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by

A. P. SINKER, M.A.

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PREFACE

As the mass of the world's literature grows greater we are more and more subjected to the temptation to take it in tabloid form. Anthologies become a menace. An apology is needed for a book which may appear to add to the menace.

The book has three main objects. (1) It is intended to be not an alternative but an introduction to a full reading of the *de Rerum Natura*. In order to read any part of the *de R.N.* with full appreciation it is necessary to have a knowledge of the whole, since all the parts are mutually inter-dependent. "To the general reader what will come home most is the spirit of the whole, the problems with which Lucretius is faced and the general attitude in which he goes to meet them. *And if one is to appreciate this fully, it is more than all else necessary to have the clear conception of the main principles and their fearless application.*"[1] My own introduction to Lucretius consisted in reading the fifth book by itself, and much of it left me puzzled and unappreciative until, years later, I read the whole poem. The sentence in italics above suggested to me that a better way to approach Lucretius for the first time would be to read him in such a way that an understanding of the structure of the whole poem and of Lucretius' "world-outlook" should be obtained. Once this is done it should be possible to read any part of the poem with a proper realisation of its relation to the whole.

(2) For those who no longer need an introduction to the *de R.N.* but who intend to read or re-read parts of it, or the whole, I hope that the book may be a

[1] C. Bailey, *Transl. of Lucretius*, intro. p. 21: italics mine.

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convenience as a kind of Baedeker to the intricacies of the structure of the poem and of the system of philosophy which it embodies. It gives a small-scale map of the whole wood which may be useful for reference when the traveller is involved in any particular group of trees.

(3) A systematic account of the *de R.N.* is necessarily also a systematic account of Epicureanism. It is doubtful whether a professional philosopher would consider a study of Epicureanism—the philosophy of the plain man and definitely not that of the professional philosopher—a desirable introduction to the study of philosophy in general. But Epicureanism at least raises some of the fundamental problems of philosophy, and to this extent may serve as an introduction to more advanced philosophic thought.—A word of warning is necessary about the way in which Epicureanism is here presented. For the sake of brevity I have had to treat it as though it were a skeleton instead of a living organism. It is presented as a closed and rigid system, whereas in reality it is a stage in the organic growth of a certain line of thought. I have had to omit nearly all reference both to the previous philosophers to whom Epicurus owed much and to the subsequent philosophers who have owed much to Epicureanism.

The method adopted has been to select from the *de R.N.* a number of passages, the total length of which is about equal to the fifth book, and to arrange them in such a way that they make clear the main features of the Epicurean system. In the selected passages there is, I think, a fair proportion both of "honey" and of "wormwood". In the second section

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of the systematic account of Epicureanism, namely Natural Science, I have followed exactly the arrangement and sub-divisions of the *de R.N.*, and in so doing I have tried to elucidate the structure of the poem.

The selected passages are connected by summaries and by a running commentary, a method suggested by that used in a recent book by Prof. F. M. Cornford, who writes, "It is not clear why we should be forced to read a book in three places at once." In the present book the three places have only been reduced to two, the linguistic notes on the text appearing as usual at the end. These notes have been made as brief as possible and I have aimed at elucidating the meaning rather than at imparting grammatical and syntactical information.

The text is that of Dr Cyril Bailey (Oxf. Text, 2nd ed.), which I have followed throughout except in four places. Once I have omitted a comma, and in the other three places I have avoided obeli by adopting admittedly uncertain emendations (VI. 713; III. 84, 962; IV. 79). There is no critical "apparatus", because the primary aim of the book is to give an idea of the *de R.N.* as a whole and for this an "apparatus" is unnecessary, however useful in gaining a detailed understanding.

For the rest of the book—almost as much as for the text—I am indebted to Dr Bailey above all. His prose translation of Lucretius is frequently (though not invariably) quoted in the following pages. To anyone who has studied his *Greek Atomists and Epicurus* my debt to this book also will be only too obvious throughout the running commentary. "Epicurus expresses in words what he wishes to say and states

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clearly what I can understand", says the Epicurean in Cicero's dialogue *de Finibus*, and whether this be true or not of Epicurus it is certainly true of his modern expositor. After Dr Bailey, I have relied chiefly on the great editions of the *de R.N.* by Munro and by Giussani, but I am also much indebted to the useful collection of material in Merrill's edition and to the school editions of Books I, III, V by Mr J. D. Duff. Other books which have been of special help are noted in the select bibliography.

