

THE ORIGINAL PLAN OF LUCRETIOUS' *DE RERUM NATURA*

In an earlier study¹ I argued that the appearance of the name of Memmius in the first, second, and fifth books alone of Lucretius *de Rerum Natura* is only the most striking indication of a fundamental change in the poet's attitude towards his reader which is already well established quite a short way through book 5, and which makes it almost incontestable that Lucretius wrote books 3, 4, and 6 after he had lost all hope of converting Memmius to Epicureanism. This was not a novel conclusion. It was argued strongly by J. Mussehl² and H. Diels,³ and accepted by C. Bailey⁴ and many other scholars. Although a vast literature has dealt with every aspect of the problem,⁵ neither Mussehl himself nor any other more recent scholar of whom I am aware seems seriously to have followed up the implications of the argument and inquired what sort of poem Lucretius originally planned to write and how he came to change it into more or less the form transmitted in our manuscripts.

U. Pizzani, whose study published in 1959⁶ is probably the most comprehensive and clearly argued examination of the whole question of the composition of *de Rerum Natura*, puts forward (pp.151 ff.) an important warning: that the order in which the books were written was not necessarily that in which they were intended to be published. This would imply in particular that books 3 and 4 (the *psychologia*, or discussion of mind and soul and their workings) were always intended to follow book 2, as they do now, but that Lucretius left them on one side while he went on to compose 5, and perhaps 6, returning to the subject of the soul only after he had abandoned Memmius as the recipient of his teaching. While this hypothesis must be accepted as possible, there seems to be no evidence of any sort to account for this unlikely procedure; and on the other hand a good deal is to be found throughout the poem suggesting what is on the face of it the more probable explanation: that 3 and 4 were at first intended to round off the poem and were moved to the central position only at a relatively late stage.

The most obvious proof of this intention is found in what seems to be Lucretius' first announcement of his programme, in 1.127–35:

quapropter bene cum superis de rebus habenda
nobis est ratio, solis lunaeque meatus
qua fiant ratione, et qua vi quaeque gerantur
in terris, tunc cum primis ratione sagaci
unde anima atque animi constet natura videndum,
et quae res nobis vigilantibus obvia mentis
terrificet morbo adfectis somnoque sepultis,
cernere uti videamur eos audireque coram,
morte obita quorum tellus amplectitur ossa.

¹ CQ N.S. 28 (1978), 267 ff.

² *De Lucretiani libri primi conducione ac retractione* (1912), pp.136, ff.

³ *Lucrezstudien*, in *Sitz. Preuss. Akad.* (1918), pp.912 ff.

⁴ *Titii Lucreti Cari De Rerum Natura libri sex* (1947), i.32–3.

⁵ See in particular the excellent bibliography by A. Dalzell, in *CW* 66 (1973), 389–427, (especially 425–7) and 67 (1973), 65–112.

⁶ *Il problema del testo e della composizione del De rerum natura di Lucrezio*, especially pp.150–74.

This passage is closely sandwiched between the exhortation to Memmius not to be put off by fears of life after death (102 ff.) and the appeal to Memmius' friendship (136–45). It appears to refer to the four later books as we know them, but only in so far as they serve to dispel superstition and the fear of death, the subjects of the sixty preceding lines: first 'superis de rebus . . . solis lunaeque meatus' and 'qua vi quaeque gerantur in terris' (127–30), which provides a fair summary of the astronomy and the terrestrial phenomena dealt with in 5 and 6; then the nature of soul and mind (131), the subject of 3; and finally the explanation of those apparitions and visions which make us forget the arguments for total annihilation after death and entertain beliefs in the survival of the soul (132–5), a topic which is to be propounded more fully in 4. 33–41 and discussed in 4.757–61, without playing nearly such a dominant part in that book as is suggested here. There is no hint at this point that 4 is to deal at length with the whole question of sensation and the doctrine of *simulacra* (essential though this is to prove in accounting for the apparitions), let alone the nature of sex and its dangers; any more than that 5 was to cover the whole history of the emergence of the world and of mankind. But allowing that Lucretius had not, at this very early stage, worked out all the topics which he was in due course to include in each book, or did not feel it necessary to include them in this summary, it is difficult to doubt, on the evidence of this passage, that right from the start he envisaged an argument which discussed first those phenomena which might all too easily be explained in terms of divine intervention, and then the mortality of the soul and misleading indications of its possible survival.¹ Before embarking on either of these two major topics, each occupying two books, the poet proceeds, as he has promised (54–61), to lay a groundwork for both by explaining the atomic system on which the whole universe depends. This to take up the first pair of books.

