

*CAELUM ASCENDIT RATIO*: THE DIVINIZING ROLE OF KNOWLEDGE IN DIDACTIC  
POETRY FROM HESIOD TO MANILIUS

Zackary P. Rider

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Approved by:

James J. O'Hara

Sharon L. James

William H. Race

James B. Rives

Zoe Stamatopoulou

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## ABSTRACT

Zackary P. Rider: *Caelum Ascendit Ratio: The Divinizing Role of Knowledge in Didactic Poetry from Hesiod to Manilius*  
(Under the direction of James J. O'Hara)

In this dissertation, I seek to refine our understanding of the genre of didactic poetry in antiquity through examination of the relationship between knowledge and divinity as it is presented by Greek and Latin didactic poets. Focusing on the poetic portrayal of the didactic student, I argue for a continuity in the didactic poetic discourse based on a conception of the divinizing power of knowledge, and show the (quasi-)deification of the student to be a recurrent generic feature. This “deification” can take different forms, ranging from a qualified return to the mythological Golden Age where humans “lived like the gods,” as seen in Hesiod’s *Just City*, to the philosophical conception of *ὁμοίωσις θεῶν*, in which the promotion of the rational part of the soul brings humanity closer to divinity. Despite this diversity of forms, each poet can be seen self-consciously working within a shared tradition, portraying new articulations on this divinizing role in ways meant to recall poetic predecessors and offer students the potential for “a life like the gods.”

Chapter 1 provides an overview of this divinization or return to a state like that of the Golden Age as it is portrayed by the Greek didactic poets Hesiod, Empedocles, and Aratus. Chapter 2 looks at Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura*, examining how Lucretius combines poetic and philosophical models to argue for the deification of the Epicurean student and especially

Epicurus himself. Chapter 3 turns to Vergil's *Georgics* to show the ways in which Vergil's polyvalent text plays with its readers' expectations to assert and reject simultaneously the possibility for his student to achieve a "life like the gods." Chapter 4 concludes the dissertation with a study of Manilius' *Astronomica*, showing how the poet exploits contradictions in his predecessors for his own ends while arguing for the inherent divinity of humanity.

To my mother, who wanted it done even more than I did.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
The Didactic Question.....	1
Divine Options.....	3
The Present Study.....	8
CHAPTER 1: THE GREEK DIDACTIC BACKGROUND IN HESIOD, EMPEDOCLES, AND ARATUS.....	12
Hesiod.....	13
Empedocles.....	23
Aratus.....	32
Conclusion.....	46
CHAPTER 2: LUCRETIUS.....	47
First Beginnings.....	50
The Hymn to Venus.....	51
The Opposition to <i>Religio</i> .....	57
Allusive Argumentation.....	63
Epicurus.....	69
The Gods of <i>Religio</i> .....	82
Conclusion.....	87
CHAPTER 3: VERGIL'S <i>GEORGICS</i> .....	88
The Invocation to Octavian.....	92

The Agricultural Life and the Golden Age.....	96
The Golden Age Inverted.....	109
The Education of Aristaeus.....	114
Conclusion.....	125
CHAPTER 4: MANILIUS.....	126
Caesar <i>deus ipse</i> .....	129
The Iron Age Redeemed.....	134
Hermetic Thought and the Divinity of Humanity.....	149
Conclusion.....	159
CONCLUSION.....	160
WORKS CITED.....	163



## Introduction

### The Didactic Question

The problem of identifying the genre now known as “didactic” in its ancient framework is well-known.<sup>1</sup> After all, there is little ancient evidence for any clear demarcation of the genre. Indeed, the “didactic” poets themselves do not seem to recognize the genre as such, instead identifying their works by the standard criterion of metrical choice. As such, given these poets’ proclivity for hexameter and the meter’s long-standing associations with the epic tradition, the grand majority of “didactic” poems are represented in self-consciously epic terms. Thus Lucretius in the proem to his *De Rerum Natura* presents his poetic predecessors on “the nature of things” as Ennius and before him Homer (*DRN* 1.117-126), while Vergil includes his own tribute to Homeric verse near the end of his poem on agricultural instruction. This emphasis on form over content in the self-representation of genre may be seen most clearly in the opening to the second book of Manilius’ *Astronomica*, wherein the astrological poet gives a catalogue of his antecedent tradition comprising material today seen as markedly divergent, but united by its hexameter form: the epics of Homer (*Astr.* 2.1-11); the instructional poetry of Hesiod (2.12-24), astronomical poets such as Aratus (2.25-35), and Nicander (2.44-45); bucolic poetry (2.39-42); and even magical texts (2.46-48).

