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Lucretius and Progress

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## LUCRETIUS AND PROGRESS

LUCRETIUS' ACCOUNT of man's existence (5.925-1457, or, if you will, 5.805-1457) appears to be a formal exposition of the Epicurean conception of progress,<sup>1</sup> which is essentially optimistic. However, the poetic setting for this doctrine seems rather to evoke the pessimistic mood of Hesiod's description of the Ages of Man (*Erga* 109-201). True enough, Epicurean notions of the physical world projected its eventual decay,<sup>2</sup> so that a hint of the moribund in a statement of man's progress is not out of place,<sup>3</sup> although progress must always take its definition from temporal assumptions.<sup>4</sup> Lucretius' description has its ramifications in the special attitudes and images that he has developed in earlier books,<sup>5</sup> and when these conflict with the implications of the formal doctrine a critic may be led to judgments such as Patin's famous phrase "anti-Lucrèce chez Lucrèce" or Logre's diagnosis<sup>6</sup> of a pathological state of anxiety. But the confusions and conflicts which appear are the inevitable consequence of giving a poetic treatment to a subject that calls for prose. The objective outlines of the thesis which the rational mind controls grow obscured and distorted in the imagistic freight of the poem, for this springs from a personal, direct and irrational conscious.

Why, then, did Lucretius choose poetry as his medium? The matter is dis-

putable and has been disputed.<sup>7</sup> It can be argued that there is very explicit evidence in the poem that for Lucretius poetry has the power to lighten the obscurity of the subject (4.8-9); that he has a marked predilection for very concrete and immediately perceptible evidence, leading him to concrete description, for which he conceives poetry to be a superior medium. One can, however, I think, distinguish another and very real motive for Lucretius. The proem to the fourth book (also at 1.926ff.) is his statement of poetic purpose, so to speak. Here he dwells upon a quality of poetry that antiquity had noticed since first the Muses remarked upon it to Hesiod in the *Theogony*, and that is its capacity for falseness. The *lucida carmina* partake of the *musaeum lepor* (8-9), and it is these *suaviloquentia carmina* (20-21) that deceive any resisting yet thinking person into accepting the doctrine. I use the word *thinking* purposely; no one else could have been intended as able to work through the philosophy which Lucretius is expounding. Yet, curiously enough, it is for such a one that Lucretius feels impelled to find some Siren charm. We do gain the impression that the *lucida carmina* may, after all, be glittering, but not necessarily conducive to lucidity.

To my mind, Lucretius subconsciously recognized the *pseudos*<sup>8</sup> in poetry and chose poetry because he could let

himself be confused by it. Rationally, he admired the Epicurean doctrine; irrationally, he could not accept it. He was, however, consciously determined to introduce it to a Roman audience. Vergil's triumph in the *Georgics* was to dilute the informational element of his subject to such a degree that it would not impinge upon his poetry. Lucretius, of course, does not do this, and the very pronounced tone of protestation in the *De rerum natura* is testimony to the continual tension between the doctrine and his poetic sensibilities.

In the discussion which follows I should be hard put to define at any point how conscious Lucretius was of the logically irreconcilable things he was saying. The very subject matter of the atomic world, of the natural world with its night and day, suggest images that can be easily and naturally extended to their archetypal associations, associations that are quite beyond the initial intent of the poet. This may be called slipshod poetry, but the mannered and compulsive craftsmanship of today's poetic image-makers is a new thing. Furthermore, the poem is long. By the time Lucretius has reached this point in the fifth book he has amply played with the potentials of these ideas so that innumerable associations are now ready in the reader's mind.<sup>9</sup>

Lucretius managed to bring off a poem that supposedly comforts persons shot through with incurable and unyielding fear; yet this poem mirrors again and again the fears of the intended reader. Lucretius, it seems, was holding a dialogue with his unconscious, not writing for an external audience. Perhaps part of the continual excitement that a reading of the *De rerum natura* engenders stems from coming suddenly upon this nervous, private dialogue, and trying to assign the lines to its participants.

