The Proems of Empedocles and Lucretius

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Lucreti poemata ut scribis ita sunt, multis luminibus ingeni, multae tamen artis. sed cum veneris, virum te putabo si Sallusti Empedoclea legeris, hominem non putabo.

Writing to his brother in 54 B.C., Cicero supplies two unique testimonies (*Ad Q. Fr.* 2.9.4). In the first sentence he echoes Quintus' admiration for Lucretius' poem, thus providing the sole allusion to the *De rerum natura* likely to be more or less contemporary with its publication. In the second, he attests the publication of an *Empedoclea* by a certain Sallustius, presumably a Latin translation or imitation of Empedocles.[1]

But even more striking than the two individual testimonies is their juxtaposition. Editors have traditionally printed a full stop after *sed cum veneris*, apparently understanding "But when you come ... (*sc.* we will discuss it)." This suppresses any overt link between the two literary judgements. On the more natural and fluent reading that can be obtained simply by substituting a comma for the full stop, as printed above,[2] the letter becomes an explicit comparison between the *DRN* and the *Empedoclea*:

> Lucretius' poetry shows, as you say in your letter, many flashes of genius, but also much craftsmanship. On the other hand, when you come, if you have read Sallustius' *Empedoclea*, I shall consider you a man, though I won't consider you human.

[1] *Cf.* Cicero's title *Aratea* for his translation of Aratus.

[2] The punctuation transmitted by the MSS. is unlikely to have ancient authority. Of the Latinists on whom I have tried out this redivision, some have found it acceptable, others have expressed reservations either about the structure of the resultant sentence, or about the loss of the aposiopesis *sed cum veneris....* As to the latter worry, this telescoped expression does not in fact seem to occur elsewhere in Cicero's letters (although there are partial parallels at *Att.* 12.5a and 14.20.3). As regards the former, I cannot help wondering how many scholars would have felt the need to argue for repunctuation if the MSS had chosen to divide the text as I have printed it.

If this is right, the two works were being directly compared at the time of their publication, and Cicero, at least, judged the Lucretian poem vastly superior.

Why did this particular comparison suggest itself? It is well recognised that Empedocles is, along with Homer, Ennius, and others,[3] an important literary influence on Lucretius, and it has even been claimed that he was a philosophical influence.[4] But I do not believe that the depth and significance of the poem's Empedoclean character have yet been properly understood. If what I shall argue in this paper is right, Cicero's comparison of the *DRN* with the *Empedoclea* will turn out to be an entirely natural one, which Lucretius would have welcomed and indeed invited. My case will be centred on the relation of Lucretius' proem to the proem of Empedocles' *On Nature*.

I. Empedocles' Two Poems

There is plentiful evidence that it was principally if not exclusively in the hexameter poem known in antiquity as the *On Nature* (Περὶ φύσεως) or the *Physics* (Τὰ φυσικά) that Empedocles expounded his world system, centred on the cosmic cycle in which four enduring elements—earth, air, fire, and water—are periodically united into a homogeneous sphere by Love, then again separated out into a cosmos by Strife.[5] But there is a longstanding scholarly tradition, deriving primarily from Diels' editions published in 1901

[3] The range of literary influences on Lucretius was considerably enlarged by the findings of E. J. Kenney, "Doctus Lucretius," *Mnemosyne* SER. IV 23 (1970) 366–92.

[4] D. J. FURLEY, "Variations on Themes from Empedocles in Lucretius' Proem," *BICS* 17 (1970) 55–64 (hereafter 'Furley' [reprinted in *Cosmic Problems* (Cambridge 1989) 172–82]), discussed below; also J. Bollack, "Lukrez und Empedokles," *Die neue Rundschau* 70 (1959) 656–86; *cf.* nn.25 and 40 *infra*.

[5] The traditional belief that zoogony took place in *both* halves of this cycle, for which see especially D. O'Brien, *Empedocles' Cosmic Cycle* (Cambridge 1969), has been powerfully challenged by J. Bollack, *Empédocle* (Paris 1965–69); U. Hölscher, "Weltzeiten und Lebenszyklus," *Hermes* 93 (1965) 7–33; F. Solmsen, "Love and Strife in Empedocles' Cosmology," *Phronesis* 10 (1965) 109–48 (= *Kleine Schr.* I [Hildesheim 1968] 274–313); and A. A. Long, "Empedocles' Cosmic Cycle in the 'Sixties," in A. P. D. Mourelatos, ed., *The Presocratics* (New York 1974) 397–425; it is now ably defended by D. W. Graham, "Symmetry in the Empedoclean Cycle," *CQ* N.S. 38 (1988) 297–312.

and 1903,[6] of attributing all the fragments concerning Empedocles' theories of the pollution and transmigration of the individual spirit, or *daimon*, to a second hexameter poem, the Καθαρμοί, or *Purifications*. The original ground for this segregation was the belief that the physical doctrine of the cosmic cycle and the 'religious' doctrine of transmigration belonged to radically distinct and probably incompatible areas of Empedocles' thought. But Empedoclean studies have now reached a curious stage. On the one hand, the old dogma has been subjected to searching criticism, and is regarded by many as an anachronistic imposition on fifth-century thought.[7] On the other hand, the conventional apportionment of fragments between the two poems, which was founded on that dogma, remains largely unchallenged,[8] as if it had some independent authority. I believe that it has none.

If we simply stick to the hard and the relatively hard evidence for what was in the Καθαρμοί, a different picture will emerge. We do at least have its opening lines.[9] Empedocles addresses the citizens of his native Acragas and tells how he walks about as "a divine god, no longer a mortal," garlanded and revered. Wherever he goes, people follow him in their thousands, pressing him with enquiries, some requesting oracles, others asking to "hear a healing utterance for diseases of every kind." Why should we not suppose that the poem was simply a response to these requests, a set of purificatory

[6] H. Diels, *Poetarum philosophorum fragmenta* (Berlin 1901) and *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin 1903).

[7] *E.g.* C. H. Kahn, "Religion and Natural Philosophy in Empedocles' Doctrine of the Soul," *AGP* 42 (1960) 3–35; J. Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers* II (London 1979) 93; C. OSBORNE, "Empedocles Recycled," *CQ* N.S. 37 (1987 [hereafter 'Osborne']) 24–50; reservations in A. A. Long, "Thinking and Sense-perception in Empedocles: Mysticism or Materialism?" *CQ* N.S. 16 (1966) 256–76.

[8] The two main challenges are those of N. VAN DER BEN, *The Proem of Empedocles' Περὶ Φύσεως* (Amsterdam 1975 [hereafter 'van der Ben']) and Osborne. I regard both as significant landmarks, even though my own conclusions will have relatively little in common with theirs. Osborne argues that the two titles name one and the same poem. Despite her arguments, I feel that D.L. 8.77 remains an insuperable obstacle to her view, as do the considerations advanced in my next section about the provenance of B115. In what follows I shall be trying to differentiate sharply between the two poems in terms of their content.

[9] Empedocles B112 D.-K. I cite the fragments by their widely used Diels-Kranz numbers, although a better text is now available in M. R. WRIGHT, *Empedocles: The Extant Remains* (New Haven 1981 [hereafter 'Wright']).

oracles and "healing utterances"?[10] That would fit comfortably with the remaining evidence, which strongly implies that in the Καθαρμοί Empedocles recommended celibacy and vegetarianism, along with advice on how to purify oneself of the pollution of previous meat eating.[11] He also, in some context within the same poem, advised cleansing oneself with water drawn from five springs.[12] In all these cases the impression given is not of any discursive exposition of the daimon's wanderings, but of instructions for ritual purification. The one Empedoclean 'doctrine' that our sources tie to the Καθαρμοί is the thesis that the foetus achieves full human form in "seven times seven" days (B 153a, *cf.* A83). Even here, significantly, the source that assigns this doctrine to the Καθαρμοί tells us only that Empedocles there "hints" at it (αἰνίττεται). This tends to confirm that the Καθαρμοί contained no expository account of gestation or birth,[13] and that the mystical figure of "seven times seven" came up incidentally in some related context—perhaps, for example, in the course of purificatory advice concerning childbirth. Next, we have a two-line fragment assigned to Book 2 of the Καθαρμοί[14] in which Empedocles picks out a certain kind of tree, one with densely packed roots but well spaced branches. There is little to go on here, but it is perhaps a little easier to imagine a ritual context for these lines—*e.g.* the choice, or avoidance, of the right kinds of leaves—than one expounding the migrations of the

[10] For the scope and content of the relevant notions of pollution and purification, see R. Parker, *Miasma* (Oxford 1983). I have no particular suggestion to make about the function of the "oracles." The evidence of a purificatory rôle for oracles is meagre (Parker 86), and I would guess that it is simply Empedocles' assumed divinity that makes this an appropriate designation for his pronouncements.