This programme for 5, 6, 3, and 4, moreover, shows every sign of being an integral part of its whole context in book 1 as originally composed. The theme of apparitions of the dead, which is set out at greater length than the subject-matter of the other three books and comes as a climax to the whole section, carefully picks up the subject of the earlier part of the paragraph; and it is equally clear that the internal arrangement of the section, with 3 and 4 following 5 and 6, is not the result of any subsequent transposition. The subsection covering 3 and 4 begins in the second foot of line 130, not at the start of a line, as it would do if it were an independent unit of six lines moved from elsewhere or inserted as an afterthought. In this respect the passage presents a strong contrast to the comparable summary in 5.55–63, recapitulating the first four books in their present order:

cuius ego ingressus vestigia dum rationes
persequor ac doceo dictis, quo quaeque creata
foedere sint, in eo quam sit durare necesse
nec validas valeant aevi rescindere leges,
quo genere in primis animi natura reperta est
nativo primum consistere corpore creta

¹ Pizzani, p.150, cites with approval R. Reitzenstein's *Das erste Prooemium des Lucrez* (*Nachricht von der königlichen Gesellschaft zu Göttingen*, 1920), pp.83–96 (which I have not been able to consult), to the effect that the order in which the

books are described in these lines is not significant but is intended to give proper emphasis to the subject-matter of book 4. Pizzani himself virtually implies that 'cum primis' in line 130 indicates actual chronological priority as well as greater importance.

nec posse incolumem magnum durare per aevum,
sed simulacra solere in somnis fallere mentem,
cernere cum videamur eum quem vita reliquit . . .

This summary concentrates on the theme of the mortality of everything in the universe, so as to lead into the first topic in book 5, the mortal nature of the universe itself (65–6), before the argument turns to the absence of divine control in the various processes of development and to the need to resist superstitious reactions to the wonders of the heavens.¹ Here the lines describing books 3 and 4 (59–63) occupy a group of complete lines, so as to form a unit easily omitted without leaving raw edges or a gap in the argument. Moreover, line 62 contains a phrase which there is good reason to believe was written later than most at least of book 4. The argument of book 4 is here stated to prove 'simulacra solere in somnis fallere mentem'. When in book 4 Lucretius begins to describe the basis of perception, he is careful to explain precisely what he means by the word *simulacra* (30–2 and 50–4); since he has previously used it to mean 'ghosts' (1.123, derived from Ennius), 'imitations' (2.41), 'reflections' (1.1060), and 'statues' (2.24, with 5.75 and 6.419). In 5.1170, on the other hand, which there is every reason to suppose was written before the full exposition of the theory of perception in 4,² he describes the appearances of the gods as 'egregias facies'; although it is clear that he means exactly the same thing as is described in 4 as *simulacra*. Further, as will be discussed below, it appears that in book 6, though for the most part written before 3 and 4, lines 68–79 show knowledge of the doctrine of *simulacra* worked out in 4. Both passages clearly belong to a very late stage of composition, when the order of books was finally changed.

Thus, of the two conflicting summaries, 1.127–35 appears to give an accurate account of Lucretius' original intentions, while 5.55–63, or at least the last five lines, belongs to a revision whereby 3 and 4 were moved in between 2 and 5. The further complexity involved in the explanation by J. Mewaldt³ of the two overlapping link-passages at the beginning of 4 (26–44 showing how the following argument develops out of that of 3 and setting out to explain away apparent disproofs of the extinction of the soul, and 45–53 making the argument develop straight out of what has been established in 1 and 2, with no reference to 3 at all), as belonging respectively to the order in our texts and to an earlier order where 5 preceded 3, has been given more weight than it deserves. Despite the lack of cross-reference between the two books, which would make the question of priority clear once for all, there is still a specific acknowledgement in 4.110–122 of the distinction *animus/anima* set out in 3.94–135.⁴ Both the evidence of the programme in 1.127–35, discussed above, and the requirements of logic show that the nature and mortality of the soul must have been examined before Lucretius went on to what seems, from

¹ See Giussani, ad loc.