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<sup>1</sup>For systematic attempts to define the genre, see esp. Effe 1977; Volk 2002, esp. 25-68. Cf. Dalzell 1996, 8-34; Harder 2007, esp. 23-30.

Yet despite this apparent unanimity on the part of the poets, these works would seem to contain certain shared features that distinguish them from other genres such as epic, as indeed their modern classification as “didactic” suggests. Unease at their epic designation may already be detected in antiquity. Most famous, perhaps, is Aristotle’s assessment that such poetry was not actually worthy of the term at all; comparing Homer and Empedocles, Aristotle argued that the latter should be called not a poet, but a natural philosopher (οὐδὲν δὲ κοινόν ἐστιν Ὅμηρῳ καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλεῖ πλὴν τὸ μέτρον, διὸ τὸν μὲν ποιητὴν δίκαιον καλεῖν, τὸν δὲ φυσιολόγον μᾶλλον ἢ ποιητὴν, Arist. *Poet.* 1447b.17-20).<sup>2</sup> Closer to modern sensibilities (in issues of terminology, if not taste for didactic poetry) was the grammarian Servius, who, introducing his commentary on Vergil’s *Georgics*, classifies the work as “didactic” (*didascalici*). Servius even gives defining criteria for the genre, focusing on the relationship between instructor-poet and student-addressee, and uses these criteria to form a corpus of “didactic” works, including Hesiod and Lucretius (Serv. Auct. *Comm. in Verg. Georg.* proem): *et hi libri didascalici sunt, unde necesse est, ut ad aliquem scribantur; nam praeceptum et doctoris et discipuli personam requirit: unde ad Maecenatem scribit, sicut Hesiodus ad Persen, Lucretius ad Memmium*. Certainly one may take issue with adopting either of these judgments in their entirety, but both point to an understanding already to be found in antiquity of the uniqueness of “didactic” poems.

The present work is not concerned to resolve this broader dilemma surrounding the classification of didactic poetry as a genre. Much work has been done on this front

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<sup>2</sup>It is worth noting that Aristotle acknowledges the same metric similarity as the later Latin poets who would identify themselves as “epic,” and yet views this similarity as entirely insufficient in his own classification.

elsewhere; in particular, the classificatory efforts of Effe and, more recently, Volk's work on the consistent metapoetic features of didactic poems have contributed greatly to our understanding of this genre *qua* genre. Here I take a somewhat more targeted approach. In a strategy similar to Volk's, I take a group of poems regularly identified as "didactic" and seek to extrapolate conclusions about the genre based on features recurrent in these works. Unlike Volk, however, I attempt no larger definition of the genre as such, but instead identify a single generic constant—the "deification" of the poetic student—and trace the development of that constant over the course of our "didactic" corpus. In so doing, I contribute an argument for the continuity of the genre while at the same time arguing for the importance of a conception of divinity based in epistemology found throughout this corpus.<sup>3</sup>

### **Divine Options**

It will be useful here to explain more clearly what is meant by the "deification" of the student. In its primary meaning, of course, the term refers to the actual apotheosis of the individual, a literal transition of status from human to god. I also use the term to describe something that may be thought of as "divine assimilation," a metaphorical comparison of human to god in a manner that suggests equivalence. In this latter articulation may be included such conceptions as a "life like the gods," already extant in our earliest Greek