[11] Hippol. *Haer.* 7.30.3=preamble to B110, and Porph. *Abst.* 2.31=B139, where καθαρμούς and διὰ τῶν καθαρμῶν respectively appear to allude to the poem, even if not to its title as such. In B139 the words "Alas, would that the pitiless day had destroyed me before I schemed the wicked deeds of meat-eating for my lips" are usually taken to express Empedocles' own regrets, but Porphyry may seem rather to be reporting them as the formula that Empedocles recomends us to utter by way of self-purification.

[12] B143, where again Theon of Smyrna's καθαρμόν seems to allude to the poem without actually naming it. I am unconvinced by van der Ben's argument (36f) for assigning the fragment to *On Nature*.

[13] See Wright 298.

[14] From a Herodian palimpsest=fr.152 Wright.

daimon.[15] Finally, the biographer Satyrus quoted fragment B111 as confirming the suspicion that Empedocles dabbled in magic (D.L. 8.59). Since Apuleius claims that it was Empedocles' Καθαρμοί that brought upon him just such a suspicion,[16] there is a strong likelihood that B 111 is from this poem.[17] Significantly, this is once again a fragment offering not doctrinal exposition but ritual advice: how to influence the weather and to summon up the dead.

My suggestion, then, is that the Καθαρμοί was just what its title and opening suggest, a set of oracles and purifications, consisting of ritual advice rather than doctrinal exposition. This is supported by the three other reports known to me of καθαρμοί as a kind of composition. In all three cases these works are fathered on archaic figures of semi-legendary status. First, Epimenides the Cretan is said to have written καθαρμοί, in verse and perhaps also in prose (3A2–3 D.-K.). Although their content is not reported, it can hardly be a coincidence that Epimenides was celebrated above all for his ritual purifications, an expertise that led the Athenians to send for him to purify their city of plague (A1, 2, 4, 8). Second, the author of the pseudo-Pythagorean *Carmen aureum* says: "But abstain from the foods that I spoke of in my Καθαρμοί and *Absolution of the Soul.*"[18] This perfectly matches the purificatory theme we have already detected in Empedocles' work. Finally, the remark at Aristophanes *Frogs* 1033 that Musaeus taught "healing and oracles" is glossed by a scholiast with the comment that Musaeus "composed absolutions [?], initiations, and καθαρμοί" (2A6 D.-K.). Healing and

[15] *Cf.* B140 on avoiding laurel leaves. (According to Theophr. *Hist.pl.* 1.6.4, all plants have their roots more densely packed than their parts above ground, but some, *e.g.* the olive tree, have a particularly dense mass of slender roots.) Since, however, in Empedocles' view the daimon can be incarnated in plants (B117, 127), the possibility cannot be absolutely ruled out that the context was an expository one about transmigrations.

[16] Apul. *Apol.* 27=3A6a D.-K.

[17] The second person singular in B111 cannot be used, as traditionally it has been, to settle the question of its provenance in favour of *On Nature*: on the impotence of this criterion see Osborne 31f. Now that we know that Empedocles wrote at least two books of Καθαρμοί (fr.152 Wright), there is even less need to suppose that the second person plural address to the Acragantines, which opened Book 1, was retained throughout.

[18] *Carmen aureum* 67f: at D. Young, *Theognis* (Leipzig 1971) 103f. The author concludes the poem three lines later with an unmistakable echo of the opening of Empedocles' Καθαρμοί: ἔσσεαι ἀθάνατος θεὸς ἄμβροτος, οὐκέτι θνητός (*cf.* Emped. B112.4).

oracles are precisely the two services mentioned by Empedocles at the opening of *his* Καθαρμοί. Then why look further for the content of the poem? We are required to do so neither by the fragments attributable to it, nor by the evidence for Καθαρμοί as a genre.

II. The Provenance of Empedocles B115

> There is a decree of necessity, an ancient resolution of the gods, sworn by broad oaths, that when one of the daimons who have a share of long life defiles ... his own limbs, or does wrong and swears a false oath, for thirty thousand years he must wander, away from the blessed ones, being born during that time as every form of mortal creature, exchanging for each other the arduous paths of life. The might of the aether drives him to the sea, the sea spits him out onto the threshold of land, the earth sends him into the rays of the gleaming sun, and the sun hurls him into the whirling aether. One receives him from another, and all hate him. I too am now one of these, a fugitive from the gods and a wanderer, who trust in raving Strife (B115).[19]

These lines, which are crucial for explaining the daimon's migrations, have been assigned to the Καθαρμοί by every editor of Empedocles since Diels. Recently the attribution has been questioned by N. van der Ben,[20] and subsequently defended by D. O'Brien.[21] But this renewed debate has so far focused excessively on the contexts in which the lines are quoted by our sources, as if one could settle the question of their provenance by counting the allusions in those contexts to κάθαρσις and cognate terms and likewise those to the cosmic cycle. Given the improbability that any ancient reader of Empedocles might have expected the physical poem and the Καθαρμοί to conflict doctrinally, the provenance of the lines will have mattered less to those who cited them than their value as evidence for Empedocles' views on the κάθαρσις of the soul—a topic on which Platonism had conferred an absolutely pivotal philosophical importance.

[19] I have avoided engaging with the textual difficulties of this passage, which are well discussed by Wright. They do not affect any of the issues I am addressing here.

[20] Van der Ben 16ff; also Osborne, in so far as she rejects any distinction between the physical poem and the Καθαρμοί.

[21] D. O'Brien, *Pour interpréter Empédocle* (Paris/Leiden 1981).

Plutarch reports that Empedocles "prefaced" these lines "at the beginning of his philosophy," ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς φιλοσοφίας προαποφωνήσας (*De exil.* 607C). Is this too vague to be helpful? "Philosophy" certainly might describe the content of the physical poem. It might also be appropriate to the Καθαρμοί, on the traditional view of that poem's content. But it is very much less appropriate if, as I have suggested, the Καθαρμοί was not a doctrinal work but a set of purificatory pronouncements. Indeed, if that suggestion is correct, Plutarch's expression "at the beginning of his philosophy" would immediately gain a much clearer sense. If Empedocles wrote two doctrinal poems, the words "his philosophy" are a desperately vague way of referring to either one of them. But if he wrote just one, they become an entirely natural way of referring to that one.[22]

Plutarch's description in no way indicates that these were the very opening lines of the poem to which they belonged, just that they preceded the philosophy proper. Hence there is little value in the argument[23] that since we have the opening of the Καθαρμοί and it differs from these lines, they must have opened the physical poem instead. Much more mileage can be got out of the content of the disputed lines. First, it is hardly insignificant that they name five of the six cosmic entities on which Empedocles' physical system is based: the daimon's wanderings are graphically described in terms of its being tossed into and out of each of the four elements in turn; and Strife is named as the cause of its downfall. This at least supports the *coherence* of the passage with the physical poem. But far more important, and strangely absent from the debate about its provenance, is the following consideration. In these disputed lines, Empedocles is himself a fallen daimon: "I too am now one of these, a fugitive from the gods and a wanderer, who trust in raving Strife." Is it credible that these words came in the introductory passage of a poem in whose opening lines Empedocles had moments earlier described himself as "a divine god, no longer a mortal"?[24] Without the straitjacket of the old prejudice that science and religion do not mix,

[22] *Cf.* Osborne 29ff.

[23] Van der Ben 16.