Thanks to these, I have found that closer acquaintance with Lucretius has given me ever greater pleasure in his poetry, and I hope that some of the enjoyment that has accompanied the making of this book may pass on to those who use it. The problems dealt with in the *de R.N.* are problems that enter into the experience of the human being almost as soon as he can begin to think—the problem of the nature of the universe, of the meaning if any that inspires it, above all the problem of death. To his treatment of these themes Lucretius brings a passionate intensity of feeling, a capacity for detailed observation and for the conception of vivid analogies, and a magnificent command of language and of rhythm. He is a poet whose poetry can thrill the young equally with the middle-aged—a quality that is not I think shared by the Augustan poets; and he is a poet whose inner conflict is widely reflected in the minds of the present generation.

I wish to thank Mr F. H. Sandbach, Fellow of Trinity College, who has very kindly read the introduction and running commentary in proof. His care and penetration have reduced the number of places

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where looseness of thought or inaccuracy of expression is evident; though I am conscious that precision in matters of detail has sometimes had to be sacrificed to the requirements of conciseness or of simplicity. I owe a debt of gratitude too for very helpful suggestions made from time to time both by pupils with whom I have read Lucretius and by my wife.

A. P. S.

Jesus College, Cambridge
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ἡ τετραφάρμακος·
ἄφοβον ὁ θεός, ἀναίσθητον ὁ θάνατος, καὶ τἀγαθὸν μὲν εὔκτητον, τὸ δὲ δεινὸν εὐεκκαρτέρητον.[1]

The Four-fold Cure.

In God there is nothing to fear,
In Death there is nothing to feel;
What is good is easily won,
What is ill is easily borne.

[1] This summary of Epicurean moral teaching is quoted by Bailey, *Epicurus*, p. 347.

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LIST OF SELECTED PASSAGES

from the *de Rerum Natura*

de R.N.		Order in this book
I.	50–135	1
	136–145	21
	418–482	5
	921–950	2
	951–983	6
II.	1–33	17
	216–293	7
	333–407	8*
	1090–1104	16
III.	14–24	15
	59–93	20
	94–160	9
	231–322	10*
	830–977	19
IV.	26–109	11
	379–521	3
V.	146–155	14
	564–591	12*
	925–1240	13
VI.	58–79	18
	703–737	4*

If the selected passages are found to be too many it is suggested that those marked with an asterisk be the first to be omitted.

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SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY AND LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Andrade	Prof. E. N. da C. Andrade, intro. (*The Scientific Significance of Lucretius*) to Munro's Comm. (1928).
B.	Dr Cyril Bailey, *The Greek Atomists and Epicurus* (1928) (cf. review by A. E. Taylor, *Classical Review*, XLIII, 2).
B. tr.	—— Transl. of *de R.N.* (1924).
B. Oxf. T.	—— Oxford Text of *de R.N.* 2nd ed. (1921).
B. Epic.	—— *Epicurus* (extant remains), text, transl., comm.
Davies	H. S. Davies, "Notes on Lucretius", in *Criterion* for Oct. 1931.
Duff	J. D. Duff, comm. Books I, III, V.
Giuss.	C. Giussani, intro. studies and comm. (Italian, ed. 1923–4).
Guyau	J.-M. Guyau, *La Morale d'Épicure*.
M.	H. A. J. Munro, comm. (final (fourth) ed.).
Merrill	W. A. Merrill, comm. (1906).
Sikes	E. E. Sikes, *Lucretius, Poet and Philosopher* (1936).

