowledge of limitation has the power to liberate.[21]

In the conclusion of the passage we observe that Lucretius comes back to the beginning in the immediacy of his approach. Initially, he addressed his reader with vigor—three imperatives in 921—but he continued with a self-oriented explanation of his own poetic mission, and only at the end returns to the reader (*tibi* 945, 948), to whom he holds out the opportunity to join "our" ranks (946, 949) and, as it were, to share the exaltation of our vision. Of course, it is difficult to assess the value of pronouns; they might be quite fortuitous in these lines. Still, one is left with the feeling that this pronoun usage goes beyond the simple requirements of didactic poetry and that Lucretius is speaking as an intermediary between the master, Epicurus, and the novice—as one who himself has seen and can therefore communicate vision. Whether we should identify the novice throughout as Memmius is an insoluble question,[22] but luckily one's understanding of the relationship that Lucretius envisages between himself and his student does not require the solution.

The process of communication, of teaching and of learning, demands effort. Lucretius' first hope for his crown lies equally in the greatness of his subject and the greatness of his effort (931–32):

> primum quod magnis doceo de rebus et artis
> religionum animum nodis exsolvere pergo.[23]

[20] Perhaps the repetition of the prefix *per-* in *perpotet* (940)—already used in a conspicuously irregular way—and *perspicis* (949) is consciously intended to emphasize the end in each case.

[21] See below, pp. 238–39.

[22] Memmius is mentioned only eleven times and only in Books 1, 2, and 5 (1.26, 42, 411, 1052; 2.143, 182; 5.8, 93, 164, 867, 1282). From this a variety of inferences have been drawn about the order of the books and about the character and history of the patron-client relationship between Memmius and Lucretius. Memmius may also be simply a literary adaptation of Pausanias, the pupil to whom Empedocles addressed his poem on nature; a number of exhortations and admonitions in Empedocles (*VS*[9] 31, B1; 5; 17.14–15, 26; 24; 25; 35.1–2; 110; 114) recur in Lucretius, although these may be the natural coincidences of two didactic works. For a discussion of this possibility see W. Kranz, "Lukrez und Empedokles," *Philologus* 50 (1944) 68–107.

[23] The vocabulary is reminiscent of Epicurus' struggles to free man from the monster *religio* (1.62–79).

He wants to hold his reader until the latter can see the whole order of things. That this process is difficult can be seen from the emphasis on attentiveness,[24] from the admission that the uninitiate crowd will shrink back, and from the simile of the doctors who try (*conantur* 937; cf. Lucretius himself, 1.25, 6.768) to cure children by tricking them to drink completely the medicine which is their healing. The doctors, as arbiters of health, may practice their deception because they themselves know what is best for the body. This reasoning transferred to the poet, who sees himself as a potential healer, would suggest that Lucretius, as an initiate, is thereby empowered to act for the man who wants to be an initiate but has not yet made sufficient progress or lacks sufficient strength. Adults, like the children of the simile, may be beguiled, but, unlike the children, they must subsequently act by their own enlightened will.

Taking 1.921–50 now in its context following the refutation of the rival philosophers and preceding the description of the infinity of the universe, we find it to be both an excellent transition and a timely exhortation to the reader as he moves from one area of physics to another, from the more to the less visible. Having discussed in the first part of the book how all things are composed of atoms and void, at line 635 Lucretius undertakes to demonstrate that all other views of the fundamental nature of the universe are wrong. With his love for teaching by example he selects for the demonstration a monist, a pluralist, and a multi-pluralist. Characteristically, he deals with these philosophers not on their own terms but in Epicurean terms, which often makes the argument seem quite unfair.

Heraclitus is the proper representative of the monists,[25] not only for himself, but also because he was much favored by the Stoics, who are indirectly attacked in Lucretius' proof that fire is not and cannot be the basic substance. The opening is scornful: those who believe that fire is the basis of all things are seen to have fallen far from true reason (635–37; cf. 705–11).[26] In their ranks Heraclitus is the first.

[24] Admonitions are frequent throughout. See below, p. 249.

[25] Since Diogenes of Oenoanda also begins with Heraclitus (Frag. 5, col. 1.10–3.14 Williams), this may indicate a canonical order of Epicurean attack.

[26] The theme of the path is common in Greek thought; for discussion and illustration see O. Becker, *Das Bild des Weges = Hermes Einzelschrift* 4 (1937) and W. Wimmel (above, note 7). Its philosophical usage probably goes back to Hesiod, *Op.* 287–92,

The metaphor reminds one of the elaborately military description of Epicurus earlier in the book (62–79), and a comparison between Epicurus the good and Heraclitus the bad general (cf. 693–94) is surely implicit. The following lines (639–44) are a mockery, half playful, half earnest, of Heraclitus' style. The antitheses are studied:

> *clarus* ob *obscuram* linguam magis inter *inanis*
> quamde *gravis* inter Graios *qui vera requirunt.*[27]
> omnia enim stolidi magis admirantur amantque,
> inversis quae sub verbis *latitantia cernunt,*
> *vera*que *constituunt* quae *belle tangere* possunt
> auris et lepido quae sunt *fucata*[28] *sonore.*

This goes beyond the conventional ridicule of Heraclitus the dark (cf. 696–97),[29] because, as a matter of fact, the chief target is not Heraclitus but his admirers.

Lucretius opens with a double attack on method, not belief. The *stolidi* (cf. 1068)[30] delight in obscurity and deliberately mismanage the truth. They accept as true that which, dyed, or even corrupted, by an

although its most celebrated instance is Prodicus' story of Heracles at the crossroads (Xen. *Mem.* 2.1.21). In Lucretius the theme is frequent and, with the exception of 1.926–27, exclusively philosophical, but since philosophy could not be separated from the form of its presentation, perhaps one should not attempt to separate the philosophical from the poetic connotations. In Lucretius only once (5.1120–35) is the emphasis placed on the choice of the path (*vera ratio, verum, iter, via vitae*). More frequent are the variants of pursuing the right path (1.80–82, 402–9, 1115–17; 5.102–3; 6.27–28), of having fallen or being diverted from the right path (1.370, 637, 659, 711; 2.176, 229; 5.23), of wandering (1.332, 711, 845–46; 2.10, 82, 740; 3.105, 1052; 6.67), and of searching (1.332; 2.10). Once the theme has been established, its terms can be transferred to ideas that are removed from the truth (1.758, 880; 2.645; 5.406; 6.767, 853). Since the majority of instances cluster around the idea of wandering (*erro, avius, vagor*), this may be another case of Lucretius' altering for his own purposes a conventional philosophical example (cf. P. De Lacy, "Distant Views: The Imagery of Lucretius 2," *CJ* 60 [1964] 49–55). There is a particular irony in applying the image to Heraclitus, who himself expressed doubt about the possibility of finding the path (cf. Frag. 45, 108 Diels).

[27] Lucretius, by the repetition of *requiro* (645, cf. 640), aligns himself with the investigators of truth.

[28] *Fucatus* runs in meaning from "dyed" or "colored" to "rouged," then to "false" or "counterfeit."

[29] The nickname "*skoteinos*" may go back to his own lifetime (*VS*[9] 22, A1a; cf. B10). For Latin allusions see Bailey 714.

