POETRY AND RHETORIC IN LUCRETIUS

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Lucretius has always attracted scholars;[1] numerous aspects of his work have been discussed, many questions have been answered, yet more, however, have been asked. And a few problems still await a satisfactory solution. In the present paper an attempt is made to offer suggestions which might contribute to clarifying, if not solving, some of these problems; for instance:

1. Why does Lucretius, in presenting Epicurean philosophy, write poetry—or, as a poet, turn to the philosophy of Epicurus who, it is said, was himself opposed to the use of poetry for philosophic purposes?

2. Why does Lucretius, in this "Epicurean" work, begin with a hymn to Venus?

3. Why does he then accumulate several seemingly heterogeneous sections like the proem at the beginning of Book 1? Were some paragraphs added later? By himself or by an interpolator?

4. What is the aim of this work? And what principle does Lucretius follow to achieve his aim?

5. Did Lucretius write the books originally in the order in which they have been preserved in the manuscripts or in a different one? And was he prevented from giving his work the intended final order?

6. Why does Lucretius frequently repeat verses, accumulate arguments, and follow a somewhat erratic line of reasoning?

7. Why did Lucretius, despite all this, arouse such a wide and lasting interest and, even after several hundred years, provoke such violent reactions from some fathers of the Church and again from men of the Church since the fifteenth century?

Indeed, one could put the basic problem as follows: what accounts for the fact that Lucretius was read so widely and attacked so fiercely, though he was not even capable of composing an acceptable *prooemium* or of presenting his material in a satisfactory order—so that it took several doctoral theses and many learned papers (mainly by German scholars) to rearrange the first proem and to reshape the whole work, or at least to rediscover the original state and order of the six books *De rerum natura?* Even the French philosopher Henri Bergson remarked in 1884:

> Since the poet refers repeatedly to the great importance which he attaches to a systematic arrangement of different parts and to the methodological grouping of proofs, it would seem that if he had sufficient time at his disposal, he would have transposed whole paragraphs, intercalated transitions and eliminated repetitions.[2]

And one of the most recent translators of Lucretius' work advises his readers not to follow the poet's own order, but rather to select some choice pieces first, before reading the "more difficult and duller" rest.[3] Are they, too, pointing to a failure on Lucretius' side or to the failure of the modern reader to appreciate the work of the ancient poet in its original form? On the other hand, a more perceptive contemporary critic states: "Lucretius speaks across the years to the modern reader more directly, and enlists his interest more immediately, than almost any other poet of antiquity."[4]

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[2] The quotation is taken from W. Baskin's translation: H. Bergson, *The Philosophy of Poetry: The Genius of Lucretius* (New York 1959) 27–28.

[3] A. D. Winspear, *The Roman Poet of Science: Lucretius* (New York 1956) vii–viii.

[4] D. E. W. Wormell, "The Personal World of Lucretius," in D. R. Dudley, ed., *Lucretius* (London 1965) 35.

In order to solve the alleged difficulties in Lucretius' poem scholars have often started from the biographical data, scanty though they are. As is well known, all references to Lucretius for the first four hundred years—except for Nepos' vague mention of his death (*Att.* 12.4)—are to the poem.   It is only in such later works as Aelius Donatus' *Life of Vergil* and such compilations as Jerome's *Chronicle* that information about the author himself is given.   However, the ever burning desire to bring to life the author of this remarkable poem has suggested various approaches, of which only two may be mentioned.   In several books and papers, G. della Valle thirty years ago gave a very detailed account of the sort of life that the person he imagined Lucretius to have been might have led in the middle of the first century B.C.[5]   A. Gerlo, more boldly, preferred a shortcut: with one stroke he supplied a wealth of biographical material, including an ancient biography, by taking Lucretius to be a pseudonym for Atticus.[6]   This procedure, surely, means founding the question not on sand, but on melting ice.

When one refrains from such daring attempts, one is left with the conflicting data in Donatus' *Life of Vergil* and in Jerome's additions to Eusebius' *Chronicle*.   These cannot inspire confidence; nor can the tone of Jerome's remarks as a whole:

> T. Lucretius poeta nascitur.   qui postea amatorio poculo in furorem versus cum aliquot libros per intervalla insaniae conscripsisset, quos postea Cicero emendavit, propria se manu interfecit anno aetatis XLIIII.

Nevertheless, Jerome's account has been trusted and has influenced many scholars in their general appreciation, evaluation, and analysis of the poem.   Some have used the *insania* to explain oddities in individual passages, some have tried to find a justification in the poem for these biographical "data"; and others have at least granted the possibility of the poet's madness.   This is all the more astonishing since Konrat Ziegler, more than thirty years ago, argued most convincingly that Jerome's remarks about the love-philtre, the madness, and the suicide are based not on a reliable source—e.g. Suetonius—but on

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[5] See especially G. della Valle, *Tito Lucrezio Caro e l'epicureismo campano* (Naples 1935).

[6] "Pseudo-Lucretius," *Ant. Class.* 25 (1956) 41–72, not repeated in A. Gerlo, *Lukrez: Gipfel der antiken Atomistik* (Berlin 1961) 3–6.

attacks from the Christians.[7]   What Jerome, who after all is known as
the unrivaled master of abusive language, testifies to is the hatred of
Lucretius' ardent enemies, for which there are many other proofs;
to put it differently, he reveals the enormous impact of Lucretius'
work, even after several centuries.

    Is there a more satisfactory approach to the Lucretian problems?
"La sua vera biografia è il suo poema," Bignone says.[8]   In other words,
the only possible method is the interpretation of the text itself.   What
does it tell us about the author, about the way he deals with his subject,
about the arrangement, the language, etc.?   Nothing yields more re-
vealing results, I think, than the introductory passage (1–145); but as I
do not wish to give the impression that I am following the old tech-
nique of persuasion here by putting the most forceful arguments first
to make them carry the rest more easily (*Auct. ad Her.* 3.18), I start
with the beginning of the argumentation.

    In view of the manner in which Lucretius announces his subject in
the introduction,

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rerum primordia pandam
unde omnis natura creet res auctet alatque (55–56),

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one might expect him to start with the proof that some *rerum primordia*
exist (55) and that out of these elements everything is created by nature;
or, if one takes these words less literally, that out of these elements every-
thing is developed or develops.   Instead, Lucretius, like Epicurus in
the brief account in his *Letter to Herodotus* (38), puts forward the more
basic proposition *nil posse creari de nihilo* (155–56) or *nullam rem e
nihilo gigni* (150), in keeping with the traditional phrasing, as it is found
in Empedocles (fr. B12: ἔκ τε γὰρ οὐδάμ' ἐόντος ἀμήχανόν ἐστι
γενέσθαι) or in Aristotle (*Metaph.* 1062B24–26), and even survives in
Persius (3.83–84: *gigni de nihilo nihilum*).   By announcing and adopting
this apparently careful procedure, he succeeds in filling his listeners with
confidence from the very beginning, although he does not—unlike
Epicurus (*Ep. ad Her.* 37–38)—give a methodological introduction.
Moreover, Epicurus confines himself to the simple οὐδὲν γίνεται ἐκ
τοῦ μὴ ὄντος, at least in the *Letter to Herodotus* (38).   Lucretius, how-
ever, adds a point for which he has already prepared his audience

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7 "Der Tod des Lucretius," *Hermes* 71 (1936) 421–40.
8 Bignone (above, note 1) 150.

carefully in several sections of the introduction (see below, p. 107): *nullam rem e nihilo gigni divinitus umquam* (150), repeated in 158: *opera sine divum.*   For this is, as he stresses again here, what people generally believe in, as they cannot see the true causes of things; this is what fills them with fear and fright (151–54); and this is, therefore, the very point Lucretius fights against.

Having thus underlined first the relevance of his undertaking for the addressee (151–56) and then the importance of this point for the rest of the enquiry (156–57: *tum quod sequimur iam rectius inde | perspiciemus*), in a manner familiar from oratory,[9] Lucretius proceeds to establish the first proposition at great length (159–214).   He starts with an apagogical proof in the form of a (mixed) hypothetical syllogism of the type:

> If P, then Q   (e.g. 159–60)
> not Q
> ∴ not P

without actually drawing the conclusion which he had already stated in the preceding paragraph (150, 155–56) or stating positively the categorical minor premiss ("ex omnibus rebus omne genus nasci non potest").   For he regards the minor premiss as generally accepted, though it is not a self-evident fact nor an established truth; it is assumed in view of experience, i.e. of successive sense impressions.   At this stage of the enquiry, where the basic question as to the nature of reality is under discussion, it seems illegitimate to use such data, before the nature of the data of sense-perception or any other form of evidence and the method of using them has been examined and/or justified, as is done by Epicurus, even in his brief *Letter to Herodotus* (37–38) and, of course, elsewhere.

It is irrelevant what attitude Epicurus took toward logic or whether this form of reasoning was accepted and developed by later Epicureans. For, unlike Epicurus, the poet is not writing for members of the school, nor is he, unlike Philodemus, largely concerned with polemics.   He is clearly addressing his work to Memmius, who was not an Epicurean, and wants it to be read by others.   He must therefore ensure that he

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[9] Cf. Cic. *Quinct.* 11; *S. Rosc.* 14; *Cluent.* 11; *Mil.* 23; also Andoc. 1.8; Lys. 17.1, 13.4; Demosth. 27.3, 43.2.

is understood and that his criteria are accepted by people who do not share the common assumptions of Epicurean philosophy; or else he must present his case in such a manner that the listener does not become aware of the difficulties indicated here. The problem, therefore, is whether the proofs which Lucretius gives are by *general* standards not only valid, but based on truth; and if not, whether this is clearly stated. While this is obviously not the case, the answer to the first question seems to be anticipated by Lucretius himself; for he adds to the two general consequents (159–60) several *adynata* and then a whole string of proofs (carefully presented with logical conjunctions: 161–214) which seem to speak for themselves.

Additional difficulties inherent in Lucretius' form of reasoning become obvious from the following lines; in summing up, he supports his point further with a question (167–68):

> quippe ubi non essent genitalia corpora cuique
> qui posset mater rebus consistere certa?

Not merely does he resort to data provided by sense-perception, he uses as evidence a statement that, couched in his own terminology (or rather Epicurean terminology), can hardly be called generally accepted experience (*genitalia corpora cuique*). For the first time, one meets here with a method which is very common in Lucretius' work. Again and again in his *argumentatio* he uses as evidence assertions which have not yet been proved and for which a proof is either never given at all—as e.g. for the "idea of law" "which is prior to, and the condition of, all the principles enunciated in the first two books"[10]—or for which a proof is given only later, often with the help of statements whose own proof rests on these assertions themselves. In commenting on 2.944–63, where the poet, anticipating his treatment in the third book, refers to the reaction of atoms of body and soul to a heavy blow, Bailey remarks ([above, note 1] 2.951): "Lucretius again, as has often been noticed before, argues from his own basis and assumes his own conclusions." Admittedly, as G. Müller points out,[11] "kein in sich

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[10] W. Y. Sellar, *The Roman Poets of the Republic* (Oxford 1889) 341.