[24] B112.4, reinforced by 113.2 ("if I am superior to frequently-perishing mortal men"), if, as Sextus' juxtaposition of 113 with 112 suggests, it is also from the Καθαρμοί. In Empedocles' world, even the generated *gods* perish eventually, *i.e.* at the end of each cosmic cycle: hence they are not immortal but "long-lived" (B21.12, 23.8; *cf.* 115.5 on the *daimones*). By contrast, mortals are "frequently-perishing," πολυφθερέων: see Wright 269.

it is hard to believe that anyone would ever have thought of assigning the former text to the Καθαρμοί. The most natural interpretation is that B115 comes from a poem in which Empedocles classed himself as a fallen daimon still working through his long cycle of transmigrations, whereas in the Καθαρμοί, opening as it does with his confident self-proclamation as a god, "no longer a mortal," he presented himself as having now completed the cycle and recovered his divinity. I therefore feel a reasonable degree of confidence in placing Empedocles' major fragment on the wanderings of the daimon somewhere in the proem to the *On Nature*. This conclusion will prove important at a later stage in my argument. Earmarking it for future use, we can now at last turn to Lucretius.

III. Lucretius and Empedocles

Numerous echoes of Empedoclean passages have been recognised in Lucretius' poem, with varying degrees of certainty.[25] It is no part of my purpose to catalogue these. But two observations seem in order. First, the 450 or so extant lines of Empedocles represent less than one-tenth of his poetic output, if we are to trust Diogenes Laertius' figure of 5,000 lines in total,[26] and even on the most conservative estimates of Empedocles' total output,[27] not more than one-fifth. Or supposing (as I am inclined to suppose) that Lucretius' interest was exclusively in the *On Nature*, what is extant of that is still likely to be barely one-fifth—roughly 400 lines out of 2,000.[28] This raises the probability that if we had Empedocles' poems intact a great deal more Empedoclean influence would come to light, and our understanding of the *DRN* be immensely enriched.

Second, I would suggest that Lucretius is likely to owe rather more to Empedocles in terms of poetic *technique* than is generally

[25] *E.g.* Furley; also: W. Kranz, "Lukrez und Empedokles," *Philologus* 96 (1944) 68–107; C. J. Castner, "De Rerum Natura 5.101–103: Lucretius' Application of Empedoclean Language to Epicurean Doctrine," *Phoenix* 41 (1987) 40–49. I have not seen F. Jobst, *Über das Verhältnis zwischen Lukretius und Empedokles* (diss. Munich 1907), but I understand from Don Fowler that it anticipated Kranz's most important findings. For other studies, see Tatum (n.32 *infra*) 178 n.5.

[26] D.L. 8.77; for discussion see Osborne 28f.

[27] *Cf.* Wright 21.

[28] 2,000 lines seems to be the figure for the length of the physical poem given by the *Suda*, *s.v.* "Empedocles" (=31 A2 D.-K.), despite the slightly odd grammar.

recognised. For example, at 1.271–97 Lucretius argues for the corporeality of air by means of an intricate analogy between the destructive power of wind and that of water. David West has observed that the number of distinct points of correspondence between the description of the wind and the description of the water greatly exceeds that normally found in the similes of Homer and Apollonius.[29] Lucretius is thus, in West's terminology, a practitioner of the "multiple-correspondence simile," a legacy that he was to pass on in turn to Virgil. What I would myself add is that, although Homer and Apollonius may offer no adequate model for the technique, Empedocles does. In his description of the eye's structure and function as analogous to those of a lantern (B 84), Empedocles reinforces the idea with a set of carefully engineered correspondences between the two halves of the simile.[30] As in Lucretius, so already in Empedocles, the multiplicity of correspondences has an argumentative motive, and not merely a descriptive one: the more correspondences there are, the more persuasive the analogy will be. Here then is a technique, singularly germane to philosophical poetry, which has almost certainly passed from Empedocles, through Lucretius, into the Latin tradition.

Lucretius' reverence for Empedocles is evident in the paean of praise with which he prefaces his criticism of Empedocles' four-element theory at 1.716–41:

> Of these [*sc.* the four-element theorists] the foremost is Empedocles of Acragas, born within the three-cornered land coasts of the island [Sicily] around which the Ionian Sea, flowing with its great windings, sprays the brine from its green waves, and from whose boundaries the rushing sea with its narrow strait divides the coasts of the land of Italy with its waves. Here is destructive Charybdis, and here the rumblings of Etna give warning that they are again gathering the wrath of their flames so that her violence may again spew out the fire flung from her jaws and hurl once more to the sky the lightning flashes of flame. Although this great region seems in many ways worthy of admiration by the races of men, and is said to deserve visit-

[29] D. West, "Virgilian Multiple-Correspondence Similes and their Antecedents," *Philologus* 114 (1970) 262–75.

[30] These are contained principally in the close linguistic parallelism of lines 4f with the final two lines. For textual problems in the passage, Wright should be consulted. For comparable prose uses of complex analogy in Hippocratic authors, *cf.* G. E. R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy* (Cambridge 1966) 345–48. I discuss the passage more fully in a forthcoming paper.

> ing for its wealth of good things and the great stock of men that fortify it, yet it appears to have had in it nothing more illustrious than this man, nor more holy, admirable, and precious. What is more, the poems sprung from his godlike mind call out and expound his illustrious discoveries, so that he scarcely seems to be born of mortal stock.
>
> But this man and the greatly inferior and far lesser men whom I mentioned above, although in making their many excellent and godlike discoveries they gave responses in a holier and much more certain way than the Pythia who makes her pronouncements from Apollo's tripod and laurel, nevertheless came crashing down when they dealt with the elementary principles of things. Great as they were, their fall here was a great and heavy one.

This is remarkable praise to lavish on a philosopher who did, after all, radically misconceive the underlying nature of the world. Where does the emphasis lie? Lucretius speaks highly both of Empedocles' "illustrious discoveries" (*praeclara reperta*), and of his poetry, which is so sublime as almost to prove his divinity—an honour that in the end Lucretius will reserve for Epicurus alone.[31] With regard to Empedocles' "discoveries," I am inclined to agree with those who hold that Lucretius is commending above all the clarity of their exposition, especially by contrast with the obscurities of Heraclitus denounced in the preceding passage.[32] This, I would further suggest, is supported by the closing remarks in the passage translated above, where Lucretius expresses his approval both of Empedocles and of his "lesser" colleagues in the pluralist tradition[33] for revealing their findings "in a holier and *much more certain* way than the Pythia who makes her pronouncements from Apollo's tripod and laurel" (738f). This has standardly been understood as crediting those philosophers with an authority comparable

[31] First at 3.15. It is unwise to be too confident that Lucretius is alluding to Empedocles' own profession of divinity at the beginning of the Καθαρμοί, if, as I would maintain, his interest is otherwise focused entirely on Empedocles' *On Nature*. But the legend of Empedocles' plunge into Etna in a bid to establish his own divinity was probably well enough known by this date to give the remark extra point (*cf.* Wright 15f and Hor. *Ars P.* 463–66; for its origin as a biographers' fiction, see A. Chitwood, "The Death of Empedocles," *AJP* 107 [1986] 175–91).

[32] E. D. Kollmann, "Lucretius' Criticism of the Early Greek Philosophers," *StClass* 13 (1971) 79–93, and especially W. J. Tatum, "The Presocratics in Book One of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*," *TAPA* 114 (1984) 177–89.

[33] The reference is vague, but perhaps picks up the proponents of two elements in 1.712f as well as the four-element theorists of 714f.

to that of an oracle.[34] It seems to me more likely that it expresses a contrast—between, on the one hand, the clear and unambiguous assertions of the pluralists, and, on the other, the Delphic ambiguities so characteristic of Heraclitus.[35] If so, we must be wary of reading into this eulogy of Empedocles any special admiration for his teaching as such. It is much more as an eloquent and straight-talking expositor of his teaching that he is canonised. Empedocles' language may be densely metaphorical (as is Lucretius' own), but at least, as Lucretius sees it, it lacks the multi-layered evasiveness and trickery of Heraclitean prose. About Lucretius' evaluation of Empedocles' actual teachings I shall say more below.