² For another indication that the discussion of appearances of the gods in 5.1169–82 was written before the full investigation of perception in 4, see J. R. Nichols, *Epicurean Political Philosophy* (1976), p.152, on the inconsistency of the unquestioned acceptance of appearances of the gods in 5 and the recognition in

4.455–68 that inferences about the validity of visions is often fallacious. The whole doctrine of false inferences on the basis of *simulacra*, including optical illusions, is worked out in 4, and would surely have influenced Lucretius' treatment of the gods in this passage of 5 if it were written later.

³ *Hermes* 43 (1908), 286–95.

⁴ So Pizzani, pp.158–9.

its prominence in the summaries in 1 and 5 and from the link-passage in 4.30–41, to have been the most significant aspect of the whole question, namely the apparitions of the dead. All we can infer is that at one stage, presumably when he was in the process of moving the whole *psychologia* to follow book 2, he tried the experiment of reversing the order, and wrote the appropriate lines, 45–8, to link 4 to the end of 2. It is difficult to see what Lucretius hoped to achieve by this further change of plan. The integration of the books into this experimental order must have been abandoned almost at once, the only surviving trace being the retention of the shorter link-passage beside the longer, repetitions and all.¹ No good explanation seems to have been given, by Mewaldt or anyone else, for the failure to omit the shorter passage when it was being revised to stand where we now find it in 3.31–4. But we shall find other indications of Lucretius' failure satisfactorily to make up his mind about the beginning of book 4.

One pointer to the poet's original arrangement of the books is to be found in the way in which the continuity both of the logical argument and of the emotional attitude is continued from the end of one book into the opening of the next. Thus the subject-matter of 1 runs on into 2 with hardly an interruption, as it leads from the nature of the atoms and void to the movement and combination of atoms to form material objects. But little less significant is the manner in which the first book concludes with the four-line address to Memmius, pointing out how easily he may hope to advance to enlightenment, with only 'parva opella'. Although, as I have shown,² the opening of the second book is curiously lacking in direct appeal to Memmius, it nevertheless takes up the theme of the preceding lines with the assurance 'And it will all be so well worth while'. The book ends, however, with a mood of apparent despondency, as Lucretius describes how a period of growth is balanced by one of decline, and how farmers in the present look back with regret to the time when 'antiquum genus pietate repletum' (1170) found life so much easier, failing to understand that this, like everything else, is determined by the universal law of nature.

At this point, in a poem as evangelistic as *de Rerum Natura* the transition from the first pair of books to whichever was intended to come next undoubtedly needs some really cheering message to open the next book. The beginning of 3, as it follows in our texts, can be held to provide this well enough, even if there is nothing in the close of 2 fully to justify the words 'tantis tenebris' in 3.1.³ But the opening of 5, as originally written to follow 2, does so a great deal more aptly. In particular, immediately after the introductory passage on Epicurus and the summary of preceding material (1–63), it resumes the topics of 2.1023 ff., on the plurality of worlds and their periodic rise and fall, with the discussion of the mortality of our own world (64 ff.). More significantly, it answers the gloom of the 'grandis arator' and the 'vetulae vitis sator' (2.1164, 1168) as their crops fail with the specific reminder than man can, and sometimes does, live without corn and wine (5.16–17); 'at bene non poterat

¹ Pizzani (pp.161–7), while accepting that the passage is extremely awkward (p.165), believes that the two summaries have different but complementary functions and were intended to stand beside each other more or less as they do now. Although this theory explains the word *sed* in line 45 more convincingly than

other explanations do, I find Pizzani's argument impossible to follow.

² p.101 n.1. It is there suggested that the whole opening of 2, especially lines 29–33 and 54–62, may not have been written until 5 and 6 were more or less complete.
of this line, see Addendum.

sine puro pectore vivi' (18)—man must possess the untroubled heart which only philosophy can provide. The real dangers of life are from man's own follies (5.42 ff.); and Epicurus has provided the answer to these. This outburst of enthusiasm is accompanied, it must be remembered, by the revival in line 8 of the direct appeal to Memmius; and he is to remain very much in the poet's mind during the first 200 lines of the book. It is not so much the recurrence of Memmius' name at the start of 5 which ensures continuity from the end of 2, as the resumption of the close relationship with the disciple, short-lived though this is to prove.