In the earlier books Lucretius develops a portrait of man and his environment for which the fifth book is final summation. Among the features of this portrait there stand out his images of life and death. They are conceived spatially and in shades. Life is that which is ordered, known, tangible, and bounded off. The poet speaks of the coasts of light (*passim*), the boundary of life (3.592), the threshold of life (3.681), the chain of life (3.599) or the road of life (2.10). Death as well, we may assume, is an area set off, although conceived only in terms of its entrance, never its spatial totality (*i.e.*, the gate of death 1.1112; 3.67; 5.373-375; the threshold of death 2.960). One gains the impression that life is a finite, known entity; death remains mysterious, simply that which is outside this entity.

The images of light continually attached to life, as in the frequent expression "shores of light" and others, create a new dimension;<sup>10</sup> death, conversely, is dark, although because it is usually implied rather than described, the aura of mystery remains. Twice (3.39; 2.580) it is so stated as being dark. Instinctively one attaches to light the sensation of knowledge and the certain, and Lucretius has introduced this association more than once, together with its counterpart, that ignorance and uncertainty are dark (1.144-5; 1.1115-7; 2.15; 2.54; 2.55-61 *et passim*). Fear is also darkness (2.59 *et passim*) and black (4.173).

The relationship that the poet sets up between light and understanding is a theme recurring in small ways. For instance, at 5.1102-1107 it partially provides the means of the transition. . . .  
*cibum coquere ac flammae mollire vapore/ sol docuit* juxtaposed to . . .  
*victum . . . / commutare . . . monstrabant . . . igni/ ingenio qui praestabant.*  
 There are many points of agreement;

the words to which I refer are *italized*. The relationship, imagistic and otherwise, which Lucretius is trying to develop between life-light-self-understanding, as well as that between their opposites, is evoked in the simile of the injured eye at 3.408ff. And even as the poet has set up a relationship between life and light, introducing the intuitive sensation of certainty and knowledge into that, so he formally acknowledges the importance of understanding for life. The mind is the keeper of life (3.396); as the seat of the emotions it is also the personality of the individual (3.136-160; 3.396-407). Death is the total loss of identity (3.830-69). Even if the soul should survive after death, there would be no continuity of the self because the identity of an individual is assumed to be composed of the total personality and understanding (3.843-844).

From another point of view the vital principle in man is imagined to be a thin breath mixed with hot air (3.232-233). It is this which prevents his absorption into the flux of atomic action, the unseen world of atoms that is continually impinging upon man, since, as Lucretius says (2.1139ff.), the environment never ceases to attack him with blows. The thin breath alone distinguishes life from death (3.126-7, 214-5), and is not, indeed, a firm guarantee of life, for it is not securely settled into place. A host of conditions can dislodge and partially disperse it, such as sickness (3.487ff.), drunkenness (3.476ff.), sleep (3.923-4); or severe shock (3.592-8). Beyond this, the very fundamentals of the personality, the moral sensibilities, as it were, are equally powerful; fear, remorse, insanity, or any frenzy can upset the breath (3.824-829).

With his images Lucretius has conceived of life as an ordered, solid, tangible place, in which light — instinc-

tively good — and knowledge — doctrinally good — prevail. It is bounded, and from it mortals pass through a gate to the dark, unsure, unsettled, moving unknown that is death. This corresponds very nearly to the repeated scientific definition of death (1.670-1 *et passim*), although the latter is without these emotional overtones. The conception of life as an unstable breath invests the image of the bounded, lighted area that is life with an underlying insecurity, makes of death a constant threat, which only a slightly greater shock will summon permanently for man. So that despite the emphasis upon the necessity for a neutral approach to life and death, the poet has made living a definite good and death an opponent to this.

But, paradoxically, life on earth is a dubious pleasure. The phrase *praemia vitae* (3.899, 956) is given psychological reference in phrases such as *vitae amor* (5.179). On the other hand, the *praemia* have not the same value as death, which is the release from pain and sorrow (3.894-911). The love of life is possibly only *mala cupido* (3.1076-77). Lucretius is at pains to point out that nature is malevolent. The earth is declining, growing less habitable (2.1150 ff.). The phrase *tanta stat praedita culpa [terra]* (2.181; 5.199) implies a malign or at least errant (and thus disinterested) creator of things. The proofs following this statement in the fifth book are meaningless unless applied to an intelligence. They presuppose a system of justice, in which it is clear that man has been cheated. Justice cannot, after all, be sensibly invoked before inanimates such as natural law or atoms. Casual asides by the poet reinforce the idea of the ugliness of human existence, such as the observation that the gods live apart from our pain and danger (1.44-47 and elsewhere), and that they are free of the hostility of natural phe-

nomena (3.18-21), or that the newborn child's cry is said to be justified in view of the evils which shall come to him (5.226-227). Lucretius sees again the kind of estrangement between man and his living environment that he saw between man and his more abstract atomic environment. Sensible nature, like the unseen atoms, comes on man with hostile force.