[30] H. A. J. Munro, *T. Lucreti Cari De rerum natura libri sex*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge 1886) on 465, 466, suggests that the Stoics are referred to in the plurals of 655, 657, 658, 659, 660, 665, 667; 782, 783; 1053, 1062, 1083, 1087. Their identification, except by derogatory adjective, is never considered necessary.

attractive sound, can agreeably touch the ear. They use selectively, according to their pleasure, the evidence of the senses, which to an Epicurean supply the fundamental data of knowledge. With 641–44 we should compare Lucretius' hope for reward: "quod obscura de re tam lucida pango / carmina, musaeo contingens cuncta lepore" (933–34). Despite the striking similarity of vocabulary, the intention is opposite. *Contingens*, used by Lucretius of himself in 934, purified by its connection with the doctors in 938, recurs in a resumptive poetic-medical sense in 947. This contrasts with the disapproval conveyed by *belle tangere* (643) and *lepido fucata lepore* (644). In the second phrase, beyond the inherent improbability of colored sound, *fucata* suggests falseness. Lucretius hopes to achieve ultimate clarity, whereas the Stoics love obscurity. The Stoics are diverted from the truth by externals, whereas Lucretius beguiles his reader on behalf of the truth, and he even feels compelled to justify his application of *lepos* by the medical simile.

The substantive argument against Heraclitus also seems to be directed chiefly against the Stoics. In the first place, fire as the sole basic substance cannot explain the diversity of things, for all things must necessarily partake of fire to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the greater or lesser density of fire involved. Moreover, the expansion and compression of fire would require the presence of void, but they deny the void (657–59):

> sed quia multa sibi cernunt contraria †muse
> et fugitant in rebus inane relinquere purum,
> ardua dum metuunt, amittunt vera viai.[31]

The specific criticism applies more to the Stoics, who rejected the void within the world, although not the void without, than to

[31] For the mss. problem see Bailey 716–17. The emended reading *Musae* of E. Bignone, "Le Muse eraclitee in Lucrezio," *Miscellanea di studi critici in onore di E. Stampini* (Turin 1921) 229–31, although rejected by Bailey, does make good sense for several reasons. "The Muses" was apparently a title of Heraclitus' work, and Lucretius by using this reference—oddly, according to Bailey—would be making another sally against Heraclitus. In any case, he had a precedent in Epicurus, who applied nicknames to adversaries. Bignone also points out the implicit contrast with Lucretius' muses, 922–25. Since Lucretius is interested in philosophy's powers of inspiration and revelation (see below, note 58), if Heraclitus had pretensions in this area, it would be satisfying to show him and his Stoic followers up. Finally, *purum*, not elsewhere used of the void, might suggest religious impurity beyond philosophical inadequacy.

Heraclitus, who did not concern himself with the problem of the void at all. The Stoics, because they observe opposition, hurriedly flee trouble and lose the path of the truth. Here, as in the introduction to the critique of Heraclitus, they are flighty and reluctant to make an effort, and thereby miss the opportunity for clear vision.

Secondly, if fire could be changed, it would itself be destroyed, and this should not happen to a basic substance. Lucretius now restates his view of a more satisfactory basic substance, the atoms, which can combine to produce fire and yet are unlike fire or any other tangible object (684–89). The concluding mention of sense perception leads to the third point of attack: to make fire the basic substance is *perdelirum* (692; cf. 698, 704), because in so doing Heraclitus fights against the evidence of the senses on the basis of the senses (693–97). Heraclitus was wrong to grant that the senses recognize fire correctly while rejecting the reliability of sense information in general. This methodological criticism, essentially the same as that directed against the Stoics earlier (641–44), now serves to reinforce and conclude this section. *Nilo clara minus* (697) recalls line 642 and is doubtless another play on Heraclitus' darkness and on the dullness of the *stolidi*. Lucretius seems to criticize Heraclitus and the Stoics for rejecting the obvious and for failure to penetrate the truth. On the other hand, he deliberately rallies his own forces by well-directed address in each stage of the discussion: question (645–46), appeal to sense evidence (663–64), *tibi* (673), *nostros tactus* (689), *referemus*, *nobis*, *notemus* (699–700).

The pluralists have strayed as far from the truth as the monists (705–15), and Lucretius next addresses himself to them, with Empedocles as his *exemplum*: "quorum Acragantinus cum primis Empedocles est" (716). The introduction is parallel to the treatment of Heraclitus (cf. *primus* 638), and the language may now be intended to represent the Homeric grandiloquence of Empedocles,[32] but the tone is quite different. Heraclitus, or rather his Stoic admirers, were treated with scorn, whereas Empedocles is honored as the fairest of Sicily's achievements (729–33):

[32] The poetic classification, or non-classification, of Empedocles is somewhat puzzling (cf. Diog. Laert. 8.57; Arist. *Metaph.* 985A5, 993A15; Empedocles, *VS*[9] 31, A22–26). The points at issue are whether meter is sufficient to create poetry, and whether metaphorical language is desirable in a philosophical work. Lucretius naturally abstains from literary disputation but obviously admires the metaphorical style of Empedocles.

nil tamen hoc habuisse viro praeclarius in se
nec sanctum magis et mirum carumque videtur.
carmina quin etiam divini pectoris eius
vociferantur[33] et exponunt praeclara reperta,
ut vix humana videatur stirpe creatus.[34]

Praeclarius, emphasized by *praeclara reperta*, is to be taken literally as well as in contrast to the dark Heraclitus. Moreover, in view of Lucretius' own claims (931–34), we should note the combination of *carmina* and *reperta*, poetry and philosophical content, on equal terms. That Empedocles was so divinely inspired that he seems hardly of human stock makes him virtually the equal of Epicurus. Although he and others came to grief over fundamentals, they gave truer responses than the Pythia (736–39):

multa bene ac divinitus invenientes
ex adyto tamquam cordis responsa dedere
sanctius et multo certa ratione magis quam
Pythia.[35]

This description of Empedocles as a holy man and oracle is quite in accord with Empedocles' own view of himself (*VS*[9] 31, B3.1–5; 112; 146). To stress the sincerity of Empedocles' revelation provides an argumentatively desirable contrast with Heraclitus, who respected oracles (*VS*[9] 22, B92, 93; cf. A20), affected a pithy and elliptical style, and himself remained dark. Yet the concern with the oracular goes further. In the quotation the juxtaposition of *sanctius* and *multo certa ratione magis* is curious: the replies of these philosophers are at once holy and scientifically accurate, from which we may conclude that rightness confers a kind of holiness, and that the answers of the philosophers are more blessed than those that come from the conventional sanctuaries of truth. The religious authority of oracles is perhaps to be superseded by that of reason (cf. Epic. Frag. 3 Bailey): beyond the *naturae species ratioque* no mystery remains. This view coincides with Lucretius' pervasive emphasis on clarity and vision, and explains

[33] Leonard and Smith offer the idea that the word "seems to connote prophetic utterance." Cf. 2.1051, 3.14.

[34] Cf. Epicurus and Athens, 6.1–8. One might also compare Lucretius' statement of his human inability to do verbal justice to Epicurus' divine achievements (5.1–8).

[35] For the subsequent expansion of these lines with Lucretius himself as subject, see below, note 58.

his specific hostility towards seers (1.102–11; 6.379–82). In the end, the oracular method and utterance may be a metaphor, like the metaphor of Bacchic initiation, for the unlocking of the real truth from deep within nature (cf. Epic. *Sent. Vat.* 29). The truth is always there, but it is easier to see if someone who has already grasped it can help release it to the others. Empedocles' concept of himself explains why Lucretius was so attracted to his predecessor. One wonders only at the omission of Empedocles' other idea, the philosopher as healer, since healer and religious intermediary are for Lucretius so closely related. Empedocles, while philosophically wrong—as the succeeding eight demonstrations against the pluralists point out—is laudable in his use of poetry for revelation, and Lucretius keeps his appreciation for Empedocles' image of the philosopher quite separate from his philosophical disagreement.[36]

The proofs themselves cannot all be taken against Empedocles,[37] and some even repeat or amplify the content of the proofs against Heraclitus (742–45; perhaps 782–802). This may indicate once more that Lucretius' effort to clarify the Epicurean view transcends his ostensible concern with the doctrine of each rival philosopher. The proofs are now both fuller and more courteous, but they show the same attentiveness to the I-you-we relationship.[38] Most conspicuous is the appeal to rationalize from the visible to the invisible (749–52) and the refutation of an objection drawn from the visible world which is offered, probably by the student,[39] on behalf of the Empedoclean view: "at manifesta palam res indicat . . ." (803).[40] The basis for

[36] For the relationship between Lucretius and Empedocles see W. Kranz (above, note 22); and O. B. Niccolini, "De T. Lucretio Caro," *Latinitas* 3 (1955) 280–86.

