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Source: *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol. 62 (1957), pp. 105-118

Published by: Department of the Classics, Harvard University

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/310970>

Accessed: 27/04/2010 08:40

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LUCRETIUS' INTERPRETATION OF THE PLAGUE

BY H. S. COMMAGER, JR.

ACCORDING to his editors, Lucretius in his account of the plague at Athens (6.1138–1286) is guilty of mistranslation, misrepresentation, and a general lack of competence with regard to his source, Thucydides. Munro finds that he “more than once misapprehends or misinterprets his [Thucydides’] words”; Bailey notes several “serious mistakes in interpretation,” while Ernout and Robin go so far as to suggest the existence of a Latin translation which Lucretius uses.¹ In general, however, a close and direct dependence upon the Greek author is recognized: editors must, after all, assume this before they can attack Lucretius for his divergences. Hence to exclaim over every similarity would be fatuous. On the other hand, it is not within the scope of this paper to catalogue every alteration or addition which Lucretius makes.² Rather, I would examine in detail some of the errors singled out most frequently. The prevailing view assumes that these represent random lapses from an otherwise faithful account; yet if considered together they betray a remarkable pattern. Lucretius appears to be viewing physical phenomena in moral or psychological terms, especially the terms of fear and desire, held by Epicurean doctrine to be the two principal obstacles to happiness. And from this tendency to see physical facts and events in nonphysical terms, rather than from the carelessness imputed to him by his editors, Lucretius’ deviations from Thucydides arise.

The first of these changes occurs in 6.1152:

morbida vis in cor maestum confluxerat aegris,
inde ubi per fauces pectus complerat et ipsum
omnia tum vero vitai claustra lababant. 6.1151–3

Cor, as every editor since Victorius has pointed out, is a mistranslation of Thucydides’ *καρδίαν* (2.49.3) which means stomach.³ Lucretius, moreover, adds *maestum*, for which there is no warrant in the Greek.⁴ The mistranslation *cor maestum*, Bailey (*ad loc.*) notes, “anticipates the misinterpretation of *μετὰ ταλαιμωρίας*” (2.49.4). Here Lucretius uses *anxius angor* (1158). This is an unusual phrase, particularly as applied to physical pain. Lucretius

uses these words only rarely, and in each case in a striking context. *Anxius angor* as a phrase occurs only once otherwise, referring to Tityos, the mythological representative of man beset by passionate desire:

sed Tityos nobis hic est, in amore iacentem
quem volucres lacerant atque exest anxius angor
aut alia quavis scindunt cuppedine curae. 3.992-4

Anxius angor here has clear reference to the psychological fact of *cupido*, which with *metus* forms the principal obstacle to a life of happiness, according to Epicurean dogma.⁵ *Anxius* alone appears again in the proem to the sixth book: *anxia corda* remain in human beings, despite their physical comforts (6.14). That they remain is the result of *cupido atque timor* (6.25).⁶

These are the only uses of *anxius*. *Angor*, besides its reference to Tityos (*anxius angor*, see above), occurs only twice. Rejecting the *timor* that there may be a life after death, Lucretius ridicules the notion that any *angor* for our former selves afflicts us (3.853). Again the context is not a physical one, but that of the fear of death. The other use of *angor*, only fifty lines later, is actually a hendiadys, identifying *angore metuque* (3.903). Man after death, affirms Lucretius, will be subject to no *doloribus aegris* (905). *Angat*, the verbal form, occurs only once, in reference not to fear, but to its companion desire:

nequiquam, quoniam medio de fonte leporum
surgit amari aliquid quod in ipsis floribus angat.

4.1133-4

If, then, *anxius angor* is a "mistranslation," it is a remarkable one. Both these words are for Lucretius immensely evocative ones, occurring elsewhere only in contexts of fear or desire, a realm of psychological significance rather than of physical description. Moreover, the substitution of *anxius angor* for Thucydides' merely physical symptom is but a single illustration of a pervasive tendency: two other similar changes occur within ten lines, each exhibiting the same movement away from a biological statement towards one with mental or psychic connotations. First, Lucretius makes the addition of *animi interpret* (6.1149) to Thucydides' flat γλώσσα (2.49.2):

atque animi interpret manabat lingua cruore.

6.1149

Secondly, he adds a line:

morbida vis in cor maestum confluxerat aegris,
omnia tum vero vitae claustra lababant.

