

# LUCRETIUS' CRITICISM OF THE EARLY GREEK PHILOSOPHERS \*

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## (1) HERACLITUS

The difficulties of understanding the philosophy and language of this offspring of a noble family who despised men, were known since the earliest time. The ancients gave him the name "*the obscure*"<sup>1</sup>.

The fragments of his book Περὶ Φύσεως indicate that his style is difficult, his language is sometimes very complex, as if he intended to be perplexing, as if he wanted only a few extraordinary people to understand him. Word-plays and antitheses, even oxymora, are quite frequent.

There are many instances of seeming contradictions, one close to the other, where their intimate connection is stressed.<sup>2</sup>

It will be sufficient to quote a few, some of which have lately been interpreted rhythmically<sup>3</sup>

1. μύροισι γὰρ μέζονες μέζονας μοίρας λαγχάνουσι<sup>4</sup>.

2. ἀξύνετοι ἀκούσαντες, κωροῖσιν εἰοκάσι· φάτις αὐτοῖσιν μαρτυρεῖ παρεόντας ἀπεινά<sup>5</sup>.

3. ἀθάνατοι θνητοί, θνητοί ἀθάνατοι, ζῶντες τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον, τὸν δὲ ἐκείνων βίον τεθνεῶτες<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Socrates according to Diog. Laert. (II 22), and Cicero *De fin. bon. et mal.* II 5, 15.

<sup>2</sup> About the language of H. cf. B. Snell, *Die Sprache Heraklits*, *Hermes*, vol. LXI (1926), pp. 353–381, and lately K. Deichgraber, *Rhythmische Elemente im Logos des Heraklit*, *Abh. d. Akademie d. Wissenschaften und d. Literatur, Geistes- und Sozialwissensch. Klasse, Jahrgang* 1962, pp. 481–551.

<sup>3</sup> cp. especially the Introduction to Deichgrabers' study, pp. 481–489.

<sup>4</sup> fr. B25D.

<sup>5</sup> fr. B34D.

<sup>6</sup> fr. B62D.

4. ξὺν νῶ λέγοντας ἰσχυρίζεσθαι χρῆ τῶ ξυνῶ πάντων κτλ.<sup>7</sup>

5. ὁ θεὸς ἡμέρη εὐφρόνη, χειμῶν θέρους, πόλεμος εἰρήνη, κάρρος λιμὸς κτλ.<sup>8</sup>

It should be noted that the language has a special function in Heraclitus' philosophy: his antitheses are not only symptoms of his personality, but are essentially connected with his system<sup>9</sup>. If we call something by its name — so says Heraclitus — we somehow separate it from its background. By calling the day a day we sever the connection between the day and its opposite, the night. Without this opposite, without the night, the day does not exist<sup>10</sup>.

In addition to the antitheses which he sometimes sharpens to an oxymoron, there are word-plays such as: τῶ οὖν τόξῳ ὄνομα βίος, ἔργον δὲ θάνατος;<sup>11</sup> this sentence is based on the word-play: βίος—βιός.

For Heraclitus fire is the base of everything, but it does not seem to be an element like water, air or ἀκτερον of his predecessors<sup>12</sup>, but for him fire is the λόγος<sup>13</sup>.

Men do not understand the λόγος, although they hear it: the majority, οἱ πολλοί, are stupid. Heraclitus' criticism is sharp and aggressive. He criticizes people who hear without understanding (e.g. fr. B 17, 19, 34 D), the poets *Homeros* (B 56 D), *Hesiodos* (fr. B 40, 41, 57 D), the philosophers *Pythagoras*, *Xenophanes* (fr. B 40, 41 D), and *Hekataios*; perhaps these are not the only ones. Heraclitus' opinion may be summarized in the following aggressive sentences:<sup>14</sup>

πολυμαθίη νόον ἔχειν οὐ δίδασκε  
 Ἡσίοδον γὰρ ἂν ἐδίδαξε καὶ Πυθαγόρην  
 αὐτίς τε Ξεινοφανῆ καὶ Ἑκαταῖον.

<sup>7</sup> fr. B114D.

<sup>8</sup> B 67 D; cf. Deichgraeber, *l.c.*, pp. 490/96. He demonstrates clearly the rhythmic structure of the fragment which is expressed also by the equal number of syllables of the words forming each pair: ἡμέρη—εὐφρόνη, χειμῶν—θέρους: πόλεμος—εἰρήνη; κάρρος—λιμὸς. D. points out that the hiatus prevents the listener from understanding a unity between the terms ἡμέρη—εὐφρόνη (p. 493). Another rhythmic factor is the order of the words in each pair: if the affirmative is marked by a and the negative by b, the following is found: a b b a b a b.

It seems that two further factors may be added:

1. Endings: η — η, ων — ος, ος — η, ος — ος.

2. Syllable-quantities: —υ—||—υ—; ——||υυ; υυυ||— — —; υυ||—X.

This looks quite interesting: while the first pair is identical, the other are opposites; the last pair may also be considered as a pair of opposites, because the syllable — ος is anceps, but should be long because of the pause after it.