These two conceptions, that life is good and that the living of it is unhappy, are almost hopelessly irreconcilable and lend themselves to the belief that Lucretius was possessed by some neurotic state of despair. Despair and a sense of futility go hand in hand with fear, and in Lucretius' scheme this emotion appears to dominate man. In the formal account of free will (2.251-293), pleasure is adduced as the prime motive, yet throughout the poem quite the contrary is admitted. While fear is generally described as fear of death or divine punishment, from a reading of the entire poem one gains the overall impression of an ubiquitous fear forming a basic element of the human psyche. This is at the heart of the statement at 3.55-58:

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

The assumption here is that man presents an abnormal psychology when he is in a secure, peaceful, friendly situation; that the emotions generated by hostility and danger — and of these fear is usually predominant — represent the true psychology of man. This conception is taken up and dramatically worked out at the close of the sixth book (1138-1286), where the horrifying and dangerous plague at Athens affords us an opportunity to view man's mo-

tives and actions as they really are. But it is a fallacy, to which, indeed, our own age succumbs, to think that the good man cannot ever be mean; antiquity itself produced the finest example of a hero in despair in Homer's account of Hektor awaiting the onslaught of Achilles (*Iliad* 22.98ff.).

The brilliant description of the terrified man at the close of the third book (1060-1075) again seems to look to causes beyond the fear of death. Lines 1068-1070 describe a fundamental state of fearing that cannot be circumscribed in that way, although Lucretius formally introduces fear of death as the motive here. In making this evaluation, however, one ought not, I suppose, to overlook our contemporary social critics who have discovered an all-pervading fear of death which has come about through the collapse of the traditional eschatological beliefs, bringing on "l'ennui de l'âge,"<sup>11</sup> a state of mind common everywhere today and well fitted to Lucretius' description. If we ought then to insist that it is precisely fear of death alone that can be understood in Lucretius' statements, we must also insist that he represents it as an ineradicable component of the human personality. This, of course, conflicts with his frequent statements on the means to overcome it; one may not alter the unalterable.

Perhaps the most detailed statement of the remedy comes after the description of the terrified man in the third book (1071-75):

quam bene si videat [his sickness] iam  
rebus quisque relictis  
naturam primum studeat cognoscere rerum  
temporis aeterni quoniam non unius horae  
ambigitur status in quo sit mortalibus omnis  
aetas post mortem quae restat cumque  
manenda.

It is eternity which finally resists all change, eternity which provides the

greater stability. Lucretius calls on his reader to identify, through studying the nature of things, with the eternal and immutable rhythm of the cosmos. He must go out to enter into contact with the greater element that surrounds and engulfs him, as Lucretius says he and Epicurus have done (1.73; 3.16-17). Man must divorce himself from the complications of living, cross the threshold, and through comprehension find death. The images of life and death which the poet has created charge the idea with a frightening and uncertain quality; understanding has a frightening potential. This action, this seeking identity with the nature of things, involves withdrawal from the human element in life. Withdrawal is a significant feature of the happy man.

It is said (3.320-22) that a study of nature will make it possible for man to live the life of the gods. The passage at 1.44-49 and elsewhere describes their existence.<sup>12</sup> It is a literary and philosophic grandchild, grown sophisticated, of the Homeric description of Olympus (*Odyssey* 6.42-47).<sup>13</sup> Remote from grief and danger, the gods live unmoved by wrath or by service, powerful in their own resources. Amplification comes at 5.165-6 when the poet asks *quid enim immortalibus atque beatis/gratia nostra queat largiri emolumentum?*

By these descriptions we come to know the gods in a world where they neither suffer, nor act, nor would experience passion. They are incapable of reacting to wrath or to kindness; they are not motivated by love. In their position they need no one's help, and since it is implied that they operate in a system of rewards for service, they will benefit no one. It is this psychology that Lucretius presents as ideal for mankind. In part it is the logical end of *ataraxia*, but his insistence makes it more vivid than that. Human involvement seems

to become for Lucretius a kind of death. The self he seems to equate with the bounded off entity that is life; other people are the formless uncertainty that is death.