6.1152-3

Leonard and Smith⁷ here compare *animus vitae claustra coercens* (3.396). If the mind habitually preserves the "fastnesses of life," when they "totter" (*lababant*) presumably the mind has been affected. We thus have strong contributory evidence that *cor* (6.1152), if not actually synonymous with *animus*, has at least strong non-physical overtones.⁸ The addition of this line (6.1153) is not very impressive in itself, and in isolation might seem to represent no more than the "poetic elaboration" which Lucretius' editors offer as an explanation.⁹ Yet the cumulative effect of the changes and additions in this section form substantial evidence that something more radical is concerned. The two gratuitous insertions (*animi interpres* [1149], and line 1153 as a whole) and the two important changes (*cor maestum* [1152] and *anxius angor* [1158]) all within ten lines betray a remarkable imaginative progress away from Thucydides' clinical description.

An identical process may be observed in yet another of Lucretius' changes. Robin summarizes lines 1208-12¹⁰ as follows:

Dans ces cinq vers, L. a commis un nouveau contresens, signalé de bonne heure par Victorius (*Var. lect.* 25.8; cf. Munro *ad loc.* et au vi. 1151) et contre lequel Lambin défend en vain le poète. Le sens général de la description de Thc. . . . est que la *perte* [italics Robin's] des organes génitaux, des pieds ou des mains, des yeux, était, pour quelques-uns, la condition de leur *salut*. Mais L. a compris que, *par crainte de la mort* (1208, 1212, cf. 1240) et *pour* rester dans la vie (1210 sq.), ils se faisaient enlever volontairement (1209) les extrémités atteintes.

Or, as Munro (*ad loc.*) points out, Lucretius is then in a position to "take advantage of his own error to point his favourite moral." He may now add two lines to Thucydides, which frame the picture:

et graviter partim metuentes limina leti 6.1208
usque adeo mortis metus his incesserat acer 6.1212

Bailey here compares

et saepe usque adeo, mortis formidine, vitae
percipit humanos odium lucisque videndae. 3.79-80

Again, what was in Thucydides a baldly factual account becomes in Lucretius one freighted with moral overtones.¹¹

This "moralizing," in its broadest sense, of physical description appears again forty lines later.

nam quicumque suos fugitabant visere ad aegros,
vitai nimium cupidos mortisque timentis
poenibat paulo post turpi morte malaque,
desertos, opis expertis, incuria mactans. 6.1239-42

Thucydides describes (2.51.5) two types of people who die: the sick who are unaided and die alone (*ἀπώλλυντο ἐρῆμοι*), and those who visit the sick and catch the disease. Lucretius, on the other hand, makes those who refuse to give aid the ones who die *desertos, opis expertis* (1242). Introducing ethical terms masquerading as clinical ones (*turpi . . . malaque*, 1241), he makes the plague a punishment (*poenibat*, 1241) for those displaying *cupido* and *timor* (1240), an idea quite alien to Thucydides.¹² What is rightly only physical narrative has been altered and erected into a moral question.¹³

One last fairly minor alteration is perhaps worth noting. Thucydides records the crowding into the city of the country people, compelled, of course, by the Spartan invasion of Attica. Lucretius rather allows the plague to embrace the countryside as well, broadening its scope rather than concentrating it. Every shepherd, herdsman, and farmer is affected (1252); only in Lucretius does the *robustus curvi moderator atrari* (1253) appear. He seems to represent a kind of Everyman, much as he did at the end of the second book, where he bore gloomy witness to the earth's decay: *caput quassans grandis suspirat arator crebrius . . .* (2.1164).

These changes betray something more than carelessness, poetic elaboration, or the inevitable consequence of writing in Latin rather than in Greek. We have seen Lucretius describe physical ills in a psychological vocabulary, treat clinical phenomena as emotionally motivated actions, change medical data to ethical commentary, and broaden the plague's area in defiance of historical fact. In simplest terms, his additions and alterations display a marked tendency to regard the plague less in physical terms than in emotional, moral, and psychological ones. These changes might be seen as a sort of verbal weathervane, pointing the direction towards which Lucretius' imagination seems to be heading. They not only allow but encour-

age us to inquire if Lucretius might have felt the plague to represent something more than a historical event.