These additional factors seem to prove the rhythmical structure of the piece and to confirm D's opinion.

<sup>9</sup> Snell points out that H's opposites are always 'living opposites' (p. 356), his language is poetical, full of sentiment; for him the language is a means of expression of sentiments, but he did not yet develop it towards logical clearness (p. 357).

<sup>10</sup> Snell, *l.c.*, p. 368.

<sup>11</sup> fr. 8B48 D.

<sup>12</sup> In that way, however, Lucretius understands the fire of Heraclitus, and therefore criticizes him.

<sup>13</sup> cp. the interesting discussion of λόγος in Deichgraeber's article. *l.c.*, p. 483/6, p. 493, p. 533 ss.

<sup>14</sup> fr. B 40 D; spelling according to Deichgraeber, *l.c.*, p. 515/6.

The majority is stupid, and stupid are also their teachers, the poets, and the philosophers : all these do hear the λόγος, but do not understand it, they lack νοῦς, and πολυμαθίη cannot teach them understanding.

Some features characteristic of Heraclitus can be summarized :

(1) Language has an important function in Heraclitus' philosophy. The use of antitheses and word-plays is essentially connected with his philosophic system and stresses the unity of opposites and the contradictions in unity.

(2) Heraclitus' language is prose, but has distinct rhythmic elements and structures of high expressive value ; the use of antitheses fits well into the rhythmic patterns.

(3) Heraclitus was a severe critic of almost every one.

(4) Even in antiquity it was extremely difficult to understand him.

#### (2) HERACLITUS IN LUCRETIUS' POEM

The passage dealing with Heraclitus consists of three sections :

(1) I 635—637 form the transition from the previous passage and a kind of introduction to the following.

(2) I 638—644 contain a personal attack on Heraclitus and on his followers, including the Stoics.

(3) I 645—704 contain the criticism of Heraclitus' philosophy, especially his opinion that fire is the basic element<sup>15</sup>;

This paper deals with *part 2*, i.e. Lucretius' relation to Heraclitus the man ; it may well be that Lucretius intended to criticize not only Heraclitus, but also those who preceded him and those who came after him.

Lucretius' attack is personal, fierce, bitter and emotional.

I 638 *Heraclitus init quorum dux proelia primus  
clarus ob obscuram linguam magis inter inanis  
quamde grauis inter Graios qui uera requirunt.  
Omnia enim stolidi magis admirantur amantque  
inuersis quae sub uerbis latitantia cernunt  
ueraque constituunt quae belle tangere possunt  
auris et lepido quae sunt fucata sonore.*

The passage starts with sounds of battle : *Heraclitus init* ; the *i* — sounds are prominent ; at the strongest places in the verse are the words *Heraclitus* — *primus*.

The subject is next to the predicate which is connected with its object by a strong hyperbaton *quorum dux*.

<sup>15</sup> This was not Heraclitus' opinion. Other subjects known as Heraclitean are not mentioned, e.g. the flux theory is conspicuously absent. The style and attitude of this third part are much less aggressive and sentimental than those of the second part ; they are more or less similar to the corresponding parts in the criticism of Empedocles (I 742—829) and of Anaxagoras (I 830—920), except for a few expressions : *perdelirum* (692), *cum uanum tum delirum* (698), *dementia* (704).

The structure of this verse is worth noting :

*Heraclitus* *primus*  
*init* *proelia*  
<sup>16</sup> *quorum dux*

Subject and attribute (or predicative) are the outer terminals, predicate and object the inner terminals and in the centre of the verse : *quorum dux*, which seems to be most important for Lucretius : *the leader of those !*

There are striking alliterations and vowel-parallelisms :

*Heraclitus* <sup>17</sup> *init*; *Proelia Primus*, *quorum dux*; and perhaps even the cacophonic : *dux Proelia* !

Heraclitus is the general, *dux*, who enters the battle at the head of his army. This picture is interesting : It has been pointed out that Lucretius likes metaphors from the sphere of war<sup>18</sup>, but if we remember Heraclitus' πόλεμος πάντων πατήρ and if we pay attention to what is told about Heraclitus' aggressive personality, facts which are corroborated by the fragments, we seem justified in assuming that it was Lucretius' intention to picture Heraclitus' personality. Here is the leader, but who are his soldiers? They are called *stolidi* and *inanes*.

The next verse (639) starts with a word-play which shows Lucretius at his best :

*clarus ob obsuram linguam* <sup>19</sup>

One of the meanings of this expression may be : 'famous on account of his obscure language', which shows some irony, but there seems to be more : there is a startling oxymoron ; expressions like *luce clarior* make us understand the contradictio in adiecto : *clarus ob obscuram* <sup>20</sup>.

Expressions of this kind we found in Heraclitus. Moreover, it does not seem probable that Lucretius did not notice the importance of the language in Heraclitus' philosophy. It is rather interesting that his criticism of Heraclitus in this section centres on the language, which is according to Lucretius used by Heraclitus as an instrument to obscure his opinions ; these seem to be — but are not — deep, so that stupid people are deceived by them, and suppose that beneath these 'inverted words' there is truth and meaning, but there are none.