[37] Specifically against Empedocles: 746–52, 770–81, probably 803–29; against Empedocles and others: 742–45; specifically not against Empedocles: 763–68, 782–802; proofs that show misunderstanding of Empedocles: 753–58, 759–62.

[38] First person plural verbs: 749, 754, 762, 794, 812; second singular verbs: 751, 758, 770, 799, 803, 824, 826; pronouns and possessive adjectives: 750, 754, 773, 797, 809, 812, 823.

[39] The identity of the objector here and in 897 is uncertain: Leonard and Smith suggest in both cases a disciple of the respective philosopher; Bailey (739) "the imaginary objector"; W. A. Merrill, *T. Lucreti Cari De rerum natura libri sex* (New York 1907) on 897, "surely . . . not . . . Memmius." For the rhetorical device cf. 6.673–74, *at* followed by *scilicet*; 3.356, *at*.

[40] Lucretius often appeals to the "manifest" (1.188, 803, 855; 2.149, 246, 707, 867; 3.30, 353; 4.504), particularly in the formula *manifesta docet res* (1.893; 2.565; 3.690;

Lucretius' refutation is the analogy between the atoms and the letters which form the words of the verse: both atoms and letters are susceptible to a variety of combinations. This is another form of reasoning from the perceptible to the imperceptible, but it gains peculiar force from the fact that the point of analogy, the letters and words of the poetry, is also the point of contact between the teacher and his student.

After dealing with the pluralists, Lucretius turns rather abruptly to Anaxagoras: "nunc et Anaxagorae scrutemur homoeomerian" (830). *Scrutemur* is a businesslike and appropriate word, for Lucretius, as Bailey points out (744), may well have realized the influential position of Anaxagoras in relation to his own atomic thought. But for all that he still takes a depreciating tone: *putat* (839, 842, 877), *fingit* (842, 847),[41] *nec concedit* (843–44), and *sumit* (876) describe Anaxagoras' somewhat arbitrary thought process, which takes him far from the truth (846, 880). As in the earlier cases, Lucretius seems to emphasize the distinction between his opponent's faulty method and his own clarity. He repeatedly stresses the hidden nature of Anaxagoras' particles (871, 875, 877, 890, 892, 904–5) and thereby lends to the argument persuasive strength, if not logic (the basic Epicurean atomic particle also lies beneath the level of sense perception: cf. 779, 895). Similarly, Lucretius' appeal to what is actually seen, or what ought to be seen if Anaxagoras' view were correct, simply elicits support for his own view (854–56, 881–92, 893, 897-906, 907, 915). In the end, Anaxagoras is dismissed with laughter (915–20), an effective rhetorical device, if not logically compelling.

As for content, the argument is similar to what has preceded. Anaxagoras is criticized for not accepting the void (843–44; cf. on Heraclitus 655–64, on Empedocles 742–45), for tolerating infinite division (844; cf. on Empedocles 746–52), for making the basic particles too weak, which will lead to their ultimate destruction and require

6.139, 249). Although the adjective generally seems to mean "obvious," "clear," "apparent," Leonard and Smith on 4.504 suggest that there Lucretius intended the literal force of "grasped by the hand" (cf. 5.102). This agrees well with his preference for basic meanings and his emphasis on the primacy of touch among the sensations (2.434–35).

[41] *Fingo* is one of Lucretius' favorite verbs for denoting futile or deliberately deceitful rationalization: cf. 1.104–5, 371, 917, 1083–84; 2.58 = 3.90 = 6.38, 2.174–75, 244–45; 3.882–83; 4.580–81; 5.713–14, 908; 6.677.

generation from nothing (847–58; cf. on Heraclitus 665–79, on Empedocles 753–57), and for failing to account for change (859–74; cf. on Heraclitus 680–89, on Empedocles 763–81). The impression of similarity is further strengthened by the several nearly exact repetitions of lines which serve to associate the philosophers.[42]

The strongest emotional link with the preceding argument against Empedocles, and the most vivid section of the argument against Anaxagoras, is the second instance of a student's objection refuted by the analogy between atomic combinations and the letters that make up words. Lucretius had said that if Anaxagoras' theory were correct, smoke, ash, and fire should all be visible in wood, but *manifesta res* (cf. 803) reveals that this is not the case (891–93). The student, however, taking up the idea, offers the example of spontaneous fires in the forest; but Lucretius turns this back promptly by saying that if the trees really contained fire particles, the woods would be forever burning. The example does perhaps actually derive from Anaxagoras,[43] but in the context it assumes its force and argumentative value less from authenticity than from the brilliance of the language with its onomatopoetic effects, from the natural splendor of the illustration, and from the immediacy of the second person address.

The student, as in 803, uses the Epicurean method of appeal to the senses, but in each case he must be set right, because he has not yet correctly understood that shifting atomic combinations account for different and changing phenomena. The letters of the alphabet provide a convenient analogy to the atoms.[44] In the argument against Empedocles, Lucretius seems to illustrate the fact of the community of letters before articulating the atomic analogy. He states that many particles common to many things explain why different things are nurtured by different things. Lines 812–16 abound in repetitions of

[42] Heraclitus 635–37 = other monists 705–6, 711; Heraclitus 670–73 = Empedocles 790–93, 797; Heraclitus 674 = Empedocles 757. Empedocles 814–15 = Anaxagoras 895–96; Empedocles 817–19 = Anaxagoras 907–9.

[43] See Leonard and Smith, note on 897–920.

[44] This analogy is briefly introduced in 1.197 and repeated in 1.823–27, 912–14; 2.688–94, 1013–18. By its fifth appearance it is so familiar that the terms of the comparison can be elided. Although it was perhaps already an atomist illustration (Bailey 633), its usage by Lucretius reiterates his concept of the teacher-student relationship. Cf. P. Friedländer, "Pattern of Sound and Atomic Theory in Lucretius," *AJP* 62 (1941) 16–34.

words in different inflexions: *alimur, aluntur*; *certis, certis*; *ab rebus, res, rerum, in rebus, res rebus*; *aliae atque aliae*; *multa, multis, multarum*; *variis, variae*. According to Lucretius, only the combination matters atomically (817–19), as can be seen from the recurrence of the same letters in different words of his verse (823–27). Once he has presented the demonstration, he formulates the principle of the comparison.

Subsequently, in the argument against Anaxagoras, he repeats the analogy, and he makes quite sure by *permagni referre* (908; cf. *magni* 817) and *paulo quod diximus ante* (907) that his pupil understands the significance of the repetition. Now Lucretius goes beyond the principle and gives the apt, verbal illustration of *ignis-lignum*: as the combinations of letters differ in the words, so must the atomic combinations of the corresponding substances. Since the conclusion of the section is the conclusion not only of the argument against Anaxagoras but also of the entire treatment of the rival philosophers, we should note especially the final caution not to transfer to the atoms the characteristics seen *in rebus apertis* (915); otherwise the atoms will laugh and weep. Although the section ends with a certain Horatian whimsicality, the conclusion is serious. The student must apply the Epicurean method of gathering information through the senses with care; by implication he must not recklessly extrapolate from the perceptible to the imperceptible atoms.[45] Mere vision is not enough; mental effort must be applied. The conclusion of both this and the previous section by a dialogue seems to suggest that the philosophical inquiry will be a close personal process. The more experienced will lead the way; the novice will follow.