Two questions must be answered before this can be a legitimate approach. First, is Lucretius in the habit of viewing physical things as representative, or symbolic? There can be little question here: the whole of the *De rerum natura* is predicated upon the assumption that we can grasp *res caecae* from *res apertae*. Lucretius of necessity sees sermons in stones: to have a mind which habitually imagines intangibles in terms of tangibles is a prerequisite for explaining Epicurean physics.¹⁴ Secondly, granting that his mind generally sees things as representative, is there any evidence that he might feel the plague, in particular, to be susceptible of symbolic treatment? Perhaps the best way to answer this is to start at the other end. As his alterations show, psychological elements, particularly *timor* and *cupido*, persist in obtruding themselves into a supposedly physical account.¹⁵ If it can be shown that Lucretius often views certain states of mind as a disease, this would lend substance to the supposition that he might conversely see in the plague an emblem of mental or psychological states.

We have at least one definite statement on this:

Huc accedit uti videamus, corpus ut ipsum
suscipere immanis morbos durumque dolorem,
sic animum curas acris luctumque metumque. 3.459-61

This parallel between physical disease and care, grief, and fear, only explicates what often inheres in the language itself. The victim of *metus* is described as *aeger* (3.1070), with all the proper medical symptoms: *aegrus luctibus* (3.933) and *doloribus aegrus* (3.905). *Cupido* similarly appears clothed in a clinical vocabulary: *ulcus vivescit et interascit alendo inque dies gliscit furor atque aerumna gravescit* (4.1068) . . . *cures* (1071) . . . *sanis* (1075) . . . *redit rabies eadem et furor* (1117).¹⁶ Even the aftereffects of passionate love are described in this manner: *languent officia atque aegrotat fama vacillans* (1124).

This use of a clinical vocabulary to define *cupido* and *metus* is not to be dismissed either as literary convention or as a handy metaphor invoked for clarity and organization. Rather it stands as an impassioned declaration of mankind's predicament: *mortalibus aegrus* (6.1) is less a casual reference than an epitome.¹⁷ The whole of the *De rerum natura* is directed towards the healing of man's inner

sickness; Lucretius would have been the first to inscribe his name beneath a later Epicurean's strikingly similar declaration:

Since as I have said most men suffer alike from false opinions as if in a plague, and the number of sufferers increases, since by copying one another they catch the disease like sheep and it is right to give help to future generations, for they are ours even if they are yet unborn, having regard further to the love of mankind and the duty of giving help to strangers who are at hand, forasmuch as the benefits of the written word are spread abroad I decided to use this colonnade and set forth in it the means of safety (*τὰ τῆς σωτηρίας φάρμακα*) for all to see.¹⁸

This *σωτηρίας φάρμακα* is precisely what Lucretius is trying to administer; and his abiding concern finds expression in the formalization of his relationship to his readers as that of a doctor to his patients.

sed veluti pueris absinthia taetra medentes cum dare
conantur, prius oras pocula circum contingunt mellis
dulci flavoque liquore, ut puerorum aetas improvida
ludificetur laborum tenus, interea perpotet amarum
absinthii laticem deceptaque non capiatur, sed potius
tali pacto recreata valescat, sic ego nunc

1.936ff., 4.11ff.

Though traditional, the passage presents not merely a perfunctory simile, but expresses a basic impetus of the poem. Wrote Epicurus:

We must not pretend to study philosophy, but study it in reality: for it is not the appearance of health that we need, but real health.

Vain is the word of philosopher which does not heal any suffering of man. For just as there is no profit in medicine if it does not expel the diseases of the body, so there is no profit in philosophy either, if it does not expel the suffering of the mind.¹⁹

And for Lucretius no less than Epicurus, this correspondence between body and mind was no stylistic flourish, but a controlling assumption.²⁰

The concept of a sick mankind, to be cured by the healing draughts of Epicureanism, was then a familiar one to Lucretius. This imaginative habit, when combined with the use of symbols as a sanctioned educational method, makes it not unlikely that he should see in a physical description of disease an emblem of the human estate in its unregenerate form. Perhaps in transcribing Thucydides' account Lucretius became aware — or even only half aware — of the poten-

tialities it held for his purpose. His alterations do not indicate a deliberate verbal dexterity: he does not use *anxius angor* because he recalls his previous uses and intends his reader to remember them also. Rather he seems to be himself responding imaginatively to a half-felt similarity between the victims of the actual plague at Athens and the sufferers from the psychic plague of fear and desire. Lucretius' language betrays this; it does not proclaim it, issuing a directive to us to compare the various passages. A contrast with Vergil's practice may illuminate this. He writes of the emperor:

Penatibus et magnis dis,
stans celsa in puppi.