When we turn to the end of book 5, we find what is ostensibly a tone of marked optimism, with one of the clearest statements of the concept of human progress to be found in antiquity:¹

namque alid ex alio clarescere corde videbant
artibus ad summum donec venere cacumen (1456–7).

That this climax of the emergence from primitive life into civilization is not after all the subject of unreserved approval becomes clear from the opening of book 6, which can have been written only to cap the concluding argument of 5. Athens is now hailed as the parent of economic and social life, and then as that of Epicurus, who first saw that the *cacumen* announced at the end of 5 needed the addition of philosophical understanding before it could ensure the good life for mankind (6.1–16). Superstition remains a danger, even after the first enlightenment; and the poet goes on to show (58 ff.) how man must not be led astray by thunder and earthquakes and other marvels, which can all too easily be interpreted as showing the hand of the gods, interfering in and threatening human life. This argument for a universe which runs without divine intervention is to persist right through book 6, including the final section on illnesses and plagues (1090–1286). This last topic is illustrated by the disproportionately long account of the Plague of Athens, which passes on from a description of the symptoms of the disease to analyse the total demoralization of the people, whom we leave abruptly at the very end abandoning their traditional beliefs and fighting for the use of pyres to burn their dead.

As an end to the poem as a whole, this account of the Plague was always deeply unsatisfactory. As an end to a pair of books on the working of natural law, which was not intended to stand last in the whole work, it is entirely appropriate, especially when it is seen that it was planned to lead into the beginning of what is now book 3. The 'great darkness' of 'e tantis tenebris'² in 3.1 will now be nothing more nor less than the demoralization of Athens (the same Athens whose leadership in the improvement of human life is extolled at the very beginning of 6) during the Peloponnesian War, which could well be held to have continued to colour the greater part of the fourth century. It was

¹ For a summary of recent views on Lucretius' belief in progress, see Dalzell, in *CW* 67 (1973), 75–6, revealing strong reasons for adopting an equivocal position.

² See now E. J. Kenney, in *Greece & Rome*, New Surveys 11, *Lucretius*, pp.21–3, convincingly answering the attempt of M. F. Smith, in the new Loeb of Lucretius (1975), pp.578–9, to argue that 'this dark

and hellish picture of what life is like without the guidance of Epicurus' serves to emphasize the brightness of the Epicurean vision. Its position at the end of the poem would, as Kenney points out, oblige the reader to 'turn back again to the earlier books of the poem for reassurance'. If the work was originally planned as I have suggested, this difficulty would not arise.

in a Greek world devoid of the old ideals and cut adrift from traditional values that Epicurus, precisely in Athens where the rot had started, was able to provide new principles of life. Moreover, the theme of man's demoralization in the face of such misfortunes as the Plague is picked up neatly in 3.55–58:

quo magis in dubiis hominem spectare periculis
convenit adversisque in rebus noscere qui sit;
nam verae voces tum demum pectore ab imo
eliciuntur et eripitur persona, manet res.

It took the Plague to reveal the insubstantial nature of what passed for religion and understanding of the natural order in Periclean Athens. In his account of the Plague Lucretius gives no hint that men should have known better than to fall so easily into panic: the explanation is the simple historical fact that Epicurus was not to begin his teaching for over a hundred years. Further, one major cause of the demoralization which set in with the onset of the Plague was the widespread fear of death: 'usque adeo mortis metus his incesserat acer' (6.1212). This idea leads on excellently to the statement, immediately after the introduction to the third book: 'metus ille foras Acheruntis agendus' (3.37). The explanation of disease must logically be followed by the explanation of death.

The sequence of ideas and emotions in the poem as a whole thus appears much more closely integrated if the books are taken in the order 1, 2, 5, 6, 3, 4, as announced in the programme in 1.127–35, than it does in the order handed down in our manuscripts. The transition from 3 to 4 remains thoroughly awkward, as it always was; and the end of 4 presents problems to which we must return. But at least the Plague of Athens is removed from its totally unsuitable position as the conclusion of the whole poem to become a significant stage in man's philosophical progress.