[11] *Die Darstellung der Kinetik bei Lukrez* (Berlin 1959) 50, in justifying Lucretius treatment of the atoms' movement against C. Giussani, ed., *T. Lucreti Cari De Rerum Natura* I (Torino 1896) 93–94.

unverständlicher Gedanke wird bei solchen Vorwegnahmen verwendet." More important, this method, besides providing a kind of argument has the additional advantage of giving the listener a sort of preview of central aspects of the doctrine so that he is familiar with them when they come to be discussed themselves and is more prepared to accept them. And yet this type of reasoning has its obvious fault. It is not that the proofs lack apodeictic certainty, nor that conclusions are put first and arguments later, which is in fact a natural procedure[12] that modern philosophers accept and consider legitimate. It is the nature of some of the so-called proofs that discredits the procedure, as for some statements no proof is attempted, for others no legitimate proof is given.

The following proofs show the same method: in 169–73 Lucretius refers to data provided by experience, again using mostly his "own" terminology (169, 171, 173) so that these lines sound more like an exposition of his teaching than a piece of argumentation. In 174–83, first some observations from nature are adduced (i.e. some further assumptions are made) before Lucretius repeats the hypothetical premiss with a more specific consequent (180–81), supporting the hypothesis with a statement in his own terminology (182–83: "quippe ubi nulla forent primordia quae genitali / concilio possent arceri tempore iniquo"). And in the third "proof" (184–91), Lucretius does not merely give the hypothetical premiss with another more specific consequent (184–85), he uses the particular piece of evidence from experience to state yet another general assumption (188–89), and with its help deduces a further point of doctrine (191: "quidque sua de materia grandescere alique"). The same procedure is found in the following section (192–98), note especially line 196.

In summing up, one might say that the first section of the *argumentatio* (149 or 159–214) fails to lay a generally acceptable foundation of well-established proofs for the doctrine to be expounded. But it does offer what look like proofs, together with a preview of several aspects of this doctrine; and thus it succeeds—not in convincing a careful, critical reader, but in presenting the views in persuasive form.

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[12] See E. Kapp, *Greek Foundations of Traditional Logic* (New York 1942) 14–15; for a contemporary view-point cf. R. Robinson, *An Atheist's Values* (Oxford 1964) 81 (I owe this reference to Mr. Kenney).

It would be tedious to present here a detailed examination of all proofs in this and the other sections of the poem, as they show again and again the same features, of which some may be briefly summarized as follows:

1. To prove his propositions, Lucretius resorts (at least in the first two books) to mixed hypothetical syllogisms in destructive form, thereby offering the test of non-contradiction.

2. In stating the categorical minor premisses he adduces evidence either immediately provided by sense-perception or by experience, i.e. successive sense-impressions, without justifying this procedure; or he even uses statements which are never proved at all.

3. To enforce the strength of the evidence in each case, he accumulates several arguments or observations as well as proofs for the same proposition. Special reference must be made to the third book, where about thirty proofs are given for the mortality of the soul (417–829). Some scholars take this series as a sign of "philosophical originality of a high order,"[13] though it is not certain whether the arguments stem from Epicurus' more detailed (lost) works, from later Epicureans, or from Lucretius himself; others regard this as fruit of Lucretius' poetic imagination and genius. In either case one should not overlook the intention to overwhelm the listener by the quantity rather than the quality of the proofs, whose order, moreover, is determined not so much by the nature of the subject as the expected impact on the audience.

4. In adducing the evidence, Lucretius employs the terminology of his own system before it has been explained and refers to central points of it before they become the subject of discussion, let alone are established by proof. In this manner Lucretius guides the listener right from the beginning to one, and only one, possible interpretation of the individual phenomena as well as of the whole universe, and makes him more inclined later to accept the arguments when they occur in their place. This method was obviously the best anyone could offer in the framework of Epicurean philosophy; but it is probably in view of the type of argument and of syllogism here used, which Aristotle would call rhetorical (*Rh.* 1356B4–5), that our poet strengthens his position by means other than logical ones.

In addition to the list given above, a few more features may be described which are designed to contribute to the persuasive form of presentation. As already mentioned, Lucretius frequently prepares a piece of argumentation by premature references to its conclusion, so

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[13] A. D. Winspear, *Lucretius and Scientific Thought* (Montreal 1963) 5.

that it is firmly fixed in the mind of the reader when it comes to be discussed and established by proofs. A particularly subtle form has been investigated by Büchner,[14] who shows that frequently in a chain of arguments a later point is already included in an earlier conclusion; e.g. after the argument that the void in things must be enclosed by *materies solida* (1.511–17) the conclusion reads (518–19):

> materies igitur, solido quae corpore constat,
> esse aeterna potest, cum cetera dissoluantur.

A similar example is provided by 510 as conclusion of 503–9.[15] This maneuver is made possible (or at least easier) through the very elaborate introduction (483–502), especially 498–500:

> sed quia vera tamen ratio naturaque rerum
> cogit, ades, paucis dum versibus expediamus
> esse ea quae solido atque *aeterno* corpore constent.

Büchner explains this as an archaic feature which Lucretius intensifies, and adduces similar passages from early Latin authors.[16] Its immediate, and most revealing, parallels, however, are found in oratory, where a more general conclusion is drawn than the actual arguments would justify—often after this conclusion has been carefully prepared in the *narratio* and/or in an introductory remark.[17]

Before the function of the introductory sections themselves can be considered, another phenomenon has to be mentioned briefly, to which Büchner ([above, note 14] 39–47) also has drawn attention. Where several proofs are accumulated (e.g. 3.634–69), Lucretius tends to state the conclusion (here 640–41) after the first one (634–39), so that the following proofs (642–66) gain in view of the already established result, and the final conclusion is accepted more readily (667–69).

However, the forms of preparation and characterization of arguments which occur in the introductory sections are more important.

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[14] K. Büchner, *Beobachtungen über Vers und Gedankengang bei Lukrez* (= *Hermes-Einzelschriften* 1, Berlin 1936) 29–30.

[15] 510 is prepared for by 486, 488, 497.

[16] Büchner (above, note 14) 33–38.

[17] See e.g. Cicero's speech *Pro Quinctio*: the conclusion, *nihil esse debitum Naevio* 41; cf. 47), is prepared through the *narratio* (15) and the introduction (37); the arguments, however, relate only to a partial aspect (*privatim debuisse*), as the *societas* continues to exist so that Naevius has no reason to mention his claims *ex societatis ratione*.

In 1.265–70 Lucretius first states the point he has just proved, thereby underlining that he has just been successful in providing a proof (265–66: *docui*). Then he urges the addressee, in view of possible misgivings which he might still feel at so early a stage of the whole undertaking, to accept the bodies whose existence among things "you must by necessity grant" (269–70: "quae corpora tute necessest/confiteare esse in rebus"). In other words, before any actual argument has been advanced, the listener is confronted with the result as a kind of necessity (see also 2.865–66). This and other similar formulae (a milder form is e.g. *invenies*: 1.450) are familiar from philosophical dialogue (Plato)[18] as well as rhetorical argumentation. But even in the most persuasive sections of his speeches Cicero never uses such a phrase without first adducing some evidence (facts, arguments, or common experience: cf. e.g. *Quinct.* 26; *Div. Caec.* 62; *Verr.* 2.2.150, 191; 2.3.40).

Other types of introduction serve to stress from the beginning the truth of the proposition (e.g. 1.498–99, 2.1023; cf. also 5.110–13), sometimes in the form of a warning to the addressee (1.370–71, 4.823–24, 4.386: "proinde animi vitium hoc oculis adfingere noli"), often with reference to the logical connection with the immediately preceding argument (2.478–80 = 522–24) or with an earlier established proposition (e.g. 1.503–4; cf. *docui* cited above), a practice familiar from Epicurus. In 1.329–33 Lucretius, after stating the proposition, again turns to the addressee:

> quod tibi cognosse in multis erit utile rebus
> nec sinet errantem dubitare et quaerere semper
> de summa rerum et nostris diffidere dictis.

He prejudices the listener—indeed he bribes him by promising something *utile* (cf. 3.206–7 in a transition between two proofs, and the hotly disputed line 4.25)—and thereby secures his attention. In summing up, one can say that Lucretius not only tends to state the conclusion first before giving the arguments, he usually also recommends it by some impressive characterization.

In a corresponding manner, refutative passages are often introduced by applying some derogatory terms to the actual or imaginary opponents or their position: e.g. *ignari materiai* (2.167; but see below, note

18 Cf. C. J. Classen, *Sprachliche Deutung als Triebkraft platonischen und sokratischen Philosophierens* (= Zetemata 22, Munich 1959) 122–23.

44) or *quod quidam fingunt* (1.371) or *derrasse* (1.711) or *hoc adfingere et addere ... desiperest* (5.156–65) or *perdelirum esse videtur* (1.690–92);[19] less aggressive is *difficilest* (3.359–61).   Occasionally such terms are used during the course of an argument (e.g. 2.985, 1.698).   This leads on to the means by which the actual force of a proof itself is strengthened: the choice of arguments and the manner in which they are phrased.

As Lucretius adopts Epicurus' form of reasoning, he frequently adduces analogies in support of a proposed view.   Not only when he refers to natural phenomena does he give vivid descriptions from natural, animal, and human life;[20] especially when he turns to his own imagination (not only for analogies, but also in piling up *adynata* in mixed hypothetical syllogisms) he succeeds in creating the most brilliant pictures, which often move or persuade rather than convince. Moreover, even in the most arid argumentative section he still endeavors to enliven and enlighten the argument by figurative language, e.g. when he speaks of *caeli lucida templa* (1.1014) or says that the atoms (*primordia rerum*) *vexantur* (1.1021–25).   In short, Lucretius colors all parts of his argument with poetic beauty to make his exposition as attractive and intelligible as possible.   From these observations scholars have drawn conclusions about Lucretius' visual mind,[21] his Roman character, or even his personal experiences; though it is by no means certain whether a *videmus* or *sentimus* refers to actual or possible experience, especially as these expressions alternate with *vides, videbis*, etc. Of course, no one will deny that Lucretius is an extraordinarily keen observer of nature, that he most impressively brings his observations to life in his argumentations, and that he draws on an inexhaustible store of imagination.   But it should not be overlooked that he does so for the sake of his arguments and their effectiveness.[22]   In a unique achievement, revealing the full force and power of his poetic genius, Lucretius fuses his logical reasoning with brilliantly executed scenes

[19] Numerous parallels can be cited from oratory, from the beginnings of a speech, a section, or an argument: Andoc. 1.8; Lys. 3.21; Demosth. 18.8, 11; Cic. *Cluent.* 160; see also *Cael.* 58 and *Planc.* 72; with reference to future witnesses, *Flacc.* 51; *Planc.* 56, 57.

[20] Nature: e.g. 1.250–61, 271–94; 2.114–22; animals: 2.317–20, 352–70; 3.657–63; 5.1063–86; mankind: 2.323–30, 500–6, 552–59; 3.152–58, 447–53, 476–83, 487–91, 642–56; 4.545–46; human and animal life: 2.352–70.

[21] C. Bailey, "The Mind of Lucretius," *AJP* 61 (1940) 278–91.