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<sup>3</sup>Schiesaro 1997, 63, discusses how "[t]he nature and boundaries of knowledge naturally represent a significant theoretical concern of the didactic poet and, by extension, the reader and the critic: thus the ideological connotations of knowledge—as well as its limits, dangers, and hopes—inevitably impact the themes that such poetry deals with, and should form an integral part of our overall interpretation of didactic texts." Such ideological connotation is precisely what I am interested in in this dissertation, as I seek to set out what the depiction of the student *vis-a-vis* the gods can tell us about the ultimate significance of knowledge as it is presented by these poets.

didactic poem, the *Works and Days*. Here Hesiod tells of a golden race of human beings said to live like the gods, free from worry and labor (ὥστε θεοὶ δ' ἔζων, ἀκηδέα θυμὸν ἔχοντες, / νόσφιν ἄτερ τε πόνου καὶ οἰζύος, *WD* 112-113). There is no question here of literal godhood, as Hesiod describes the deaths of these individuals soon after (though they are subsequently made δαίμονες by Zeus). Instead, Hesiod makes the connection between the golden race and gods on an ideological basis. Assuming certain characteristics, such as freedom from toil or trouble, as essential to the gods' state, Hesiod argues that other individuals who possess these characteristics are suitably described as “god-like.”

This similitude between the ideal condition and divinity soon found currency among the philosophers, who saw certain divine characteristics as befitting the wise man. Thus in his *Theaetetus* Plato presents similitude to the gods as the final aim of a philosophical life, describing the process as ὁμοίωσις θεῷ (176b).<sup>4</sup> Aristotle makes a similar point in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, claiming the contemplative life to be more divine than human (ὁ δὲ τοιοῦτος ἂν εἴη βίος κρείττων ἢ κατ' ἄνθρωπον· οὐ γὰρ ἦ ἄνθρωπός ἐστιν οὕτω βιώσεται, ἀλλ' ἦ θεῖόν τι ἐν αὐτῷ ὑπάρχει, 1177b). Ultimately, such similitude would become a common goal for the philosophical schools of the Hellenistic period, so that the philosopher Epicurus could tell his student Menoeceus that, should he follow Epicurean teachings, he would live as a god among men (ζήσεις δὲ ὡς θεὸς ἐν ἀνθρώποις, D.L. 10.135). As may be expected, this philosophical development often made the “life of the gods” into a more introspective affair, moving from the idealized physical conditions of Hesiod's golden race to a state based on mental and emotional tranquillity. Yet the same process can still be detected:

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<sup>4</sup>Cf. Erler 2002, 159-160; Volk 2009, 242; Gale 2013, 282-283 (with further bib.). Of course, the concept was not original to Plato, who would have found the notion already expounded by thinkers such as the Pythagoreans and Empedocles, among others.

the identification of specific qualities as “divine” and the subsequent recognition of their possessors as “god-like.”

It is important to note how hazy a line divides this metaphorical form of deification from what could be considered an “actual” state of apotheosis, particularly for our philosophical sources.<sup>5</sup> If one defines divinity by specific characteristics, and encourages students to possess these characteristics as fully as possible, is it then still just a metaphor to say the successful philosopher is “living a life like the gods,” or can a form of transcendence be implied? This development may be detected in our quotation from Aristotle, who expressly distances the philosophical life from “human” life (κρείττων ἢ κατ’ ἄνθρωπον· οὐ γὰρ ἢ ἄνθρωπός ἐστιν οὕτω βιώσεται, 1177b); the Epicureans would be criticized frequently for taking the implications of this view to their logical conclusion by conducting sacrifices to Epicurus on his birthday.

In addition to this “divine assimilation,” of course, there is the practice in ritual and cult of deifying specific individuals. In the Roman context that will be the focus of this dissertation, the most pertinent example is the deification of Augustus Caesar and his adoptive father Julius, and the concomitant development of imperial cult—a development with which we will see two of our poets, Vergil and Manilius, interact at some length.<sup>6</sup> Yet the deification of the Caesars may be seen as the final step in a much lengthier process of defining divine status in Rome.

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<sup>5</sup>Of course, what is meant by “actual” apotheosis will differ as well, depending on the discourse in which one is operating—cultic, mythological, philosophical, or otherwise.