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INTRODUCTION

(i) (*a*) Historical background of Epicurus and of Lucretius

When towards the end of the fifth century B.C. philosophers began to turn their thoughts from Natural Science to Ethics, Greek city-states still enjoyed political freedom. With Socrates and Plato, therefore, the moral duty of man as an individual is inseparable from his moral duty as a citizen. Aristotle's ethical views followed, rather belatedly, the same tradition. But with the rise of Macedonia in the middle of the fourth century the Greek city-state declined from a position of independence to a position of subordination in a military empire. The inhabitants of Greek cities ceased to have duties and responsibilities as citizens and found themselves forced to act under orders from Macedonia. The problem, How should a good citizen behave? ceased to have any meaning.

Epicurus was born in 341 B.C. and never knew political freedom. His philosophy was conditioned by the political circumstances of the period. First, he is not concerned with the moral duty of man as a citizen but only with the moral duty of man as an individual. Second, his philosophy betrays the uncertainty and lack of confidence of an age following a great disaster—the disaster of the Macedonian conquest of Greece. The motto of all his moral teaching might well be "Safety First". "Philosophy is no longer the pillar of fire going before a few intrepid seekers after truth: it is rather an ambulance following in the wake of the struggle for existence and picking up the weak and wounded."[1]

The political circumstances which conditioned Epicureanism at its birth were to some extent reproduced in the time of Lucretius. Political freedom, and the

[1] C. F. Angus, *Cambridge Anc. Hist.* VII, 231.

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duties and responsibilities of man as a citizen, were beginning to disappear at Rome just as they had disappeared at Athens. The republic had been shaken to its foundations and despotism was looming near Public life was ceasing to be the natural occupation of the educated class. It was at this time therefore that Epicureanism and Stoicism, the philosophies of man as an individual, began to make an especially strong appeal at Rome. The *de R.N.*, in which the Epicurean system of Natural Science is set forth, is a symptom of the beginning of the downfall of the Roman republic.

(i) (*b*) Epicurus

Epicurus (b. 341 B.C.) spent his childhood in Samos, his father having gone there as a colonist from Athens. His early manhood was spent in the cities of Asia Minor, where he studied philosophy. In 307 he settled in Athens, at that time under the domination of Demetrius Poliorcetes, and bought a house between the city and the Peiraeus. His house and the famous Garden became the centre of a kind of Society of Friends, and for thirty-seven years Epicurus lived in retirement as their leader. Most unusually by Greek standards, even women and slaves were admitted on terms of friendship. Epicurus died at the age of seventy.

From what we know of Epicurus' relationships with other members of the community, his character was marked by exceptional gentleness and humanity. The life of the community was frugal: luxury was not connected with Epicureanism till long after. Epicurus was a voluminous writer, and his writings were held in the greatest reverence by his followers; so much so that no changes were subsequently made in his teaching, and there was never a school of "Neo-Epicureans" (as, for instance, of Neo-Platonists). Lucretius in the *de R.N.* never departs from his master's doctrines.

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(i) (*c*) Titus Lucretius Carus

About the life of Lucretius we have hardly any certain knowledge. He was born between the years 100 and 94 B.C. and died probably in 55 or 54 B.C. His poem was published at his death in the unfinished state in which he left it. Cicero may have been the editor of it.

In the *de R.N.* Lucretius tells us practically nothing about himself.[1] The tone of equality which he adopts towards Memmius makes it fairly certain that he was a Roman aristocrat; though it is clear that he did not take part in public life. The story that he wrote the poem in the lucid intervals of a madness brought on by a love-potion and that he finally committed suicide,[2] recorded by Jerome (fourth century A.D.), is perhaps an invention due to early Christian hostility towards the supposed atheist. Of more interest than Jerome's piece of scandal is the passage in Virgil's second Georgic referring to Lucretius, which might well serve him for an epitaph:

> felix, qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas
> atque metus omnes et inexorabile fatum
> subiecit pedibus strepitumque Acherontis avari.[3]

(i) (*d*) Gaius Memmius

The *de R.N.* is addressed to Memmius and Lucretius claims him as a friend, but he seems to have been unworthy of Lucretius' friendship. Catullus gives him a black character in his tenth and twenty-eighth poems, and his political career was one of treachery and finally

[1] For suggestions about his character arising out of the poem see sect. (ii) of the Introduction.
[2] See Tennyson's poem, "Lucretius".
[3] G. II. 490–492.