[22] This is shown by such dramatic pictures from human experience as 3.894–99 and such careful applications of a comparison as 6.890–94 and 895–98.

for the same purpose for which he uses typically Roman phrases from the Ennian tradition or colloquial speech, for which he selects characteristically Roman examples[23] (or those from daily life), for which he gives his vivid descriptions of phenomena from nature and of dramatic scenes from human life: to bring his message home to the Roman listener, to make it more effective and impressive, more easily acceptable and comprehensible for his audience. And this is his concern throughout. His "poetry" is not confined to a few digressions; just as most of the "purple passages" have a didactic function, most of the argumentative sections are full of "poetry"—"Lucrezio e sempre poeta."[24]

Besides these poetic features, a few others assist his listeners in following individual arguments. As Lucretius again and again appeals to experience and observation, he often turns to the audience and asks questions. An example, chosen at random from the beginning, may be quoted as illustration (1.225–31):

> praeterea quaecumque vetustate amovet aetas,
> si penitus peremit consumens materiem omnem,
> unde animale genus generatim in lumina vitae
> reddducit Venus, aut redductum daedala tellus
> unde alit atque auget generatim pabula praebens?
> unde mare ingenui fontes externaque longe
> flumina suppeditant? unde aether sidera pascit?

The arguments are not simply presented to the listener; he is made to join the enquiry and to contribute himself, as in a Platonic dialogue. Moreover, the lines quoted give a few indications how the choice of words underlines points which are relevant to the argument: the anaphora of *unde*, the combination of *genus* and *generatim*, the "traductio" *redducit/redductum*, the repetition of *aetas anteacta* (in the following lines 233 and 234, see also 225). Examples can be found on any page, and it must suffice to refer the reader to the secondary literature (see below, notes 36–38).

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[23] P. Grimal, "Lucrèce et son public," *REL* 41 (1963) 91–100, rightly stresses—in another context—that Lucretius' aim is not merely to expound Epicurean doctrine, but to show it to be consistent with Roman moral doctrines and views (96).

[24] C. Giussani (above, note 11) xxv.

Finally, another device deserves attention which Lucretius employs to enforce the effect of an argument and to assist the listener. He takes great pains to phrase his conclusions pointedly (e.g. 2.567–68), often in one line (1.328, 510), not only to make them easy to remember (an aspect occasionally stressed by Epicurus [*Ep. ad Her.* 35–36], see also Lucr. 2.581–82), but also to underline the particular aspect and to leave the listener in no doubt as to its content and relevance. (For this reason also the listener is addressed in the concluding remark of the first book.)

Next we turn to groups of proofs, their introduction, their order, and their summaries. As individual proofs are usually introduced by some characterizing remark, whole groups are often prefaced by a special section. Sometimes first an elaborate announcement of the content is given (e.g. 5.92–96 with personal address, repetition of *tria, tris, tria* after *triplicem*, with the contrast *una dies: multos annos* etc.). Sometimes first the subject-matter is characterized or recommended in detail (2.1023–47): not only the truth of the matter is stressed (1023, 1041), its novelty (1024, 1025, 1040), and its marvelous nature (1026, 1027, 1028, 1029, 1035, 1037); the listener himself is addressed (1023, 1024, 1038, 1040–43) and encouraged not to be surprised (1040), not to refuse the truth (1041), but to judge for himself (1041–43). Then the *propositio* itself follows (1041–47 for 1048–89, with back-reference in 1044–45 to 1.958–1001). At once the well-known precepts for a proem come to mind (Cic. *Inv.* 1.23):

> attentos autem faciemus, si demonstrabimus ea, quae dicturi erimus, magna,
> nova, incredibilia esse, . . . dociles auditores faciemus, si aperte et breviter
> summam causae exponemus, hoc est, in quo consistat controversia.
> nam et, cum docilem velis facere, simul attentum facias oportet.

One is also reminded of the other rule which seems to go back to Prodicus (Quint. 4.1.73, cf. Arist. *Rh.* 1415B9–17):

> est interim prooemii vis etiam non exordio; nam iudices et in narratione
> nonnumquam et in argumentis ut attendant et ut faveant rogamus.

In 4.176–82 (see also 4.907–11) the *propositio* (4.176–79, cf. 907–8) is followed by a few lines in which the poet, implying a kind of *praeteritio*, seems to recommend himself with an Alexandrian topos (4.180–82 = 909–11). At the beginning of the anti-theological attack (5.110–234)

Lucretius writes: "multa tibi expediam doctis solacia dictis" (113); elsewhere he combines the proposition with a recapitulation (e.g. 5.772–82). The elaborateness of these passages again illustrates Lucretius' concern to see the listener guided to a full appreciation of the poem and to a right understanding of the *rerum natura*. His method is most clearly revealed in a recapitulation in the first book (418–48); for it turns out to be a "restatement with certain important differences and additions."[25] As Lucretius introduces a piece of teaching prematurely in arguments and conclusions, he uses transitional sections for the same purpose.

Furthermore, as an argument is often introduced with a derogatory term applied to the opponent, an argumentative section frequently begins with a refutation of the opposite view (e.g. 4.823–57; 5.110–234),[26] in a manner very much reminiscent of oratorical practice, where first the adversary's position is demolished before the speaker's case is put forward.[27]

The order in which the proofs follow each other in a group is invariably carefully marked: *principio—praeterea—porro—huc accedit—denique—postremo*; and as Lucretius at the beginning of a longer section stresses the logical connection with a preceding one, he does the same thing where one proof follows another. Thus Boyancé summarizes ([above, note 1] 307)

> que Lucrèce subordonne ou croit tout subordonner à l'évidence rationnelle. Il s'agit pour lui de démonstrations scientifiques qui doivent tenir leur force de leur vérité intrinsèque, et non de complaisances qu'on leur susciterait dans l'imagination et le coeur. Lucrèce ne se meut jamais ou ne croit jamais se mouvoir dans ces sphères ambiguës du vraisemblable, du probable où se meut si souvent la pensée antique sous l'influence de la rhétorique.

But others have pointed to difficulties in finding logical connections or have even altered the transmitted text, as e.g. Brieger and Giussani

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[25] C. Bailey (above, note 1) 2.665.

[26] Note G. Müller (above, note 11) 27.

[27] Cf. e.g. Cic *Mur.* 3–10; *Sull.* 3–35; *Cael.* 3–50; *Mil.* 7–22; see C. J. Classen, "Cicero *Pro Cluentio* 1–11 im Licht der rhetorischen Theorie und Praxis," *RhM* 108 (1965) 127 note 82.

in their editions.   A brief examination of Lucretius' first argumentative section may help to explain his procedure.   As pointed out above, in 1.265–70 Lucretius begins with a summary of the previous argument (265–66), then warns the listener not to distrust the following argument and prejudices him (*necessest confiteare*) before giving a detailed description (271–97) how *venti vis verberat*—a familiar natural phenomenon, but pictured in a most impressive manner which makes the audience see (one could almost say feel) the force of a storm.   He does not fail to point—casually—to the explanation (277), before going on to the second picture from nature, again most impressive in itself (while also inspired by epic tradition: cf. *Il.* 5.87–92, 11.492–95), which is to serve as analogy, and is carefully applied before the conclusion is drawn in the same words in which the explanation was given before (295–97, cf. 277).   The second proof is comparatively brief (298–304), though it refers to almost the whole field of sense-perception (and Lucretius' interpretation of it).   Lucretius is obviously not so much concerned with advancing a convincing argument, as with carefully introducing a vital aspect of his system.   He can do this more easily since the listener has been impressed by the first section.   After this heavily loaded piece of teaching, Lucretius returns almost lightheartedly to a trivial matter, the *suspensae in litore vestes*, presented rather rigidly —two lines of description, two lines of observation, two lines of conclusion (305–10)—before he gives a list of brief examples of wear and tear (311–21), familiar from Greek philosophers as well as proverbs.[28] This series is impressive because of the obvious nature of the examples, the precise formulation, and the quantity, recalling the series of examples which Cicero would shower on his audience when he addressed the *plebs*.   The last proof refers to a very general phenomenon: growth and decay (322–27).   It is not only of great importance (like the second), but also indisputable and therefore most suitable to precede the last line of the section, in which the point to be proved is once more enunciated in the form of a conclusion: "corporibus caecis igitur natura gerit res" (328).   Lucretius begins with a most effective description of a natural phenomenon and its consequences, with which everyone is familiar, so that the point can immediately be grasped and

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[28] Cf. C. J. Classen, "Sulpicius Lupercus," *Class. Med.* 21 (1960) 46–49.

the impact on the listener is guaranteed; and he finishes with a general argument, again so vividly expressed (325: *aevo macieque senescunt*) that its effect need not be doubted. Beginning and end are given special emphasis, while in the middle part the order reflects another principle: examples and descriptions alternate with dry syllogisms so that success is ensured by means of variety (cf. also 1.958–67; 984–97 and 968–83; 998–1001).

More observations could be derived from other passages. It must suffice to refer to a paper by K. Büchner,[29] which shows that Lucretius endeavors to put an especially moving argument at the end of a series. This reminds one of an old precept of the art of persuasion, to put the strongest arguments first and last, and to throw the less convincing ones *in mediam turbam atque in gregem* (Cic. *De or.* 2.314). This is said with regard to the *genus iudiciale*, where an orator cannot afford to ignore awkward points when they have been raised by the opponent. Lucretius is, of course, quite at liberty to choose whatever suits his case best from the wealth of evidence that is supplied by the universe and his interpretation of it. A close examination shows that he not only introduces and concludes a series of arguments effectively, he also arranges them carefully in view of their strength and their likely impact on the audience.

Variatio, the other principle exemplified above (1.265–328), is applied in different ways in groups of proofs. As a long list of examples may divert the reader's attention from the point under discussion, so that an intermediary conclusion is called for (e.g. 4.435 in 379–468), a long stretch of arid scientific reasoning would be too difficult to follow and its force might be lost. It has already been shown how arguments are fused with poetic charm and how dry syllogisms alternate with lively examples and fantastic *adynata*; in addition Lucretius occasionally inserts what are commonly labeled "digressions." Very heterogeneous passages have been grouped together under this term and studied from very different points of view, e.g. to illustrate Lucretius' poetic genius (or particular aspects of it), to gain additional arguments for the original chronology of the books, etc. I shall discuss them here, together with other poetic passages, to elucidate their function.

[29] "Über den Aufbau von Beweisreihen im Lukrez," *Philologus* 92 (1937) 68–82. I would add 4.513–21 (in 4.469–521); 5.737–47 (in 5.705–50); 6.285–94 (in 6.246–94).

According to Gudrun Haerke's special study,[30] there are two groups of digressions: those which contain and illustrate the basic moral ideas of the work and others which are outside the didactic program, merely an overflow of Lucretius' feelings and inclinations. Miss Haerke is certainly right in stressing the didactic function of the illustrative passages, i.e. the close connection between some of the digressions and Lucretian teaching and the general purpose of the poem; especially since some scholars tend to regard them as dissociated from the rest of the work, as its "redeeming feature"—without any programmatic function. In fact, they are a continuation of the arguments by other means, chosen for the same reason for which Lucretius fuses reasoning with poetry. Does this apply to all digressions? "Purely decorative" is G. Townend's verdict[31] for the stories of the Trojan War (1.473-77) at the end of the argument on coniuncta and eventa, and of Phaethon (5.396-405) near the end of the long section on the destructibility of the world (5.91-415); and yet he adds that "they serve the purpose of adding a personal interest to passages where the human content is small"; in other words, while they are superfluous for the argument—and even this may be disputed—they are helpful for the listener.