<sup>6</sup>On the deification of the Caesars and the establishment of the imperial cult, see, e.g., Weinstock 1971; Price 1984; Fishwick 1987; Gradel 2002; Koortbojian 2013.

The initial stages of this process can be set some two centuries prior to the rule of Augustus. The first divine honors to a Roman were those awarded to M. Marcellus by the Syracusans in 211 BCE, upon his defeat of the Carthaginians for control of the city.<sup>7</sup> Around the same time, Ennius is supposed to have translated into Latin the *Hiera Anagraphe* of Euhemerus, in which that Hellenistic philosopher had claimed that the traditional gods were originally illustrious human beings, granted immortality for the services they provided to humanity.<sup>8</sup> Over the course of the subsequent 200 years, the topic of deification would undergo considerable debate and development.<sup>9</sup> Recent work by Cole, for example, has described the trajectory of Cicero's personal ideology concerning divinization over the course of his career, and the ways in which he sought to influence public discourse concerning the practice.<sup>10</sup> Cicero himself in his *De Natura Deorum* shows the potential difficulties that could arise as the nature of deification was contested, describing how the tax-exempt status of land consecrated to Amphiaraus was called into question by Roman tax collectors, who argued that anyone who had once been human could not now be immortal (*DND* 3.49):<sup>11</sup>

an Amphiaraus erit deus et Trophonius? nostri quidem  
publicani, cum essent agri in Boeotia deorum immortalium  
excepti lege censoria, negabant immortalis esse ullos qui

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<sup>7</sup>See Fishwick 1987, 46; cf. Rives 1993. These honors in turn were part of a larger Hellenistic tradition of ruler cult.

<sup>8</sup>For discussions of Euhemerus and the *Hiera Anagraphe* in the Roman context, see Gale 1994, 75-84; Bosworth 1999, 10-12.

<sup>9</sup>For a brief synopsis of humans being worshipped as gods in the Republican period, see Gradel 2002, 32-53.

<sup>10</sup>Cole 2013.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. Cole 2013, 18-19.

aliquando homines fuissent.

Poets too could take part in shaping this discourse. Thus Catullus could borrow from Sappho to describe godhood in terms of proximity to Lesbia (Catull. 51.1-5):

Ille mi par esse deo videtur,  
ille, si fas est, superare divos,  
qui sedens adversus identidem te  
spectat et audit  
dulce ridentem...

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A generation later, Vergil portrays his shepherd Tityrus instead defining divine status in terms of beneficence and power relations, as he offers sacrifice to the *iuvenis* who allowed him to retain his pastoral existence (Verg. *Ecl.* 1.6-10):

O Meliboee, deus nobis haec otia fecit.  
namque erit ille mihi semper deus, illius aram  
saepe tener nostris ab ovilibus imbuet agnus.  
ille meas errare boves, ut cernis, et ipsum  
ludere quae vellem calamo permisit agresti.

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Under Augustus, the poetics of deification became especially charged, as the poets of the regime sought to contribute their own articulations to the *princeps*' policy.<sup>12</sup> Vergil would again play an immense role, aspects of which will be discussed in chapter three; so too would Horace in his Roman Odes and the opening to his second book of *Epistles*, where he compares Augustus favorably to other deified figures such as Romulus and Liber, as the *princeps* is worshipped even while alive (*praesenti tibi maturos largimur honores / iurandasque tuum per numen ponimus aras*, Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.15-16). While examining the uses of deification in the poetry that follows, then, it is important to keep in mind this

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<sup>12</sup>Cole 2001, 68-69, discusses how “[p]oetic texts such as the *Georgics* and *Odes* 1-3 interacted with...other sets of discourses in ways that had cumulative, constitutive effects in defining Augustus’ divine status.”

evolving discourse on the status of deification. Each poet will be seen to grapple with this status in his own way, portraying his own view on how a human may become a god.