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(after Lucretius' death) disgrace. His interest in Epicureanism must have been very slight, for we learn from a letter written by Cicero to him (*ad Fam.* XIII. 1) that he had bought in Athens a piece of ground on which were ruins of Epicurus' own house and that he refused to give it up to the contemporary head of the Epicurean school and his followers, who no doubt viewed the ground as a holy place.

(ii) "L'ANTI-LUCRÈCE CHEZ LUCRÈCE"[1]

"Art for Art's sake" is a formula which finds less support now than a generation or two ago. In the revolt against the moral uplift which characterized much of the art and literature of the last century the pendulum swung too far. A less extreme view finds more favour now, which might be expressed in the formula—if a formula is wanted—"Art for Life's sake". We no longer altogether rule out the view of Aristophanes and Sir Philip Sidney that the function of poetry is to teach Virtue (though "Life" in our formula and "Virtue" in theirs may not be synonymous). We no longer view the phrase "didactic poetry" as a contradiction in terms. But the fact remains that didactic poetry which is also good poetry is extremely rare. What then are the special difficulties or dangers besetting didactic poetry?

It is not easy to answer this question in a few lines, but if we attempt to do so we might put our answer as follows.—The poet who wishes to convey instruction, the didactic poet, is likely to have his attention fixed at least as much upon his readers as upon the ideas that he is trying to express, and this distraction of the poet's attention from his theme to his audience is more likely to produce rhetoric than poetry. Keats voiced the

[1] The phrase of Patin, *Études sur la poésie latine.*

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feeling of everyone when he said that he disliked a poet who had "a palpable design" upon the reader, and in didactic poetry the design is only too apt to show through. There is no great poetry that is not passionately sincere expression of the poet's inner experience, and where the poet's attention is too much diverted from his own inner experience to his audience he is likely to fail.

There are many poems, e.g. the *Aeneid*, about which we might reasonably hesitate if we were asked to say whether they can be classed as didactic poetry or not; but there can be no doubt about the *de R.N.* How far then does it escape the blight that lies on most didactic poetry?

Anyone who reads the *de R.N.* is bound to be impressed by the passionate intensity and sincerity of Lucretius' tone. He writes with a passion strangely at variance with the passionless state of mind that he advocates as man's true ideal. He writes with a depth of conviction that is not easily reached without a profound inner conflict. It may help to an appreciation of Lucretius if we pause for a moment to consider some of the passages where the signs of this conflict are most evident.

Towards the end of the third book, after an accumulation of twenty-eight proofs of the mortality of the soul, comes the line that is the climax of the *de R.N.*:

> Nil igitur mors est ad nos neque pertinet hilum.

It is followed by one of the finest passages in the poem, in which Lucretius holds up to scorn the folly of the fear of death. But, for all his scorn, the most moving lines are those beginning,

> Iam iam non domus accipiet te laeta...

which are put into the mouth of an imaginary *opponent*

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—an opponent who points out that, though death may hold no torments in store for us, yet the mere thought of the cessation of the joys of life gives cause enough for fear of death. Lucretius answers his opponent with the voice of reason, but it is difficult not to feel that his heart is with his opponent, or rather that it is his own heart speaking on the other side in opposition to his head. In the preceding paragraph Lucretius has been describing the man who professes a belief in the mortality of the soul *without sincerely holding it.* "You may be sure that his words do not ring true and that there lurks in his heart a secret goad, though he himself declare that he does not believe that any sense will remain to him after death." *Subesse caecum aliquem cordi stimulum* is a self-revealing phrase, and in the *iam iam non domus* lines Lucretius shows that he himself was not entirely free from the prickings of a *caecus stimulus.* An intense love of life, such as is evident throughout the *de R.N.*, is incompatible with entire equanimity in the contemplation of death, however clearly reason may argue that death is annihilation and that (in Lucretius' words) "there abides with thee no longer any yearning for these things". Claudio's words in *Measure for Measure* illustrate better than any description the nature of the inner conflict that we may suspect in Lucretius. When Isabella first hints to Claudio that he is to be put to death, his reception of the news would have had the full approval of Lucretius the philosopher:

> If I must die,
> I will encounter darkness as a bride,
> And hug it in mine arms.