I cannot now discuss all the examples of the second group and refute in each case Haerke's contention that these digressions "sind überhaupt nur Niederschlag lukrezischer Gefühle oder Neigungen . . . daß sie ihr Vorhandensein im Werk überhaupt nur subjektiven lukrezischen Gefühlen verdanken" ([above, note 30] 16), a contention which she weakens herself by her own admission: "Dabei sind technisch . . . auf die Weise Exkurse entstanden, daß regelrechter Lehrstoff durch persönliche dichterische Anschauungen des Lukrez beansprucht und dadurch verklärt worden ist." Instead it must suffice to state that while, of course, the so-called digressions are invariably inserted to speak to the listener in a manner different from the arguments, they are also invariably closely connected either with the intention of the particular context or with Lucretius' program in general. A few

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[30] *Studien zur Exkurstechnik im römischen Lehrgedicht (Lukrez und Vergil)* (Diss. Freiburg, Würzburg 1936). It needs to be emphasized that Lucretius' digressions cannot simply be explained as a traditional feature of didactic poetry.

[31] "Imagery in Lucretius," in Dudley (above, note 4) 100.

examples may be given as illustration. Between the refutations of Heraclitus and Empedocles, Lucretius inserts an encomium of Sicily (716–33), offering the listener relief; but at the same time that poet is indirectly (ἀπὸ τῆς πατρίδος) honored whose example meant more for Lucretius' philosophical poem than the following refutative section might suggest. Lucretius is very careful in weighing praise and censure of those to whom he is indebted as philosopher or poet (note 3.1036–44). Democritus' views, for example, are on the whole accepted and revered by Lucretius (5.622: "Democriti quod sancta viri sententia ponit," a phrase which he uses even where he disagrees, 3.371), and yet the Abderite himself means little, as his philosophical ideas have largely been absorbed by Epicurus. But Empedocles, though his system offers itself as a suitable representative of one of the three cosmological systems which are rejected, has a vital importance as the πρῶτος εὑρετής of Lucretius' type of poetry and, indeed, his only predecessor. For this reason Lucretius, before starting the polemics, acknowledges his debt to Empedocles by eulogizing his home in verses which are strongly influenced by the tradition of hexameter poetry and which end in personal praise (729–33).

The next digression follows the refutation of Anaxagoras (830–920): the lines on Lucretius' mission (921–50), which will be discussed later (see below, p. 101). However, it is not always at the end of a refutation that one meets with a *digressio*; the famous passage on Magna Mater (2.600–60) interrupts the second book to offer an interval in the dry *argumentatio*; but again its connection with, and relevance to, the subject matter, especially its polemical aspects (against attempts to save traditional religion through rational interpretation), have recently been stressed by several scholars.[32] Polemical also is the function of several inserted passages—whether "purple" or not—which are designed either to fight against traditional religion, to illustrate and reject misconceptions of current beliefs (e.g. 2.167–82 [but see below, note 44], 1090–1104; 5.110–234, 1194–1240; 6. 379–422), or at least to contribute to this purpose, like the example of the searching cow (2.352–66), which again is more than a "purple" passage in that it also serves as an analogy from nature. "The most familiar beauties reveal a deeper meaning when they are seen to be not mere resting places in the toilsome march

[32] See e.g. G. Müller (above, note 11) 44–45.

of his argument, but rather commanding positions, successively reached, from which the widest contemplative views of the realms of Nature and human life are laid open to us."[33]

Finally a word about 1.400–17. After establishing the basic principles, Lucretius proves the existence of matter in the form of small particles and of empty space, refuting at the end some rival theories (1.320–99). Before starting on the next chain of proofs, he turns to the listener (1.400–3):

> multaque praeterea tibi possum commemorando
> argumenta fidem dictis corradere nostris.
> verum animo satis haec vestigia parva sagaci
> sunt per quae possis cognoscere cetera tute.

Then he adds two pictures: the hunting dog (404–6 with application 407–9) and—to enforce a promise (410–11)—the poet's *fontes* (412–17). These images do not, of course, support an argument, though the interruption enables Lucretius on returning to the argumentation to summarize the previous discussion and once more to state his point of view (418–48); but they offer more than a resting place, more than a *praeteritio*, as a comparison with corresponding passages in Epicurus' *Letter to Herodotus* shows (68 and 45): the poet does not merely point to further detailed aspects which he omits and leaves to the listener to find for himself; from the comparison he almost deduces that such a search is likely to be successful (*ipse videre . . . poteris*); and in the second picture he reveals even more clearly his concern for the listener, for Memmius. Thus the purpose of these passages becomes obvious: they serve to encourage the listener to follow the argument, just as other digressions immediately assist him in doing so or prejudice him against opposing views. However different the functions of the so-called digressions may be, they have all turned out to be indispensable parts of the persuasive form of presentation.

Lines 1.400–17 raise the problem of how Lucretius addresses the audience and Memmius in particular, and of the function of this *personal* feature in Lucretius' poem. Apart from the mention of the name in the proem (1.26, 42, and perhaps in or before 50), to which I shall return soon, Memmius is addressed twice both in Books 1 and

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[33] W. Y. Sellar (above, note 10) 388.

2 and five times in Book 5, to promise that something will be revealed
to him (2.182), that he will be able to hear or to discover something
(1.410–17, 2.143, 5.1282, cf. 1.403), to urge him to join, as it were, the
searching party (5.93), to appeal to him as a member of that party
(5.8, 164, 867) or, finally, to warn him not to be misled (1.1052). In
addition the poet frequently turns to the listener simply in the second
person singular, a fact which again has been interpreted and exploited
in different ways. Lucretius, who in this is following the tradition
of Greek didactic poetry (Hesiod and especially Empedocles), clearly
often has Memmius in mind, even without using his name (e.g. 3.206–7,
416–20), but the anonymous address enables him also to imply that he—
whose choice of the poetic form already indicates a claim to general
application—wishes to address (and be heard by) a wider audience.
Cf. Epicurus himself in his *Letter to Idomeneus*, where he uses ὑμῖν
(omitted by Cicero: Epic. fr. 138 Us.). When one, therefore, casts
one's net more widely and includes all references in the second person
singular, one is justified in saying that, throughout his poem, Lucretius
shows immediate and continued concern for the attention, under-
standing, judgment (2.1040–43), consent, and active cooperation of
the listener, to whom he in turn constantly makes promises not only
to lead him towards a better understanding in the end, but also to assist
him in the process, to provide lights along the way that leads towards
freedom from fear, inner peace, and happiness. This is not an empty
promise; any student of this poem quickly becomes aware of the many
ways in which the poet is anxious to facilitate and ensure comprehen-
sion; nowhere is this more obvious than in his choice of words, in his
elocutio.

   Before we turn to stylistic problems, a few words have to be said
about the structure of whole books. It is not an easy task to analyze
the composition of a book of Lucretius and to show the function and
relevance of each section in its place. While E. K. Rand's attempt
to force the familiar five parts of a *logos* on the third book must be
regarded as a failure,[34] it is generally agreed that not only are the
proems carefully planned and executed, but also the final sections of
each book are given special prominence and are composed with a
view to the preceding book, to the following book, and to the poem

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[34] "La composition rhétorique du IIIᵉ livre de Lucrèce," *RPh* ser. 3, 8 (1934) 243–66.

as a whole.   Work on the sequence of the six books was plagued for many years by the question of their original order: the present arrangement was seen as the result of deliberate change.   All attempts to explain the present order have been either rather fanciful or rather general.   But as it is impossible to take up the challenge of a full analysis here, it must suffice to point to the results of those who have studied individual books and revealed behind their well-considered plan a pedagogical intention as guiding principle.[35]

It will also be appreciated that I cannot here hope to do justice to so complex a phenomenon as Lucretius' style.[36]   Again, I can merely recall a few well known facts.   As regards the choice of words, Lucretius was, of course, forced by the subject matter to describe many things for the first time in Latin.   In complaining of the *patrii sermonis egestas* he seems only to apply a topos.   But how does he actually cope with the problem, he whom one finds so anxious to be intelligible?   Generally speaking, it can be said that he avoids new words; where he has to form them—and I mean really new words, not those which happen to occur in his poem for the first time because of the fragmentary state of preservation of Old Latin poetry—he follows the practice of the time (cf. *Auct. ad Her.* 4.10) in preferring Latin coinages, harsh though they may sound (e.g. *clinamen, notities*), while avoiding Greek terms. Admittedly, D. S. Swanson, in his *Formal Analysis of Lucretius' Vocabulary* (Minneapolis 1962), lists, besides 65 Greek names and 9 proper adjectives, more than a hundred Greek nouns and about 25 adjectives with Greek formation, and one verb; and Bailey ([above, note 1] 1.139) finds "a large number of Greek words in the poem to some of which he was almost compelled by his subject-matter, while the use of others appears gratuitous."   But when one goes beyond the limits of a purely mechanical, statistical approach and examines the lists carefully, one finds that many words and technical terms were fully incorporated

[35] See the books and papers listed by Boyancé (above, note 1) 336–38 and 339–43, especially J. Mussehl, *De Lucretiani libri primi condicione ac retractatione* (Diss. Greifswald, Berlin 1912); K. Barwick, "Kompositionsprobleme im 5. Buch des Lucrez," *Philologus* 95 (1943) 193–229; G. Barra, *Struttura e composizione del "De rerum natura" di Lucrezio* (Naples 1952); G. Müller (above, note 11); U. Pizzani, *Il problema del testo e della composizione del De rerum natura di Lucrezio* (Rome 1959) 130–80; L. Gompf, *Die Frage der Entstehung von Lukrezens Lehrgedicht* (Diss. Cologne 1960).

[36] Again I refer to Boyancé's bibliography (above, note 1) 343–46; note also the introductions to most annotated editions, and several papers in Dudley (above, note 4).

into the Latin language (especially the language of poets) long before
Lucretius' time, e.g. *corona, hora, poema, scaena,* but also *absinthium,
aether, celamen, concha*; others are deliberately chosen and grouped to-
gether for special effects, e.g. the musical terms in 2.412 and 2.505 (with
other luxury-terms: 500–4), the love-names in 4.1125–30, or again the
Greek expressions in the attack on the folly of love (1160–69). But in
philosophical exposition, where Lucretius aims at clarity and precision,
there are only two or three Greek words, each carefully introduced and
explained: *homoeomeria* (1.830–42), *harmonia* (3.98–103), and *prester*
(6.423–30); so that his attitude to the use of Greek differs not only
from that of Plautus, Lucilius, the tragic poets, or Catullus, but also
from that of Cicero.

More frequently Lucretius gives a current word a new meaning,
explaining it by a definition or the addition of a genitive or adjective,
a participle or a synonym; and his metaphors are mostly chosen from
spheres close to common experience and used in groups taken from the
same field (see below, p. 99). Moreover, he will employ the same
term several times to accustom the listener to it. Indeed, the repetition
of one or several words or whole lines, in the past often severely criti-
cized, has in recent years at last been recognized as a device which our
poet (like his model Empedocles) employs for the sake of clear expres-
sion and emphasis,[37] or for the sake of pleasant sound.[38] Both these
aspects point in the very direction which has already been found
characteristic: they are aimed at the audience, to make it more willing
to listen and more able to understand. These two factors also deter-
mine Lucretius' use of metaphors,[39] to which I have already alluded
briefly. It may appear superfluous or even out of place to mention

[37] Cf. C. Lenz, *Die wiederholten Verse bei Lukrez* (Diss. Leipzig, Dresden 1937; with
unfortunate interest in the "original" chronology of the books); A. E. Raubitschek,
"Zu einigen Wiederholungen bei Lukrez," *AJP* 59 (1938) 218–23. The repetition of
key-words has its immediate parallel in oratory.