The following verse (640) rises to a high stylistic level :

*quamde grauis inter Graios, qui uera requirunt,*

<sup>16</sup> *quorum*, used in demonstrative sense, is expected to be at the head of the sentence ; its position in the third place is rather strange.

<sup>17</sup> This is the only verse in Lucretius' poem where Heraclitus is mentioned ; but no conclusion can be drawn from this fact on Lucretius' attitude towards Heraclitus, as Empedocles and even Epicurus are mentioned once only.

<sup>18</sup> cp. M. Rozelaar, *Lukrez, Versuch einer Deutung*, Amsterdam 1943, p. 67 ss.

<sup>19</sup> In Lucan's *Pharsalia* I 86—7 we read : *imago clara per obscuram uultu maestissima noctem*. I would not have mentioned this, unless there were some other reminiscences in the *Pharsalia* to this book of Lucretius ; see note (43).

<sup>20</sup> Beginnings and endings are identical : *ob ob-scuram linguam*

The expression *gravis inter Graios* consists of three bisyllables with clash between ictus and prose-accent and with alliteration in adjective and noun: *gravis-Graios*. In contrast to this grave and beautiful verse there is the second half of the preceding verse: *magis inter inanis* and the following verse (641):

*omnia enim stolidi magis admirantur amantiue.*

It seems worthwhile to note the startling difference in sound appearance between verses 640 and 641: In the former 4 out of the 6 metrical units begin with long vowels, out of 14 vowels 6 are long and 8 short, whereas in the latter verse one metrical unit only begins with a long vowel<sup>21</sup> and 2 only out of 16 vowels are long.

(640)	a	ī	e	ō	ē	ī	
	e a	i	a i	ī	a e	u	
(641)	o	i	ī	a	a	a	
	i e	o i	a i	ī	u a	e.	

There is an internal rhyme in 641: *admirantur amantiue*, which looks as if it was intentional; contrasted with gravity and depth is lightness and superficiality.

With this verse starts the criticism, not of the master, but of his followers who wrongly think his teachings to be the truth: they are *stolidi*<sup>22</sup>.

Commentators thought that Lucretius unintentionally reminded his hearers by *stolidi* of *Stoici*<sup>23</sup>. He may suggest Ennius' verse:

*nam ui depugnare sues stolidi soliti sunt.*<sup>24</sup>

The next verse (642) has a double internal rhyme: *inversis quae sub uerbis*; the expression *inuersa uerba* is not easily understood: the commentators refer it to antitheses, even to allegories.<sup>25</sup>

One thing seems to be certain: Lucretius could not possibly have mentioned unusual word-order in Heraclitus' writings: at least in his

<sup>21</sup> (*stoli*)*di magis*.

<sup>22</sup> These are οἱ πολλοί of Heraclitus, there are also called ἀξύνετοι, and κωφοί (fr. B 34 D). The original meaning of κωφοί seems to be 'deaf' and so the word is used by Heraclitus in the above fragment, but it came to mean also 'stupid'; *stolidi*. Perhaps Lucretius intended to suggest this?

<sup>23</sup> So Bailey in his commentary to this verse: "probably an unintentional pun". Bailey mentions I 1098, where *stolidi* is used as epithet for *Stoici*. I am not sure that this pun was *unintentional*. See next note.

<sup>24</sup> *Ann. fr. 105 V*. This verse shows a pun: *stolidi soliti*. It is possible that Lucretius, who knew Ennius writings well, meant to recall another verse unknown to us, but the fact that the verse mentioned contains a word-play seems to suggest that Lucretius wanted the listener to remember it. Word-plays are legitimate here, because Heraclitus is criticized. By the way, Ennius is suggested also by *quamde* used by Lucretius only here, and mentioned by Festus 312, 32 ss L. as an ancient word used by Ennius.

<sup>25</sup> cp. Ernout-Robin who point to antitheses in Heraclitus; Bailey mentions Quintilian VIII 6,44: "ἀλλήγορα *quam inuersionem interpretantur, aliud uerbis, aliud sensu ostendit, etiam interim contrarium*".

fragments there are no instances of this. Allegories are rather rare, too, in the fragments. So, either we have to limit this criticism to antitheses only, or else, perhaps the numerous word-plays could be meant? It is suggested that the verb *inuerto* 'turn upside down', 'hurt', 'maime' could allude to instances like :

βίος-βίος, μῦθοι-μοῦρα, μαινόμενοι-μαίνεσθαι.

Next comes an oxymoron: *latitantia cernunt*; the verb *cerno* is used by Lucretius quite often and it is not always possible to find out the difference between its meaning and that of *uideo*, but it seems that *cerno* refers to clear, sharp vision, at least here; the verb *latito* appears 3 times at Lucretius, *lateo* 12 times; it is difficult to discern any difference in his use of these verbs; *latitantia cernunt* is a very strong oxymoron in a rather Heraclitean vein. If these people 'distinctly see hidden things', then either these things are not really hidden or they do not really see them. This looks like an ironical expression: they only imagine that they see something, but there is nothing to be seen. All these nice and seemingly deep word-plays, all these artifices of the language of Heraclitus, there is nothing behind them, and whoever thinks otherwise, is *stolidus, inanis*.