But if it appears so far that Lucretius' first plan for the arrangement of his material was superior to that eventually adopted, it is equally clear that it is no longer possible to restore the poem by replacing the six books in their original order. The series 1, 2, 5, 6 may be read in that order without marked anomalies or breaks in the argument becoming apparent, provided that we omit the summary of 3 and 4 in 5.59–63 as part of the revision. Proceeding on through 3 and 4, there is a noticeable lack of unity about the transition from 3 to 4; but the worst disarray becomes evident about halfway through 4. At line 822, where Mussehl¹ believed that Lucretius had broken off to compose book 3, the poet's purpose seems to change remarkably. Up to this point he has developed the doctrine of *simulacra* in perception primarily in order to account for those visions of the dead which induce people to believe in personal survival after death; although the promise made in 4.37–45, as in 1.130–5 and 5.62–3, that it will be shown how apparitions of the dead enter our minds both 'vigilantibus' and 'in somnis',² is only partly fulfilled in 4.757–76, where these apparitions seem to be manifested to us only when asleep.³ Moreover, no explanation is given of those visions of the gods which play a part in 5.1169 ff., as one of the main sources of superstition, easy though it would have been to include these in

¹ Op. cit., p.138.

² Cf. 1.133, 'morbo adfectis somnoque sepultis'.

³ A. Dalzell, in *Phoenix* 14 (1960),

103–4, points out how the repetitions from this passage in lines 788–801 indicate a lack of finish of the whole section.

the same discussion. But if the discussion of perception is so far directed mainly to the purpose of dispelling false ideas about death, Lucretius now allows himself to be carried away by his interest in perception of all sorts as a subject in itself. He goes on, after a transitional passage on the lack of purposiveness in the development of the senses (823–57), to consider other mental activities which have no connection at all with the main theme of the book up to this point: hunger, bodily movement, sleep, dreams (a passage in which he seems to have forgotten what had previously appeared as the most significant category of dreams, those of persons no longer living, and concentrates on the way in which men dream of whatever has occupied their waking minds, without regard to the validity of what they see), and finally sex and its hazards. This last topic occupies some 250 lines, less and less connected with the main themes of the book. The *simulacra*, which promised at one stage to be the controlling motif of the whole book, occur here only in so far as desire is inspired by the impact of *simulacra* of the beloved (1061). The closing sections on heredity (1209 ff.), fertility (1233 ff.), and inexplicable love for the homely woman (1278 ff.) are justified only by the previous theme, so dominant in 5 and 6, of explaining phenomena without recourse to divine intervention. Mussehl complained¹ that book 6 was something of a miscellany; but at least it all falls under the general heading in 1.129–30, 'qua vi quaeque gerantur in terris' (that is to say, by natural law, without interference from the gods). By contrast, book 4 becomes more and more disorientated as it goes on, suggesting almost that the poet had completed his main programme by line 822 and had to add further material, on more or less related topics, in order to round off the last book to a proper length.

And if the ending of 4 has always been an inconsequential conclusion to a dissertation on perception, even in its widest sense, or to a considerably wider treatment of *psychologia*, the nature of mind and soul, it is even less satisfactory as a conclusion to the poem as a whole. The Plague of Athens may be intolerably gloomy; the triumph of the plain woman is simply trivial. As Bignone² argued for a hypothetical conclusion to book 6, whether lost or never completed, which would answer the breakdown of human morale with a picture of divine *ataraxia*, so we might imagine that somehow *de Rerum Natura* was originally intended to return to the same goddess of love with which it began. But in view of the way in which the influence of 'Veneris sagittis' is explicitly denied in 4.1278, at the start of what is now the very last paragraph of the book, it defeats conjecture, and may well have defeated Lucretius, to imagine how this might have been done.

It seems likely enough that Lucretius never completed book 4, originally planned as the last of the poem. Presumably before he undertook the completion of so ill-planned a book,³ he decided, for reasons which we cannot now appreciate, to alter the whole structure of the work, moving the *psychologia* (3 and 4) so as to become the second of the three pairs of books. He did not get round to changing the programme in 1.127 ff., to take account of this rearrangement; but he did insert after 5.58 (as a book whose relative position had just been altered) the summary in five lines of the two books which were now to precede instead

¹ Op. cit., p.121.

² *Storia della letteratura latina* (1945), ii.321–2.