[38] See R. E. Deutsch, *The Pattern of Sound in Lucretius* (Diss. Bryn Mawr College
1939); P. Friedländer, "Pattern of Sound and Atomistic Theory in Lucretius," *AJP* 62
(1941) 16–34.

[39] S. von Raumer, *Die Metapher bei Lucrez* (Schulprogramm Erlangen 1893); H. S.
Davies, "Notes on Lucretius," *Criterion* 11 (1931–32) 29–42; C. A. Disandro, *La poesía
de Lucrecio* (La Plata 1950) 115–27; R. F. Arragon, "Poetic Art as a Philosophic Medium
for Lucretius," *Essays in Criticism* 11 (1961) 371–89; E. M. McLeod, "Lucretius' *carmen
dignum*," *CJ* 58 (1962–63) 146–48; see also above, note 36.

this aspect of *elocutio*, as it is the most genuine and legitimate of a poet's tools. But at this point one should not forget that Lucretius is expounding a philosophical system; and in the case of a *philosopher* an explanation is called for. It will not suffice to say that Lucretius applies the Epicurean practice of appealing to analogies. First, it has been observed that Lucretius is very judicious in selecting only those metaphors with which the reader is likely to be familiar—e.g. those taken from nature, sea, war—or metaphors which are connected with, or suggested by, the subject matter. It has even been said that in his metaphors Lucretius shows himself conscious of being a Roman.[40] I am not convinced that this is justified; but it is correct that political and legal terms are used to describe the relations between atoms, in a whole system of metaphors, all supporting each other and explaining each other. Similarly Lucretius connects metaphors from nature or selects suggestive, pregnant ones which he then develops into full pictures which show his gift to observe and to describe, to put the beauty of nature clearly and vividly before our eyes (even where he follows epic tradition) in order to facilitate the understanding. His use of a network of images, or of developed pictures which can easily be grasped and remembered, is particularly illustrative of the didactic function of Lucretius' metaphors; it should not make one forget the other aspect, that metaphors in Lucretius' work—as in any poem—have an artistic function: to please, to enrich, to stimulate the imagination.

Is this in keeping with Epicurean philosophy? Did Epicurus not warn against the use of poetry because it might distract from the truth (see below, p. 110)? No doubt he did; but in raising this question one raises at once the more general one: why Lucretius uses poetry for a work of Epicurean philosophy (or why the poet turns to the Epicurean blend of philosophy). A suggestion which might contribute to the solution of this problem seems to arise from the observations made so far. We have met with features which are the property of poetry and are expected in a work of poetry (and there are others which have not been mentioned, such as assonance, alliteration, homoeoteleuta, etc.). And we have met with others that are at home in any philosophical discourse—and again there are more that have not been pointed out. Such labels as "poetic" and "philosophical"

[40] H. S. Davies (above, note 39) 35.

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do not help to solve the problem that lies in the combination of the two (which Aristotle so clearly distinguishes in his *Poetics* [1447A28–B24]). It has emerged, I trust, from the discussion so far that the author is constantly concerned for the listener, for his attention, his understanding, his judgment, his consent and cooperation in the attempt to grasp the truth, the vitally important truth about the gods, the universe, and the soul, a truth that will make him free. In view of this, the poetical and the philosophical aspect should not be seen separately: they are inextricably connected and interfused by the poet as two complementary features of one scheme, to achieve the most effective presentation of the case by adding to the force of the argument the most persuasive form. To prove that this is more than a very subjective assumption or daring conclusion based on a few cleverly selected aspects of the poem, I call the poet himself to my aid and turn at last to the proem of Book 1.[41]

What does the poet actually say? First, in a climax (*Aeneadum genetrix—hominum | divumque voluptas—alma Venus*) he addresses Venus, whose power is amply described and illustrated in the traditional style of a hymn before he formulates his particular request:

> te sociam studeo scribendis versibus esse (24);

and again, after a brief *propositio* in 25:

> aeternum da dictis, diva, leporem (28);

and still later he asks:

> suavis ex ore loquellas
> funde petens placidam Romanis, incluta, pacem (39–40).

Lucretius asks for assistance, he asks that his words may be given lasting *lepor*. What is *lepor*? The poet himself has already indicated the answer in the foregoing verses where the same word occurs (15–16):

> ita capta lepore
> te sequitur cupide quo quamque inducere pergis.

"Thus caught by (your) pleasantness (or charm) everyone (of the animals) follows you full of desire, whither you lead it." Through the

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[41] See Boyancé's bibliography (above, note 1) 338–39, especially J. P. Elder, "Lucretius 1.1–49," *TAPA* 85 (1954) 88–120, and F. Giancotti, *Il preludio di Lucrezio* (Messina 1959); on Venus: R. Schilling, *La religion Romaine de Vénus depuis les origines jusqu'au temps d'Auguste* (Paris 1954) and K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte* (Munich 1960) 183–84.

wording of his prayer, he leaves no doubt that he wishes his poem not merely to be *laetum et amabile*, but also to be furnished with *lepor* so that the listener, in like manner caught by *lepor*, may follow him; i.e. he wants to see his words endowed with such a quality that enables him to lead his audience whither he wishes; and this he asks of Venus, whose power is manifest in nature, thus implying an important immediate parallel between the subject of his poem and its form. What exactly is *lepor*? When one examines the few occurrences of the word in Lucretius' work,[42] one finds that it denotes a beautifully colorful, shining brightness and appealing (*smiling*: 2.502; cf. 4.81–83) pleasantness, more generally a quality that through its delightful appearance endears an object to the spectator, that captures him: "(aurum) tollebant nitido capti levique lepore" (5.1259). The particular application for our context is hinted at in 3.1036: "adde repertores doctrinarum atque leporum"; it is more fully expressed by the well known verses which Lucretius inserts (921–50), after refuting several rival theories, to introduce the last section of Book 1. Here he characterizes not only the importance (931), relevance (931–32), nature (922, 933), and *ratio* (943, 946) of his subject, but also, more personally, his manner of presentation (934 with the important addition of 935)—especially through the simile 936–42 and its application (943–50).[43]

In this passage, which need not be quoted in full here, *lepor* is again understood as the outward dress that is given to the subject, to make it appear delightful, charming, captivating; to make it deceive the listener, who will in this manner not turn away from what appears to an outsider as *tristior* (sc. *ratio*: 944). To appreciate fully the meaning of the simile, especially in its relevance for the poem, a few points may be added:

1. Lines 933–34 connect *lepor* with *lucida carmina*. Since Lucretius introduces the whole passage with "clarius audi. / nec me animi fallit quam sint obscura" (921–22) and frequently elsewhere insists on the

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[42] Apart from the first proem: 1.934 = 4.9; 2.502; 3.1006, 1036; 4.80, 1133; 5.1259, 1376.

[43] J. H. Waszink, *Lucretius and Poetry* (Mededel. Koninkl. Nederl. Akad., Afd. Letterkunde, N.R. Deel 17.8, Amsterdam 1954); L. Gompf (above, note 35) 146–70; see also the heated debate between P. Boyancé and F. Giancotti (below, note 49).

lucidity of his own exposition and the light he tries to shed ("clara tuae possim praepandere lumina menti" 1.144), one might think that *lepor*, too, is to be connected with, and understood in, this context. However, *lepor* denotes the charm that makes an object shine and gives it *nitor*; it does not illuminate it, does not make it transparent, but it adds that quality which guarantees attention (948).

2. In several other places in the poem Lucretius refers to the sweetness of his words: 1.410–17 (in an address to Memmius) and 4.180–82 (in the application of a traditional topos [cf. Bailey *ad loc.*]: "suavidicis potius quam multis versibus edam") where sweetness (together with brevity) is clearly taken as preferable to lengthy exposition. The word *suaviloquens* itself is borrowed from Ennius, who uses it in the famous description of the orator M. Cornelius Cethegus (*Ann.* 303), following Homer's picture of Nestor (*Il.* 1.248); the Greek equivalent is also applied to the Muses by Hesiod (*Th.* 965) while Aphrodite is only called γλυκυμείλιχος in a late hymn (*Hymn. Hom.* 5.19). Invariably the metaphor points to the attractiveness and persuasiveness of speech.

3. The close verbal parallel between 934, 938, and 947 has sometimes been taken to imply that Lucretius adds to the arid scientific reasoning an enticing introduction (closely corresponding to the *honey* on the *rim*) and a few purple passages. But while the comparison speaks of doctors who *oras pocula circum contingunt*, lines 933–34 read

> deinde quod obscura de re tam lucida pango
> carmina, musaeo *contingens cuncta* lepore;

and again in 945–47 *nostra ratio* is the object of the two infinitives *exponere* and *contingere*, the second of which is an explanatory addition to point to the application of the simile, not to introduce a new feature. To a *suaviloquens carmen Pierium* one could hardly add *musaeum dulce mel*; as already implied in *suaviloquens*, *mel* flavors the poem *throughout* (cf. Cic. *De or.* 1.159 "lepos, quo tamquam sale perspergatur omnis oratio").

4. To understand the function of Venus in this context—and this leads back to the proem—the following verses should be taken together:

> Aeneadum genetrix, hominum divumque voluptas,
> alma Venus (1.1–2);
> Calliope, requies hominum divumque voluptas (6.94);

> ipsaque deducit dux vitae dia voluptas
> et res per Veneris blanditur saecla propagent (2.172–73);[44]
> ita capta lepore
> te sequitur cupide quo quamque inducere pergis (1.15–16).