### **The Present Study**

This study begins with a chapter on the Greek didactic poets before turning to a trio of Latin didactic poems written during the late Republican and Augustan periods: Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, Vergil's *Georgics*, and Manilius' *Astronomica*. Two dominant factors make these works particularly apt for the study proposed. First is the diversity of ideology represented by these works. Writing on, respectively, Epicurean natural science, the agricultural existence, and astrology of a (supposedly) Stoicizing nature, these poets cleave to no single philosophical tradition. As such, any potential ideological similarity in their works must be explained by other means, such as a shared poetic tradition. The second factor making these poems favorable for the present endeavor is their shared cultural milieu. Writing within the span of a little over a half-century, these poets would likely have shared certain assumptions concerning their undertaken genre. Moreover, the influence each of these poets exerted over the next is clear and far-reaching; as each responds to the work of his predecessors, one may observe the development of the genre and its features.<sup>13</sup> Before

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<sup>13</sup>It may be reasonably objected that this dissertation omits Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, a poem that certainly fits into the didactic tradition under investigation, interacting especially with the works of Lucretius and Vergil and acknowledging Hesiod as a predecessor through ostentatious rejection of Hesiodic inspiration (AA 1.27-28). It also touches on issues of apotheosis, particularly in the treatment of Caesar's eventual deification (e.g., 1.203-204). Yet I save discussion of Ovid's poem for future study for two reasons. First, the extent to which the teachings of Ovid's didactic *praeceptor* are undercut and shown to be inept throughout the poem complicates analysis by forcing the reader to juggle (at the least) two potentially conflicting levels of the text: a "straight" reading of the poem in which the teachings of the *praeceptor* are taken at face value, and a more nuanced reading taking into account the contradictions and impossibilities inscribed in the text (cf., among others,



discussing this trio, I begin with a study of their Greek predecessors, focusing on those with the most lasting influence on Latin didactic: Hesiod, Empedocles, and Aratus. In these poets, the genre's close connection between knowledge and divinity is established and developed, laying the foundations for our Latin poets' endeavors.

As will be seen, the (quasi-)deification I identify in these poems can take many forms, and serves as a rhetorical strategy employed to provide encouragement for the student, to demonstrate the immense rewards for success in the didactic endeavor, and, ultimately, to argue for the divine nature of human reason. Thus use of the trope can vary greatly in scale, from the relatively straightforward life of Hesiod's Just City, wherein the successful student can reach only an approximation of the golden race's "life like the gods," to the full-blown apotheosis offered by Empedocles' purificatory instruction. More often, particularly in the case of the Latin poets that will be the focus of this dissertation, the successful student falls somewhere between these two extremes, becoming "like a god" within an altered context of what that concept may mean.

In the first chapter, I provide an overview of this deification as it is portrayed by the Greek didactic poets Hesiod, Empedocles, and Aratus. Already in Hesiod's *Works and Days*,

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Watson 2007 and James 2008). Second, the poem's dual generic affiliations with both the didactic and elegiac tradition problematize a reading of it as a didactic text; especially given the longstanding presence of erotodidactic elements in elegy (see Wheeler 1910-1911), one may question whether any particular feature of Ovid's instruction can be clearly identified as a development of the "hexameter" didactic that is the focus of this study rather than of the elegiac erotodidactic tradition. (The relation between these two strands of didaxis is outside the scope of this dissertation). Both complications hinder investigation of essentially didactic generic features: how can the critic be assured that the features analyzed are to be identified as didactic markers, rather than elegiac or parodic? While recognizing the difficulty of isolating uncomplicated examples of any genre's features, it seems better to forego analysis of the *Ars* for the present and to seek to identify recurrent features in Lucretius, Vergil, and Manilius.

the germs of the association between knowledge and divinity can be seen in the poet's Myth of the Ages. Seeking to persuade his student by extolling the rewards for didactic success, Hesiod presents the successful student's life in the Just City as comparable to that of the golden race, who "lived like the gods." This idea will be transformed by Hesiod's successors, who will alter his claims to suit their own ideologies. For Empedocles, espousing a philosophy rooted in the continuity and transmigration of the soul, Hesiod's metaphorical deification will be made literal, as the later poet argues for divine reincarnation founded on the purity offered by his teachings. In Aratus' *Phaenomena*, these two systems are blended, as Aratus combines elements of his predecessors' portrayals to argue for his own unique take on the divine life obtainable by the discerning student.