At this point in Book 1 we accept as proven the fundamental Epicurean assumptions about the existence of atoms and void. The refutation of the monists, pluralists, and multipluralists has constituted the last 285 lines of the proof. The selective and tendentious treatment, the recurrence of the same topics and proofs, the repetition of language, and finally the setting of "us" against "them" all seem to indicate that Lucretius is more concerned to demonstrate the validity of his own views than sincere in the discussion of the theories of others. It is

[45] Elsewhere this is precisely what is required, e.g. 1.749–52, 2.123–41. Moreover, analogy is one of the most common of the persuasive devices: see examples in E. McLeod (above, note 9).

therefore quite reasonable that he should next set forth his own claims to the reader's attention (921–50).

Nunc age hurries him forward. *Cognosce et clarius audi* articulates the curious combination of intellectual effort and revelation by inspiration (cf. 943–46). Like his predecessors, Lucretius grapples with light and darkness (921–22, 933), but inspiration will help him achieve his goals, and a vision of reality is assured his follower. This reassurance is given at a critical moment: the infinity of the universe, space, and matter is a more abstract topic than the atoms and void, and it could easily baffle a weaker reader; or its implications might alarm the reader by making him feel that he was too irreverent of the arrangements of the gods.[46]

Lucretius' timely expression of confidence is renewed, briefly and mildly, in the conclusion of the book (1114–17):

> haec sic pernosces parva perductus opella;
> namque alid ex alio clarescet nec tibi caeca
> nox iter eripiet quin ultima naturai
> pervideas: ita res accendent lumina rebus.

Second person immediacy recurs. The triple prefix *per-* suggests strength, and yet Lucretius says, with an encouraging diminutive, *parva opella*, the task is not really so hard.[47] One need only begin. Nature (*res*) itself provides the torch (cf. 2.1050–51) that prevents one from losing the path in the blind night. The progress of one's knowledge[48] will be a succession of lights, the end of which is again described as the vision of the totality of nature, *ultima naturai pervideas*. Total vision is possible—as *ultima* and the prefix *per-* make clear—but it is to

[46] Lines 1015, 1021–22 allude specifically to the gods. See also below, note 68.

[47] *Parva opella* may be a diminutive of affection. As for the content of the phrase, Lucretius quite frequently emphasizes the ease of the learning process for the student (2.402, 462, 763; 3.158, 856; 4.523, 615–16, 663, 749; 5.882, 1282; 6.423, 532–34, 1000, 1081) and the ease of the exposition for himself (2.381; 5.1168), as well as the small need for lengthy explanation (1.402, 499; 2.143; 4.115, 723; 6.1082–83)—although he admits that a new subject is hard at first (2.1023–43; cf. 5.97–103).

[48] With this notion of progress one might well compare two later statements. When discussing the plurality of causes (5.526–33), Lucretius says that it is not always possible for one moving forward step by step, *pedetemptim progrediens*, to select the single cause of a given phenomenon. When he describes the products of man's conscious experiment, he combines the idea of human progress with nature's readiness to reveal successive

be reached in stages, as Lucretius suggests by the phrases *alid ex alio clarescet* and *res accendent lumina rebus*, both of which emphasize the notion of process (cf. 1.407, 6.998–1000). Bailey (793) points out that this passage is reminiscent of Epicurus. While the master's precedent was doubtless not without impact on Lucretius, the words also harmonize very well with his own thinking about himself and his student.

The truth then is readily available, but one needs sympathetic help to begin to see it. Lucretius is ready to play the role of Epicurus to one less advanced than himself. In 1.921–50 he does not mention Epicurus. He clearly plans to follow a different method, but he obviously hopes to emulate the master in communicating his vision, derived from Epicurus, to his student. It will thus be profitable to survey his major discussions of Epicurus (1.62–79; 3.1–30; 5.1–54; 6.1–42) and ascertain how he regards the master.

The first passage (1.62–79), the only one of the four that is not a prooemium, follows the invocation to Venus. Epicurus was the first (66, 67, 71)[49] to resist *religio*, the oppressor of mankind, and to break the tight bars that held nature captive.[50] In so doing, he went beyond the bounds of the world and brought back the victory of knowledge (75–77). The passage is beautifully symmetrical in its justice. A human (*homo* 66, *mortalis oculos* 66–67) dared save earthly humans (*humana vita* 62, *in terris* 63, *mortalibus* 65) from the tyranny of the skies (*a caeli regionibus* 64, *caelum* 69), so that men became the equal of

possibilities (5.1452–57):

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

[49] Primacy is stressed also in the other encomia: 3.2; 5.9; 6.1, 4. Note the personal claims of Lucretius: 1.926–30; 5.336–37.

[50] Military vocabulary dominates: *oppressa* (63), *ostendebat* (64), *instans* (65), *tollere*—or *tendere* (Nonius)—*contra* (66), *obsistere contra* (67, cf. 109–10), *minitanti* (68), *effringere . . . arta . . . portarum claustra* (70–71), *pervicit* (72), *moenia* (73), *refert nobis victor* (75), *pedibus subiecta vicissim* (78), *victoria* (79). With Epicurus' assault on the *arta naturae portarum claustra* (70–71) one should compare Lucretius' effort to free the soul *artis religionum . . . nodis* (931–32); for nature freed by knowledge, 2.1090–92; for the enslavement of mortals to religion, 5.86–87 = 6.62–63.

heaven: *nos exaequat victoria caelo* (79).[51] In the pride of victory Lucretius moves from the third person neutrality of "mortals" to the first person immediacy of *nobis* (75) and *nos* (79). Three things should be noted: first, the victory is intellectual (*oculos* 67, *animi virtutem* 70, *vis animi* 72, *mente animoque* 74; cf. 5.49–50); secondly, Epicurus' desire to liberate nature is represented as that of a lover striving to free the beloved (69–71, especially *acrem, irritat, cupiret*); and finally the liberating vision is one of limitation (1.75–77 = 594–96):

> quid possit oriri,
> quid nequeat, finita potestas denique cuique
> quanam sit ratione atque alte terminus haerens.

It seems typical of Lucretius and appropriate that the description of Epicurus' marvelous journey, vision, and prize of knowledge should culminate in the ancient religious figure of the boundary stone, fixed and immovable (cf. 2.719, 1087; 3.1020),[52] which seems to symbolize the quasi-religious security inherent in the permanence of nature and available through one's knowledge of nature's principles. In his later reworkings (5.88–90 = 6.64–66) of these lines, he presents the other side of the coin: ignorance of natural law is the basis of the unhappy human belief in the gods (cf. 1.104–11, 3.1020–21, 1078 on the limit of death; 5.1430–33 on the limit of pleasure; 6.25 on the limit of desire and fear). Preoccupation with the idea of natural restriction is also readily visible in the frequent references to the *foedus naturae* (1.586–87; 2.302; 3.416; 5.56–58, 310, 924; 6.906–7; cf. 3.787 = 5.131, 3.794–95) and in the emphasis on the fixed limit of growth and decay (1.551–64, 577–78, 584–98, 746–47, 844; 2.1116–19), especially in the formula (1.670–71, 792–93; 2.753–54; 3.519–20):

> nam quodcumque suis mutatum finibus exit,
> continuo hoc mors est illius quod fuit ante.