We are reminded of the more staid simile used by Lucretius himself: "Why dost thou not retire like a guest sated with the banquet of life, and with calm mind embrace, thou fool, a rest that knows no care?"

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But later in the same scene, Claudio lifts the veil and lets us see the other side of the inner conflict:

> Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
> To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;
> This sensible warm motion to become
> A kneaded clod;...
> To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,
> And blown with restless violence round about
> The pendent world; or to be worse than worst
> Of those that lawless and incertain thought
> Imagine howling: 'tis too horrible!

By giving us the two passages within a few lines of each other, Shakespeare shows how these two opposing states of mind can exist side by side. It would be an exaggeration to suggest that Lucretius was as much torn between the two as Claudio, or that his *nil igitur mors est ad nos* does not ring true. But it is not unreasonable to attribute the intensity of his feeling on the subject of Death to an inner struggle in which his head did not win an easy victory over his heart.[1]

There are other passages in the *de R.N.* which suggest a similar conflict between Lucretius the poet and Lucretius the philosopher. Lucretius as philosopher held the orthodox Epicurean belief that the sun and moon are about the size they appear to be, namely the size of not very large rocks, and that they are at no great distance from the earth. These orthodox theories are set forth in a matter-of-fact way in the course of the fifth book.[2] Later on in the same book we come to a passage the tone of which seems strangely inconsistent with this belief, and the poetic fire of the passage tells us that Lucretius is again writing with his heart rather than with his head. The passage begins: "For

[1] Lucr. III, esp. ll. 830–977 (Passage 19); Shakespeare, *M. for M.* Act III, Sc. i.

[2] v. 564–591 (Passage 12). Similarly the stars were held by the Epicureans to be mere pin-points of light.

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when we turn our gaze on the heavenly quarters of the great upper world, and ether fast above the glittering stars, and direct our thoughts to the courses of the sun and moon, then into our breasts burdened with other ills that fear as well begins to exalt its re-awakened head, the fear that we may haply find the power of the gods to be unlimited, able to wheel the bright stars in their varied motion." This feeling of awe, natural to the poet in the presence of the immensity of the starry heavens, is strange in a philosopher who reduced the heavens to so petty a scale. He then proceeds to speak of the might of nature's forces and the powerlessness of man:

> usque adeo res humanas vis abdita quaedam
> obterit.

The phrase *vis abdita quaedam* reminds us of the *caecus stimulus* in Book III, and suggests that here too the imagination of the poet hinted at things beyond the range of the reasoning of the philosopher.[1]

Perhaps it is a truism to say that great poetry is more often than not the product of an intense inner conflict in the poet; but it may be worth while to cite the testimony of poets themselves. Lucretius' own contemporary, Catullus, illustrates the inner conflict in one of its commonest forms in literature:

> Odi et amo. Quare id faciam, fortasse requiris.
> Nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior.

A closer parallel with Lucretius may be found in Milton. Another great poet, Blake, wrote of *Paradise Lost* as follows:

> The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels and God, and at liberty when of Devils and Hell, is because he was a true Poet, and of the Devil's party without knowing it.

[1] V. 1204–1240 (Passage 13); and cf. VI. 58 ff. (Passage 18). For further illustration and discussion of the conflict between Lucretius the philosopher and Lucretius the poet refer to Index, *s.v.* "L'anti-Lucrèce".

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In *Paradise Lost*, and in Milton himself, we see a conflict between, on the one side, Reason, order, sublime tranquillity; on the other side, Passion, heroic energy, unsatisfied desire that strives for ever after the unattainable and is never at rest. In Lucretius Philosophy won, perhaps, a more complete victory than did Religion in Milton, but otherwise the nature of the conflict in the two poets is very similar.—A modern poet, W. B. Yeats, analysing the nature of his own inspiration, writes thus of his attempts to write poetry which shall express *himself* and not the conflict in himself:

> When I shut my door and light the candle, I invite a Marmorean Muse, an art, where no thought or emotion has come to mind because another man has thought or felt something different, for now there must be no reaction, action only, and the world must move my heart but to the heart's discovery of itself,... : all my thoughts have ease and joy, I am all virtue and confidence. When I come to put in rhyme what I have found it will be a hard toil, but for a moment I believe I have found myself and not my anti-self. It is only the shrinking from toil perhaps that convinces me that I have been no more myself than is the cat the medicinal grass it is eating in the garden.