In the second chapter, I turn to Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*. While the poet's most explicit evocation of deification does not occur until the poem's fifth book, in which his master Epicurus is referred to as a *deus*, Lucretius lays the groundwork for the deification of the successful Epicurean from the opening lines of his poem, as can be seen in his invocation to Venus and his subsequent depiction of Epicurus' assault against *religio*. After an examination of these passages and the philosophical background for Lucretius' portrayal of the gods, I study Lucretius' engagement with his poetic predecessors to show how Lucretius manipulates poetic models such as Golden Age imagery and earlier portrayals of the gods to reinforce his philosophical aims. From here, I move to Lucretius' combination of philosophical and poetic models in his depiction of the deified wise man Epicurus before ending with a study of the corollary to this elevation of the student: the anthropomorphization of the gods of *religio*.

In chapter 3, I examine possibilities for deification as they are presented in Vergil's *Georgics*. Looking first at the opening invocation to Octavian, I study the ways in which Vergil negotiates the *princeps*' potential deification as he composes in the politically transitional period after the battle at Actium, and reasserts the Euhemeristic notion of divinization as a reward for benefaction used previously by Lucretius. I then turn to two potential "Golden Ages" described in the poem, the rustic setting of the *laus ruris* that closes book 2 and the plague of Noricum that closes book 3, to examine the ways in which Vergil plays with his readers' expectations to assert and reject simultaneously the possibility for his student to achieve a "life like the gods." The chapter concludes with a discussion of the Aristaeus epyllion that ends the poem, and an examination of Aristaeus' potential role as a proxy for the agricultural student.

The study ends with the discussion of Manilius' *Astronomica* in chapter 4. Just as Vergil does in his *Georgics*, Manilius opens his poem with the figure of a deified Caesar. Yet whereas Vergil focuses on the differing divine possibilities available for the deified *princeps*, Manilius, writing near the end of Augustus' reign almost 40 years later, reflects the established reality of Augustan cult. Following an examination of this Manilian portrayal of Caesar, I proceed to discussion of Manilius' cultural history, showing how the poet exploits contradictions already present in the rhetoric of his poetic predecessors to his own ends. I conclude with a discussion of the more esoteric features of Manilian thought, and his argument for the inherent divinity of humanity.

## Chapter 1: The Greek Didactic Background in Hesiod, Empedocles, and Aratus

In this chapter, I examine the development of the relationship between gods and humanity as it is presented in the three Greek didactic poets with arguably the greatest influence on the later Latin tradition: Hesiod, Empedocles, and Aratus. As will be shown, all three poets point to ways in which knowledge can allow humanity to approach parity with the gods. I start with Hesiod's *Works and Days*, the foundation text of the genre. Here Hesiod portrays the divide between humanity and gods as an essential feature of contemporary life, and the condition that makes his didaxis necessary. Focusing on his account of humanity's descent in the Myth of the Ages, I explore the ways in which Hesiod uses his instruction to bridge this divide and lead humanity to an approximation of their original "golden" state. From here, I turn to Empedocles' philosophical poetry, which deals more explicitly with issues of transcendence, portraying the ascent to godhood as a legitimate possibility. Although Empedocles' cosmological and eschatological views lead him to radically different conclusions about the nature of the gods and their relation to humanity, I argue that the poet's rhetoric retains an Hesiodic element, portraying the instruction afforded by the poet as a means to unity with the divine. The chapter ends with a discussion of Aratus' *Phaenomena*, which blends features of Hesiodic and Empedoclean didactic to present the possibility of a literal return to the golden age in place of Hesiod's approximation.