What purpose is served in this passage by the fulsome praise of Sicily? One object, no doubt, is to compare Empedocles favourably with that other wonder of Sicily, Etna.[36] But it also has the job of illustrating why Sicily was the birthplace of the four-element theory.[37] The four elements are intricately worked into the travelogue. Empedocles was born within Sicily's "land coasts," *terrarum ... in oris* (717)—and here *terrarum* is not an "otiose addition" (Bailey), but Lucretius' way of identifying the land of Sicily with the element earth. The elements water and fire are abundantly in evi-

[34] It is *prima facie* implausible that an Epicurean should speak with implicit approval of oracular authority. The textual support for such a reading is usefully assembled by M. F. Smith in the revised Loeb edition of Lucretius (London/Cambridge [Mass.] 1975), 60f n., but it does not persuade me. In Epicurus *SV* 29, χρησμῳδεῖν is associated with unintelligibility, thus favouring the alternative interpretation proposed here. The Ciceronian texts (*Fin.* 2.20 [Smith's "1.7.20" is a misprint], 102; *Nat.D.* 1.66) do use *oracula* of philosophical pronouncements (some of them Epicurean), but only in the mouths of Epicurus' critics. That leaves the epigram of Athenaeus (*ap.* D.L. 10.12), which speaks of Epicurus not as himself oracular but as *inspired* either by the Muses or by the Delphic oracle.

[35] For *certus*='unambiguous' see *OLD s.v.* 9. The same sense fits perfectly into 5.111f, where these lines recur: Lucretius is saying that his prediction that the world will one day perish is a firm and unambiguous one, *unlike* those associated with the Delphic oracle. For Heraclitus' 'Delphic' ambiguity, *cf.* his 22B93 D.-K. As for *sanctius*, in a comparison with an oracle this must primarily imply 'holier', but the basic meaning of *sanctus* (from *sancire*) is 'ratified' or 'confirmed', and it also has connotations of 'above board' or 'honourable' (*OLD s.v.* 4).

[36] If the thesis developed below is right, it may not be too fanciful to see in the imminent new eruption of Etna (722ff) a hint at the scheduled rebirth of Empedoclean poetry.

[37] This was well spotted by L. MacKay, "*De Rerum Natura* 1.717 sqq.," *Latinitas* 3 (1955) 210, and J. M. Snyder, "Lucretius' Empedoclean Sicily," *CW* 65 (1972) 217f.

dence in the descriptions of the surrounding sea, of the whirlpool Charybdis, and of the flames of Etna (717–25). Finally (725), those flames are borne "to the sky" (*caelum*). Now the sky, as the abode both of air and of the heavenly bodies, might in principle symbolise either of the elements air and fire. What surely clinches its identification with air, and thus completes the catalogue of four elements, is the fact that Empedocles himself uses "sky" (οὐρανός) as a name for his element air (B22.2).

And the Empedoclean influence goes deeper still. The very idea of using individual phenomena like sea, rain, wind, and sun to symbolise the four elemental stuffs is thoroughly Empedoclean. So too is the poetic device of interweaving the four elements into the language of a descriptive passage: we have already seen Empedocles do the same at B115, when he described the tossing of the fallen daimon from aether (=air) to sea, to land, to the sun's rays, and then back once more into the eddies of the aether.

At the very least, then, Lucretius' description of Sicily reveals his intimate knowledge and exploitation of Empedoclean poetry. And it would be unwise to rule out the further possibility that it is itself a direct imitation of a lost passage of Empedocles.

IV. The Enigma of Lucretius' Proem

We are now ready to turn to the most hotly and inconclusively debated passage in Lucretius, the proem to Book I.[38] It is structured as follows:

1–20: praise of Venus as *Aeneadum genetrix* and the life force of all nature;
21–28: prayer to Venus to inspire Lucretius' poem, because she alone is responsible for making things pleasing, and because Memmius has always been her favourite;
29–43: prayer to Venus to intercede with her lover Mars and bring peace to the Roman republic;
44–49: it is not in the divine nature to concern itself with our affairs;

[38] The huge bibliography on this passage prominently includes F. Giancotti, *Il preludio di Lucrezio* (Messina 1959); K. Kleve, "Lukrez und Venus (*De rerum natura* I, 1–49)," *SymbOslo* 41 (1966) 86–94; E. J. Kenney, *Lucretius* (=*Greece and Rome: New Surveys in the Classics* 11 [1977]) 13–17; D. Clay, *Lucretius and Epicurus* (Ithaca 1983 [hereafter 'Clay']) 82–110; and all the major commentaries.

50–61: programmatic address to Memmius about the content of the poem;
62–79: praise of Epicurus' intellectual achievement;
80–101: attack on the evils of religion, as illustrated by the sacrifice of Iphigeneia;
102–35: warning to Memmius not to be enticed by false religious tales about the survival and transmigration of the soul;
136–45: the difficulty of Lucretius' poetic task.

The most enigmatic feature of the proem lies in the first three subdivisions, 1–43. How can Lucretius, as an Epicurean, praise Venus as a controlling force in nature, and even beg her to intervene in human affairs? In Epicureanism, the gods emphatically do not intervene in any way in human affairs—as Lucretius himself paradoxically goes on immediately to point out (44–49=2.646–51).

To respond that the proem's treatment of Venus is allegorical is not in itself a solution to the puzzle. As Lucretius himself warns at 2.655–60, allegorical use of divinities, *e.g.* 'Neptune' for the sea and 'Ceres' for corn, is permissible only if one avoids any false religious implications. Although Venus might, on this principle, get away with symbolising nature, or even perhaps Epicurean pleasure,[39] the opening address to her as ancestress of the Romans can hardly be judged equally innocent, nor can the prayers to her to intervene in Roman affairs and to inspire Lucretius' poetry. It is not that these allegorical explanations do not carry any weight at all. I think there is much truth in them. But the most they can do, for readers who have read on and been surprised to learn that this is an Epicurean poem, is mitigate their bafflement. The question remains, what can have impelled Lucretius to start out so misleadingly, totally disowning the attitude to the gods that the rest of the poem will so ener-

[39] The suggestion of E. Bignone, *Storia della letteratura latina* II (Florence 1945) 437–44 (which faces the difficulty that Lucretius' Venus controls *all* natural coming-to-be [esp. 21ff], not just animal reproduction). *Cf.* the recent proposal of E. Asmis, "Lucretius' Venus and Stoic Zeus," *Hermes* 110 (1982) 459–70, that Venus is here an Epicurean deity invented to take over the rôle assigned to Zeus by the Stoics. I myself share the doubts of Furley, in "Lucretius and the Stoics," *BICS* 13 (1966) 13–33 (=*Cosmic Problems* 183–205), whether Lucretius was at all concerned to counter the Stoics. So far as concerns theology, the only two even superficially Stoic views criticised in the *DRN* are that the world is animate and divine, and that it was created for the sake of men (5.110–234); and I doubt if these are *meant* to be Stoic, since both are introduced by Lucretius as purported grounds for the thesis, foreign to mainstream Stoicism, that the world (although apparently created) is everlasting.

getically promote? It is hardly an exaggeration to say that he spends the remainder of the poem undoing the damage done by the first forty-three lines.

V. Furley's Thesis

In short, the opening of the proem simply is not like Lucretius. But it is very like Empedocles. In an outstandingly important study of the proem, David Furley has observed the high level of Empedoclean content to be found in it.[40] My object here will be to augment his observations with further evidence of Empedoclean echoes, and, finally, to propose a very different explanation for their presence here.

First, notice the by now familiar technique of working the four elements into a descriptive passage. The poem begins as follows (1–5):

> Ancestress of the race of Aeneas, delight of men and gods, nurturing Venus, who beneath the gliding beacons of the sky pervade the ship-bearing sea and the crop-carrying lands, because it is due to you that every race of animals is conceived and born into the sunlight....

Planted in the text already are references to the sky (which we have seen to represent the element air in Empedoclean imagery),[41] to the heavenly bodies and the sunlight (*i.e.* fire), to the sea, and to the land. We then launch into a second catalogue of the same four (6–9):

> From you, goddess, and your approach the winds and the clouds of the sky flee away. For you the creative earth pushes up sweet flowers. For you the sea's surface laughs, and the sky, made calm, shines with diffused light.