[51] This reversal might seem impious, and so Lucretius cites the example of Iphigenia (1.80–101) to convince his student that the enormities of *religio* surpass the audacity of the mortal Epicurus in fighting against it. In 5.117–25 he further argues that, inasmuch as there is no divinity in nature (with 5.122–23, cf. 5.51), mortals who exercise their reason are not liable to punishment like the Giants. The juxtaposition of mortal-immortal (5.121) and the reference to the *moenia mundi* (5.119) seem to be specific allusions to the passage in Book 1.

[52] Cf. 5.56–58 for a parallel image.

Furthermore, that the knowledge of limitation is felt to be a liberating force may well lie behind the desire to offer multiple explanations for those manifestations of nature whose simple causes are not readily open to us (5.526–33, 614, 705–50, 751–52; 6.703–11). In this context Lucretius, even more than Epicurus (*Pyth.* 85–88), wishes to preclude the selection of the wrong cause or, worse, the attribution of causes to the gods, which would impair one's peace of mind by reviving all the old anxieties.[53]

The second passage about Epicurus (3.1–30) amplifies the first; but while the first is historical narrative framed by direct address, presumably to Memmius (1.50–62, 80–83), and only at the very end personal in tone, the second is quite personal throughout. Pronouns are numerous (*te, tuis* 3; *te* 6; *tu, tu, nobis* 9; *tuis* 10; *nos* 12; *tua* 14; *me* 28; *tua* 29), and there are two vocatives besides (3,10). Lucretius describes his response to Epicurus who first brought light out of darkness (1–3):

> e tenebris tantis tam clarum extollere lumen
> qui primus potuisti inlustrans commoda vitae,
> te sequor.

He follows (with 3.3–4, cf. 5.55–56) out of love (with *amorem* 5, cf. *voluptas* 28; Epicurus 1.69–71), not from competitive zeal, and he longs to imitate his master, whom he represents as father and virtually fatherland. It is not immediately clear that *patria* in line 9 is not a noun but an adjective. The three words *tu patria nobis*, echoing *tu pater* at the beginning of the line and emphatically ordered so that the two pronouns enclose *patria*, present a complete thought in themselves. The master stands not only in the role of parent but also, for a moment, in the place of the *patria*, the sum total of a Roman's social, religious, and political connections and obligations (cf. 1.41–43). Epicurus thereby commands love, respect, and duty.

In the next lines (3.10–13) the image shifts from father to teacher, and Lucretius now represents the disciples as bees feeding on the golden words of the master. We are reminded of the honeyed cup of

[53] This psychological, as opposed to the epistemological, tendency seems borne out by the discussion of the origin of religion among primitive men: they received the idols of the gods, and simultaneously they observed the regularity of nature. In their ignorance, they rashly attributed the latter to the former, and thus brought suffering upon themselves and posterity (5.1161–1240; cf. 6.48–55).

philosophy (1.934–47), and in the thorough diligence of the bees (*omnia* 11, 12) we may see a parallel to the attentive effort which Lucretius demands of his student.

Through golden words Epicurus reveals (*vociferari* 14; cf. 5.54, 6.6, 24) his philosophy (*ratio* 14), which permits Lucretius to repeat Epicurus' excursion beyond the confines of the world (*moenia mundi discedunt* 16–17; cf. 1.72–74; 2.1044–47) and to see the mechanical operation of the whole: "totum video per inane geri res" (17; cf. 26–27, 30) The realm of the gods is open to view; Acheron is not (*apparet* 18; *at contra nusquam apparent* 25). That is, the ultimate in human expectation, the contemplation of the gods, is readily available, but the ultimate in human dread is found not to exist. Conventional fears, *animi terrores* (16), are dispelled by the intervention of Epicurus (*tua vi* 29) and are replaced in the beholder through the experience of vision by religious ecstasy and reverence: "his ibi me rebus quaedam divina voluptas percipit atque horror" (28–29).[54] In the light of such achievements, it is small wonder that we should find here the first allusions to Epicurus' divinity (*dicta . . . perpetua semper diguissima vita* 12–13, *divina mente* 15, *divina voluptas* 28).

This topic is given careful consideration in the prooemium of Book 5, which Lucretius begins by modestly disclaiming to Memmius his mortal capacity to treat adequately Epicurus' discoveries and merits. Then comes a comparison of Epicurus first with those traditional benefactors of mankind, Ceres and Liber, and next with Hercules.[55] Epicurus excels the former in *referta* and the latter in *facta*, although his superiority in each case has the same basis. People could do without bread and wine but not without a pure heart (18):

at bene non poterat sine puro pectore vivi.

[54] G. F. Else, "Moenia Mundi," *CW* 37 (1944) 136–37, interprets these lines as the description of the experience of conversion. I would, however, disagree when Else says that "the vision was not an outgrowth of his philosophy; the philosophy was a rationalization of his vision": the text as a whole seems to express the desire to provide the possibility for the re-enactment of the vision.

[55] Apart from the obvious rhetorical value of the antithesis *facta-referta*, Hercules provides a useful counterweight to Ceres and Liber, since the discrediting of the Stoic hero has specific tactical advantages. Moreover, the assessment of his achievements as less than those of Epicurus reiterates what is implicit in 1.62–79, namely that Epicurus was the greatest of the heroes. With the parallel treatment of Hercules' natural and Epicurus' psychological monsters, cf. 3.978–1023, on the victims of Acheron in this life.

As for Hercules, the monsters he removed were remote and would not bother us, just as even now we for the most part[56] avoid those that the earth still produces; but an impure heart would enjoin great battles and great disasters (5.43–48):

> at nisi purgatumst pectus, quae proelia nobis
> atque pericula tumst ingratis insinuandum?
> quantae tum scindunt hominem cuppedinis acres
> sollicitum curae quantique perinde timores?
> quidve superbia spurcitia ac petulantia? quantas
> efficiunt clades? quid luxus desidiaeque?

In view of the militant representation of Epicurus (49–50; cf. 1.66–75, *passim*), the military description of our emotional conflicts seems quite natural. Epicurus, in contrast to the other benefactors and heroes, by his philosophy (9–10) brought life out of the sea and out of the darkness into the light (11–12).[57] He found the sweet consolations of life (21; cf. 6.4) and vanquished our psychological monsters (45–50). Hence, because of his discoveries and his acts of salvation, we must admit that he was a god: "dicendum est, deus ille fuit, deus" (8; cf. 19, 50–51; 6.7–8). Almost as an afterthought, Lucretius lists revelation as a further claim for divinity (52–54):

> cum bene praesertim multa ac divinitus ipsis
> immortalibu' de divis dare dicta siierit
> atque omnem rerum naturam pandere dictis.[58]

[56] The honest admission of less than absolute security contained in *plerumque est nostra potestas* (42), is echoed in the prooemium of Book 6: *ferme* (10), *proquam possent* (11), *plerumque* (33).

[57] With the combined use of military and nautical terminology in the prooemium, one might compare a passage at the end of Book 5 where Lucretius contrasts the desires of primitive and modern men (1423–57). Neither group realized the simple needs of nature and the limits of possession and real pleasure. The restless searching concomitant to this ignorance has, however, advanced civilization: "idque minutatim vitam provexit in altum / et belli magnos commovit funditus aestus" (1434–35). The achievements are then illustrated, and the result restated (1454–57). Progress has not been an unmixed blessing. The continuity of metaphor, probably by no means wholly self-conscious and deliberate, provides a link between the beginning and the end of the book, for the end seems to supply the historical background for the psychological state of man from which Epicurus rescued him.