If man will live as the gods do, he must first be subject to no emotions (called *mala* 3.310); he must be neutral; he must withdraw as far as possible from the experience of living, that source of pain and danger. He will be moving out of contact with his fellow men when he is no longer obliged to respond emotionally to them. The proemium to the second book is a telling statement of this. Sweet is it, he says, to watch others struggling at sea or in war, yourself withdrawn from the scene. The sweetness lies not in viewing the misfortunes of others—this would be an emotional reaction to one's fellow humans. Rather, the pleasure resides in one's sense of withdrawal or escape. The passage continues:

sed nil dulcius est bene quam munita tenere  
edita doctrina sapientium templa serena  
despicere [the others] . . .

The withdrawal is conceived in terms of an image of the fortified bounded-off area which agrees so well with the general theme of the good as Lucretius conceives it. However much lines 3-4 may strive to soften it, the *double-entendre* of *despicere* reminds us that the pleasure felt over another's misfortune, even though it may be due to the favorable comparison with one's own lot, reveals a considerable contempt, if not hostility, for mankind.

Human relations are seldom mentioned in the poem. A systematic description of a philosophy would not omit the mention of them, although their value might be thought to be well known. If the foregoing description of the ideal behavior is accurate, then human relations would not be a part of the scheme. Friendship is mentioned in con-

nection with Memmius (1.140-1), but this is probably convention. The value of friendship in the fifth book (1019) is an ambiguity to which we shall come in a moment. Most human relations which are discussed are of a hostile nature (see especially 3.59-86) which is brought on through fear of death. The preponderance of military metaphor in the poem suggests a frame of reference with hostility as its focus.

Personal relationships apart from those between parents and children are presented only in terms of sexual love. It might be said that this is the only human response that the withdrawing person cannot avoid. Sexual love forms the subject of one of the better known passages (4.1037-1287). Here Lucretius again enjoins against involvement. Since complete and true contact can never be achieved with the partner, love brings misery (1110-1111). Ideal contact is pictured as being on the physical level, either in removing tangible portions of the love object or entering completely into the love object. In some ways a hearkening back to the Aristophanic position in the *Symposium*, it is much more an extension of the constant reduction in the poem to the tactile qualities of an object, and illuminates the Lucretian insistence upon a conception of spatial concreteness. That which is real, which one can command as a knowledgeable object, is that which can be grasped. Since the love object is ever a separate entity, it is not a certain thing.

Contact upon the emotional or intellectual level is thought to be illusory and unsatisfactory. Emotionally, love is regarded as a trap (1144-50), a common enough metaphor, but in this context grim and devoid of any romantic nuance. The danger of becoming subservient to another is paramount (1122); it would cause a breach in those walls

which bound man's identity. The orgasm itself is physically the kind of frightening dissolution that parallels the description of the displacement of the vital breath. It is a betrayal of the self. The discussion of sexual love in the poem is introduced by a notice of adolescent nocturnal emissions, which in turn develops out of a discussion on sleep, which Lucretius equates in part with death (916-928). The imagistic progression is clear. The remarks on the malevolence and insincerity of females are symbolic on the emotional level of the utter bankruptcy of human relations. Lucretius' prescription for sexual release through commercial love is a reduction of the one form of human relations he has treated to an action that is as far as possible uninvolved and egocentric.

Man in the human milieu appears to be very similar to man in the atomic milieu. The self must be guarded zealously, separated and bounded off from the hostile and uncertain world of humanity surrounding it. With image,<sup>14</sup> nuance and at times doctrine, Lucretius has evolved a portrait of man that underlies the entire description of man's stay on earth in the fifth book, which is formally a statement of progress, although pictorially a *descrescendo*.

Lucretius is often complimented<sup>15</sup> on his description of primitive man because he seems to have freed himself from the fabulous qualities of the traditional idea of the Golden Age, and to have conceived something closer to modern anthropological findings.<sup>16</sup> Contemporary research stresses the handicaps of primitive man, and Lucretius also strives to show his limitations. But his account cannot be analyzed that simply. Lucretius was naturally aware of the traditional idea of a Golden Age and its decline; not only that, he found it congenial enough to his own thinking

to weave it into his poem (2.1153ff.), although sufficiently diluted to leave only the traces of nostalgia and melancholy that are its hallmarks. All through the description in the fifth book runs a Hesiodic theme that at times seems completely central.