8.680

This represents a conscious hat-tipping, a deliberate attempt to associate Augustus verbally, as he claimed to be genealogically, with Aeneas and Anchises. Vergil intends us to remember that both half-lines have been previously applied to Augustus' great forebears, the first line to Aeneas (3.12), the second to Anchises (3.527).²¹ Lucretius, by contrast, tends to associate emotionally rather than refer intellectually. He responds in a similar verbal way to what he feels to be similar situations: is spontaneous rather than calculated, impulsive rather than formal.²²

With this reservation, let us then take the path which the alterations from Thucydides point to, and look at Lucretius' account as at least tending towards metaphorical statement. As we have seen, Lucretius' habit of conceiving mental sicknesses in terms of physical disease might have encouraged him to see in the physical plague the emblem of a mental one. Several other elements in Thucydides' account might have similarly appealed to Lucretius' imagination as being the physical actuality for terms he himself had used as metaphors for fear and desire; as being the objective equivalent of mental or psychological truths. Situations which for Thucydides represented historical fact might for Lucretius embody a depth of moral significance and possess a symbolic resonance gained from his own handling of them as figures in nonphysical contexts. His discovery, in Thucydides' factual account, of particular situations which held for him a wealth of symbolic reference, might also have influenced him, consciously or unconsciously, to treat the whole plague as, in a sense, a metaphor for life.²³

Psychological speculation is, however, less rewarding than an examination of the text: what are these situations which might have

held for Lucretius this rich suggestiveness? Consider the diseased, plunging headlong into wells and streams in a vain attempt to satisfy their thirst:

insedabiliter sitis arida, corpora mersans,
aequabat multum parvis umoribus imbrem. 6.1176-7

Not dissimilar is the striking image of those seeking to satisfy their thirst for life, and quell their fear of death: *sitis aequa tenet vitae semper hiantis* (3.1084).²⁴ The same metaphor characterizes the ambition-stricken man; hell's emissaries surround us:

Sisyphus in vita quoque nobis ante oculos est
qui petere a populo fascis saevasque securis
imbibit . . . 3.995-7

Those seeking to satisfy their craving for life by an accumulation of wealth or honors are doomed to this perpetual thirst.²⁵ Desire, as well as fear, takes on this metaphoric guise:

in medioque sitit torrenti flumine potans. 4.1100

The only precedent for the burning thirst of the Athenians is to be found in those suffering from the diseases of fear or desire.²⁶

The element of frantic and pointless struggle might have struck Lucretius as forcibly as that of insatiable thirst. The very height of the plague finds men still fighting over burial sites: *multo cum sanguine saepe rixantes*.²⁷ Yet how better than this is the struggle for false ends that plagues mankind?

proinde sine incassum defessi sanguine sudent,
angustum per iter luctantes ambitionis. 5.1131-2

The exhausting fight for wealth (5.1421ff.) or honors (5.1124; cf. 2.11ff.; 3.59ff.) is, rightly viewed, no better than the race for tombs. Passionate love is similarly marked by this total exhaustion and vain endeavor.

adde quod absumunt viris pereuntque labore.²⁸

To the Athenians the plague came only once; but for the mass of a sick and unenlightened mankind struggle and exhaustion are among the very attributes of existence.

Finally, Lucretius might find in the uncertainty of medical treatment an analogue to the lack of any sure knowledge on the part of those infected by fear or desire:²⁹

nec ratio remedi communis certa dabatur;
 nam quod ali dederat vitalis aeris auras
 volvere in ore licere et caeli templa tueri,
 hoc aliis erat exitio letumque parabat.
 illud in his rebus miserandum magnopere unum
 aerumnabile erat, quod ubi se quisque videbat
 implicitum morbo, morti damnatus ut esset,
 deficiens animo maesto cum corde iacebat,
 funera respectans animam amittebat ibidem.

6.1226-34

This passage embodies one rather odd alteration from Thucydides. For Thucydides two things are "most dreadful" (2.51.4): on the one hand the apathy, on the other, the danger of contagion. Lucretius sees only one thing as *miserandum magnopere* (6.1230). He makes the apathy (*deficiens animo*, 1233) all important, while the spread of the disease becomes subordinated (*quippe etenim*, 1235).³⁰ A mental, or psychological, despair, resulting from the failure of any *certa ratio*,³¹ appears to Lucretius as the central issue. The physical aspect is relegated, with considerable grammatical confusion, to a dependent position. *Implicitum morbo* (1232) seems to indicate the way Lucretius' thoughts are moving. The word occurs only once elsewhere. Man could escape from the toils of love, *implicitus*, unless he stood in his own way: *nisi tute tibi obvius obstes* (4.1150). I do not imply a direct relationship, but there is a certain similarity of feeling. External forces are no longer of equal importance, as they were for Thucydides. Man's own despair before his incurable state is most significant — he stands in his own way.