Again, the four elements feature: the winds and clouds of the sky, the earth, the sea, the sunlight. And if all this is still not enough, we need only move on to 29–43, Lucretius' prayer to Venus to intercede with her lover Mars. It has long been recognised that here we have a striking allusion to the joint-protagonists of Empedocles' physical poem, Love and Strife—whom Empedocles himself sometimes calls Aphrodite and Ares.

[40] *Supra* n.4. The range and depth of Empedoclean nuances in the proem are further enriched by Clay 22f, 49ff, 82–110, 253–57.

[41] I offer this as a ground for going beyond Furley and detecting all four elements even in 1–5.

Furley has noted two other Empedoclean echoes in the proem, to which we will come shortly. But first the question must be asked: why should an Epicurean poem start with an Empedoclean prologue?

It is here that I part company with Furley. He argues that Lucretius' act of piety to Empedocles is the acknowledgement of a philosophical debt. Although Lucretius was himself a committed follower of Epicurus, Furley suggests, he recognised Empedocles as the inaugurator or champion of two traditions to which, as an Epicurean, he too adhered. The first of these is the insistence on absolutely unchanging physical elements. The second is the rejection of a teleological world-view, with all its implications of divine intervention.

But this could hardly explain Lucretius' decision to *open* with a tribute to Empedocles. No reader of the proems to Books 3, 5, and 6 can doubt that Lucretius' other philosophical debts pale into insignificance when compared with his acknowledged dependence upon Epicurus. Why then would he give his putative philosophical obligation to Empedocles the undeserved and thoroughly misleading prominence that it gains from a position at the poem's opening?

Moreover, the unwritten rules of philosophical allegiance in the ancient world do not normally permit the imputation of authority to anyone other than the founder of your own school, or, at most, to his own acknowledged forerunners.[42] The Epicurean school was second to none in observing this principle. It seems certain that Empedocles was not regarded by Epicurus or his successors as any sort of philosophical forerunner; and even an acknowledged forerunner like Democritus was treated with scant respect in the school.[43] If Lucretius broke with the standard pattern of philosophi-

[42] Argued in D. Sedley, "Philosophical Allegiance in the Greco-Roman World," in J. Barnes, M. T. Griffin, edd., *Philosophia Togata* (Oxford 1989) 97–119.

[43] For Democritus as an acknowledged precursor of Epicurus, see Plut. *Adv.Col.* 1108E–F. Epicurean attacks on Empedocles include those of Hermarchus (see F. Longo Auricchio, *Ermarco, Frammenti* [Naples 1988] 66–73, 92–99, 125–50, and P. A. Vander Waerdt, "Hermarchus and the Epicurean Genealogy of Morals," *TAPA* 118 [1988] 87–106, esp. 89f n.13) and Colotes (Plut. 1111F ff); see also Cic. *Nat.D.* 1.29; and Diogenes of Oenoanda 5 II.2–4 Chilton, with the further passages assembled by Vander Waerdt. Here and in what follows I am talking about the treatment of other philosophers by Epicurus' followers. I do not believe that Epicurus himself was so ungenerous: see D. Sedley, "Epicurus and his Professional Rivals," in J. Bollack and A. Laks, edd., *Etudes sur l'épicuréisme antique* (= *CahPhilol* 1 [1976]) 119–59.

cal allegiance, that would be a most exceptional departure for which we would need strong evidence. His declarations of absolute loyalty to Epicurus, as the very first philosopher to liberate men from fear of the divine,[44] hardly encourage any such speculation.

Even on the two philosophical issues picked out by Furley, element theory and anti-teleology, it is doubtful whether Lucretius or any other Epicurean would have been as generous in acknowledging Empedocles' contribution as Furley proposes. Indeed, so far as concerns element theory, Lucretius is emphatic at 1.734–41 (translated *supra* 278) that this is *not* a topic on which Empedocles acquitted himself with distinction.

That there is something, singular or plural, that somehow persists through all cosmogonical and other changes is common ground for all physical philosophers from Anaximander on. No doubt Empedocles' elements were more emphatically *unchanging* than those of his predecessors. At least, he says that as the elements intermingle they both become different things at different times and remain always alike (B 17.34f). He probably means that they form different compound substances but nevertheless retain their own distinctive properties in the mixture. But other interpretations were possible—for example, that in mixtures the elements do retain their original properties, but that these remain dormant until the compounds separate out again. And, at any rate, I see little sign that Lucretius was prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt on this point. In criticising the four-element theory, he makes no gesture of respect even for the well-advertised indestructibility of Empedoclean elements (B 8, 9, 12): on the contrary, his principal ground for rejecting the theory is that stuffs like earth, air, fire, and water are inevitably perishable (1.753–62). As for their unchangeability, he mentions this as no more than a *possible* interpretation of the theory, and one that would rob it of what little explanatory power it has (770–81).

Does Empedocles fare any better in Lucretius' eyes as a champion of anti-teleology? It cannot be denied that Aristotle casts him in that rôle: in defending the teleological structure of organisms, Aristotle contrasts his view with the zoogonical thesis of Empedocles that originally a set of randomly composed monsters sprang up—graphically described by Empedocles as "ox-children man-faced"[45]—of which only the fittest survived. This anticipation of

[44] Especially 1.62–79 (see below), 3.1–22, 5.9–13.

[45] B61.2. *Cf.* Arist. *Phys.* 198b32, 199b10–12.

one of the principles of Darwinism has earned Empedocles widespread respect, including, it is sometimes suggested, the respect of the Epicureans. For Lucretius testifies (5.837–77) that they adopted a similar-sounding theory of the survival of the fittest as their basis for the origin of species.

I would not want to deny the probability of a historical link between the Empedoclean and Epicurean theories. But it is a large leap from that to the supposition that the Epicureans *acknowledged* a debt to Empedocles. Indeed, it can be precisely in those cases where a school is drawing on the ideas of another that it is most at pains to minimise the resemblance and to stress its own originality. This appears to have been the Epicurean attitude to the Empedoclean theory of evolution. Plutarch (*Adv. Col.* 1123B) tells us explicitly that the Epicureans derided Empedocles' "ox-children man-faced." And well they might, for Empedocles' monsters were themselves the bizarre product of random combinations of limbs and organs that in an even earlier stage had sprung up and wandered about on their own (A 72, B 57)! There is nothing like this in the Epicurean theory, as we hear about it from Lucretius; and I can see no attempt in Lucretius Book 5 to restore to Empedocles the credit which the Epicurean school traditionally denied him.[46]

Indeed, since Lucretius certainly knew Empedocles' physical poem at first hand and did not have to rely exclusively on Aristotelian-influenced doxography,[47] it certainly should not be assumed that he read Empedocles as a pioneering opponent of teleology. If Aristotle chooses Empedocles rather than the far more suitable Democritus for that rôle, it is surely because Empedocles, perhaps alone among the Presocratics, has actually supplied him with an illustration of what a non-teleological explanation of an organism

[46] Furley (61 with n.15) supports his thesis with the claim that Lucretius 5.837–41 is a translation of Empedocles B 57. Although it may pointedly recall the Empedoclean lines, it is hardly a translation. Where Empedocles describes isolated limbs, Lucretius describes whole organisms with congenital defects—and that represents a crucial difference between the two zoogonical theories.

[47] *Cf.* Clay 22f, 289f nn.43f. W. Rösler, "Lukrez und die Vorsokratiker: doxographische Probleme im I. Buch von 'De rerum natura'," *Hermes* 101 (1973) 48–64, stresses Lucretius' use of doxography in his critique of Empedocles at 1.714–829; but this is, I believe, a special case, in so far as the passage is almost certainly based on Epicurus' own criticism of earlier physical theories in *On Nature* 14 and 15, which in turn probably relied heavily on Theophrastus' Φυσικῶν δόξαι: see D. Sedley, "The Character of Epicurus' *On Nature*," *Atti del XVII Congresso Internazionale di Papirologia* I (Naples 1984) 381–87.

would look like.[48] It does not follow that Empedocles' own intention, taken in context, came over as anti-teleological.[49] As is well known, he is supposed to have postulated four stages of animal evolution, of which the compounding of the ox-children man-faced was only the second. Either in the first stage, that of solitary animal parts, or perhaps in the third stage, that of the so-called "whole-natured forms," he described the creation of individual animal parts in terms that could hardly have won him the friendship of an anti-teleologist like Lucretius. In B 84, already mentioned above, Empedocles describes how Aphrodite[50] cunningly created the eye, just like a man fitting together a lantern for the preconceived purpose of lighting his way at night. Even if one strips from this the figurative personification of Love as a divine artisan, one is left with the impression of an intelligent and purposive creative force. The architectonic rôle of Love in Empedocles' cosmic cycle makes it a very hard task indeed to portray him as a pure mechanist.