This calls to mind the pregnant phrase used by the French critic, "l'anti-Lucrèce chez Lucrèce". Epicureanism was to some extent Lucretius' "medicinal grass", and both "self" and "anti-self" find expression in the *de R.N.*[1]

Epicurus has been called "the most humane and gentle among the ancients". His whole system of philosophy is, so far as we can tell, a reflection of his temperament. Blest with a contented and cheerful disposition and with an exceptional gift for making and

[1] Catullus, 85; Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*; Yeats, *Essays*, p. 485. Yeats' later poems constantly give expression to this inner conflict, e.g. "*Ego Dominus Tuus*", "Sailing to Byzantium", "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" (*Collected Poems*, pp. 180, 217, 265).

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keeping friends, he appears to us as one of those fortunate beings whose natural gifts coincide with their ideals. He was born an Epicurean. About Lucretius' character we know little except what we can gather from his work, but the contrast between him and Epicurus is clear enough. The *de R.N.* suggests that the writer was of a sombre and on the whole pessimistic disposition, and that passion and anxiety played a large part in his life. It is noticeable that he has practically nothing to say on the theme of friendship, which occupied such an important part in Epicurus' own teaching.[1] Thus in temperament he was totally unlike Epicurus, but, as so often happens, he felt the attraction of the opposite and he seized on the philosophy which offered the tranquillity of mind that he so much lacked.

We may well conclude that the anxious and passionate missionary spirit that is evident throughout the *de R.N.* is due not so much to a disinterested wish to instruct Memmius, nor even to a wish to convert mankind, as to Lucretius' desire to force *himself* to the mould of the master who was so different from him. In this we may see the explanation why the *de R.N.* escapes the blight that lies on most didactic poetry. "A palpable design" on his reader is not uppermost in Lucretius' mind: his eye is directed not so much outward towards his audience as inward towards the conflict experienced in his own mind. And because the problems with which he deals—the nature of the universe, the question of a divine providence, and, above all, the question of death—are problems which arouse a similar conflict to a greater or less degree in the mind of every man, we are still moved by the poem in which Lucretius attempted to resolve the conflict.

[1] See pp. 100, 101.

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(iii) Language and Metre

Lucreti poemata ut scribis ita sunt, multis luminibus ingeni, multae tamen artis. Cic. *ad Q. frat.* II. 11 (9).

(*a*) Language

The only great poem written in Latin hexameters before the time of Lucretius was the *Annals* of Ennius.[1] Lucretius gives his predecessor ungrudging praise. "Our own Ennius, who first bore down from pleasant Helicon the wreath of deathless leaves, to win bright fame among the tribes of Italian peoples."[2] Amongst the Roman poets contemporary with Lucretius, of whom Catullus was of course chief, it was the fashion to despise Ennius for his ruggedness and to admire the Alexandrian school of Greek poets; elegance rather than grandeur was the fashionable literary virtue. Cicero and Lucretius both stood apart from this contemporary movement. Cicero spoke with disdain of the fashionable poets as "cantores Euphorionis", Euphorion being an erudite Alexandrian poet and grammarian. Lucretius wrote in a consciously archaic style, which was suitable to the grandeur of his theme and, incidentally, showed his admiration for Ennius. His praise of Ennius, quoted above, is intentionally reminiscent of Ennius' own words. *Per gentes Italas hominum quae clara clueret* recalls Ennius' *nostra Latinos | per populos terrasque poemata clara cluebunt*; the use of the archaic verb *cluere*[3] being especially significant.

