

On *templa serena* at Lucretius' *De rerum natura* 2.7

At *DRN* 2. 6-7, Lucretius asserts that nothing is sweeter than holding (*tenere*) well-fortified (*bene munita*) serene temples (*templa serena*), raised-aloft (*edita*) by the doctrine of the wise (*doctrina sapientum*). The phrase *templa serena* has been contested (for *templa* as 'celestial realms,' see Giussani, 1896, 156; others *seem* to suggest that the citadels are on earth. See, e.g. Bailey, 1947, 798. Most scholars do not address the location of the citadels, but assume that Lucretius speaks of literal citadels (e.g. Sharrock, 2013, 18; Morrison, 2013, 223; Roy 2013, 782; Marković, 2008, 128; Fowler, 2002, 48-9, 54; De Lacy, 1964, 49)). In this talk, I suggest that we have not recognized Lucretius' metaphor in the phrase and I suggest that, with *templa serena*, Lucretius refers to 'tranquil minds' (rather than to tranquil temples) that derive their tranquility (*serena*) from having knowledge of Epicurean philosophy; accordingly, the phrase *edita doctrina sapientum* explains the means by which the minds are made serene, and the *bene munita* refers to the fact that it is Epicurean wisdom (*doctrina sapientum*) that has fortified the 'temples.' Thus, the passage does not refer to literal temples, real or imagined.

I suggest that, in this passage, Lucretius refers to a practice of Epicurean contemplative practice (holding a serene mind), wherewith one can, from a privileged perspective (*unde*, 8), 'look down on' (*despicere*, 8) non-Epicureans who live lives subject to avaricious volitions. Lucretius is using a form of rhetoric that is protreptic, for he encourages others to want to be in a position of 'superiority' relative to non-Epicureans who suffer from unnecessary passions. Lucretius' *templa* are *edita* 'elevated' by *doctrina sapientum*, because the *templa* are 'higher' than the minds of those who are not 'elevated' by Epicurean philosophy. By using the imagery of heights, Lucretius participates in the philosophical *topos* that philosophical lives are 'higher'

than common lives and suggests that, we infer, the Epicurean life is ‘higher’ than the lives of members of other philosophical schools (and ‘higher’ than the lives of religious practitioners).

Lucretius’ use of *tenere* corroborates the suggestion that *templa* is metaphorical, for one cannot ‘hold’ external temples, whether we envision the temples as temples on earth or as temples in the sky. We can, however, ‘hold’ *serena* mental states that derive from practicing Epicureanism. The metaphorical use of *tenere* is ubiquitous (cf. *OLD* s.v.), and *tenere* is as metaphorical as is *templa* in this passage. All human beings can ‘hold tranquil minds,’ if they pursue Epicurean practice.

Elsewhere in the *DRN*, Lucretius uses language that corroborates the suggestion that *templa serena* contains a metaphorical linguistic expression. Lucretius refers to ‘the shrine (*aduton*) of the *cor*’ at 1.737, and this corroborates the argument that *templa* refer to elements of the mind at 2.7, for at 1.737 Lucretius refers to an important body-part as a sacred space. The most important comparandum for *templa* referring to mental realms at 2.7, however, occurs at 5.103, where Lucretius refers to *templa...mentis*, with *templa mentis* referring to mental realms. Thus, the *DRN* offers corroborative linguistic evidence in favor of the suggestion that *templa serena* refers to mental phenomena at 2.7. Furthermore, the interpretation explains why Lucretius would call ‘temples’ *serena*; it is not temples that are ‘serene,’ which would be an illogical assertion (since temples are inanimate), but minds that are *serena* thanks to practicing Epicureanism.

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