

“Lucretius on Reason, Hierarchy, and the Natural Order”

1. Cicero, *De Re Publica* 1.56

magna auctoritas est multique testes...ita  
consensisse gentes decretis videlicet principum,  
nihil esse rege melius, quoniam deos omnes  
censent unius regi numine...

There is great authority and many witnesses...to the fact that people  
have consented, of course, to the judgments of their rulers, that there is  
nothing better than a king, since all of the gods consent to the power of  
one king...

2. Cicero, *De Re Publica* 1.12

neque enim est ulla res in qua propius ad deorum  
numen virtus accedat humana, quam civitatis aut  
condere novas aut conservare iam conditas.

For there is nothing in which human virtue can approach closer to the  
power of the gods, than by establishing new states or in preserving those  
already established.

3. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 1.44-49

omnis enim per se divum natura necessest  
immortali aevo summa cum pace fruatur  
semota ab nostris rebus seiunctaque longe;  
nam privata dolore omni, privata periculis,  
ipsa suis pollens opibus, nihil indiga nostri,  
nec bene promeritis capitur nec tangitur ira.

For it is inherent in the nature of the gods  
that they enjoy an immortal life with the utmost peace,  
far removed and separate from our affairs,  
for they are free from all grief, free from danger,  
thriving in their own abilities, needing nothing from us,  
neither captivated by worthy conduct nor touched by anger.

4. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 1.78-9

quare religio pedibus subiecta vicissim  
obteritur, nos exaequat victoria caelo

Wherefore religion is in its turn cast down and trampled beneath our feet,  
his victory made us the equal of heaven...

5. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 2.1090-94

Quae bene cognita si teneas, natura videtur  
libera continuo, dominis privata superbis,  
ipsa sua per se sponte omnia dis agere expers.  
nam pro sancta deum tranquilla pectora pace  
quae placidum degunt aevom vitamque serenam

If you accept this knowledge well, you understand that nature  
is always unshackled, free from haughty despots, doing everything  
by herself spontaneously and with no input from the gods.  
For, taking into consideration the sacred minds of the gods in their  
peaceful calm who pass placid ages and a serene life...

6. Cicero, *De Officiis* 2.11

Quae ergo ad vitam hominum tuendam pertinent, partim sunt inanima... partim animalia, quae habent suos impetus et rerum appetitus. Eorum autem rationis expertia sunt, alia ratione utentia. Expertes rationis equi, boves, reliquae pecudes, apes, quarum opere efficitur aliquid ad usum hominum atque vitam. Ratione autem utentium duo genera ponunt, deorum unum, alterum hominum.

Of the things, then, that are necessary for the maintenance of human life, some are inanimate ... and some are animate and have their own instincts and appetites. Of these [animate ones], some lack the capacity for reason, but others do use it. Those lacking reason include horses, cattle, other herd animals, and bees; the labor of these contributes something to the human life and experience. There are two races of beings that do make use of reason: the one divine, the other human.

7. Cicero, *De Finibus* 3.67

Et quomodo hominum inter homines iuris esse vincula putant, sic homini nihil iuris esse cum bestiis. praeclare enim Chrysippus, cetera nata esse hominum causa et deorum, eos autem communitatis et societatis suae, ut bestiis homines uti ad utilitatem suam possint sine iniuria.

And just as they consider there to be bonds of right among humans, so they consider there to be no such bonds between humans and beasts. For Chrysippus brilliantly stated that all other things were created for the sake of humans and gods, but that they [i.e. humans and gods] were created for their own community and fellowship, so that people can use beasts for their own advantage without injustice.

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Translations are my own.