Some of the linguistic forms used by Lucretius are puzzling at first sight to a reader accustomed to classical

[1] The main fragments of Ennius' verse are given in the *Oxford Book of Latin Verse*.
[2] I. 117–119.
[3] See n. on I. 119 (Passage 1).

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Latin. There follows a list of examples of some of the more common of these.

(1) Case-endings:

Gen. sing.: *aquāī*, *animāī*, *materiāī*.
Abl. sing.: *marĕ* (for *mari*); *parti*, *nubi* (for *parte*, *nube*); *quique* (for *quoque*).
Gen. plur.: *Molossum*, *consanguineum*.

(2) Forms of verbs:

Infin. pass.: *cunctarĭĕr*, *cohiberier*, *volvier* (for *cunctari*, *cohiberi*, *volvi*).
Transferred conjugation: *tuĭmur*, *cīmus* (*tuēmur*, *ciēmus* are the classical Latin forms).
potis est (= *potest*). *siet* and *fuat* (both = *sit*).
Contraction: *protraxe* (*protraxisse*), *consumpse* (*consumpsisse*); *irritāt* (*irritavit*).

(3) Preposition:

indu = *in*. Also *indugredi*, *indupediri*, etc.

(4) Unusual order of words (mainly for metrical convenience):

Tmesis: *seiungi seque gregari*, *qui vitam cumque*....
Reversed order: *quibus e*.

Lucretius uses also a considerable number of words which are peculiar to him among good writers. Of these coinages some are due to the nature of the subject: he manufactured the word *clīnamen*, for instance, to express the "swerve" of the atoms. Others are due to metrical necessity or convenience: for instance, *variantia* and *dispositura*s in place of the metrically impossible *vărĭĕtas* and *dispŏsĭtĭones*. The most interesting type of unusual word employed by Lucretius is the compound adjective. Early Roman poets had followed the Greek practice and had freely coined compound adjectives. Both Lucretius and Catullus followed their example. *Terriloquus*, *fluctifragus*, *velivolus*, *horri-*

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sonus, noctivagus, levisomnus, perterricrepus are a few of the many examples in the *de R.N.* To our ears such words seem pictorially effective and add much to the vividness of Lucretius' descriptive passages. But, for some reason which we are unable to appreciate, the Romans of the succeeding generation found them distasteful. The Augustan poets employed them but rarely and confined themselves to simple compounds such as *armiger, omnipotens*.

Lucretius' syntax is sometimes unusual. It is well to remember that *constructio ad sensum* is a favourite of his. Most difficulties can be resolved if we look to the meaning rather than to rigid syntactic rules.

In Latin, as probably in most languages, alliteration and assonance appear frequently from the earliest times. In the extant fragments of Ennius there are many striking examples. One of the most striking is from his tragedy *Andromache*:

> Haec omnia vidi inflammari,
> Priamo vi vitam evitari,
> Iovis aram sanguine turpari.

Amongst subsequent writers, Lucretius is remarkable for his fondness for alliteration and assonance. Sometimes he uses them in such a way that the sound reflects the sense of the words; sometimes he evidently takes a pleasure in the sound purely for its own sake. Memorable examples are, *vivida vis animi pervicit*; *flammantia moenia mundi*; *venti vis verberat*; *mortalem vitam mors cum immortalis ademit*. Alliteration and assonance are so frequent that they colour the whole poem and are an outstanding feature of Lucretian music. In the notes on the text I have not drawn attention to individual examples. The best way to read Latin poetry is to read it aloud: when this is not possible, the attentive reader will still read with his mental ears open; and in either case the effect of alliteration and assonance will be felt

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without a running accompaniment of exclamations from the editor.