[58] Cf. Epic. *Sent. Vat.* 29. Somewhat later in Book 5 Lucretius describes his own oracular method. He follows in Epicurus' footsteps. Having demonstrated the laws of mortality applicable equally to the soul and to the macrocosm, he now encourages Memmius to look bravely to the heavens and contemplate the ultimate destruction of the

The insistence, with "proofs," that Epicurus must have been divine is to be understood on the one hand as polemic against conventional religious thought and on the other as reassurance to those who would pursue Epicurus' philosophy: they need not fear they are setting upon a wicked path (cf. 1.80–82), nor need they have qualms about the traditional gods (5.1198 ff., 6.68 ff.). Rather they may expect a liberating vision, for nothing prevents us from living a life worthy of the gods (3.322).

The emphasis on Epicurus' divinity should not, however, cause one to overlook his human aspect. That Epicurus was a man constitutes the dramatic point of 1.62–79. His mortality and his distinction are stressed in 3.1042–44 by his inclusion in the catalogue of the noble dead. Obviously, a conventional god would be inappropriate in such a list of mortals. Epicurus could have been omitted altogether, yet Lucretius deliberately named the most illustrious of mortals, the sun among the stars, to stress the fact that we all must die. Epicurus does not in the degree of his human involvement, as represented by the facts of his life and by Lucretius' description of him, qualify as an Epicurean god in the strict sense (cf. 1.44–49 = 2.646–51; 2.1093–94; 5.82). His philosophy, once grasped and followed, can, however, induce a state of godlike calm (3.319–22; 5.1203; 6.58–78), even though the sharing of Epicurus' vision may excite ecstasy in the viewer. His achievement required organized effort (*per artem* 5.10), perhaps precisely because the prizes (*praemia* 5.5) were intellectually won (5.49–50). Moreover, unlike a true Epicurean god and most conventional gods, he was extraordinarily moved by the unhappiness of man, who,

universe. The subject is difficult, but he will speak out with religious solemnity: *sed tamen effabor* (5.97–104; cf. 1.136–45, 921–22). Then, repeating what he has already said of Empedocles (1.734–41), he offers reassurance against the mortal fear of offending the gods in the universe (5.110–13):

> qua prius aggrediar quam de re fundere fata
> sanctius et multo certa ratione magis quam
> Pythia quae tripode a Phoebi lauroque profatur,
> multa tibi expediam doctis solacia dictis.

The *solacia* (cf. Epicurus 5.21, 6.4) are immediately the arguments why the gods cannot be involved in the universe (5.114–234), while the *fata* are, as in the case of Empedocles, the physical facts (5.235 ff.). The character of his revelation is decidedly scientific (cf. 1.54–55, 951–54; 2.182); and in this Lucretius wishes to emulate Epicurus and Empedocles, whose influence is strong in this passage (5.97, cf. *VS*[9] 31, B114; 5.100–3, cf. B133). For the value of the oracular metaphor see above, pp. 231–32.

despite nature's generosity in providing for most of his wants and the consequent availability of safety, persisted in being miserable. Epicurus' response forms the topic of the prooemium of Book 6.

The introductory praise of Athens for having produced grain, law, and Epicurus, as if these were all equal benefits, seems somewhat stilted and even contradictory to what has preceded, but the emphasis is probably better taken on the therapeutic assistance of Athens which renewed life for suffering mortals: "mortalibus aegris . . . recreaverunt vitam" (6.1–3; cf. 1.942), since this is the tendency of the whole prooemium. Why Epicurus was moved to make his revelation, Lucretius describes in a passage of some length, carefully framed by the two lines, "omnia veridico qui quondam ex ore profudit" (6) and "veridicis igitur purgavit pectora dictis" (24). By this repetition we are certainly intended to realize the truthful and cleansing nature of Epicurus' revelation.

Epicurus was distressed by the endless and unnecessary struggles of man, until he understood that man himself was responsible for his own unhappiness (6.17–23):[59]

> intellegit ibi vitium vas efficere ipsum
> omniaque illius vitio corrumpier intus
> quae collata foris et commoda cumque venirent;
> partim quod fluxum pertusumque esse videbat,
> ut nulla posset ratione explerier umquam;
> partim quod taetro quasi conspurcare sapore
> omnia cernebat, quaecumque receperat intus.

Lucretius here rather strikingly expands the conventional philosophical figure of the soul vessel,[60] for he conflates the sense of futility suggested by the leaky Danaid sieve (6.20–21; cf. 3.935–42, 1007–10) with the defilement of its content by a corrupting container (6.22). The vessel can neither hold nor maintain the purity of whatever comes to it from the outside, not even the *commoda* of life (6.19; cf. 3.2, 937).

[59] In 5.1423–57 (see above, note 57), Lucretius makes the same point that ignorance of limit led to unhappiness and struggle, the responsibility for which lies with us (1425, 1430–31).

[60] See Bailey 1556. The vessel is, in any case, a favorite object of comparison. It is more simply used of the body as container of the soul (3.440, 451–52[?], 555, 793 = 5.137; cf. Bailey 1070), and it recurs in the "true ring" test (3.873; cf. Bailey 1141).

On the other hand, purification, which reverses corruption, also seems to end futility (6.33).

Epicurus, seeing the difficulty, cleansed man and we observe once again that liberation is by way of definition and limitation (*finem statuit* 6.25, *exposuitque bonum summum* 26, *viam monstravit tramite parvo* 27). *Purgavit pectora* (6.24) makes explicit what was hinted at in the prooemium of Book 5. A pure heart (5.18, 43) is necessary, because only a man who has been cleansed of harmful notions can receive the truth.[61] Once the truth has been seen, proper resistance can be offered to life's inconveniences ("quibus e portis occurri cuique deceret" 6.32), and proper effort along the path of right reason can be made ("recto contendere cursu" 28). This propriety of action, consonant with the example of Epicurus himself, is the happy contrast to the calamitous conflict of the unenlightened described in 5.43–48.

Epicurus showed that, for the most part, man needlessly tossed upon the seas of care (6.34, cf. 11). As in 5.11–12, the images of heavy sea and darkness are set side by side, and the prooemium of Book 6 concludes with the simile of children in the dark, men in the light (35–41):

> nam veluti pueri trepidant atque omnia caecis
> in tenebris metuunt, sic nos in luce timemus
> interdum, nilo quae sunt metuenda magis quam
> quae pueri in tenebris pavitant finguntque futura.
> hunc igitur terrorem animi tenebrasque necessest
> non radii solis nec lucida tela diei
> discutiant, sed naturae species ratioque.

This is a philosophical commonplace (e.g. Plat. *Phaed.* 77E; cf. Lucil. 526–29 W), but we should also note the particular use that Lucretius has made of a comparison that obviously satisfied him, since he repeats it twice elsewhere (2.55–61; 3.87–93). The function of these lines always appears the same, reassurance of the student before taking up difficult (Book 2) or fear-inspiring material, death in Book 3 and celestial phenomena in Book 6.

In the simile we notice first of all the familiar contrast between light and dark: "caecis in tenebris," "in tenebris," "terrorem animi tene-

[61] Cf. *integros fontes* (1.927); Epic. Frag. 24 Bailey. Moreover, one should remember that the title of Empedocles' second work was *Katharmoi*.

brasque," followed by "non radii solis nec lucida tela diei / . . . sed naturae species ratioque" (cf. 3.1; 5.11–12). Children fear everything in the genuine darkness of night, but we in broad daylight, in the darkness of our minds, sometimes fear things as little to be dreaded as the imaginings of children. For them simple daylight is the cure, but we must go beyond that light to the intellectual comprehension of not only the outward manifestation, *species*, but also the inner principle, *ratio*, which governs it.[62] The *species* of nature demands ordinary light within which to be seen, a direct confrontation of the viewer and his object, and—to extrapolate from the context of the earlier occurrence of these lines (6.39–41 = 1.146–48)—the courage to look hard at what may seem either too obscure or too close to the realm of the gods for man's gaze. The transition from merely seeing what is readily visible in broad daylight to achieving an abstract understanding of the motivating mechanics of the visible world is gradual, but imperative. It is this necessary mental effort which differentiates the man from the child. Fear is common to both children and adults (*metuunt*, *timemus*, *metuenda*, *pavitant*, *terrorem*), but as in the simile of the children and their doctors (1.936–42), help for the children can be mechanically and externally produced, while the adults must take action for themselves (*necessest*). Epicurus has provided the intellectual light; we must follow; and indeed Lucretius has already described how the Epicurean vision dispelled his own *animi terrores* (3.14–30).