Towards the end of his work, Lucretius, desiring to be shown the right path, asks Calliope for help and guidance (as Empedocles does in Fr. 137), calling her *callida musa* (93) and *hominum divumque voluptas*, thereby implying that knowledge as well as beauty, and the ability to instruct and to appeal are required. At the very beginning, however, in an invocation which is similar and yet very different, Lucretius, laying the whole emphasis on the need for *lepor*, turns to Venus, justifying his choice by an illustration of the power she exercises through *lepor* in the realm of nature (i.e. the subject of the poem). To appreciate fully this choice and line 24 in particular, one should remember—what seems usually forgotten—that not only does the Greek equivalent to *voluptas*, ἡδονή (and ἡδύς), early and frequently characterize the pleasing nature or form of a speech, beginning with ἡδυεπής (see above, p. 102) and ἡδεῖα ἀοιδή (Hom. *Od.* 8.64), but also ἀφροδίτη denotes the beauty, grace, and charm of style (Dion. Hal. *Comp.* 3; *Lys.* 11; cf. Lucian, *Scyth.* 11; Eunap. *VS Iambl.* 458 Boiss.). Correspondingly ἐπαφρόδιτος is applied to ἔπη and ἔργα (Xen. *Symp.* 8.15) or ποίησις (Isoc. 10.65). Note also ἀναφρόδιτος in Hortensius' verdict of L. Torquatus (Gell. 1.5.3). But *venus*, too, is used for stylistic phenomena by Horace (*Ars P.* 320) and Quintilian (4.2.116, 6.3.18 etc.); and even earlier one meets with *venustas* (*Auct. ad Her.* 4.19, 24), *venustus* (Cic. *De or.* 2.262, 327; 3.199), and *venustulus* (Plautus, *Asin.* 223). There seems to be little doubt that Lucretius is influenced by these terms when he formulates a prayer to Venus to give his words the pleasantness and charm that will enable him to lead his audience whither he wishes. Furthermore, in describing this effect (indirectly: 15–16) he uses language reminiscent of current terminology. In Cicero one reads:

> si vero adsequetur (sc. orator), ut talis videatur, qualem se videri velit et
> animos eorum ita adficiat, apud quos aget, ut eos quocumque velit vel

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[44] G. Müller (above, note 11) 20–23 regards 167–83 as interpolation; lines 2.257–58 have not been quoted, as scholars reject the transmitted text, but cannot agree on its correct form.

trahere vel rapere possit, nihil profecto praeterea ad dicendum requiret (*De or.* 2.176).

nemo erat ... qui ... posset ... animum eius, quod unum est oratoris maxime proprium, quocumque res postularet impellere (*Brutus* 322).

neque vero mihi quicquam, inquit (sc. Crassus), praestabilius videtur, quam posse dicendo tenere hominum mentis, adlicere voluntates, impellere quo velit, unde autem velit deducere (*De or.* 1.30).

haec vis, quae scientiam complexa rerum sensa mentis et consilia sic verbis explicat, ut eos, qui audiant, quocumque incubuerit, possit impellere (*De or.* 3.55).

And Horace sings (*Ars P.* 99–100):

> non satis est pulchra esse poemata; dulcia sunto
> et quocumque volent animum auditoris agunto.

In describing the power of an orator or of poetry, Cicero and Horace again and again paraphrase the Greek term *psychagogein*.[45] The verbal affinity to the passage in Lucretius' proem is slight; but in view of the elaborate simile (1.936–42) and the other factors mentioned, I wish to submit that Lucretius, too, had the psychagogical effect of the manner of presentation in mind when he asked his words to be endowed with *lepor* by a power whose name is used as synonym for stylistic charm, a power that seems to be able to guarantee the effectiveness of *lepor* (in a poem) as it permeates all nature and enslaves all nature through *lepor* and brings it to productivity, a power that symbolizes creativity (especially of something *laetum* and *amabile*), a power that can also render nature peaceful, a power that is identified with *voluptas* and leads to *voluptas*, a power that has its place in Epicurean philosophy since it is in reality no more than the effect of certain constellations of atoms (in 4.1058 recognized in the realm of sexual pleasure and here applied to another field) and a goddess to whom one can pray without violating the principles of Epicurean theology (cf. W. Schmid [below, note 52] 732–33), a power that in Roman religion was originally no more than an aspect of other gods, the grace they show, a power that in Roman

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[45] The terms *psychagogisch* (W. Schmid, "Altes und Neues zu einer Lukrezfrage," *Philologus* 93 [1938] 351), *psicagogico* (L. Ferrero, *Poetica nuova in Lucrezio* [Florence 1949] 39, 119, 146, 148) and *psychagogique* (P. Boyancé [above, note 1] 72) have long been applied to Lucretius and his method, but have not, so far as I am aware, been justified from actual phrases in the text.

mythology was accepted as mother of the nation and (as in Greek mythology) as a force that can also end war and can be appealed to for peace, a power, finally, that Greek philosophers had recognized in its multiple functions (note Emped. Fr. 17.22–26)—in brief it is the power that provides all the conditions necessary to give the poet the desired success.   And as Lucretius is at the beginning of his poem concerned to win an audience, nothing need deter him from using such a familiar form as the invocation of Venus—as long as he does not turn this into a part of a creed.   It is not the fact that Lucretius invokes Venus which is important, but that he never does it again, and even justifies such use of language (2.655–60).

Before any further conclusions are drawn, the rest of the proem has to be examined.   In the second half of his prayer, Lucretius honors Memmius in a very special manner, as he points to the goddess' favor and concern for him (26–27) and to the service he will render to the community (42–43); one could equally well say he endeavors to make Memmius *benivolus* in accordance with the theoretical precepts for *exordia*: e.g. Cic. *Inv.* 1.22, "ab auditorum persona benevolentia captabitur, si res ab iis fortiter, sapienter, mansuete gestae proferentur." Secondly he asks for the listener's attention (50–51, cf. *Auct. ad Her.* 1.7: "attentos habebimus . . . si rogabimus, ut attente audiant") and meets the possibility of contempt for the subject matter (52–53: "ne mea dona . . . contempta relinquas"), again in keeping with the theory (Cic. *Inv.* 1.21): "in humili autem genere causae contemptionis tollendae causa necesse est attentum efficere auditorem."   Accordingly, he announces (54–55):

> nam tibi de summa caeli ratione deumque
> disserere incipiam et rerum primordia pandam,

i.e. that he is going to discuss something relevant, new, and important, as the theory advises (Cic. *Inv.* 1.23):

> attentos autem faciemus, si demonstrabimus ea, quae dicturi erimus, magna, nova, incredibilia esse, aut ad omnes aut ad eos, qui audient, aut ad aliquos inlustres homines aut ad deos inmortales aut ad summam rem publicam pertinere.

Setting out his program in this manner (1.54–61), Lucretius succeeds also in making his audience *docilis*, thereby providing the third essential

prerequisite of a prooemium (cf. Cic. *Inv.* 1.23: "dociles auditores faciemus si aperte et breviter summam causae exponemus"). In other words the introductory pieces seem to take into consideration the well known theoretical advice to make the listener *benivolus, attentus, docilis*—an important rule of rhetorical theory.[46] As the terms "rhetoric" and "rhetorical theory" used to be taken as derogatory in meaning, especially when applied to poetry, it seems appropriate to stress that most rhetorical precepts were originally derived from poetry; and that the rhetorical features in Lucretius' proem need not cause any more surprise than any of the numerous other factors of persuasive presentation which have been outlined above. A fuller explanation of his use of rhetoric will be given below.

I have suggested that Lucretius, by announcing his subject, attempts to make his audience *attentus* and *docilis*. Has he succeeded? Can he hope to have attracted his audience? Will they listen to "unde omnis natura creet res auctet alatque"? Are the *genitalia corpora*, for which he gives several synonyms, really a subject that "ad eos qui audient pertinet"? Lucretius himself seems to doubt it. For he adds a paragraph that is meant to stress, besides the novelty of the subject, its relevance (62–79). And to make clear right from the beginning his concern for his fellow men, he starts with the word *humana* (62):

> humana ante oculos foede cum vita iaceret.[47]

It is not the structure of nature as such that is Lucretius' subject, but the consequences that can be drawn from its right understanding; they mean something to *us*: *nos exaequat victoria caelo* (79). In other words, it is not a detached scientific investigation that Lucretius is going to carry out for its own sake; rather he is explaining the scientific discoveries of others for the benefit of his fellow men (note 75, "refert

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[46] More than seventy years ago, J. Woltjer adduced in his "Studia Lucretiana," *Mnemosyne* n.s. 24 (1896) 66–68, some rhetorical precepts to explain the first proem; but his references which are incomplete and not always correct have been largely ignored—an exception is F. Jacoby, "Das Prooemium des Lucretius," *Hermes* 56 (1921) 18—and never fully exploited. Similarly N. F. Deratani's paper "Lucretiana," *Vestnik Drevnej Istorii* (1950) 217–20, which illuminates several features in Lucretius' poem through rhetorical theory, unfortunately again not systematically, has been used only by J. M. Tronskij, "Bemerkungen zum ersten Prooemium des Lukrez," in *Charisteria Francisco Novotný Octogenario oblata* (Prague 1962) 61.

[47] The long debate on the meaning and reference of *cum* seems to have ignored the function of *humana*; it will now, I hope, come to an end.

nobis victor," and 79).[48]   The program sounds promising: a victory over the dreadful past (62: *foede cum vita iaceret*) by means of a bold discovery (66–74), but a victory won at the expense of a factor which lies at the center of Roman life: traditional religion.   This is the enemy that Lucretius implicitly discredits and explicitly attacks from the beginning and throughout the whole paragraph (62–63, 64–65, 68–69). But in the last sentence he admits defeat as well as victory (78–79).   For he cannot hide the fact that here something is gained, but something else is lost—and this is dear to many.   The listener becomes irritated, he may hesitate to follow further as the path seems to lead to impiety and crime (80–82).   A special effort has to be made to maintain his interest, to win his favor again: *religio* in its traditional form has to be denounced, effectively unmasked.   For this purpose Lucretius uses an old device, the *relatio criminis* (cf. Cic. *Inv.* 2.78; Fortunat. 1.15), and in support of this he selects the most dramatic instance of *religio*'s crimes; after a polemical characterization at the beginning (82–83), he relates Iphigenia's sacrifice in the most moving manner, summing it up in just one line, an unforgettable line: "tantum religio potuit suadere malorum" (101), reminiscent of the manner and tone of preachers, for which popular philosophers as well as the evangelists offer parallels.

Lucretius is still not satisfied; he has illustrated the evil practices of religion by a very impressive example, which, suggested by Greek sources, may be known to many Romans; but it is remote from the actual forms of Roman religion with which his listeners are familiar and which determine their whole life.   For they are in the grip of the eloquent and powerful *vates* (and their frightening messages), are struck by the fear of life after death and its penalties which the *vates* threaten.   This influence Lucretius cannot afford to ignore if he wants to succeed in putting across his message.   On the contrary, he incorporates an attack on the representatives of traditional religion in the proem in order to make clear from the beginning which target he is aiming at in his poem (even though he does not often mention institutions of Roman religion).   Moreover he cannot simply reject the belief in an after-life, like Caesar in the debate on the right penalty for

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[48] He announces here that aspect which he later brings in by adding *divinitus* (see above, p. 81).

Catiline (Sall. *Cat.* 51.20, cf. Cic. *Cat.* 4.8); nor can he merely ridicule it, as Cicero occasionally does in his speeches (*Cluent.* 171), though not always (*Phil.* 14.32, cf. *Att.* 10.8.8, thereby testifying that this belief is widespread). Lucretius has to prove it false or at least indicate that it is unjustified, based on false assumptions and conceptions. Thus, after denouncing the *vates* (102–9) with the technique and polemical vocabulary characterized above (*terriloquis dictis; fingere somnia*) and after repeating his own view of the present position (110–11: *ratio nulla est*), he starts very pointedly: *ignoratur enim*. For the power of the *vates* and their traditional religion depends on *inadequate knowledge* of the soul's nature and origin, subjects which are here not merely introduced as central to the whole work, but shown to be relevant for everyone. For the present, Lucretius merely rejects one particular expression of the belief in the immortality of the soul: that which is found in Ennius; not because he regards Ennius as the most evil exponent of such views. On the contrary, he takes care here to show his deep respect for the first Latin writer of this kind of poetry (117–19, 121), a respect which he has already indicated by using *Aeneadum* as first word and which he continues to stress by employing archaic forms, thereby pointing to the tradition in which he wants his own work to be seen and, of course, expressing a claim which should not be overlooked. At the same time, however, he does not fail to imply that he is correcting his predecessor, improving upon him; not least of all because Ennius, too, touches upon *rerum natura* (126). Against this, Lucretius sets his own scheme which he now announces more elaborately (127–35); and in doing so he again tries to attract the audience's interest through a vital promise: to free everyone from the fear that the priests have instilled.