The two verses (643/44) concluding this section are most interesting :

*ueraque constituunt<sup>26</sup> quae belle tangere possunt  
auris et lepido quae sunt fucata sonore.*

Lucretius, the genius of a poet, who saw in his poem an effective means of explaining the difficult philosophical system of Epicurus<sup>27</sup>, criticizes those who think nice-sounding words, which influence the listeners' ears, to be the truth!

I confess that whenever I read these verses of Lucretius, I failed to grasp their full meaning: Did he intend to hit at the Stoics, such as Kleantes, the author of the Hymn to Zeus, or at others whose writings are lost? It was rather difficult to suppose that he meant the pupils of Heraclitus himself. Not until I read Deichgraeber's study did I understand that the rhythmical structure of Heraclitus' expressions and his special use of the language was alluded to by Lucretius. We may indeed say about Heraclitus' language, even in the scattered fragments which remained, about his words and sentences and their structure that they *belle tangere possunt auris* and *lepido (sunt) fucata sonore*.

This unique junction of sound and colour is most daring and suggests Heraclitus' style.

Deichgraeber's opinion about the rhythmical structure of Heraclitus' writings seems to be confirmed by the words of Lucretius, who criticizes the philosopher from Ephesus with his own means, using for this purpose the main elements found in Heraclitus' writings.

<sup>26</sup> The verb *constituunt* is in its meaning quite near to *cernunt*: both of them may mean 'to decide'. Cp. Varro LL 7, 98: *creui ualet constitui etc.*; perhaps *cernunt* (642) has an additional meaning: they decide that there is something hidden under the mixed up words, but in fact, there is nothing.

<sup>27</sup> e.g. I 945.

If we ask the question, why Lucretius' language is so aggressive, why this section is full of sharp expressions, word-plays and antitheses, the right answer seems to be not the one given usually, that this aggressiveness was caused by Lucretius' hatred of the Stoics and of Heraclitus, their spiritual father.<sup>28</sup> Although there can be no doubt of Lucretius' dislike of the Stoics, although Lucretius was fond of similes and metaphors from the sphere of war,<sup>29</sup> this may not be the full answer to the question.

In his criticism Lucretius touched upon all the important elements of Heraclitus' personality, by putting in its centre Heraclitus' language: he imitated his aggressiveness and sharpness, his fierce criticism, his contempt of men, he stressed his difficulty of expression, the rhythm and sound of his language. It may well be that Lucretius, the poet, wanted to present before the listener a picture of Heraclitus drawn by Heraclitean means, by his language and his style. They are all in here, the elements important for Heraclitus and known from his fragments: his aggressiveness, sharp criticism, the main characteristics of his language, its difficulty and its beauty, and its importance in Heraclitus' philosophy.

### (3) EMPEDOCLES<sup>30</sup>

Empedocles of Acragas in Sicily was a most influential personality: Poet,<sup>31</sup> prophet, philosopher, physician, statesman and orator all in one. Many tales were told about his life and death. He was most eager to know nature, but still more, he wanted to rule it, to force it to serve man.

Fragments of two of his poems remain: We have some 300 verses out of about 2000 of his *Περὶ Φύσεως*, which contained his explanation of the world in a mechanistic way as union and separation of four elements by two powers, *Φιλία* and *Νεῖκος*<sup>32</sup>.

Altogether different in subject and in style is Empedocles' other poem, *Καθαρμοί*, which contained about 3000 verses according to ancient testimonies<sup>33</sup>, but may have been much smaller. We have about 100 verses only.

In his poem addressed to the citizens of his native city Acragas, Empedocles appears as prophet and as physician, performing miracles.

While the style of *Περὶ Φύσεως* justifies to a certain extent Aristotle's assertion that Empedocles was no poet, but a philosopher who knew to use rhetoric and poetic means, in the *Καθαρμοί* there appears

<sup>28</sup> cf. Bailey, *Comm.* vol. II, p. 711. Ernout-Robin, vol. I, p. 135.

<sup>29</sup> See note (18).

<sup>30</sup> *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, I pp. 276 ss

<sup>31</sup> Aristotle speaks about Empedocles three times: *Poetics* 1447b17 he calls him *φυσικόλογος* rather than *ποιητής*; *Diog. Laert.* VIII 51 ss tells us that in his *Σοφιστής* Aristotle stated that Empedocles invented rhetoric, whereas in his *Περὶ Ποιητῶν* he called him 'Ομηρικός, δεινὸς περὶ τὴν φράσιν and *μεταφορητικός* and said about him that he used other poetic means (*ἐπιτεύγματα*) as well.

<sup>32</sup> Commentators rightly pointed to the influence of Empedocles on Lucretius, when he put Venus together with Mars in the prooemium of the 1st book (*Ernout-Robin*, I p2); I think that in addition to both being gods of fertility, here are actually *Φιλία* — Venus and *Νεῖκος* — Mars.