From these four passages about Epicurus we may then form a composite image of a mortal who from love—erotic or paternal—or from simple human sympathy fought successfully against *religio* and the monsters that beset the psyche. He released the knowledge of nature to man, whom he purified and taught by the golden words of his true revelation. He was the torchbearer, the guide out of darkness into safety, who showed how his own vision of the totality of things could be emulated. In the greatness of his deeds and achievements he was truly divine.

[62] Sister Frances, "The Light of Reason and the Darkness of Unbelief," *CJ* 58 (1963) 170–72, calls attention to the verbal similarity of *radii* and *ratio* and aptly adduces 2.1023–47 as a specific application of the principle of going beyond *species* to *ratio*. With the vision of the enlightened one might contrast the "blind" philosophy of the wrong thinkers (6.67) and their "blind" desires (3.59, 874; 4.1120, 1153).

All of this harmonizes very well with Lucretius' statement about himself and his role in 1.921–50. Although he feels inferior to the master, whom he does not even wish to rival (3.5–8), he expects to be the initiator, the guide, the generous lover to his student, whom he pushes so relentlessly toward the truth precisely because he views himself as a responsible intermediary. Lucretius' means of revelation will be poetry, a mode for which Epicurus had rather little use;[63] and thus the achievement of clarity, while it has the same purpose as for Epicurus, is for Lucretius more of a verbal, poetic problem. This explains his concern for the relative light and dark of the rival philosophers in their style, as well as in the content of their thought. Epicurus could bring light by the simple revelation of his philosophy, but Lucretius must set forth that philosophy in Latin for a possibly recalcitrant audience, refute the claims of other schools, and write charmed verse besides.

Although the goal must inevitably seem desirable, the attainment may, on occasion, seem hard, and hence Lucretius is always anxious to show that the intellectual process of acquiring his philosophy is worthwhile. In the prooemium of Book 2 he elaborates upon the benefits of the vision offered by Epicureanism.[64] This passage, closely related in thought to those concerned with Epicurus, is perhaps of greater comfort to the student, for Lucretius here addresses him, the ordinary mortal, directly (4, 6, 9, 36, 40, 41, 43a, 44, 53) and encourages him to recognize the necessities of nature so that he may achieve peace. The emphasis is on effort, but equally on its rewards.

He begins by describing how pleasant it is to watch from land the toil of another caught in a storm at sea and how pleasant also to gaze upon the contest of war without being involved oneself, but how nothing is sweeter than to possess the realms of philosophy (2.1–8). All three instances mark points of safety and progress for the beholder, but the first two are situations of turmoil, one natural, the other man-made, from which the beholder is physically apart (4, 6); while the third, the *templa serena*, symbolizes philosophical potential and achievement. *Suave* describes the first two; *nihil dulcius*, the last. By this

[63] Epic. Frag. 33 Bailey, 228, 229 Usener; Plut. *Moral.* 15D; Diog. Laert. 10.121B; Cic. *Fin.* 1.71 ff.; cf. the discussions cited above, in note 3.

[64] For a sensitive discussion of this prooemium see P. De Lacy (above, note 26).

distribution of adjectives Lucretius points out that fortuitous escape from trouble is less valuable than the conscientious effort to gain the stronghold of philosophy. That the fortress of philosophy is described in a curious blend of intellectual and military terminology, previously applied to Epicurus, may well be intended to hold out to the student the real expectation that he will be able to emulate the master's victories.

All three positions offer a view of dangers escaped and great human exertion, *magnus labor* (2) and *belli certamina magna* (5), but only the third offers the metaphysical view of men who have lost the path of life and seek it wrongly (2.9–13):

> despicere unde queas alios passimque videre
> errare atque viam palantis quaerere vitae,
> certare ingenio, contendere nobilitate,
> noctes atque dies niti praestante labore
> ad summas emergere opes rerumque potiri.

Although Lucretius has already established wandering far from the path of true reason as the characteristic of wrong-thinkers, that idea has particular force here, since just at the end of Book 1 clarity was represented as inherent in nature and the path as readily visible. It is therefore all the sadder for the emancipated to observe the futile expenditures of wrong effort by the unemancipated, effort which Lucretius emphasizes by a sequence of laborious verbs, *quaerere*, *certare*, *contendere*, *niti*, *emergere*. The phrase *ad summas emergere opes* even seems to contain an ironic contrast: the wrong-thinkers strive for the ultimate in wealth and power, a pinnacle without reality, whereas the right-thinkers can achieve the heights of philosophy by proper mental orientation and ritual purity. If *emergere*, oddly used in this context, could be taken as Smith suggests (*ad loc.*) to mean "to rise out of the sea," then Lucretius seems even to draw a parallel between those struggling at sea in dangers for which they are not responsible and those struggling to implement wrong ideas for which they are indeed responsible.

Once again, it is the lack of knowledge of limitation that causes unhappiness. The unenlightened do not see (2.16, cf. 20, 47) that nature demands only that which may remove pain from mind and body (2.14–19):

o miseras hominum mentis, o pectora caeca!
qualibus in tenebris vitae quantisque periclis
degitur hoc aevi quodcumquest! nonne videre
nil aliud sibi naturam latrare, nisi utqui
corpore seiunctus dolor absit, mente fruatur
iucundo sensu cura semota metuque?

Several points should be noted. The adjectives "unhappy" and "blind" are conventional and yet for Lucretius specific: "blind" because not-seeing, and because not-seeing, "unhappy." The reader is moved, because he knows that both conditions are unnecessary. Moreover, *miser* contrasts with *suave* and *dulcius* of the previous section, and *caecus* with the emphasis there on seeing the dangers one has escaped. Lucretius in this prooemium takes us backward from our own degree of awareness and shows us the needless misfortunes of those who do not see. He shows both the luminous goal for which one should strive and also the unhappiness from which one has come. Furthermore, while *qualibus* may be merely a metrically convenient and decorative alternate for *quantis*, the use of both may be quite deliberate: men differ in the kind of their confusion, but the danger is great for all.

In lines 2.20–54 Lucretius explains that rich external assets do not genuinely help either body or mind. The description depends very largely on visual appeal. For example, nature does not demand domestic elegance (24–28):

si non aurea sunt iuvenum simulacra per aedes
lampadas igniferas manibus retinentia dextris,
lumina nocturnis epulis ut suppeditentur,
nec domus argento fulget auroque renidet
nec citharae reboant laqueata aurataque templa. . . .

The particular illustration may have been suggested by spectacles of contemporary luxury, by Homer, or by his own use of *substernere* in line 22, conjuring up thoughts of feasts and banqueting; but more important is the emphasis on gold and silver, on a reality as glittering and as unreal as the *summae opes* of 13.

Similarly, manifestations of power are shown to have no effect on the disposition of the mind (2.47–54):

quod si ridicula haec ludibriaque esse videmus,
re veraque metus hominum curaeque sequaces

nec metuunt sonitus armorum nec fera tela
audacterque inter reges rerumque potentis
versantur neque fulgorem reverentur ab auro
nec clarum vestis splendorem purpureai,
quid dubitas quin omni' sit haec rationi' potestas?
omnis cum in tenebris praesertim vita laboret.