Exploiting these verbal parallels is only a sharply specific method of demonstrating a closeness of general impression, not an effort to point out subtle verbal echoes. I suggest only that Thucydides' portrait of a diseased population, burning with an insatiable and self-destructive thirst, weary and uncertain, may have obscurely reminded Lucretius of his own image of man. And for this reason he appropriates Thucydides' account. It becomes not merely the physical climax to the physical manifestations of the sixth book, but the moral culmination of the whole poem. Where Thucydides recorded the plague as an aid to future generations (2.48.3), Lucretius borrows it as an emblem of a present mental sickness. To recognize it man is to look not ahead, but within.

An analogy based on the common elements of thirst, exhaustion, and uncertainty, would not be a very telling one. Luckily we have

Lucretius' specific alterations (pp. 105-108 above) to initiate the comparison which a more general view has confirmed. Again let me repudiate any suggestion that Lucretius was seeking to articulate any formal doctrine. Only an incorrigibly symbolic imagination appears to be at work, not a calculated mental effort: there is nothing approaching the definitive austerity of an allegory. If we do acknowledge that Lucretius consciously or unconsciously may have felt the plague's symbolic potentialities, we can see why he ended his poem here.³² By broadening the plague's applicability, heightening its intensity, and deepening the controlling moral awareness, Lucretius gives to it a monumental solidity of reference. The architecture of the poem culminates here, as the various perceptions of man's folly unite in a final despairing integrity of vision.

NOTES

1. H. A. J. Munro, *T. Lucr. Cari Libri Sex* (Cambridge, 1893) III 391; C. Bailey, *T. Lucr. Cari Libri Sex* (Oxford, 1947) III 1728; A. Ernout and L. Robin, *T. Lucr. Cari Libri Sex* (Paris, 1928), *ad* 6.1138. I use Bailey's text and numbering throughout.

2. Especially such minor changes as the substitution of "eighth or ninth day" (6.1197) for Thucydides' "seventh or ninth" (on which see Munro *ad loc.*) Nor do I make any attempt to discuss an alternative source for such a catalogue of symptoms as appears in 6.1182-96 (probably derived from the writings of Hippocrates: see Munro and Ernout-Robin *ad loc.*) Munro and Bailey give fairly exhaustive listings of all additions and alterations, and see also W. Lück, *Die Quellenfragen im 5 und 6 Buch des Lukrez* (Breslau, 1932) 175ff. None of the changes I discuss involves any question of another source, Hippocratean or otherwise. All occur within sentences which are a direct translation of Thucydides, and are of such a nature that his Greek may in each case be seen behind them.

3. Cf. Scholia to Thuc. quoted *ad loc.* by Creech, *T. Lucr. Cari Libri Sex* (London, 1835): *οι παλαιοι ιατροι τον στομαχον καρδιαν εκάλουν, και καρδιωγων τον πνον του στομάχου.*

4. This conclusively disposes of Lambinus' attempt to prove that Lucr. uses *cor* for "stomach" (see Munro, *ad loc.*). *Maestus* is an adjective never used of physical pain by Lucretius: *deficiens animo maesto cum corde iacebat* (6.1233) does not refer to a stomach ailment. Cf. *perturbata animi mens in maerore metuque* (6.1183). If *cor* ever refers to anything but "heart" it is surely "mind." Its use in 6.5, as applied to Epicurus, seems to have a primarily intellectual connotation, for nowhere is he signalized but for his mental prowess. *Vivida vis animi* (1.72) appears less an attribute than a definition. Cf. 3.1043, *ingenio superavit*; 3.14-15, *tua ratio . . . divina mente coorta*; and the proems to books three and five *passim*. For the use of *cor* as implying intellect see 4.44; 5.882; 1456 (reading, with Bailey, *clarescere corde videbant*). Cicero (*Tusc. disp.* 1.9.18) equates *cor* and *animus*, and gives several examples demonstrating the in-

tellectual sense of *cor*. Without entering the vexed question of exactly where the seat of thought was located, it should be noticed that the *cor* is for Lucretius the faculty subject to fear (3.116; 874; 6.14) and desire (4.1059; 1138). In this connection it should be noted that *maestus*, in its only uses outside the description of the plague, refers each time to fear of the gods (1.89; 99; 4.1236).