Why, then, does Lucretius nevertheless speak approvingly of Empedocles' "discoveries" (1.732f)? To see this in perspective, it is important to note that only four lines later he speaks with equal approval of the "discoveries" of other, unnamed natural philosophers whom he brackets with Empedocles. Lucretius is not, in effect, singling out Empedocles as a uniquely important authority but is expressing an Epicurean's qualified respect for the work of the Presocratic natural philosophers in general. Following Epicurus, he applauds the Presocratic tendency to seek physical, as opposed to theological, explanations for such cosmic phenomena as celestial motions, eclipses, and earthquakes. The Epicurean school's method of handling these phenomena was to catalogue with approval all the available physical explanations of each, adding that any or all might be correct, so that to choose between them would be arbitrary and unscientific. Both Epicurus, in his *Letter to Pythocles*, and Lucretius, in Books 5 (509–770) and 6, thus come to list as possibilities a range of explanatory theses deriving from Presocratic philosophers, including Empedocles. For example, both Epicurus (*Ep. ad Pyth.* 101) and Lucretius (6.204) accept as one of the possible explanations of lightning the thesis of Empedocles (A63) that it is fire from the

[48] So too, in a different way, at Arist. *Part.An.* 640a19ff.

[49] I pass over the further complication that teleology was not yet at this date a recognised issue on which sides had to be taken.

[50] B86 confirms that Aphrodite was the artisan in question.

sun trapped in the clouds. It is, I am convinced, only at this level of detail that the Epicureans, Lucretius included, are prepared to applaud the "discoveries" of Empedocles.

VI. Empedocles as Literary Forebear

If, then, Lucretius is not thanking Empedocles for the content of the *DRN*, perhaps he is thanking him for its form. There are, after all, well-recognised formal correspondences between the two hexameter poems. *De rerum natura* no doubt translates Περὶ φύσεως, a conventional title for many Greek cosmological texts, including Empedocles' physical poem. Indeed, one late source reports Empedocles' title as Περὶ φύσεως τῶν ὄντων,[51] which would be closer still to *De rerum natura*. Lucretius' poem is addressed to a friend, Memmius, as Empedocles' *On Nature* is to his friend Pausanias. And both at certain points turn to address an invocation to the muse Calliope.[52]

My hypothesis will be as follows: the proem of the *DRN* is, *and is meant to be recognised as*, an imitation of the proem to Empedocles' Περὶ φύσεως.

The letter of Cicero with which we opened constitutes strong evidence that contemporary readers could be expected to recognise this imitation, if such it was. For it attests a literary climate in which Empedocles was on the list of familiar Greek authors,[53] either through direct acquaintance or through Latin translations. (Even if educated Romans shared Cicero's inability to struggle through to the end of Sallustius' *Empedoclea*, they could be assumed to have read the opening.) And it shows us Lucretius being thought about by his contemporaries in an Empedoclean context.

[51] The *Suda s.v.* "Empedocles"=31 A 2 D.-K. There is no independent evidence to confirm this title, but it seems not implausible for a fifth-century work. *Cf.* Melissus' title Περὶ φύσεως ἢ περὶ τοῦ ὄντος, whose genuineness is guaranteed by its satirisation in Gorgias' Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ἢ περὶ φύσεως. Viewed as a variant on this, Περὶ φύσεως τῶν ὄντων is entirely apposite for a pluralist manifesto like that of Empedocles.

[52] Emped. B3, 131; Lucretius 6.92–95. See Clay 253–57.

[53] For a judicious discussion of Ennius' possible use of Empedocles, see O. Skutsch, *The Annals of Quintus Ennius* (Oxford 1985) 160, 164 n.18, 260, 394ff, 758. Ovid's extensive use of Empedocles in the speech of Pythagoras in *Met.* 15 will be the subject of a forthcoming paper by Philip Hardie, which he has kindly let me see in draft.

On my hypothesis, Lucretius' purpose is to establish from the outset the precise Greek literary mantle he is assuming (rather as Vergil's *Aeneid* announces with the opening words *arma virumque cano* that it will be a combined *Iliad-Odyssey*). Literary pedigree was a matter of immense importance to Roman poets, and Lucretius, in his poetic manifesto at 1.921ff and his appreciation of Ennius' pedigree at 1.117ff, shows himself to be no exception.

To amplify the hypothesis: Lucretius is imitating Empedocles' proem but adapting it, as he goes along, (a) to a Roman patriotic theme and (b) to Epicurean philosophy, at the same time steering us gently away from Empedocles' actual doctrines. His object? To announce himself as the Roman Empedocles—the great Roman poet of nature. In short, he is laying claim to a literary, not a philosophical, heritage. For there can be little doubt that it was to Empedocles, rather than to the only other plausible candidate, Parmenides, that Lucretius looked as his great Greek forebear in the tradition of cosmological poetry.[54]

A glaring weakness of this hypothesis will already be obvious. We do not have the proem to Empedocles' *On Nature*.[55] How then can we say anything at all about its resemblance or otherwise to Lucretius' proem? My answer is twofold. First, we are not altogether without evidence about its content, as I hope to show. And second, if the proposed hypothesis proves capable of explaining features of Lucretius' proem that otherwise remain inexplicable, that in itself would provide some degree of confirmation.

1.1–49. I shall begin my defence of the hypothesis with an examination of the opening lines (translated *supra* 282):

> *Aeneadum genetrix, hominum divomque voluptas,*
> *alma Venus, caeli subter labentia signa*
> *quae mare navigerum, quae terras frugiferentis*
> *concelebras....*

The linguistic case for a direct Empedoclean model seems to me a rather strong one. The first two words are, of course, a distinctively

[54] This was the comparison that regularly occurred to Roman readers: see *e.g.* Quint. *Inst.* 1.4.4; Lactant. *Div.Inst.* 2.12.4.

[55] Van der Ben offers his own wholesale reconstruction of Empedocles' proem. Most of it rests, in my view, on pure guesswork. My grounds for rejecting it will simply be the arguments I offer below for accepting a different reconstruction, based largely on Lucretius.

Roman invocation. But *hominum divomque voluptas* has the hallmark of Empedoclean ancestry. The identical phrase recurs, with a small change of syntax, at 6.92–95, in an address to Calliope that has long been recognised as an Empedoclean touch on Lucretius' part.[56] *Hominum divomque* could translate some variant on the regular hexameter ending ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε, used in Homer's formulaic designation of Zeus as "father of men and gods." Such reworkings of Homeric locutions and concepts are an integral feature of Empedocles' poetry.[57] And *voluptas* picks up Γηθοσύνη, 'Delight', used by Empedocles, like 'Aphrodite', as a title for his goddess Love (B 17.24). Next, *alma* recalls ζείδωρος, 'life-giving', an attested Empedoclean epithet for Aphrodite (B151). We then proceed, in 2–9, to the elaborate double interweaving of the four elements into the hymn. For Lucretius to expect any reader to identify these as the Empedoclean four in the very opening lines of the poem, without any prior clue, would be wildly optimistic. It is far more credible that he found them already present in his Empedoclean original. We have already noted that interweaving the four elements into a descriptive passage is an authentic Empedoclean device.

Line 3 is remarkable for its pair of compound adjectives. Lucretius has a well-known penchant for these quasi-Greek formations,[58] and indeed they elsewhere sometimes combine with Greek loan words to build up an evocative context that transports his reader to the Greek world.[59] But it is an unusual feature of this pair that both accurately translate actual Greek compound adjectives—respectively, *navigerum*=ναυσίπορον and *frugiferentis*=καρποφόρους (or a participial equivalent from καρποφορεῖν). The line practically tumbles into a Greek hexameter unaided: ναυσίπορον πόντον καὶ γαίας καρποφορούσας, or the like.