The fears and cares of men lack respect for arms and power, and they are not deceived by the false luminosity which may beguile men. Lucretius rather neatly joins the two parts of his discussion, and in 51 and 52 even unites the two parts of the section on the body (21–33, 34–36). Line 53 makes explicit what we had assumed already: philosophy offers true insight. Line 54, on the other hand, recapitulates the idea of futile, dark effort, and in 55–58 we are presented with the analogy, perhaps already hinted at in the adjectives *ridicula* and *ludibria* of 47, between children frightened in the dark and men frightened in broad daylight. The moral once again is that one must come out of the darkness (15, 54, 56, 58, 59) through knowledge.

Progress along the right road requires effort from both the initiate and the intermediary. This explains the constant appeals for confidence,[65] memory,[66] attentiveness,[67] and for freedom from false religious scruple;[68] the formulaic admonitions such as *nunc age*[69] and *percipe*;[70] the plenitude of first person didactic verbs such as *expediam*,[71] frequently found in perfect tense reminders such as *docui*,[72] or *ut diximus ante* and its variants;[73] and the appeals to previously demonstrated material.[74] The sense of joint responsibility also accounts for Lucretius' urgent expressions of a desire to move forward (3.259; 5.91; 6.80–83, 245), since all eternity is at stake (3.1071–75).

[65] 1.102–6, 267, 333; 2.1040–41.

[66] 2.581–82, 891; 4.643.

[67] 1.50–53, 499; 2.66, 125, 1023; 3.181; 4.912–15, 931; 6.920.

[68] 1.80–82, 151–58; 2.167–82, 659–60; 5.78–81, 114–21, 156–65, 305, 1041–43, 1204–40; 6.68–78, 379–422, 760–66.

[69] 1.265, 921, 953; 2.62, 333, 730; 3.417; 4.110, 176, 269, 673, 722; 6.495, 535, 738.

[70] 2.335, 731; 3.135; 4.111, 115, 270, 723, 880; 6.46, 536, 768.

[71] 1.499; 2.66, 183; 4.634, 931; 5.77, 113; 6.245, 497, 641, 682, 739, 1093.

[72] 1.265, 539, 543, 951; 2.339, 478, 499, 522, 1050; 3.31, 426, 458, 500, 522; 4.26, 45, 752, 861, 1145; 5.364; 6.43, 176, 271, 486, 627, 1094.

[73] 1.734, 794, 846, 907; 2.509; 4.73, 383, 643, 742, 882, 1037; 6.769. Cf. *ostendimus* and its variants: 1.429, 531; 2.94; 3.810; 4.672, 746; 5.355; 6.487, 774, 996.

[74] 1.858; 2.94; 6.936–37.

Perhaps the best description of the cooperative process occurs in the simile of the student ferreting out the truth like a hunting dog in diligent pursuit of the scent (1.402–9; cf. 2.123–24; 6.920). Lucretius has been discussing the void and says that though the student may delay by raising objections, he must in the end admit[75] that void exists, for Lucretius can scrape up *fides* for his argument (1.399–401; cf. 423; 2.478–79 = 522–23; 5.104). His words will be the *vestigia* (1.402; cf. *vestigia certa viai* 406; *ratio vestigia monstrat* 5.1447) by which the student himself (*tute* 1.403, *te tute ipse* 407) can penetrate all the dark hiding places and drag out the truth (1.408–9):

> poteris caecasque latebras
> insinuare omnis et verum protrahere inde.

The truth is once more represented as readily available in a consecutive order of vision (*alid ex alio* 407) to a receptive mind (*animo . . . sagaci* 402), and yet the right path to the truth must first be indicated (*semel, certa* 406) so that it may be followed. The student can himself, like Epicurus and Lucretius, bring his victory out of the darkness, but if he falters or requires assistance, Lucretius can offer it in sweet abundance: their lives will lapse sooner than his words (411–17).

This is the generosity of love (cf. 1.52–53), more vividly described earlier when Lucretius first explains his motivation for executing his difficult task (1.140–45):

> sed tua me virtus tamen et sperata voluptas
> suavis amicitiae quemvis efferre laborem
> suadet et inducit noctes vigilare serenas
> quaerentem dictis quibus et quo carmine demum
> clara tuae possim praepandere lumina menti,
> res quibus occultas penitus convisere possis.

The intimate character of the relationship is stressed by the juxtaposition of *tua me* (cf. 102), and the seriousness of the endeavor by the prefixes *ef-ferre*, *prae-pandere*, and *con-visere*, all three either unusual compounds or oddly used. We should observe, however, that whereas the conventional lover generally spends restless nights, Lucretius'

[75] The phrase "you must admit" is a favorite Lucretian pedagogic and argumentative device (1.205, 270, 462, 624, 627, 826, 963, 974, 976; 2.284, 513, 691, 866, 1074, 1084; 3.166, 470, 543, 578, 677, 766, 799; 4.216, 526; 5.343, 376; 6.697).

wakefulness is calm (cf. 2.8, 1094; 3.293); and elsewhere too he terms his labor pleasant (2.730; 3.419), but his desire to communicate is expressed as longing (*aveo* 2.216; 3.6, 259; 4.778, 823).

The gift offered is the typical light out of darkness (1.144–45) conveyed through poetry. Leonard and Smith (*ad loc.*) suggest that *carmen* may here have some connotation of "magical song" or "incantation."[76] This idea of charmed poetry would not only harmonize with the comparison between Lucretius and the doctors of the honeyed cup (1.933–50, especially 934, 945–50) but would also explain his enthusiastic appeal to Venus (1.1–28). She is the symbol of the creative force as seen in the natural process of reproduction (cf. 1.227–28; 2.171–73) and in the artificial process of poetry. In each case, the shores of light are the goal. Since the *lepos* of Venus leads each thing eagerly onwards (1.15–16), Lucretius would like to borrow that charm (28), presumably to lead Memmius, or any student whatever, toward the truth.[77]

Unfortunately, Lucretius says very little else about poetry, although it is included among the agreeable products of civilization (5.1450–53). He uses *cano* to introduce new topics of his own (5.509; 6.84) and to describe the works of Ennius (1.117) and unspecified *poetae* (2.600; 5.327, 405; 6.754). He refers to his poetry (1.144, 934, 946; 3.420; 6.937) as well as that of Empedocles (1.731) as *carmina*, but his most frequent term is *versus*.[78] In short, apart from two brief sections in which poetry is viewed as the charm that will hold the student's attention until he can see the truth, Lucretius seems rather conventional in his usage and irritatingly uninterested in his own novel attitude. It is useless for us to be annoyed that he did not discuss Poetry, since he so obviously regarded it as a charmed means to a weightier end. This is quite apart from his actual success as a poet. One does imagine that Lucretius did take a certain pride in his own poetic achievement, but we must overcome our firm feeling that it is somehow indecent for a great poet to regard his poetry as secondary to its content.

[76] Cf. the preference for verse that is *suavidicus* (4.180=909; cf. 1.945). The idea of charmed poetry goes back to Homer (*Od.* 17.514, 518–21).

[77] For the association of Venus and poetry see Boyancé, *REA* 49 (above, note 3) 98–99; and J. P. Elder, "Lucretius 1.1–49," *TAPA* 85 (1954) 88–120.

[78] 1.24, 137, 416, 499, 823, 825, 949; 2.529, 688, 690, 1013; 3.36; 4.180, 909; 6.83; cf. 1.121, of Ennius.