5. Usener, *Epicurea* (Teubner, 1887) frg. 485(p.305), 203(161), *Kuriai Doxai* 10(73). Lucretius devotes his third book to a systematic attack on the immortality of the soul (and hence the fear of death), and the end of the fourth to a similar attack on *cupido*. There are, of course, shorter passages on fear and desire *passim*.

6. These *anxia corda* are signaled by *infestis querellis* (6.16), much as the *anxius angor* of the diseased was the constant companion of *gemitu commixta querella* (6.1159).

7. W. E. Leonard and S. B. Smith, *T. Lucr. Cari Libri Sex* (Madison, 1942).

8. See note 4. above.

9. "He now seeks to satisfy his poetical feeling . . ." (Munro, III 392). For an equally unsatisfactory alternative see Bailey's explanation: "Here must be recognized not so much the difference between prose and poetry, but, as Giussani has pointed out, the difference in the genius of the two languages, the Latin author tending naturally to the fuller and more emotional description." (Bailey III 1723) Both of these suggestions contain an element of truth, but neither should be accepted as a complete explanation, any more than an easy reference to Lucretius' carelessness or ignorance should be.

10. et graviter partim metuentes limina leti
vivebant ferro privati parte virili,
et manibus sine nonnulli pedibusque manebant
in vita tamen, et perdebant lumina partim:
usque adeo mortis metus his inceserat acer.

11. P. Maas, however, defends Lucretius on the grounds that *στερισκόμενοι* (2.49.8) might refer to the operations of surgeons, and that Lucretius does also (Bailey, *addenda*, III 1759). This would require some distortion of the Greek, and even if we accept the idea that Thucydides may refer to surgeons, it does not follow that Lucretius does. Vergil, in his imitation of Lucretius, has the horses wound themselves (*Geor.* 3.514). In any case, Maas' attempt to rehabilitate Lucretius' scholarship succeeds in obscuring the most interesting point, which is not whether Lucretius thought doctors were involved, but that he here saw fit to introduce a moral comment.

12. See Ernout and Robin, *ad loc.*

13. Lucretius also acknowledges that the socially-minded contract the disease (6.1243-6). Like Thucydides he allows "all the most virtuous" (Bailey's translation of *optimus quisque*, 6.1246; cf. *οι ἀρετῆς μεταποιούμενοι*, 2.51.5) to die. But this is a different matter from his substitution of those who are unaiding for those who are unaided.

14. Thus the "first beginnings" find illustrations in the letters of the alphabet (1.196-8; 823-7; 2.688-94), sheep on a mountain side (2.317), military manoeuvres (2.323) or notes in a sunbeam (2.114). Lucretius is committed to the discovering of *vestigia notitiae* (2.123; cf. 2.112) in every imaginable physical phenomenon. Cf. Epicurus, frg. 212 (Usener 163).

15. I am not, of course, taking Lucretius to task for describing the psychological effects of the disease, as Thucydides himself does, particularly in chapter

53. Rather Lucretius fails to draw the line between the two: medical symptoms are often described in a markedly unmedical manner.

16. The impact of this passage is strengthened by the linkage of the medical vocabulary with that describing the burning heat of love (4.1087-90, 1096-1101, 1116-7, 1138). The fire of the lovers seems to have less in common with the traditional conceit than with the *sacer ignis* (6.1167) of the plague (6.1145, 1168-77, 1180). The lovers' sickness and accompanying flames present themselves to Lucretius less as literary conventions than physiological symptoms. The vehement elaboration of his writing conveys an immediacy denied any merely literary conceit.

A wound metaphor sometimes substitutes for, or stands together with, that of disease. It too applies both to fear (*haec vulnera vitae . . . mortis formidine aluntur*, 3.63; cf. 5.1197) and desire (*vulnere amoris*, 1.34; *incerti tabescunt vulnere caeco*, 4.1120; cf. 4.1068-83, noting the complete intermixture with the disease imagery). With the wound imagery, as with that of fire and disease, we have the peculiarly Lucretian tendency to become so carried away by his own figures that they attain concrete reality. Starting with the conventional *mens saucia amore* (4.1047), perhaps in imitation of Ennius' *Medea animo aegro, amore saevo saucia* (Trag. 254, ed. Vahlen³ [Teubner, 1928]), Lucretius proceeds to a remarkably concrete description (4.1049-57). Cf. his transformation of the equally familiar image of the bonds of love (4.1145-50; 1187; 1201-7): he applies it with such sustained fierceness that it finally achieves physical reality (4.1201-7).