³ Pizzani, pp.167–72, produces further arguments for the unfinished state of

book 4, suggesting that the second summary (45–50), lines 218–29 (from 6.924–33), 687–705, 777–817, 822–57 are all provisional drafts, inadequately adapted to their contexts.

of follow. The language of this insertion, including the reference to *simulacra* derived from book 4, is so characteristically Lucretian, while containing unique locutions ('corpore creta' in 60, 'vita reliquit' in 63) which have not in fact occurred elsewhere in the poem, as to make it clear that the lines, and therefore the rearrangement, are the poet's own work and not that of any *emendator* working after his death. The two versions of the summary of 1 and 2, found with slight variations in 3. 31–34 and 4.45–48, must both have been composed as part of the same rearrangement, the doublet being caused, as I have suggested above, by a temporary indecision as to whether 3 or 4 should stand after 2.

A more important change must have occurred in connection with the beginning of book 6, in its new position as last of all. The invocation to Calliope in 6.92–5 cannot have stood where it does now so long as 6 stood fourth in the sequence, containing as it does the reference to 'supremae . . . calcis', the final lap of the race.¹ It may have been written specifically for its present position while the order of books was being revised; but in that case one would expect it to be more effectively integrated into the context as a whole and not to introduce a fresh second-person address in a context already containing entirely different second-person references, however anonymous, both before (68–86) and after (167–9, 189–97). Since it is in fact easily removed from its position in 6 without leaving any sort of gap, it seems more probable that it was originally part of the introduction to 4, at that time the last book of the six.

If the latter possibility is to be accepted, it follows that this address to the Muse is all that now remains of the original opening to book 4. Despite the arguments of Mewaldt,² the first twenty-five lines of 4 (*Avia Pieridum . . . persentis utilitatem*) were never as well suited to this position as they are to the earlier context in 1.926–50, from which they have been taken over with minor variations.³ Mewaldt held that such an invocation of poetic enthusiasm was called for at the start of 4, as an encouragement to the reader to tackle the unusually difficult doctrine of the *simulacra*; and objected to the way in which it interrupts the flow of the later part of 1. In fact, such interruptions are especially characteristic of the first two books, and it is precisely in the first book that such encouragement to Memmius to persevere plays a recurring part.⁴ In this earlier context, five lines precede, integrally leading into 'avia Pieridum', which here is not even the beginning of a sentence. More important, the opening line of the paragraph, 'nunc age, quod superest cognosce et clarius audi' (921), provides the second-person opening which leads on to the similar language at the end of the passage, 'si tibi forte . . . dum perspicis omnem' (948–9), which comes in very anomalously at the end of the passage in 4.⁵

¹ So perhaps also the mutilated passage 6.47–8, if we could be confident of the sense to be restored (so Pizzani, p.174).

² Op. cit., pp.290–1.

³ L. Lenaghan, in *TAPA* 98 (1967), 221–51, shows how excellently the lines fit into their context in book 1.

⁴ I. Bruns, *Lucretius-Studien* (1884), p.7, believed that the passage in 1 marks the introduction of a fresh motive in composition, distinct from the conversion of Memmius, which Lucretius was already

abandoning for the pursuit of poetical glory. This is an over-simplification, but may contain some truth.

⁵ The second-person opening also provides an owner for the mysterious *animus* in 1.932, where the omission of *tuum* is more easily understood if Memmius has been referred to by implication ten lines earlier. In 4.7 no such owner for the *animus* is to be found; and one can understand why Lactantius (*Inst.* 16.3) quotes the line, as from book 4, with the more general *animos*.

The explanation of this curiously unsatisfactory opening to the fourth book seems to be that, whether or not the Calliope-passage at one time formed part of this book in its final position, the rest of the original introduction proved entirely unsatisfactory once the rearrangement of books had taken place. That introduction was accordingly jettisoned, the Calliope-passage alone being transferred to what had in turn become the final book. Lines 926–50 were then borrowed from book 1 (though without losing their original status there, as might easily have happened¹), and slightly adapted as a stop-gap opening to 4.²