<sup>33</sup> *Diog. Laert.* VIII 77.

a poet who rises to a level of enthusiasm and of style which we find again in certain sections of *De rerum natura*. Whereas style and language of the philosophic sections of Lucretius' poem are similar to those of the fragments of *Περὶ Φύσεως*, the style of Lucretius' prooemia and quite many other sections show an altogether different quality, poetic, full of sentiment, which is reminiscent of Empedocles' *Καθάρμοι*. So we find in Lucretius the same duplicity as in Empedocles, here in one poem, there in two <sup>34</sup>.

Empedocles' poems show an unusual power of expression and a struggle for a clear representation of his philosophy by means of a poetical language. His effort is felt to change the language and make it serve his special purpose <sup>35</sup>.

#### (4) EMPEDOCLES IN LUCRETIUS' POEM

The passage dealing with Empedocles, his philosophy and the criticism of it, falls into three sections, just as we have seen in the case of Heraclitus :

(1) I 705—715 form the transition from the previous passage and a kind of introduction to the following.

(2) I 716—733 deal with the personality of Empedocles.

(3) I 734—829 contain the criticism of Empedocles' philosophy ; the verses 734—741 clearly distinguish between Empedocles the master and his disciples.

Again, as we have done with Heraclitus, we shall concentrate our interest on the second section, which is much longer than the corresponding part dedicated to Heraclitus (18 verses as opposed to 7).

I 716 *quorum Acragantinus cum primis Empedocles est,*  
*insula quem triquetris terrarum gessit in oris,*  
*quam fluitans circum magnis anfractibus aequor*  
*Ionium glaucois aspergit uirus ab undis,*

720 *angustoque fretu rapidum mare diuidit undis*  
*Italiae terrarum oras a finibus eius.*  
*hic est vasta Charybdis et hic Aetnaeu minantur*  
*murmura flammaram rursum se colligere iras,*  
*faucibus eruptos iterum uis ut uomat ignis*  
*ad caelumque ferat flammai fulgura rursum.*  
*quae cum magna modis multis miranda uidetur*  
*gentibus humanis regio visendaque fertur,*  
*rebus opima bonis, multa munila uirum ui,*  
*nil tamen hoc habuisse uiro praeclarium in se*

730 *nec sanctum magis et mirum carumque uidetur.*  
*carmina quin etiam diuini pectoris eius*  
*uociferantur et exponunt praeclara reperta,*  
*ut uix humana uideatur stirpe creatus.*

<sup>34</sup> The influence of Empedocles the poet on Lucretius the poet has not yet been examined in full, although the Commentaries of Bailey and Ernout-Robin present much material.

<sup>35</sup> cp. A. Lesky, *Geschichte der griech. Literatur*, 2, Bern-München. 1957/8, p. 240.



This section is remarkable for its high style, and the commentators are right in considering it an imitation of Empedocles' style <sup>36</sup>.

To distinguish between Empedocles and those who had held similar opinions, we hear again *quorum*, the relative pronoun used as demonstrative, as in I 638 <sup>37</sup>, but it stands at the beginning of the sentence, as usual. The verse does not begin with the philosopher's name, but after *quorum* comes the adjective referring to Empedocles' city, which was so dear to him <sup>38</sup>, followed by the expression *cum primis*, 'among the first': Empedocles is not *the* first as Heraclitus <sup>39</sup>; the verse concludes with the name strongly stressed because of the monosyllable *est* at its end.

A comparison of the first verses of each section indicates the essential difference; similar terms are in brackets ( ): :

638 '(Heraclitus) *init (quorum) dux proelia (primus)*'  
716 '(quorum) *Acragantinus (cum primus) (Empedocles) est*'.

Without taking into consideration the word order, we find the following in common :

638	716
<i>quorum</i>	<i>quorum</i>
<i>primus</i>	<i>cum primus</i>
<i>Heraclitus</i>	<i>Empedocles</i>

Here are the differences : Against *init dux proelia* (638) we have : (716) *Acragantinus est*; in other terms : In the case of Heraclitus the fact is stressed that he *storms* into battle at the head of his army, whereas Empedocles *is* the son of Acragas, the city of wonders on an island of wonders, whose praise starts in the following verse.

There were no special sentimental links between Heraclitus and Ephesus except for his advice to the Ephesians to hang themselves <sup>40</sup>, whereas the bonds of Empedocles with his native city are well-known.

We may also note that verse 716 is not so complicated in its structure as is 638.

<sup>36</sup> cp. Ernout-Robin to verse 729 ss. Bailey remarks to verse 716 : "they (viz. Empedocles' poems) show a real poetic gift. The *Περὶ Φύσεως* was no doubt the model of *De rerum natura* and Lucretius' admiration for Empedocles stands in strong contrast to his contempt for Heraclitus".

Empedocles' *Περὶ Φύσεως* is dedicated to Pausanias and begins with the verse :

*Παυσανίη, σὺ δὲ κλύθι, δαίμονος Ἀγγίττω υἱέ.*

In this poem Empedocles uses the second person without, however, mentioning Pausanias, and sometimes it seems that he speaks to the listener in general, and not specifically to the dedicatee of his poem. We can recognize this in Lucretius' poem as well.