The final verses on the *egestas linguae* (136–45) look like no more than a topos, stressing the difficulty of the task ahead (Cic. *Inv.* 1.22). However, not only is the difficulty here a genuine one (1.830–33; 3.258–61); but Lucretius also stresses several other themes in these lines. First the *rerum novitas* is emphasized again. Then a justification is given for the *labor* which Lucretius is prepared to take upon himself, in the excellence of Memmius (140–42; cf. 27, 42–43), the man whose friendship he hopes to enjoy; and in anticipation of the pleasure of their mutual understanding as friends, the wakeful nights appear

serenae and the *labor* acceptable—or, as he puts it later, *dulcis* (cf. 2.730 and 3.419-20, again with reference to Memmius' *vita*). Finally, immediately before the beginning of the *argumentatio*, Lucretius expresses his intention to assist the listener by shedding light on his path.

This survey, superficial as it had to be, has made clear that each section of the proem has its function and that all the different aspects (including the prayer for an effective form and favorable conditions) are aimed at the listener: to prepare him, to introduce him to the subject, to assure him of its relevance, to overcome all prejudices and, in turn, to prejudice him, to raise his expectations not only with regard to the subject matter and its importance, but also to its form which is equal to the standards set by Ennius, to warn him in view of the difficulties of language, to address him as a friend. Yet one may ask whether such an accumulation is tolerable, even if its individual parts are justified in their function by rhetorical theory. There are parallels, perhaps not in poetry, but in Ciceronian speeches such as *Pro Cluentio*, where the author repeatedly brings in new aspects as he finds himself faced with a particularly difficult task and is forced to use all possible means of persuasion. But is it feasible, in view of Epicurus' attitude towards poetry, that an Epicurean—or rather Lucretius in presenting Epicurean philosophy—would follow rhetorical theory? The problems of the proem cannot be solved in isolation. They have to be seen in connection with Lucretius' intention and manner of presentation throughout the poem, in other words they cannot be dissociated from his use of poetry (which occasioned us earlier to turn to the proem). When one examines the secondary literature one finds remarks, often critical remarks, about Lucretius' rhetoric or isolated references to individual rhetorical devices. But these features have never been assembled (apart from the stylistic ones) nor discussed in connection with each other. While this paper cannot claim to offer a complete list, at least an attempt has been made to gather a good many different factors from all areas (*inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*) and to interpret them in the framework of the whole poem and in the light of the poet's general plan. This leads, finally, to the question of why Lucretius used poetry and rhetoric in an Epicurean work, a question which requires a detailed discussion.

There has been a hot debate recently over Epicurus' attitude towards poetry;[49] and it is, of course, quite impossible to go into any of its details. "Only the wise will be able to discuss correctly the problems of music and poetry," says Epicurus (Diog. Laert. 10.120). While most scholars conclude that Epicurus condemned all types of poetry (except perhaps as a pastime or in connection with traditional cults) and try to justify Lucretius' poem in spite of this (Tescari, Giuffrida, Boyancé, Waszink), others have argued that Epicurus was only opposed to poetry as long as it was mythical or appealed to passions (Giancotti) and admitted poetry which was useful or pleasant or provided it served ἡδονή or ἀταραξία (W. Schmid). It is clearly necessary to distinguish between reading and examining poetry (e.g. epic poetry) for educational purposes, as part of the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία which Epicurus rejects; the reading and writing of poetry for pleasure; and the writing of new poetry as a means of conveying the Epicurean teaching, poetry which would not be affected by the verdict ὀλέθριον μύθων δέλεαρ (fr. 229 Usener). Whatever Epicurus' views may have been, the question arises whether his followers, though conservative, deviated from his precepts in this respect. Again our texts are inadequate or controversial. Colotes, obviously, attacked the use of poetry for the presentation of philosophical thought (De Lacy [above, note 49] 140). But as regards the later representatives of the school, no one can deny that Philodemus wrote poems—nor that Cicero referred to him as an exception (Pis.70). Further, while some scholars assume that poetry was later accepted insofar as it provided τέρψις or proved

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[49] On the views of Epicurus, the Epicureans, and Lucretius see especially: O. Regenbogen, *Lukrez: Seine Gestalt in seinem Gedicht* (Leipzig 1932 = *Kleine Schriften*, Munich 1961, 296–386); O. Tescari, *Lucrezio* (Rome 1939) 47–64 (reviewed by W. Schmid, *Gnomon* 20 [1944] 12–15); P. Giuffrida, *L'Epicureismo nella letteratura latina nel I secolo a.C.*, vol. 1: *Esame e ricostruzione delle fonti: Filodemo* (Torino 1940), esp. 16–27, 182–89; vol. 2: *Lucrezio e Catullo* (Torino 1950) 7–86; P. H. and E. A. De Lacy, ed., *Philodemus: On Methods of Inference* (Philadelphia 1941) 139–40, 149–52; P. Boyancé, "Lucrèce et la poésie," *REA* 49 (1947) 88–102; J. H. Waszink (above, note 43); F. Giancotti (above, note 41) 15–90; P. Boyancé, "Études lucrétiennes," *REA* 62 (1960) 441–45; F. Giancotti, "La poetica epicurea in Lucrezio, Cicerone ed altri," *Ciceroniana* 3 (1961) 67–95; F. Giancotti, *Lucrezio poeta epicureo* (Rome 1961) 5–7; P. Boyancé, "Épicure, la poésie et la Vénus de Lucrèce," *REA* 64 (1962) 404–10; G. Broccia, "Il proemio primo del *De rerum natura* di Lucrezio," *RCCM* 4 (1962) 334–61; F. Giancotti, "Epicurea et Lucretiana," *RFIC* 91 (1963) 369–73; P. Boyancé (above, note 1) 57–68; F. Giancotti, "Note Lucreziane," in *Miscellanea Critica* (Leipzig 1965) 95–98.

useful, or that Philodemus recognized the "intrinsic value of poetry, rhetoric and music" (De Lacy [above, note 49] 149), they insist that even he condemned the use of poetry for philosophical purposes or education; and this view was certainly considered characteristically Epicurean in Cicero's time (*Fin.* 1.71–72).

The second problem is the attitude of Epicurus and his school towards rhetoric. Here the problems are even more complicated, since "rhetoric" is an ambiguous term, applied to the art of government (ῥητορικὴ πολιτική), of arguing, of using language in general, and to the interpretation of poetry (ῥητορικὴ σοφιστική). The political aspect may be excluded; and when Epicurus is said to have written that rhetoric "does not employ observation of what usually happens or make conjectures according to probability" (De Lacy [above, note 49] 132 with reference to Philod. *Rhet.* Suppl. 27–28), he is attacking the failure of the politicians to apply a type of reasoning which is usually connected with rhetoricians (Philod. *Rhet.* Suppl. 40) and which is also accepted by Epicurus himself: observation and inference. When Epicurus writes about rhetoric, it is to warn against its use: οὐδὲ ῥητορεύσειν καλῶς (Diog. Laert. 10.118); and when he opposes metaphors (*Nat.* 28.11–12) and neglects *ornamenta* (Cic. *Fin.* 1.14), he rejects any use of language which obscures the original, proper meaning of words, in accordance with his understanding of words as actually representing empirical facts;[50] it is because of this view that he insists on (and for himself endeavors to achieve) adequacy of expression and clarity of style (Diog. Laert. 10.13),[51] i.e. virtues of style which were taught by rhetorical theory. This is not an element of *Anti-Epicurus* in Epicurus, but an indication that his alleged hostility towards rhetoric has to be modified, just as his general principles of education are qualified (according to Cicero, *Fin.* 1.71–72):

> nullam eruditionem esse duxit, nisi quae beatae vitae disciplinam iuvaret ... non ergo Epicurus ineruditus, sed ii indocti, qui, *quae pueros non didicisse turpe est*, ea putant usque ad senectutem esse discenda.

[50] Cf. Cic. *Fin.* 2.6; R. Heinze, ed., *T. Lucretius Carus: De rerum natura Buch III* (Leipzig 1897) 67; P. De Lacy, "The Epicurean Analysis of Language," *AJP* 60 (1939) 85–92.

[51] Cic. *Nat. D.* 1.49; *Fin.* 1.15; other *testimonia* are collected by H. Usener, ed., *Epicurea* (Leipzig 1887) 88–90.

Indeed, reading Epicurus' letters and fragments one may wonder how much he learned from rhetoricians for his arguments and even for his expression, which Cicero occasionally describes as *deliberately* ambiguous (*Nat. D.* 1.86) or misleading (*Nat. D.* 1.85: "verbis reliquisse deos, re sustulisse").[52]

Turning to the school, one finds Cicero making the same critical remarks about the Epicureans as about their master. Whereas Philodemus comes to a new appreciation of rhetoric (for display), he still condemns rhetoric inasmuch as it lacks method in using observation and argument, uses figurative language, and appeals to emotions. However, his actual treatises, arid though they may be in style, betray a certain familiarity with rhetorical teaching, indeed with rhetorical tricks. Of Zeno, Cicero even says that he spoke "non . . . ut plerique sed . . . distincte, graviter, ornate" (*Nat. D.* 1.59). Unfortunately, most Epicurean literature of the time is lost. But it is worth remembering that during the second and first centuries B.C. Epicureans developed a considerable activity in order to spread their teaching to Italy and to attract people to their philosophy. It was probably after the Epicureans had been excluded from the Athenian embassy of philosophers to Rome in 155 B.C. that two members of the school went independently; at least we hear (Athen. 547A; Ael. *VH* 9.12) that Alk(a)ios and Philiskos were expelled from Rome in 154 B.C. (rather than 173 B.C.). In the first century an increasing number of Greek Epicureans were active in Italy (Phaidros, Philodemos, Siron). While the echo in Lucilius' early 28th book (fr. 753 Marx) may be purely literary,[53] Varro may well have had more immediate knowledge of the school (cf. fr. 315, 402); and Cicero, in his lost speech *pro Q. Gallio*, alludes to *convivia poetarum ac philosophorum*, in one of which Epicurus is introduced discussing with Socrates (fr. 6.2 Schoell). Twenty years later he not only refers to the large number of Epicureans, giving *voluptas* as the reason why the multitude is attracted (*Fin.* 1.25),

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[52] On Epicurus' language and style—or rather varieties of styles—see W. Schmid in his fundamental and comprehensive article "Epikur," in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 5 (1961) 708–14, who points to rhetorical devices in the *Letter to Menoeceus* (710); see also C. Brescia, *Ricerche sulla lingua e sullo stile di Epicuro* (= *Collana di Studi Greci* 26, Naples 1955), on *figure retoriche* 82–86. Cicero's criticism is largely directed against Epicurus' neglect of dialectic (*Fin.* 2.18, 26, 27; 3.40).

[53] His attack on T. Albucius (fr. 88–94 Marx) does not mention his Epicureanism.

but he also speaks of the "philosophus nobilis, a quo non solum Graecia et Italia, sed etiam omnis barbaria commota est" (*Fin.* 2.49). This success was partly due to the emphasis on *voluptas* (and a misunderstanding of its nature and rôle), but also to the fact that the Epicureans made every possible effort to popularize the teaching of their master.