17. It is particularly effective here, coming after the enumeration of all man's physical comforts (5.1440-57). It would be interesting to speculate as to whether the tentative medical metaphor of the sixth poem (*aegris . . . recreaverunt* [cf. *recreata valescat*, 1.942; 4.17] . . . *querellis . . . purgavit pectora*, 6.1-24) is deliberate, looking forward to the description of the plague at the book's end. If intentional, this would shed light on Lucretius' practice in unifying the different books.

18. Diogenes of Oenoanda, frg. 2, col. ii.7, ed. William (Teubner, 1907) 5. The translation is that of A. D. Nock, *Sallustius* (Cambridge, 1926) xxxvi.

19. Frg. 220 and 221 (Usener 169). I use, here and below, the translation of C. Bailey, *Epicurus* (Oxford, 1926) frg. A 54 (p. 115) and D 54 (133). cf. *Ep. Tertia* (Usener 59, line 3); frg. 471 (Usener 301); Wotke, *Wiener Studien* (1888) 196, frg. 64 (also in Bailey, frg. A 64, p. 116).

20. The use of clinical terminology for mental or moral ills is of course traditional. Greek tragedy exploits the analogy constantly (see any *index verborum* under *νόσος* or *φάρμακος*); cf. the indices in the 3 vols. of W. Jaeger's *Paideia*, Transl. by G. Highet (New York, 1939-44) s.v. "medicine," and for references to the Diatribes see Nock, *Sallustius*, p. xxviii, note 69. By Horace's time terms like *sanus* and *insanus* were such common coin that their original impress had been nearly obliterated by too frequent handling. Horace, however, refreshes their radical meaning by placing them often in contexts of explicitly medical metaphors. Cf. also his adaption of the doctor-patient analogy of Lucretius, in *Satire* 1.1.25. The tradition persists at least until Swift, who makes his masque Gulliver a doctor (and twice quotes Lucretius' honeyed cup passage).

I am here concerned only to show that Lucretius draws the analogy, and not to present its biography. Lucretius, moreover, exhibits a fierceness of imaginative involvement which transcends any merely conventional formulation. In

general, his images are less striking for their originality than for the intensity and elaboration with which he employs them.

21. And later, to Aeneas (10.261).

22. Thus where Lucretius exhibits such imaginative involvement in what he describes that conventional metaphors tend to take on physical reality (cf. note 16, above), Vergil reveals careful meditation in submitting his images to this same physical realization. Dido, for instance, is carefully described as transfixed with love for Aeneas, as she will later be transfixed with her physical wound. The opening lines of the fourth book contain terms, here used figuratively, which are to reappear later in their physical reality: *regina gravi saucia cura vulnus alit . . . haerent infixi pectore vultus* (4.1-4); *tacitum vivit sub pectore vulnus* (67); cf. *infixum stridit sub pectore vulnus* (689). This represents, I think, a premeditated artistic foreshadowing having little in common with Lucretius' impulsive absorption.

23. My feeling is that Lucretius was probably largely unconscious of any symbolic function the plague might fulfill, and certainly did not think of it as an allegory. His alterations of Thucydides are better understood as a record of his own imaginative tendencies than as the result of any formulated plan consciously imposed. I doubt that his readers would be aware of the changes, or would look upon the plague as anything more than factual. Hence I find it hard to accept J. P. Elder's tentative suggestion that Lucretius may have "intended, deliberately," the plague to be Epicurean conversion propaganda ("Lucretius 1.1-49," *TAPA* 85[1954] 93, note 10). If this were Lucretius' deliberate intention, surely the pattern would be less equivocal, and the lesson more carefully conveyed. The echoes of psychological terminology collected above, and those I shall treat below, are but evidence of his associative manner of thinking. Compare his tendency to revert to the same verbal clusters when treating birth or creation (*pabula laeta, nitidae fruges, ridet, suavis, blandus*, etc. Cf. 1.1-23, 252-7, 2,594-6, 994, and J. P. Elder, "Lucretius" 111.) There is a similar recurrence, in connection with birth, of *in luminis oras* (borrowed from Ennius, but applied in quite different fashion: 1.22; 2,577; 617; 5,1455). None of these words or phrases is intended as a deliberate reminiscence of any other; rather all alike chart the associative manner in which Lucretius' imagination works.

