

Philosophical Vignettes at Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* 2.1-13

In a forthcoming article, Chris Eckerman offers a new interpretation of *DRN* 2.7-8, arguing that *tenere...templa serena* refers to practicing *ataraxia*. I am in agreement with Eckerman's suggestion. The purpose of this talk is to consider interpretive ramifications, left unaddressed, deriving from his philological argument. I argue that Lucretius begins his proem by developing vignettes around cornerstone concepts in the Epicurean ethical doctrine. I suggest that Lucretius develops an argumentative tricolon, with two vignettes emphasizing *aponia* (1-2, 5-6) and one vignette emphasizing *ataraxia* (7-13). Scholars have already recognized that, in the proem, Lucretius develops the idea that the Epicurean life offers security (*asphaleia*) (cf. Konstan 2008, 32), but, since we have not recognized, until recently, that the third member of the tricolon references *ataraxia*, we have not recognized that Lucretius develops a tricolon dedicated specifically to reflection on *aponia* in the first two limbs and on *ataraxia* in the third. That is to say, the proem does not focus on security generally but on the security that may be had in *aponia* and *ataraxia* specifically.

The first two lines provide Lucretius' first vignette on *aponia*.

Suave, mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis,
e terra magnum alterius spectare laborem;

Looking upon the great labor of another person from land when winds are upsetting the calm on the great sea is pleasant.

The term *laborem* (2) is programmatic, for, as M. Gale (2013, 33) has shown, Lucretius uses *labor* and *laborare* to reference 'the futile struggles of the non-Epicurean.' Accordingly, readers, as they become familiar both with Epicurean doctrine and with Lucretius' language, infer that the man is at sea for commercial reasons, pursuing the affluence that may result therefrom (cf.

limbs of the tricolon) and thereby transmits canonical Epicurean doctrine. Diogenes Laertius, in his *Lives of the Philosophers*, records (10.137), for example, that Epicurus holds that pains of the mind are worse than pains of the body and that pleasures of the mind are greater than pleasures of the body. With the privileging of *ataraxia* in the climactic element of the tricolon, Lucretius, I suggest, expounds canonical Epicurean doctrine.

Thus, I argue that Lucretius begins his proem with a tricolon that encourages the reader to reflect on *aponia* and *ataraxia*, although this has previously gone unnoted. In this respect, Lucretius, as *praeceptor doctrinae*, uses philosophical vignettes and thereby makes the technical teachings of *aponia* and *ataraxia* understandable to beginning readers, such as Memmius (as constructed within the text), who are not well familiar with Epicurean doctrine.

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