Cicero remarks in his *Tusculan Disputations* that the books of Plato and the other Socratics were generally read, "Epicurum autem et Metrodorum non fere praeter suos quisquam in manus sumit" (2.8). For this reason, as Cicero says later in the same work (4.6), "illis [i.e. the other philosophical schools] silentibus Amafinius extitit dicens, cuius libris editis commota multitudo contulit se ad eam potissimum disciplinam." And not only did Amafinius' own books meet with great success: "post Amafinium autem multi eiusdem aemuli rationis multa cum scripsissent, Italiam totam occupaverunt" (*Tusc.* 4.7). Though Amafinius' date is disputed, it seems unlikely that such remarkable success could have been achieved in the few years between Lucretius' death and the summer of 45 B.C. If one assumes that Amafinius wrote before Lucretius, the poet's claim to be the first requires explanation (1.925–30; 5.335–37). Interpreted literally, these lines mean no more than that he is the first to treat his subject—i.e. *natura rerum . . . ratioque* (note 5.335) with the aim to free mankind from false beliefs—in verse, while Amafinius' exposition was obviously very different (*Acad. Post.* 1.5):

> (Amafinius aut Rabirius) . . . nulla arte adhibita de rebus ante oculos positis vulgari sermone disputant, nihil definiunt, nihil partiuntur, nihil apta interrogatione concludunt, nullam denique artem esse nec dicendi nec disserendi putant.

In saying this, Cicero is probably not merely applying his usual verdict of Epicureans, but actually judging the Roman Epicureans, of whom he says in the *Tusculan Disputations* (2.7–8):

> quia profitentur ipsi illi, qui eos [*sc.* libros] scribunt, se neque distincte neque distribute neque eleganter neque ornate scribere, lectionem sine ulla delectatione neglego. . . . hos Latinos i soli legunt, qui illa recte dici putant.

It need hardly be pointed out that there was room, then, for a more attractive treatment, offering the new ideas in a more intelligible

form or addressing itself—perhaps—to a more refined taste; I say perhaps, because it is not at all clear whether Lucretius meant to speak primarily to the upper class or the common people or, as I assume, to both.

This alone, however, is not enough to explain Lucretius' choice of poetry for his "Epicurean" subject. A few more points have to be added. It seems of little relevance that Cicero points to Velleius' more ornate contribution to the discussion (*Nat. D.* 1.58), though it implies that the attitude towards the form of presentation must have changed, as his remark on Zeno also indicates (*Nat. D.* 1.59). More important is the fact that a good many Roman Epicureans show their independence in one way or another. In view of the Epicurean attitude to civic duties, one could point to the political activities of T. Albucius (praet. 105 B.C.), L. Thorius Balbus (legate in Spain 79 B.C.), C. Velleius senator, L. Manlius Torquatus (cos. 65 B.C.), L. Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus (cos. 58 B.C.), and to "the sudden outburst of political interest among the Epicureans of the Ciceronian period";[54] one could also point to the literary interests and activity of others.

But a more fundamental question arises: was Lucretius an Epicurean? What was his intention? Was it to give an account of Epicurean philosophy in Latin—or was it something else? What is the background against which we have to see and to understand his work? Right from the beginning Lucretius stresses his desire to free mankind from the bonds of false beliefs in divine interference, in punishment after death, and in other forms of superstition by which the lower classes, and also many members of the aristocracy, were influenced in spite of, and indeed because of, the critical attitude towards the traditional forms and practices of Roman religion. Throughout the poem Lucretius shows that he is concerned, not about the structure of the universe, but about mankind's welfare and well-being, that the explanation of nature (and the nature of the soul) is a means of attaining internal peace and pleasure, as envisaged e.g. in 5.1203: "pacata posse omnia mente tueri."

I make the assumption now—and I am aware that it is an assumption, though I consider it a reasonable one—that it was this mission to

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[54] A. Momigliano, in a review in *JRS* 31 (1941) 151 (= *Secondo contributo alla storia degli studi classici* [Rome 1960] 378).

enlighten mankind which Lucretius assumed and with which he found himself faced; and it is in view of this task that the choice both of his subject and of its form have to be considered. The question whether Lucretius was first poet or first Epicurean is idle, as the one aim seems to account for both. Before one attempts to explain Lucretius' choice, it is worth stating what the poem reveals about the poet himself: he is familiar with Greek philosophy, he is familiar with Greek poetry (Homer, Aeschylus, Euripides, as well as didactic poems and Alexandrian poetry), he is deeply rooted in the tradition of Latin poetry, and he has obviously received the usual higher education (i.e. *rhetorical* training).[55] With respect to his intention as outlined above, all this knowledge could only make him aware that, while the Greeks had developed philosophical dialogues, philosophical treatises, and protreptic letters, there was virtually nothing corresponding in Latin; as Cicero points out, most philosophical schools were silent, while only the Epicureans produced prose works of low quality. With regard to the content, one could ask whether Lucretius first decided on explaining nature and then on following Epicurus. In view of his protreptic aim it is more likely that this was actually one decision, even though contemporary Epicureans seem to have stressed Epicurean piety (F. Jacoby [above, note 46] 24), while Lucretius uses every possible opportunity to attack any form of divine interference and theological explanation more fiercely than Epicurus himself does. Moreover, the protreptic form was facilitated by the Epicurean concept of friendship.

The real problem was how to present *natura*. A treatment in prose like Cato's *De agricultura* could not be expected to attract many readers; verse may have been suggested by Ennius' and Valerius Soranus' didactic poems or Cicero's *Aratea*—and, of course, by Empedocles, who wrote in the golden age before philosophy and rhetoric parted company (Cic. *De or.* 3.59–61), a poet whose work combined protreptic and didactic aspects. Moreover, since Epicurus' philosophy not only based knowledge on sense-perception and necessitated continuous references to natural phenomena (for analogies or proofs), but even

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[55] See e.g. A. Traglia, *Sulla formazione spirituale di Lucrezio* (Rome 1948), and L. Ferrero, *Poetica nuova in Lucrezio* (Florence 1949), who has a useful discussion of "L'eredità della scuola: elementi retorici e *communes loci*" (140–50), but overemphasizes the "Alexandrian" elements (*passim*).

assumed that the letters of the alphabet immediately corresponded to
the atoms and therefore required the words themselves to mirror nature
directly, one might suggest that Lucretius was so struck by the beauty
of nature that he felt a poetic treatment could most easily do it justice.
But in the verses in which the poet himself seems to hint at his motives
(1.921–35), he implies another reason: *laudis spes magna* has struck him
with enthusiasm (note the manner in which ἐνθουσιασμός is expressed
without the mention of divine interference), and *at the same time*
(*simul*) filled him with sweet love for the muses (a fine example of
Venus' creative and productive activity: cf. 1.22–23 preceding 24),
i.e. made him turn to poetry.   This may sound surprising.   But the
desire for *laus* need not disturb us, as the master himself did not con-
sider praise incompatible with his philosophy—nor does Lucretius,
who uses very similar language for Epicurus and himself.[56]   Moreover,
the mention of *laudis spes magna* has to be read in its context; introduced
by *sed* it follows "nec me animi fallit quam sint obscura" (922).
Lucretius expects *laus* and laurel not because he writes poetry, but
because he is the first to present this great and difficult subject in an
intelligible, attractive, and effective manner in the service of a great
cause.   Thus one may conclude that he, realizing the difficulty of the
subject matter (the difficulty in understanding it and making it compre-
hensible), took up the challenge and chose poetry to make it intelligible
and clear.   Next Lucretius reveals that he regards this business as
pleasant (927 and 928: *iuvat*, cf. Cic. *Fin.* 2.14)—another factor that
makes his *labor dulcis*—and the expected crown as well-deserved; and
this for two reasons (931–34):

> primum quod magnis doceo de rebus et artis
> religionum animum nodis exsolvere pergo,
> deinde quod obscura de re tam lucida pango
> carmina, musaeo contingens cuncta lepore.

Though these lines do not actually state Lucretius' motives, they clearly
indicate what he considers his intention and his achievement to be:
as the teaching (*doceo*) of the great subject is closely connected with the
missionary aim, so the inherent obscurity of the subject is connected

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[56] Cf. G. Barra (above, note 35) 65–67.

with *his own*[57] clear and attractive exposition.   His choice of poetry
is due not to artistic considerations, but to the same reason for which
he selects his material.   This is confirmed by his manner of using the
poetic form.   For he does not allow himself to be carried away by
his poetry; on the contrary, as several scholars have pointed out,
his poetry is subordinated to the philosophical content of the work
and its aim.   Thus he aims at clear exposition, effective expression,
correct language.   But he cannot simply emulate the purely didactic
poetry of his time, e.g. Cicero's *Aratea*; he has to give his poetry a
form by which he can hope not merely to inform, but to impress, to
capture the audience and to make it follow whither he wishes; he has
to give his work a dress to which both the poetical and the rhetorical
tradition contribute.   Many advantages of this manner of presentation
are obvious; more could be mentioned, e.g. that it meets the Epicurean
demand for a form easy to remember (*Ep. ad Her.* 36, cf. Epicurus'
own *ratae sententiae* and Cic. *Tusc.* 4.7).   But there also seem to be
some difficulties, since poetic expressions occasionally imply more
than what is said elsewhere in non-metaphorical speech (note e.g. on
nature, 3.23 or 5.225) and thus illustrate why Epicurus rejected the use
of metaphors.   But this is a difficulty only as long as the poem is
read as a piece of instruction in Epicurean philosophy and not as an
attempt to free Romans from superstition by all possible means.
In the same way I think one has to understand the other alleged incon-
sistencies with Epicurean philosophy: Lucretius' first loyalty was not
to Epicurus, but to the mission, and in fulfilling this he used all available
means.

    If one is prepared to accept this one may find it easier to solve the
problems listed at the beginning.   For it has emerged that Lucretius is
neither primarily an Epicurean nor a poet, but engaged in a self-
assumed mission: and in this light one has to understand (and can
accept) his use of poetry; his invocation of Venus and the complicated
first proem; the form of his arguments, their accumulation and arrange-
ment and their alternation with illustrative passages—in short his psycho-
logical rather than logical form of argumentation; the repetition of

    [57] It needs to be emphasized that *carmina* are not by nature *lucida*, but only when they
are written in a particular manner, e.g. in such (*tam*) a manner as is here used.   Bailey
(above, note 1) 2.759 rightly states that "933–934 give Lucretius' own idea of his style
and its purpose."

words and lines; the imagery and the other rhetorical devices; and, finally, his lasting success. Thus the form of presentation in general and a few special passages have revealed something of Lucretius' method and aim, even of his personal convictions. It may be possible to argue that Lucretius writes *in furorem versus*—not *per intervalla insaniae*, but in the sense that he is carried away by a mission for inner peace to which he tries to give the most eloquent expression: one might say he is driven by a *furor*, which he knows, however, how to control and channel into the most suitable form by his familiarity, not only with philosophy and poetry, but also with rhetoric, the basis of general education. It was a poet who succeeded in putting this in the most pointed manner conceivable (Stat. *Silv.* 2.7.76) by speaking of the *docti furor arduus Lucreti*.