24. Thirst implies water, which is of course the archetype of the life-giving force. The underlying paradox that thirst for this supposedly reviving element (whether figurative, as in the third book, or literal, as in the sixth) should result in death, might be tied to the poem of three (79-83). Here the love of life (or fear of death) leads men to kill themselves, forgetting that this very fear is the *fontem curarum* (3.82). In a sense, the effort to avoid death leads men to plunge into it. The notion of a false or seeming nourishment which is actually a destructive force underlies all three cases, though to insist upon an exact equivalence or detailed parallels would be futile.

25. It should be remembered that Lucretius considers both avarice and ambition as largely motivated by the fear of death (3.64).

26. Epicurus also draws the analogy between the diseased, thirsting man and the victim of desires: frg. 471 (Usener 301).

27. 6.1285. For the generally exhausting effect of the plague, and the struggles it arouses, cf. *dissolvebat eos, defessos ante, fatigans* (6.1162); *nec requies erat ulla mali: defessa iacebant corpora* (6.1178); *incomitata rapi*

certabant funera vasta(6.1225); *populum sepelire suorum certantes*(6.1247).

28. 4.1121. cf. *frustra que laborat*(4.1099), and for the broad picture of the exhausting and unrewarded struggle which love entails, see 4.1097-1120. The number of negatives is extraordinary; they systematically punctuate and destroy any possibility of beauty or pleasure that love might have: *non datur . . . nec satiare queunt . . . nec possunt . . . nequiquam . . . possunt nec . . . nec reperire possunt*.

29. Lucretius particularly emphasizes the uncertainty to which those attacked by fear or desire are reduced. For fear see the end of the third book: *morbi quia causam non tenet aeger*(3.1070; cf. 3.1050; 3.37-93). The lovers' search for any sure remedy to their desires is similarly doomed. The description of the immediate act of love (4.1077-1120) is introduced by *fluctuat incertis erroribus ardor amantum*, and concluded by *nec reperire malum id possunt quae machina vincat: usque adeo incerti tabescunt vulnere caeco*, while the results of passion declare man bound to hopeless insecurity: *adde quod alterius sub nutu degitur aetas*(4.1122). Hence the approval of *meretrices*(4.1071) — those using them are healthy (*sanis*, 1075) in that they at least escape the perpetual uncertainty of lovers(4.1060; 1133-40). Cf. the similar attitude of Horace in *Sat.* 1.2.37-79, 127-34, noting the many Lucretian echoes, especially in 72-5, 111-114. Cf. Lejay, *Les Satires d'Horace* (Paris, 1911) *ad loc.* The evidence for Epicurus' attitude is confused; he appears to have objected not to a peaceful marriage, but only to the upsetting quality of an unsatisfactory passion, which he likened to a goad of restlessness (frg. 483; Usener 305) Cf. Bailey, *ad* 4.1058, and J. B. Stearns. *Epicurus and Lucretius on Love*, summarized in *TAPA* 63 (1932) xxxiv.

30. See Ernout-Robin *ad loc.*: "Il y a, dans *quippe etenim*, une nouvelle et étrange déformation de la pensée de Thc." Cf. Munro *ad loc.*

31. *Ratio* translates the Greek *ῥαμα*(2.51.2) which means only "remedy" or "medicine." Though *ratio* here may mean only "method," it surely betrays the same tendency on Lucretius' part to move towards issues that are more than physical. There are at least overtones of the technical terminology of Epicureanism: *vitae rationem quae nunc appellatur sapientia*(5.9). For the use of *ratio*, with *certa*, of philosophic utterance cf. 1.738; 5.1111.

32. And did not, as Bignone suggests, plan to make an addition about the life of the gods. (See Bailey, *Addenda et corrigenda*, for various views, and J. P. Elder, "Lucretius" 88 for numerous references and several interesting suggestions of his own.) It seems to me highly unlikely that any author of such violence of imaginative habit that he must describe lambs as "stunned" (*perculsa*, 1.261) by their mother's milk, would be able to write *largo sermone* (5.155) about the immensity of indifference which Epicurean gods inhabit.