Prosaic passages and phrases are another characteristic of the *de R.N.*: from the nature of the subject it was inevitable that this should be so. Lucretius, however, often seems to us surprisingly careless on this point, until we remember that the line of demarcation between "prosaic" and "poetic" constantly shifts. When Ennius wrote in his *Annals*,

> septingenti sunt paulo plus aut minus anni
> augusto augurio postquam incluta condita Roma est,

the dry record of historical facts had not come to be thought of as more suitable for prose. Similarly, when Lucretius wrote,

> id quod iam supera tibi paulo ostendimus ante,[1]

the proper use of footnotes had not been invented. There are arid passages of scientific exposition, but we can rarely read far without coming across an oasis—some vividly descriptive word, or a metaphor that suggests the oneness of all things both living and inanimate, for instance *flammai flos*. When so many Latin metaphors have passed on into English and have long ago been worked to death, it is particularly difficult for us to recapture the freshness of many of Lucretius' metaphors: *concilium*, for instance, applied to inanimate objects is properly a metaphor (the word is used in this way by Lucretius only amongst good Latin writers); but its metaphorical force is easily lost on us, for we are hardly conscious of any metaphor at all in the English phrase "concourse of atoms". The more that the reader can forget his English insensitivity to metaphor, the less likely he is to complain that the scientific parts of the *de R.N.* are prosaic.[2]

[1] I. 429.
[2] For Lucretius' use of metaphor see p. 36, n. 1.

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(iii) (*b*) Metre

There is no space here to enter into the interesting question of the development of the Latin hexameter,[1] and without doing so it is impossible to give any coherent account of the metre of Lucretius. A few general remarks, therefore, and the enumeration of a few details will have to suffice.

First, the individual line. Lucretius differs from Virgil most markedly in the following points.[2] There is frequently a diaeresis at the end of the second foot, e.g. *omnia denique sancta, at primordia gignundis*. The fourth foot is often contained in a word, e.g. *tibi suavis daedala tellus*, where Virgil would probably have preferred *suavis tibi*. The fifth and sixth feet are not subject to the Virgilian rules: endings such as *materiai, mente animoque, quandoquidem extat, securum agere aevom, constare: id ita esse* are not at all uncommon. Lucretius' elisions are often awkward, as some of the examples just quoted show. Most of the differences so far enumerated between the practice of Lucretius and the practice of Virgil can be explained by the general statement that Lucretius did not possess Virgil's subtlety in handling the two counterpoised forces which together produce the music of the hexameter, word-accent and metrical ictus.

Second, the structure of groups of lines. In Latin hexameter poetry before Virgil there was a strong tendency to make the end of a clause coincide with the end of the line. An outstanding example of this is provided by the extant fragment of Cicero's *de Con-*

[1] For an excellent introduction to this subject see W. R. Hardie, *Res Metrica*, pp. 196 ff., "The History of Metre at Rome".

[2] The examples in this paragraph are taken from M. pp. 13, 14.

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sulatu Suo,[1] which is mostly written in clauses of stock length; and thus we even get rhyme, through the recurrence of verbs at the end of lines. Lucretius' lines are not quite so frequently "end-stopped" as Cicero's, but they are far more so than Virgil's, as a comparison of any two passages selected at random will show. Virgil had the art—indeed he invented the art—of varying the structure of groups of hexameter lines in such a way that he was able to produce endlessly different patterns of sound. The lines of Lucretius march past us like soldiers in ordered ranks. The lines of Virgil are more like a kind of processional dance, where the dancers move past, in groups of varying size, to a tempo that is constantly varying. But, although Virgil's method is the more subtle, the method of Lucretius is admirably suited to his subject. The cumulative effect of Lucretius' lines intensifies the cumulative effect of the arguments that he advances, as for instance when he gives us with relentless persistence a succession of twenty-eight proofs of the mortality of the soul. The rhythmical subtlety of Virgil would be out of place here. Changing the former simile, we may say that Lucretius' lines are like a long flight of steps, and each line or compact group of lines carries us a step forward in the argument.

Third, prosody. A few points may be collected under this heading which might cause difficulty. Quantity sometimes varies, e.g. *lĭquidus* and *līquidus*, *cŭpido* and *cuppedo*, *rēī* and *rēi*, *sūādet* and *sŭadet*, *tēnuis* and *tĕnŭis*. Final *s* is often disregarded, as it was by earlier poets, e.g. *privatu' doloribus aegris*. *-que* is sometimes added to a word ending in short *e*, e.g. *mutareque*.

[1] *Oxford Book of Latin Verse*, no. 55.

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