In line 21 Venus emerges as the controller of all *natura*, with the strongest possible indications that the term here signifies not so much 'nature' as 'birth' (through its derivation from *nasci*, 'to be born'). As Diskin Clay has shown, this unmistakably reflects Em-

[56] 6.94, *Calliope, requies hominum divomque voluptas.*

[57] See the seminal study of Bollack (*supra* n.5: I 277ff). Aristotle, in his lost Περὶ ποιητῶν, called Empedocles Ὁμηρικός (D.L. 8.57).

[58] Lucretius' compound adjectives are conveniently catalogued by C. Bailey, *Lucretius, De Rerum Natura* I (Oxford 1947) 132ff.

[59] *E.g.* 2.618–20, 4.580–89.

pedocles' characteristic use of φύσις with precisely the same shift from the more familiar 'nature' to 'birth'.[60]

Beyond these linguistic and conceptual considerations, it is in any case eminently plausible that Empedocles' poem should have opened with a hymn to Aphrodite. Hesiod's *Works and Days*, with its opening hymn to Zeus, would constitute ample precedent within the tradition of didactic poetry; and it goes without saying that Aphrodite would be Empedocles' preferred divinity. In B128 he makes it a mark of the Golden Age, in which among other things there was no animal slaughter, that Aphrodite was the only divinity worshipped:

> Nor did they have Ares or Strife as a god, nor was Zeus or Cronos or Poseidon their king, but Cypris was queen.... Her they propitiated with pious images....

I am not suggesting that this fragment itself comes from Empedocles' proem. But it does reveal a feature of his religious thought that Lucretius could himself use to advantage—namely the idea that the identity of a person's divinities is a function of that person's own moral state.[61] If you are a peaceful person, Ares is not your god, but Aphrodite is. Lucretius, as an Epicurean, must hold the somewhat similar view that the gods' true nature is peaceful, and that men's tendency to endow them with angry and warlike temperaments is a projection of their own moral maladjustment.[62]

This may offer us a lead on the much debated lines 44–49, in which Lucretius presents the correct Epicurean view of the gods as tranquil and detached. These lines occur also at 2.646–51, where they appear superficially much more at home, and many editors believe that they are an intrusive gloss in the proem:[63] it seems anomalous for Lucretius to stress the total detachment of the gods from human affairs directly after his prayer to Venus to intervene and save the Roman republic from war.

But now imagine an Empedoclean proem in which Aphrodite, as

[60] B8. See Clay 83–95, with the parallels cited at 308 n.29.

[61] *Cf.* B17.23, where Love is "she by whom mortals think friendly thoughts and perform peaceful deeds."

[62] See A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* I (Cambridge 1987) 139–49. The point stands whether or not, as argued there, Lucretius was wrong to understand Epicurus' gods as objectively real organisms.

[63] See the arguments marshalled by E. Courtney, "Quotation, Interpolation and Transposition," *Hermathena* 143 (1987) 7–18, at 11ff.

Love, is asked to propitiate Ares, as Strife. What Empedocles would have intended by this is not so much an attempt to interfere with the inevitable progression of the cosmic cycle, as a plea to men to let their peaceful tendencies calm and suppress the bloodthirsty side of their nature.[64] If so, Lucretius would welcome this essentially moral use of myth and prayer, and could readily apply it to the current war-torn state of his own country. But since Empedocles regards Ares/Strife as a real, if less palatable, god, Lucretius might very naturally want to add an Epicurean corrective: that Venus' hoped-for propitiation of Mars represents no more than men's return to the one *true* conception of the divine nature as tranquil and detached, instead of angry and warlike. Hence the connexion of thought found in the text: Venus, make Mars peaceful, because that alone is the true nature of divinity. Or, translated into Epicurean moral terms: Romans, let your belief in a peaceful god overcome your belief in a warlike god, because peacefulness alone is the true nature of godlike happiness. The connexion of thought could no doubt have been made clearer; but I would be very reluctant to rob Lucretius of this important Epicurean modification of Empedoclean theology.

By this stage I am no longer suggesting direct translation or line-by-line imitation of Empedocles' proem on Lucretius' part, but the deployment of the same sequence of themes as occurred in it, for increasingly Epicurean purposes.

1.50–61. The next section of Lucretius' proem is a programmatic address to Memmius. He asks Memmius to give him his full attention—perhaps an echo of the passage that contained Empedocles' surviving line "Listen to me, Pausanias, son of wise Anchiteus" (B1). He then proceeds to outline the content of the poem. He will explain to Memmius the character of the heaven and the gods, and the elements (56f)

> *unde omnis natura creet res auctet alatque*
> *quove eadem rursum natura perempta resolvat.*

[64] Eustathius (*Od.* 310.33ff, *ad* Hom. *Od.* 8.367) may imply that Empedocles used the myth of the union of Aphrodite and Ares as an allegory for friendship; and since there is no stage within the cosmic cycle itself at which Love and Strife unite, the likeliest location for that piece of symbolism would indeed be his proem. However, Eustathius' words may mean no more than that some allegorists proposed an Empedoclean interpretation of the myth; *cf.* Heraclit. *Alleg.Hom.* 69.8, and F. Buffière, *Les Mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque* (Paris 1956) 168–72.

from which nature creates, increases, and nurtures all things, and into which that same nature once more resolves them when they are destroyed.

After this he spends four lines naming his cosmic first principles (*genitalia corpora*, *semina rerum*, *etc.*).

This dual process, whereby things combine and are once more dissolved into their constituents, closely echoes Empedocles' own programmatic description in B17, a passage that is explicitly attested as coming from the opening of his physical poem.[65] It begins:

δίπλ' ἐρέω· τοτὲ μὲν γὰρ ἓν ηὐξήθη μόνον εἶναι
ἐκ πλεόνων, τοτὲ δ' αὖ διέφυ πλέον' ἐξ ἑνὸς εἶναι.

I will tell a double tale. For at one time there grew to be just one thing from many, and at another it grew apart once more to be many out of one.

The symmetrical two-way nature of the process is emphasised repeatedly in similarly balanced antitheses for a further fifteen lines, after which Empedocles, like Lucretius, proceeds to name the cosmic principles underlying the process—the four elements, plus Love and Strife. The formal parallelism of the two programmatic passages is striking.

It begins to look highly plausible that Empedocles' proem to *On Nature*, having opened with a hymn to Aphrodite, then continued with a programmatic address to Pausanias, of which B17 formed a part.

1.62–79. Lucretius' next section is his praise of Epicurus'[66] intellectual achievement. At a time when mankind was wretchedly oppressed by religion, a certain Greek became the first (*primum Graius homo*, 66) to stand up against its tyranny. Such were his mental powers that he was able to break through the "flaming walls of the world" and traverse with his intellect the measureless universe. By reporting back to us the laws that bind and limit natural processes, he has broken the power of religion.

Once more there is a clear Empedoclean model, B129, almost certainly referring to Pythagoras:

[65] Simpl. *In Phys.* 161.14f; see preamble to B17 in D.-K.

[66] I am unpersuaded by the proposal of L. Edelstein, "Primum Graius homo (Lucretius 1.1–149)," *TAPA* 71 (1940) 78–90, that the reference is a general one to the Presocratic physical tradition. The proems to Books 3, 5, and 6 supply ample evidence of Lucretius' belief that Epicurus was the first to make the crucial breakthrough, scientific as well as moral.

> There was among them a man of extraordinary knowledge, possessing a vast treasury of understanding, and master of every kind of wise deed. For when he reached out with all his understanding he easily saw everything that is, over ten and twenty generations of men.

As Furley has pointed out,[67] the Lucretian passage unmistakably recalls the Empedoclean. Both men are great historical figures, too august to be named. And both are praised for their intellectual achievement in breaking through the boundaries of ordinary human experience—Pythagoras for his recollection of his former incarnations,[68] Epicurus for his grasp of the nature of the infinite universe beyond our own world.