## Hesiod

In this section, I first look at the rhetoric of Hesiod's *Works and Days* and his depiction of humanity's status in relation to the gods, paying particular attention to the Myth of the Ages, the Hesiodic passage most frequently imitated or referred to by his Latin successors. This myth, and much of Hesiod's instruction, is best understood in terms of the discussion of the two Strifes with which Hesiod begins his poem proper<sup>14</sup> and characterizes contemporary humanity (*WD* 11-26):<sup>15</sup>

Οὐκ ἄρα μούνον ἔην Ἑρίδων γένος, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ γαῖαν  
εἰσὶ δύω· τὴν μὲν κεν ἐπαινέσειε νοήσας,  
ἣ δ' ἐπιμωμητή· διὰ δ' ἄνδιχα θυμὸν ἔχουσιν.  
ἣ μὲν γὰρ πόλεμόν τε κακὸν καὶ δῆριν ὀφέλλει,  
σχετλίη· οὐ τις τὴν γε φιλεῖ βροτός, ἀλλ' ὑπ' ἀνάγκης 15  
ἀθανάτων βουλήσιν Ἑριν τιμῶσι βαρεῖαν.  
τὴν δ' ἐτέρην προτέρην μὲν ἐγείνατο Νύξ ἐρεβεννή,  
θῆκε δέ μιν Κρονίδης ὑψίζυγος αἰθέρι ναίων  
γαίης τ' ἐν ῥίζησι καὶ ἀνδράσι πολλὸν ἀμείνω·  
ἥ τε καὶ ἀπάλαμόν περ ὅμως ἐπὶ ἔργον ἔγειρεν. 20  
εἰς ἕτερον γάρ τις τε ἰδὼν ἔργοιο χατίζων  
πλούσιον, ὃς σπεύδει μὲν ἀρώμεναι ἢ δὲ φυτεύειν  
οἶκόν τ' εὖ θέσθαι, ζηλοῖ δέ τε γείτονα γείτων  
εἰς ἄφενος σπεύδοντ'· ἀγαθὴ δ' Ἑρις ἦδε βροτοῖσιν.  
καὶ κεραμεὺς κεραμεῖ κοτέει καὶ τέκτονι τέκτων, 25  
καὶ πτωχὸς πτωχῷ φθονέει καὶ ἀοιδὸς ἀοιδῷ.

Correcting the earlier genealogical claims of his *Theogony*, Hesiod here explains that there are two types of Strife to be found among humanity. One is responsible for war and conflict (14), and is thoroughly denounced by the poet; no one honors this Strife willingly, but only

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<sup>14</sup>Some ancient editors went so far as to athetize the first ten lines, making our line 11 the first of the poem; see West 1978 *ad* 1-10.

<sup>15</sup>For the distinction between Strifes as essential for the rest of this part of the poem, see Rosenmeyer 1957, 262; Heath 1985, 246-247.

under compulsion from the gods (15-16). In contrast, the other Strife is “much better for men” (19) and is responsible for a sense of emulative competition, rousing individuals to work out of envy at another’s prosperity (20-26). Both are closely related to the two subsequent stories about Pandora and the Myth of the Ages that account for the present state of mankind.<sup>16</sup> By explaining the scarcity of resources in the contemporary world (κρύψαντες γὰρ ἔχουσι θεοὶ βίον ἀνθρώποισιν, 42), the story of Prometheus and Pandora gives a cause for the inequality and envy that fuel the “good” Strife and the work to which it incites humanity, while the Myth of the Ages documents the rise of the “bad” Strife and the subsequent need for justice to counter it. As I argue, over the course of the *Works and Days* Hesiod suggests that his precepts offer a way to reverse the state of humanity described in these tales, countering the effects of the bad Strife while encouraging the effects of the “good.” Although humanity may no longer reach the same god-like state as the men of the Golden Age, it can, through the knowledge of justice and farming imparted by Hesiod (and the will of the gods), reach a modern approximation.