That the beginning of 6 was to some extent revised when it moved into sixth place in the series is further suggested by the remarkable passage 68–79, on the danger that superstition may render the philosopher incapable of receiving the *simulacra* of the gods with proper tranquillity of mind. This claim for a sort of communion with the gods, albeit unilateral, appears to have no clear parallel in our extant Epicurean sources;³ although it is already assumed to a minor extent in 5.1169–82, where apparitions of the gods, to either the waking or, more usually, the sleeping mind, are shown to be responsible for many of the misapprehensions of superstition. There is no hint in the latter passage of the element of reality in these apparitions nor of the actual benefit which the enlightened mind may obtain from them. In some lost version of Epicurean theology and epistemology they seem to have possessed something of the illuminating power of the Platonic Forms to reveal the true nature of divinity, wisdom and *ataraxia* to the suitably prepared mind. This would be a considerably stronger reason for the rather surprising introduction of such a difficult concept as that of the gods into Epicureanism than the basic need to explain how men have such a widespread *notities* of gods and their superhuman qualities. But there has been nothing throughout the whole of *de Rerum Natura* before this point to suggest the contribution that these *simulacra* might make to the philosopher's life—nothing except the vague objective mentioned in 3.322, 'dignam dis degere vitam', where there is no hint that this was to be achieved by anything but *ratio*, rational understanding. In the early part of book 6 Lucretius appears to have gone beyond anything to be found in his earlier statements of the Epicurean doctrine. That the passage is a very late addition to a section which would be quite coherent and complete without it,⁴ has already been suggested on the strength of the words

nec de corpore quae sancto simulacra feruntur
in mentis hominum divinae nuntia formae (76–7),

¹ In a similar way, the second link-passage in 4.45–53 was preserved in that place despite the use of the more important lines as 3.31–4.

² On this whole problem, see Giussani, i.118–20.

³ Bailey, vol. i, pp.71–2, Giussani, i.184, J. M. Rist, *Epicurus: an Introduction* (1972), p.157, A. A. Long, 'Hellenistic Philosophy', *Philosophy* (1974), pp.48–9. The passage of Epicurus (*ad Menoec.* 124) which appears to provide the closest approximation is textually very uncertain, and would hardly have been interpreted to give this sense without the guidance of Lucretius. However, Cicero (*N.D.* 1.49)

attributes to Epicurus the doctrine that an infinite supply of *imagines* enters the mind, bringing great pleasure and providing a concept of the blessed and eternal.

⁴ The whole beginning of 6 is a bit of a patchwork, with 56–7 repeated from 1.153–4 (and again in 6.90–1), and 58–66 from 5.82–90, with 67 added as an additional link (cf. the insertion of 2.54 before a similarly repeated section); but it still forms a complete unit, with or without 68–77, the last line of which seems intended to take the place of 67 as a statement of general demoralization to be avoided in the light of the following observations.

with their use of the technical term *simulacra* derived from the early part of the later book 4, just as in the similar passage 5.62, which clearly belongs to the period when the order of books was revised.

Such a process of revision seems to have gone some way, but never to have reached completion. The incoherent, though entirely Lucretian, passage 5.1341–9, on the improbability that men really tried to use wild animals in warfare, may have been inserted, or at least amplified, at this time, as may various others which do not stand out from their contexts in the same way. In any case, Lucretius can hardly have intended it to remain permanently in its present state, expressing as it does the poet's inability to decide on the truth of his assertions in the previous paragraph, in a manner without parallel in the rest of the work. But book 4 was undoubtedly left lacking a proper introduction, suitable to its new position, and book 6 lacking a new end to round off *de Rerum Natura* as a whole. The composition of such an ending Lucretius may well have left to the last; and he may indeed have had in mind to write something of the sort proposed by Bignone, somehow developing from the inchoate promise in 6.68–79 (and perhaps in 5.155) on the means of attaining perfect *ataraxia*. Unless, as is always possible, we have to deal with a text which lost its closing leaf at a very early period, we must assume that the task was broken off by the poet's illness or death. What can hardly be doubted is that the rearrangement of books and consequent revision of details was not the work of an emendator or publisher, but of Lucretius himself. Wherever there is reason to suppose that passages were added or altered to suit the new pattern, the language is entirely characteristic of his own style, without suggesting borrowing from other parts of the poem. An editor who, on his own initiative and under no particular pressures, decided to alter the order of books (or even to carry out a known intention of the author to do so), perhaps in order to use the powerful, if inappropriate, Plague of Athens at the end of the work rather than the totally ineffectual Triumph of the Plain Woman, must have done either more or less to remove anomalies. For example, he must either have adjusted the programme in 1.127–35 so as to give the following books in their new order, or failed to insert in 5.59–64 the new summary of 3 and 4; either have left the original introduction to book 4 or devised something more effective than the passage taken from book 1—or at least omitted that passage from its context in 1 so as not to spoil its impact as the introduction to 4. The final state of the work bears all the marks of a revision undertaken in haste,¹ but with the writer's poetical ability and grasp of his material still unimpaired—whether *per intervalla insaniae* or not, we cannot judge.