True enough, early man has no control over his environment and must subsist on that which nature offers him. He must struggle against beasts and improvise in his ignorance of healing techniques. Is it for this that Lucretius calls him *miser* (944, 983)? It is a judgment upon which the critics seize with enthusiasm,<sup>17</sup> but perhaps wrongly. Sikes' suggestion,<sup>18</sup> that *miseris mortalibus* (944) is inspired by the Homeric *deiloisi brotoisi*, is good. The pleasing context of 944, i.e., *ampla*, the description of streams, does seem to suggest that, like *deiloisi*, *miseris* refers to an immutable condition inherent in the human situation rather than to anything particularly concerned with primitive man. At 983 *miseris* seems to be, if not a recall of 944, a common instance of an adjective describing the result of the action of the sentence (*infestam . . . faciebant . . . quietem*). As such it has no general reference to primitive man.

There are indications that primitive man's life was much preferred by Lucretius. Some of them have to do with the spatial ideas of the earlier books. The poet remarks that primitive man is of a hard (*durus*) race. Hardness with its suggestion of the monolith recalls the virtues of the bounded-off area. This is reinforced by the poet's observation that early man's existence was solitary, broken only infrequently by random sexual relations, which indeed involved no yielding (964ff.) on the man's part. Primitive man is living the ideal existence, free of entangling human commitments; his sexual encounters can be considered auspicious by

virtue of the asocial, antiseptic and atomic implications in the phrase by which Lucretius describes them (962 *Venus . . . iungit corpora amantum*). Primitive man then is almost totally self-contained.

Lucretius has also built upon the previous ideas of light and dark that he set up. The primitive scene is filled with light (931 *per caelum solisvolentia lustra*; 937 *quod sol . . . dederant*; 943-4 *novitas tum florida . . . pabula . . . tulit*, this last involving light by traditional association). The image of light and darkness is given real prominence in the longish<sup>19</sup> digression (973ff. in the Bailey text) on primitive man's faith during the night in the subsequent rising of the sun. Early man does not fear, because in the darkness of his ignorance the light will always exist for him. What are we to make of this? Is it that knowledge brings uncertainty? that increasing understanding of his environment brings on man increasing darkness? Just as man in his rudimentary state has not involved himself with his fellow man, neither has he involved himself with his environment or nature. He does not till the land, nor attempt to control nature in any way. Is it this freedom that keeps out fear? Perhaps both attitudes lie behind the description. Lucretius' idea of primitive man's death is a logical addendum to this. He was at the mercy of wild animals and feral savagery often made his death horrible, but death for him was natural. It was part of the same natural rhythm as the eternally rising sun, whereas in Lucretius' own time death is contrived and perverse (999ff.). The final contrast becomes one of innocence and serenity in ignorance, set beside viciousness and misery in knowledge.

Greater intelligence and understanding also produces *casas, pellis ignemque*



(1011). Linked to these (although the lacuna is bothersome) are society and the family. From it all *genus humanum primum mollescere coepit*. The *mollescere* after *durus* in the context of their associations in the poem leaves no doubt that Lucretius is speaking of a decline. The civilized skills are only loosely associated in it; marriage and friendship are at once immediate cause and effect. Sexual relations and by extension general human relations (for Lucretius is speaking of years of married life) have been imaginatively defined in the chilling final two lines of the fourth book (1286-7):

nonne vides etiam guttas in saxa cadentis  
umoris longo in spatio pertundere saxa?

In the context of the images of bounded off spaces, subject to assault and continual dissolution on both physical and psychic levels, the dangerous qualities of these relations are clear. In the fifth book the social contract becomes a stage of dissolution and disintegration rather than cohesion.

Beginning with line 1105, Lucretius embroiders the idea which he had begun at 999ff., that man's increase in intelligence and understanding, his moving out, so to speak, into a *rapprochement* with his environment and the rest of humanity, called forth greater complications, confusions, hostilities and terrors. Society grows elaborate and man perverts himself through ambition, fear, and envy.<sup>20</sup> The strange passage (1308-1340) in which Bailey<sup>21</sup> is almost tempted to find signs of insanity, is in actuality a brilliant baroque reworking of 999ff., an exciting poetic fantasy of an intelligence fevered, perverted and cancerous. The alliance of cause and effect has been deranged and the free-wheeling intellect has made man fall victim to himself.