Doctrinally, it should be noticed, Lucretius and Empedocles are veering ever further apart. Epicurus' discoveries, which secured his victory over religion, are taking the place of an Empedoclean religious doctrine that is anathema to Lucretius, the doctrine of transmigration.

1.80–101. There follows Lucretius' direct attack on the evils of religion, illustrated with the example of Agamemnon's sacrifice of his own daughter Iphigeneia. Furley is right to point out the clear reminiscence of Empedocles B137, in which Empedocles attacks the sin of animal slaughter with the example of a father unwittingly sacrificing his own son, who has transmigrated into the body of an ox. There is no detailed linguistic imitation, but the close functional parallelism of the two pathetic scenes of sacrifice should leave little doubt that the one passage is written with the other in mind. (Lucretius' description does not, incidentally, appear to be directly modelled on any of the accounts of Iphigeneia's sacrifice extant in Greek tragedy.)

1.102–35. Lucretius continues with a warning to Memmius not to be confused by superstitious tales, such as those about the survival and transmigration of the soul. In the course of making the point, he names Ennius as the author of such a confusion—although, he adds, Ennius must be given his due as the great innovator who brought Greek poetry to the medium of the Latin language.

[67] See also W. Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1972) 137; P. R. Hardie, *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium* (Oxford 1986) 39 n.17.

[68] For the tradition of Pythagoras' multiple incarnations, see Burkert (*supra* n.67) 137ff.

Why did Lucretius choose to include the topic of transmigration in his proem? In view of all the Empedoclean echoes we have already witnessed, it can hardly be a coincidence that Empedocles likewise outlined his beliefs about transmigration in his proem. It is here that I can at last call upon the findings of the earlier part of this paper, in which I defended the attribution of B 115, Empedocles' explanation of his doctrine of transmigration, to the proem of his *On Nature*. If I am right, and Lucretius' attack on transmigration is an intended counterpart to Empedocles' exposition of the doctrine at the corresponding point in his own proem, he has now moved yet further in distancing himself philosophically from his principal literary model.[69] Where previously we saw him adapting themes from Empedocles' proem to his Epicurean philosophy, he is now presenting his own matching passage not as an adaption of Empedocles, but as a direct antidote to his teachings.

1.136–45. Finally we come to the closing section of Lucretius' proem, in which he stresses the magnitude of his poetic task—a task made harder, he says, by the deficiencies of the Latin language and the novelty of the subject matter. It is overwhelmingly tempting to correlate this with the group of fragments (B 8–11, 15) in which Empedocles deplores the imprecision of ordinary language in speaking of things' being born and dying where there is in reality only combination and separation, but adds that he will follow the convention. The shared theme of how to cope with the deficiencies of one's own language constitutes a strong link between the two passages. We have no explicit attribution of these fragments to Empedocles' proem, but B 8 is at least cited by Simplicius as coming from the opening book of *On Nature*; and even without the Lucretian parallel the proem has always seemed the likeliest location.

[69] Undoubtedly the dream passage in Ennius' own proem is also directly echoed in these lines: see Skutsch (*supra* n.53) 12, 155; Clay 310 n.48; J. H. Waszink, "The Proem of the *Annales* of Ennius," *Mnemosyne* SER. IV 4 (1950) 215–40, esp. 224f. So Lucretius is here distancing himself from Ennius' beliefs, while revering his poetry, in a way that pointedly parallels his treatment of Empedocles. (The point is redoubled if, as seems likely, Ennius' beliefs were themselves influenced by Empedocles: *cf.* Hardie [*supra* n.67] 17–22, 79–83.) Indeed, anyone who may doubt the appropriateness of my distinction between a 'literary' and a 'philosophical' debt to Empedocles should note that just such a distinction operates here with regard to Ennius.

VII. Empedocles' Proem

A little earlier we arrived at the informed guess that Empedocles' proem to *On Nature* opened with a hymn to Aphrodite, followed by a programmatic address to Pausanias. We can now, in the light of our subsequent findings, ask how it went on.

Lucretius' proem offers the following sequence of topics in its latter part (62–145): (a) Epicurus' intellectual achievement and defeat of religion; (b) the evils of religion; (c) the folly of uncritically believing religious tales, such as those about transmigration; (d) the magnitude of Lucretius' poetic task. The thematic link between the first three is a perfectly satisfactory one, and the last is, if not directly connected, still an appropriate enough topic to address in a proem. And yet there is something disquietingly specific, not to say arbitrary, about the third topic. Why go to such lengths to criticise the transmigration thesis in particular, when there are countless other offending doctrines? Is it merely in order to introduce a heavily qualified tribute to Ennius?[70] My preferred explanation has been that the choice and sequence of topics was in some measure dictated by a further consideration, Lucretius' desire to reproduce the thematic structure of Empedocles' proem. One incidental by-product has been the materials for a scissors-and-paste reconstruction of the latter part of Empedocles' own proem. Now stand back and look at the result. We have supplied Empedocles with the following fluent sequence of topics: (a) Pythagoras' achievement in recalling past incarnations: an appeal to authority for the doctrine of transmigration; (b) the evils of animal slaughter, illustrated by unwitting sacrifice of a deceased and transmigrated son: the moral importance of the doctrine of transmigration; (c) the origin and nature of transmigration itself; (d) the folly of being misled by ordinary usage into supposing that anything literally dies.

[70] I do not mean to deny that direct reaction to Ennius plays a significant part in this passage (see previous note). My question concerns the overall thematic structure of the passage. I would tentatively add that Lucretius is unlikely to have been impelled by contemporary philosophical developments to pick transmigration as a target. To judge from the evidence of Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, the current revival of interest in Plato's immortality doctrine played down reincarnation in favour of discarnate survival. Nor does transmigration appear to be an attested feature of first-century B.C. neo-Pythagoreanism (for which see J. M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* [London 1977] 117–21, and *cf.* P. A. Vander Waerdt, "Peripatetic Soul-Division, Posidonius, and Middle Platonic Moral Psychology," *GRBS* 26 [1985] 373–94, esp. 388f).

The thematic coherence of this sequence is extraordinary. It is much more tight-knit than the corresponding passage in Lucretius, and tells a complete story of its own, one thematically parallel to the Lucretian passage, yet utterly unlike it in detailed content. What is more, the denial of literal birth and death with which it ends not only gives a philosophical basis to the transmigration doctrine that precedes it, but also prepares the ground for the physical exposition to follow, which will likewise be founded on the Parmenidean tenet that nothing literally comes to be or perishes.[71] This emergence of a reconstructed Empedoclean proem with a coherence and vitality of its own is an additional windfall, which lends welcome support to my hypothesis about Lucretius' proem, quite apart from what it promises to teach us about Empedocles himself.

The nature of my case has been essentially cumulative. Every main stage of Lucretius' proem has proved to correlate with an Empedoclean original. The first part reads as if it were closely imitating an Empedoclean hymn, while the remainder sustains a virtually unbroken series of thematic links with known or attested passages of Empedocles. Moreover, every one of those Empedoclean originals can plausibly be located in the proem of his *On Nature*, either on independent evidence, or through its thematic coherence with passages that have already been located there.

Lucretius is the servant of two masters. Epicurus is the founder of his philosophy; Empedocles is the father of his genre. It is the unique task of Epicureanism's first poet to combine these two loyalties. And that task is what gives his proem its very distinctive character.[72]

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[71] See especially B12. The Parmenidean tenet seems to be applied by Empedocles indiscriminately to the soul's survival and to the permanence of the elements: both equally are separated, not destroyed. How coherent this conflation is is another question. *Cf.* especially Kahn (*supra* n.7).

[72] Ancestors of this paper have been presented to audiences at Berkeley, UCLA, Stanford, and the University of Wales, and a near-final draft was delivered at the conference on "Tradition and Innovation in Epicureanism" at Duke University in April 1989. I am grateful for invaluable comments received on all those occasions, and also in writing from David West, Don Fowler, Geoffrey Lloyd, Robert Wardy, Catherine Osborne, Samuel Scolnicov, Philip Hardie, Paul Vander Waerdt, Michael Reeve, Ted Kenney, and Bill Furley.