And if such a major rearrangement was undertaken not long before the end of the writer's life—not long enough at least for him to finish it—what explanation can be given for the abandonment of an original pattern which seems to have been more logically constructed and more poetically convincing than the order preserved in our manuscripts and editions? There may be some gain to be observed in the achievement of 'centrality'² and symmetry, whereby the central pair of books, on the nature of the soul and the problem of mortality, is surrounded on either side by pairs of books on the physical universe and its independence of the gods. But if this meant leaving one line of thought

¹ Contrast the careful work of Virgil's editors, Varius and Tucca, after his death.

² So E. J. Kenney, *Lucretius, De Rerum Natura*, Book III (1971), pp.12–13).

unfinished in order to deal with another, before returning to the original purpose, the gain must be questionable. All that I can suggest is that, once Lucretius had decided to complete book 4 by examining such miscellaneous psychological matters as sex, he may have realized that no satisfactory conclusion to the work could be constructed on this foundation and that he must make use of the Plague of Athens and some contrasting exposition of *ataraxia* to provide a sufficiently powerful conclusion.

So far as we can judge from the work as we now have it, Lucretius' first thoughts were probably better than his second. Whether the change of plan was occasioned primarily by poetical or philosophical considerations; whether by general depression resulting from the defection of Memmius or by the onset of physical or mental illness—this I do not see that we can ever hope to decide. But if what came down to us had been the poem as originally projected, and if Lucretius' last available hours of composition had been spent in fulfilling his initial plan rather than in recasting it to fit a different, and questionably more promising, scheme, we should have something closer to the realization of that original enthusiasm which, as he tells us at the beginning of his enterprise, (1.141–4),

quemvis efferre laborem
suadet et inducit noctes vigilare serenas
quaerentem dictis quibus et quo carmine demum
clara tuae possim praepandere lumina menti.

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Addendum:

The closeness of the link between the beginning of 3 and what was written to precede (or even the less gloomy picture at the end of book 2 which precedes in our present text) clearly justifies Bailey, and the majority of other editors, in accepting 'e tantis tenebris' in 3.1 from cod. Monacensis (echoing 'fluctibus e tantis vitae tantisque tenebris' in 5.11), rather than *o* of O and V. Despite the arguments of Timpanaro in *Philologus* 104 (1960), 147–9, who fails to account for the variants in the Italian manuscripts (best explained on the assumption that their parent, P, like L, one of its best attested descendants, and also Q, had a lacuna at this point, resulting from a failure of the scribe of the archetype to insert the capital), neither reading has any more authority than *a* of some of the Italians. M. L. Clarke, in *CQ* N.S. 27 (1977), 354–5, argues that in Latin poetry an address beginning with a relative or participial phrase normally starts with *o*. While the negative of this would be difficult to establish, it is clearly true that such an address never opens with a bare relative. In *Aen.* 8.511 it is covered by *tu*; here the relative 'qui primus potuisti' is covered by the whole previous line, linking the argument

closely with the end of the preceding book, in a way paralleled by none of Clarke's other examples, nor by any other I have discovered. The sense thus runs: 'Out of such darkness (as just described) to raise so bright a light, you were the first to be able . . . and I follow your lead as a result, o glory of the Greek race.' Perhaps no less significantly, Clarke asserts that he knows of no example of *o* separated from the relative by such an interval. In fact, a survey of the poems of Cicero, Catullus, Vergil, Horace, Propertius, Ovid, Manilius, Lucan, Valerius Flaccus, and Statius (which would often have been an easier task if Deferrari had admitted that *o* could have any stylistic importance) reveals no example where it is separated at all, except Lucan 1.195, 'o magnae qui', and two examples where a pronoun precedes, Prop. 4.9.33, 'vos precor, o luci sacro quae', and Val. F. 1.7, 'tuque, o pelagi qui'. The anomaly of separation by a whole line, in addition to the lack of parallel for any sort of *o qui* followed by a second *o* plus vocative (also pointed out by Clarke), is enough to guarantee the judgement of the scribe of Monacensis rather than of those of O and V.