Since Lucretius must set the stage for a pejorative commentary on his

own time, he lets go the violence of this passage to turn to a description of the agricultural life of this second stage of man. This, the commonplace *summum bonum* of Roman thought, has been praised by Lucretius throughout the poem.<sup>22</sup> The scene of the rustics at play has the stamp of goodness on it. They are innocent, their pleasures are simple and uncontrived. The scene is laid in the light of day, and the dancers strike the ground *duriter*, evoking the sense of virtuous solidity.

At 1405 the poet remarks that songs provide a solace for sleeplessness, and with this the scene changes from light to dark, reinforced by a reference to watchmen at 1408. The mention of watchmen in turn transfers the scene in its darkness to Lucretius' own time, and the mood changes. Songs of the brightness of day have come now to be sung only in the night. The futility of the idea of progress is brought out at 1409-11, which serves as an advance theme to the final thought. After this a picture of changing values of man, drawing his inconsistency, his unknowability, and his untrustworthiness, is finished off at 1419 with the mournful conception of primitive man fighting over the first skin clothing. The violence over the fur is illogical in its conclusion; futility and a sense of man's inherent evil remain the aftertaste of Lucretius' description.

All these ideas are summed up in the stark lines, 1430-35, in which (despite *provexit* with its sense of rise) *altum* stands as a sardonic *double-entendre*. Into this bleak and hopeless atmosphere come lines 1436-39, like the brief bars of normal waltz melodies in the distortions of Ravel's *La valse*. In the total darkness of Lucretius' contemporary world the sun and the moon are watchmen with the light. The second reference to watchmen recalls 1408, so that while

this second reference suggests an association of light with a knowledge of the nature of things, the connection with the first returns us along a path to the element of goodness descending via the songs from early man. That in turn recalls us to the earliest man, free and unencumbered in his ignorance and simplicity of action, living in darkness without fear.

Lucretius has gained a triumphant synthesis in this passage. For understanding and knowledge, that by the doctrine lead to light, lead in the poetic conscious to dark, and both ideas are implicit here. Nothing more need be said about the progress of man. The busy little list from 1440-1457 is almost an afterthought (if not, indeed, an anticipation of the opening lines of the sixth book), a belated reaffirmation of an optimistic doctrine, or a category, hurried and confused, that is the rhythm of civilized man's behavior.

If one compares this long disquisition with the Hesiodic description of the Ages of Man, he will notice several points of comparison. Hesiod, of course, has five distinct stages of human evolution; it is difficult to make such divisions here, although one critic, Bayet, has done so,<sup>23</sup> calling them respectively "vie animale; société contractuelle primitive; monarchies et révolutions; organisation judiciaire et religieuse; progrès techniques et artistiques." Bayet is not intent upon developing a Hesiodic parallel; this is one of three schemes he employs to bring out more clearly Lucretius' debt to a variety of Greek philosophic systems. Certain definite parallels do exist, however. Effortlessness is the particular quality with which Hesiod endows his Age of Gold (*Erga* 117-118 *karpòn d' éphere . . . ároura automáte*). Lucretius' primitive man, in his acceptance of his existence, in his freedom from involve-

ment and from attempts at overreaching himself, evokes the same mood. More specifically, 5.937-8 *quod terra crearat/sponte sua* etc., tends to parallel the Greek I have quoted. One wonders if Lucretius was at any time thinking of his most primitive man in the Hesiodic phrases *hó-ste theoi d' ézo-on . . . nósphin áter te póno'n kai oizúos*. This is the Lucretian formula for the divine existence (1.44-49 and elsewhere). The Hesiodic Silver Age is characterized by doltishness and effeminate childlike softness (*méga né-pios* 131) that corresponds to the idea in the Lucretian *mollescere*. This second phase, as Bayet points out, is characterized by the family, and the extensions of it. Hesiod also first introduces the idea of family in his Silver Age (*país . . . parà mé-teri kedné-i* 130) and it also is not a flattering one. Again Silver Age men's propensity to war upon one another (133-4) is a parallel to the Lucretian description of violence. Bronze Age violence, still worse, can perhaps be likened to the grotesquery of warfare at 1309ff. There is little point, however, in trying for an absolute parallel; it is not at all here. The portrait by Hesiod rises to a climax in the Age of Iron, his own, that is fragmented, nervous and hurried in much the same way as the closing lines of Lucretius' fifth book. The fundamental difference in point of view is that Hesiod saw change in man, bringing him always into a worse moral condition, whereas Lucretius seems to have conceived of man unchangeable,<sup>24</sup> as a kind of Pandora's box of evil that gradually opened as man continually enlarged, through knowledge and experimentation, his awareness of the world outside himself.