<sup>37</sup> see note (16).

<sup>38</sup> The *Καθαροί* are dedicated to the people of Acragas, and are addressed in most sympathetic and sentimental terms and highly praised (*fr. 112, 1 D*).

<sup>39</sup> This distinction is rather startling. Is it possible that Lucretius wanted by this means to express the difference between Heraclitus, the lonely man, who did not need his fellow men, the aristocrat and contemptor of mankind, and Empedocles, the leader who could exist but as a leader of believers?

<sup>40</sup> *fr. B 121 D*. Heraclitus the aristocrat was opposed to the democracy of Ephesus, whereas Empedocles collaborated with the democrats of his city.

The praise of Sicily covers verses 717—730; in this last verse the circle is closed and Lucretius returns to Empedocles.

This part is built as follows :

Empedocles	717—721	722—725	726—728	Empedocles
(716) <i>quorum Acragantinus</i>	The sea	the fire	the miracles	<i>nil tamen hoc</i> (729)
(717) <i>insula quem</i>	(Italy) <sup>41</sup>	(Aetna)	(good things and brave men)	<i>nec sanctum</i> (730)

By his description of Sicily Lucretius seems to explain, how Empedocles came to this theory of the four elements: the wonders of sea and fire are so closely connected with Sicily. A man born on such an island can be understood to be a man of wonders, a man brought up seeing such wonders daily can be understood to be a poet.

The large number of adjectives<sup>42</sup> in this section is interesting: (*insula triquetris, magnis (anfractibus)*<sup>43</sup>, (*aequor*) *Ionium, glaucis (undis), angusto (fretu), rapidum (mare), uasta (Charybdis), Aetnaea (murmura), magna, miranda, opima, uisendaque, munita (regio), (gentibus) humanis, (rebus) bonis, (modis) multis, multa (ui)*).

To this may be added attributes in genitive which appear in no small number :

*terrarum (in oris), Aeoliae terrarum (oras), (a finibus) eius, (murmura) flammaram, flammai (fulgura), uirum (ui)*.

We cannot but feel the intensity of this language which suggests Empedocles' style.

This section contains only a few verbs, most of them used metaphorically :

*gessit, aspergit, diuidit, est, minantur se colligere, uomat, ferat, uidetur, fertur, uidetur*.

Besides this there are of course specific Roman alliterations and onomatopoeiae<sup>44</sup>.

In the concluding part of this section (726—730), which ends with a pair of marvellous verses, Lucretius returns from Sicily to Empedocles. Its parallel structure is remarkable.

<sup>41</sup> The reading of O Q "haeliae" has been corrected to 'Aeoliae', L has 'Italiae'. See the remarks of Ernout-Robin and of Bailey to this verse. In any case Italy seems to be meant. 'Aoliae' is understood to mean Southern Italy.

<sup>42</sup> A glance at the first verses of the *Καθαρμοί* (fr. B112D) reveals a similar phenomenon: In 12 verses there are 14 adjectives and 3 attributes in genitive. A section of about the same length from *Περὶ Φύσεως* (fr. B3D) has 7 adjectives in the first 5 verses which have a more poetical content, and 4 attributes in genitive. This is in striking contrast to Heraclitus who only scarcely uses adjectives as attributes. See Snell. *l.c.*, p. 378.

<sup>43</sup> In the first book of Lucan's *Pharsalia* we read: *totam dum colligit iram* (I 207), *longis anfractibus* (I 605), this in addition to *clara per obscuram* (I 187). See note (19).

<sup>44</sup> e.g. *fretu rapidum mare* (720). — *um* (723), *725*, *m* (726, 727).

Verses 726 and 730 both end with the verb *uidetur* which should be understood as a true passivum to *uideo*: 'is seen' and not: 'it seems'.<sup>45</sup> There are the parallel members: *miranda uidetur* — *uisendaque fertur*, and in chiasitic order around the adjectives *opima* and *munita*, the ablatives

*rebus — bonis*  
*multa — uirum ui*

The verses 729—30 contain no less than four comparatives, one of them only simple (*praeclarius*), the other three circumscribed by *magis*:

*nil praeclarius* (729).  
*nec sanctum magis et mirum carumque* (730).

It seems that the unity between the three peaks *sanctum mirum carum* could not have been expressed in a more persuasive way. The conjunction *nec* continues *nihil* from the preceding verse and joins to it the whole group whose members are connected by *et* and *que*, so that *magis* comprises the two other adjectives as well.

What may be the reason for this differentiation? The adjectives *sanctus* and *carus* as a rule form their comparatives in *-ior*, *mirus*, however has *magis mirus*. Lucretius perhaps wanted to retain the unity of the three and therefore used *sanctus* and *carus* with *magis*.<sup>46</sup>

Now we have to deal with the three verses concluding the section (731—733); they deserve our special attention. After having ended his praise of Sicily with the praise of Empedocles, the man of wonder, he comes to speak about Empedocles the poet, to whom he was indebted so much. Just as Empedocles, Lucretius wrote a poem *On Nature* and just as the Greek philosopher he tried to explain a difficult philosophical system in beautiful verses.

The climax of Empedocles' feats are his *carmina*, which are mentioned almost against the uses of syntax, at the beginning of verse 731. The expression *quin etiam* giving special stress to the following, appears 15 times in Lucretius' poem,<sup>47</sup> but here only in another than the first place in the verse; this seems to be sufficient evidence for the importance in

<sup>45</sup> *fertur* is a problem. Bailey *l.c.* remarks: "a curious guide-book interruption, which further has the interesting suggestion that Lucretius had never been to Sicily himself". I cannot agree with Bailey, because I fear that the strength of *uidetur* 'is seen' is weakened by such an assumption. Perhaps *uisenda fertur* may be understood as a continuation of *miranda uidetur*, the sense being:

'this region is seen by human beings as a miracle and is said (by them) to be worth visiting'.

<sup>46</sup> Giussani sees in *carus* an expression of Lucretius' emotional relationship towards Empedocles, whereas Bailey does not see his way to agree, because *carus* lacks the second terminal (dear to whom?). It is of course possible to understand 'to men', but does not the use of the adjective *carum* by T. Lucretius *Carus* suggest some special importance for the Roman poet? The word is used only twice by Lucretius, the other passage being entirely different (*III 85 — carosque parentis*).

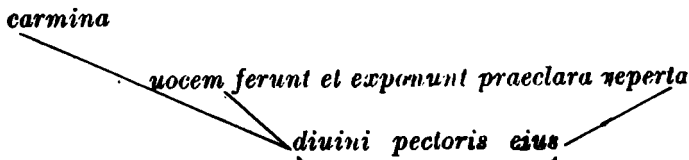
<sup>47</sup> Paulson, *Index Lucretianus*, lists 16 cases, but VI 209 is a correction by Lachmann instead of *quippe etenim* in the mss, which has not been accepted by editors beginning with Diels.

Lucretius' opinion of *carmina* in this connection : Lucretius the poet is now speaking of Empedocles the poet.<sup>48</sup>

What is the action of the *carmina*? They *uociferantur et exponunt*. The verb *uociferantur* is like *carmina* at the head of the verse immediately following, the listener knows that 'the poems are raising their voice'. This verb appears at Lucretius in three other verses,<sup>49</sup> once with an object (III 14/15), Bailey is right in supposing that *reperta* is the object to *exponunt* only and not to *uociferantur* as well.

The expression *diuini pectoris* is genitiuus possessoris not only to *carmina*, but also to *praeclara reperta*; furthermore, may it be possible that Lucretius still heard *uocem fert* in the verb *uociferantur* and did connect *diuini pectoris* to this as well?<sup>50</sup>

The structure of these verses would then be :



the expression *diuini pectoris eius* being ἀπό κοινού to the three terms : *carmina*, *reperta*, *uocem*. This section is summarized and terminated by verse 733, beginning with the tiny conjunction *ut*, which actually bears the whole heavy verse, hinting at the belief that Empedocles is more than human :

*ut uix humana uideatur stirpe creatus.*

There is in my opinion a strong contrast between *uideatur* in this verse and *uidetur* used twice (726, 730). There it is a fact ; so Sicily is *seen* and so Lucretius *sees* Empedocles, but here it just *seems* so, this is not a fact, but a belief, understandable and caused by the special qualities of Empedocles. Before departing from this passage, we shall glance at the transition to the philosophical discussion : (734—741)

Lucretius criticizes Empedocles' adherents by stressing the distance between the master and his disciples, but still he has some praise<sup>51</sup> for them :

*bene ac diuinitus... inuenientes,*  
and a very nice metaphor *ex adyto cordis!*

Verse 739 has a double alliteration by *p* and *f* :

*Pythia tripodi profatur| Phoebi*

<sup>48</sup> I do not think that this peculiar word-order can be explained by 'metrical need'; a master of language as Lucretius would have found another solution to this difficulty. The only explanation is that he wanted this specific order.

<sup>49</sup> II 1051 *res ipsaque per se uociferatur*

II 450 *aeraque quae claustris restantia uociferantur*

III 14/15 *nam simul ac ratio tua coepit uociferari/naturam rerum.*

<sup>50</sup> This has to be a mere guess, as I could not find similar uses of this or any other verb.

<sup>51</sup> There may be some irony in these verses : Pythia is not mentioned without intention, but Lucretius' attitude seems to be generally serious. These are hints at the style of the Καθαροί : the verb *profatur* (739), for instance.