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<sup>1</sup> C. Bailey, *Greek atomists and Epicurus* (Oxford 1928), 376ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 366ff.

<sup>3</sup> Jean Bayet, "Lucrèce devant la pensée grecque," *Museum Helveticum* 11(1954)97: "De même que le corps et l'âme de l'individu se fortifient et vont vers la décrépitude: ainsi le monde, ainsi la société des hommes."

<sup>4</sup> J. B. Bury, *The idea of progress* (London 1920), 5f.

<sup>5</sup> The problem of the order of the books, as written, has nothing to do, of course, with the order of reading them. If it is true that books one, two and five were first composed (cf. K. Büchner and J. B. Hofman, *Lateinische Literatur und Sprache in der Forschung seit 1937* [Bern 1951], 56), it points possibly to some sort of essential distinction in the poet's mind between his physical theories and his ethical-psychological theories.

<sup>6</sup> J. Logre, *L'anxiété de Lucrèce* (Paris 1946).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. J. H. Waszink, "Lucretius and poetry," *Med. Ned. Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afdeling Letterkund* n.s. 17(1954)243-257, who reviews the various positions.

<sup>8</sup> Waszink's thorough discussion of this, *ibid.* 252-3, leads to opposite conclusions.

<sup>9</sup> C. H. Whitman in his chapter "Fire and other elements," in *Homer and the heroic tradition* (Cambridge 1957), has shown the great number of associations Homer has made for the idea of fire throughout the long *Iliad*, and how they are at times combined.

<sup>10</sup> It would be a mistake to think that because *luminis oras* is a traditional phrase (see *Q. Enni carminum reliquiae*, L. Mueller [St. Petersburg

1884], *Annales* 118) it cannot have great imagistic force in Lucretius, unless one wishes to assume that the phrase was a dead metaphor like our English "on the point of," in which case Lucretius would have been a bore to make such use of it.

<sup>11</sup> H. Hesse, *Magister ludi*, presents in his first chapter an awesome fictional account of it in our time.

<sup>12</sup> For the occurrences in Lucretius of like ideas, see *De rerum natura* ed. Bailey (Oxford 1947), note on 1.44.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. B. M. W. Knox, "Ajax of Sophocles," *HSCP* 65(1961)19-20.

<sup>14</sup> C. Bailey, "The mind of Lucretius," *AJP* 61 (1940)278ff., rightly stresses the imagistic nature of Lucretius' mind.

<sup>15</sup> Bailey, *op. cit.* (note 12) 3.1472-4.

<sup>16</sup> Detailed in Martha, *Le poème de Lucrèce* (Paris 1896), 294ff.

<sup>17</sup> Bailey, *op. cit.* (note 12), on 5.944.983. Cf. also *De rerum natura* ed. Ernout-Robin (Paris 1925-28) on 5.944, although on 5.925 they say "la vie primitive . . . est . . . plus heureuse que la vie civilisée."

<sup>18</sup> E. E. Sikes, *Lucretius poet and philosopher* (Cambridge 1936), 151 n.2.

<sup>19</sup> Bailey, *op. cit.* (note 12), on 5.973: "an almost disproportionate treatment of this theme. . . ."

<sup>20</sup> Ernout-Robin, *op. cit.* (note 17), on 5.1408-35, see as the basic meaning of the fifth book a vicious circle in desires and their fulfillment leading to more elaborate desires, etc.

<sup>21</sup> Bailey, *op. cit.* (note 12), 3.1529.

<sup>22</sup> Martha, *op. cit.* (note 16), 313.

<sup>23</sup> Bayet, *op. cit.* (note 3), 97.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. 3.307-310, 319-22, where Lucretius implies that there is an element in the human psyche that nothing, not even education, can alter.