Verses 740/741 are interesting on account of their syntactic and sound-structure :

*p*ri*ncipiis tamen in rerum fecere ruinas*  
*et g*r*auiter magni magno cecidere ibi casu*

The preposition *in* follows the noun from which it is separated by *tamen* : the weak and unimportant words *in* and *et* are stressed by the ictus, the word-order is inverted, as if Lucretius wanted to point out by syntax and sound the chaos caused by those unskilled philosophers : *rerum fecere ruinas* ; there are the r-sounds and especially *-ere*, *-re*, and in the following verse *grauiter* corresponding to *cecidere*, the Polypotton *magni magno* and the adverb *ibi*, in an unusual place in the verse ; two short-vowelled syllables *ibi*, before two long vowelled ones, *casu*, to show the depth of the fall. Verse 740 contains 4 *i*-vowels, 2 of them long and 2 short, whereas verse 741 has 5 *i*-vowels, 4 of them long and 1 short. There is *-um* in 740 and *a* and *o* in 741. We can hear this terrible collapse through the unusual word-order and through the sounds, vowels as well as consonants.

The picture drawn by Lucretius of Empedocles, this miraculous man who could be believed to be a god<sup>52</sup> on account of his personality, his teachings and his poems, this picture seems to correspond well to the fragments of his poems.

It is most difficult to be sure that Lucretius quoted Empedocles<sup>53</sup> but again as with Heraclitus, we should be able to recognize the ἕθος : Empedocles' personality, actions and literary works were entirely different from those of Heraclitus, and so was Lucretius' attitude towards him. Lucretius referred to Empedocles not only as a philosopher, but first of all as a poet, who by his personality was much closer to him than Heraclitus, the more so as the latter was one of the fathers of the Stoic philosophy, which Lucretius did not particularly like.

#### (5) ANAXAGORAS

Anaxagoras, born in Clazomenae in Ionia, brought philosophy to Athens ; closely connected with Pericles and Euripides, he was the first victim of the Athenians' narrow-mindedness, as far as philosophy was concerned : he was accused and condemned, but succeeded in leaving Athens.

His doctrine is known from a considerable number of fragments written in rather simple prosaic style. Not much is known about Anaxagoras the man ; there is one testimony worth noting, that he was not seen laughing nor smiling<sup>54</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> cp. fr. B112D θεός ...

<sup>53</sup> Expressions like θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι (fr. B35D) and others may be quotations or hints-but this is by no means certain.

<sup>54</sup> Aelian, Var. Hist. VIII 13.

## (6) ANAXAGORAS IN LUCRETIUS' POEM

From what has been said above about Heraclitus and about Empedocles, we should not expect Lucretius to make any personal remarks about Anaxagoras.

Both the passages dealing with Heraclitus and with Empedocles were composed of three sections : introduction, appraisal of their personalities and works, and factual discussion and criticism. Here we find an introduction and immediately after it the discussion. Anaxagoras *the man* is not mentioned at all, neither negatively as Heraclitus, nor positively as Empedocles, he is simply not there. What may be the reason for Lucretius' silence?

As has been pointed out before, there is no place for an appraisal of Anaxagoras' personality. It seems that Lucretius had no personal relation whatsoever to this prosaic philosopher, he has no reason to criticize him as fiercely as Heraclitus had criticized others, nor could he praise him in the enthusiastic style of Empedocles. In this case there remains only professional discussion in a rather dry vein, as done in the third sections of the criticism of Heraclitus and Empedocles.

Anaxagoras' philosophy is criticized in the verses 830—920. In the first 4 verses (830—833) which may be considered as an introduction, Lucretius complains, as usual, about the poverty of the Latin language which has no word for *ὁμοιομερία*, but he comforts himself and his listeners that the term can be easily explained. That is all.

*Summary* : Lucretius' attitude towards personalities and writings of the three Greek philosophers is entirely different, but the style and level of his discussion of their theories is essentially the same.

Heraclitus *the man* is fiercely attacked, Empedocles is enthusiastically praised, and Anaxagoras *the man* is not mentioned at all.

Looking at the different sections of the three passages we see :

	Introduction Section 1	Personal appraisal Section 2	Discussion Section 3	
Heraclitus	635—637 (3)	638—644 (7)	645—704 (60)	transition
Empedocles	704—715 (12)	716—733 (18)	742—829 (88)	734—741 (8)
Anaxagoras	830—834 (4)	—	835—920 (86)	

Examination of the relative length of the sections shows that the third section, the discussion, contains more or less the same number of verses, somewhat less in the case of Heraclitus. The first section is smaller in the case of Heraclitus and Anaxagoras and quite large (12 verses) when Lucretius deals with Empedocles.

Section 2 comprises 7 verses about Heraclitus, 18 about Empedocles and none about Anaxagoras.

Could it be imagined that *Φιλία* and *Νεῖκος* lead Lucretius in this criticism? If that were so, we should have expected at least a few

verses about Lucretius' attitude towards Anaxagoras, but there is nothing of this kind.

The only possible explanation seems to be that Lucretius intended to give a picture true to life of the two outstanding Greek philosophers whose teachings cannot be understood unless their personal background is known. Lucretius masterfully drew this background with the aid of style, language and sound, by the special means used by each of them. Anaxagoras' philosophy can be understood and appraised without knowing details of his personality. Therefore Heraclitus, the aggressive, lone, obscure philosopher is harshly and aggressively criticized, the enthusiastic poet-philosopher Empedocles is praised enthusiastically and poetically, and Anaxagoras is dealt with in a matter-of-fact way.