According to Hesiod’s Myth of the Ages, men and the gods have similar origins (ὁμόθεν γεγάασι θεοὶ θνητοὶ τ’ ἄνθρωποι, 108)<sup>17</sup> and in the time of Kronos, the golden race of men lived like gods (ὥστε θεοὶ δ’ ἔζων, 112). Certainly, this is not to say that gods and men were *identical*—while the golden race was free from old age and disease (οὐδέ τι δειλὸν / γῆρας ἐπῆν, αἰεὶ δὲ πόδας καὶ χεῖρας ὁμοῖοι / τέρποντ’ ἐν θαλίῃσι κακῶν ἔκτοσθεν ἀπάντων, 113-115), its members nevertheless died, unlike their immortal counterparts (θνήσκον δ’ ὥσθ’ ὕπνω δεδμημένοι, 116). Rather the golden race’s similarity to the gods is

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<sup>16</sup>Cf., e.g., Querbach 1985, 6-7; Clay 2003, 37-38.

<sup>17</sup>For a discussion of the exact force of ὁμόθεν here, see West 1978 *ad loc.*

to be seen in the ease of their lifestyle. They are at peace (ἥσυχοι, 119), free from toil and grief (νόσφιν ἄτερ τε πόνου καὶ οἰζύος, 113), and they are exempt from the necessity of cultivation; the earth bears for them unstintingly and of its own accord (καρπὸν δ' ἔφερε ζείδωρος ἄρουρα / αὐτομάτη πολλόν τε καὶ ἄφθονον, 117-118). Subject neither to violence nor scarcity, they are without the two forms of Strife which are so central to life in the Iron Age.

That this is so becomes apparent when the golden race is compared to subsequent races. Following the removal of the golden race from the earth, Hesiod introduces the silver race, “like to the golden race in neither stature nor thought” (χρυσέῳ οὔτε φῆν ἑναλίγκιον οὔτε νόημα, 129). The humans of this age are said to suffer distress owing to two factors—their incapacity to refrain from committing acts of *hybris* against one another and their neglect of the gods (133-136):

παυρίδιον ζώεσκον ἐπὶ χρόνον, ἄλγε' ἔχοντες  
ἀφραδίης· ὕβριν γὰρ ἀτάσθαλον οὐκ ἐδύναντο  
ἀλλήλων ἀπέχειν, οὐδ' ἀθανάτους θεραπεύειν  
ἤθελον οὐδ' ἔρδειν μακάρων ἱεροῖς ἐπὶ βωμοῖς...

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In the latter characteristic, Hesiod shows that a disconnect has emerged between gods and humans. Whereas the golden race has a close relationship to the gods, indicated by the honored position they receive from Zeus after death (121-126), the silver race fail to tend to the gods or their sacrifices.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, the focus on *hybris* as the fundamental

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<sup>18</sup>It is in fact unclear whether the men of the golden race were required to sacrifice to the gods at all. Should one seek to reconcile this account with the events of the *Theogony*, the golden race may be identified with the human race prior to the division at Mekone, where humans and gods were ultimately separated and sacrifice was established (*Th.* 535ff.). Reference to the golden race as “delighting in feasts” (τέρποντ' ἐν θαλίῃσι, *WD* 115) proves little either way; while a mention of such feasting may refer to that feasting associated with sacrifice, the same phrase is used in the *Odyssey* to describe Heracles' divine state as he delights in festivities with the immortal gods (αὐτὸς δὲ μετ' ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι / τέρπεται ἐν

activity of the silver race points to the introduction of the blameworthy Strife, which will afflict each subsequent race of humans. Indeed, for the subsequent bronze race it is their primary feature; interested solely in acts of *hybris* and the “works of Ares” (οἷσιν Ἄρης / ἔργ’ ἔμελε σπονόμεντα καὶ ὕβριες, 145-146), this race takes no part in the consumption of bread (perhaps indicating a disregard for the agricultural cultivation motivated by the better Strife) and ultimately destroys itself through its violence.

Even in the heroic age, which is presented by Hesiod as an improvement over the previous bronze age and as directly descended from the gods (δικαιότερον καὶ ἄρειον / ἀνδρῶν ἡρώων θεῖον γένος, οἳ καλέονται / ἡμίθεοι, 158-160), this destructive Strife is still omnipresent. Again, the age is characterized entirely by war, which wiped out the heroes at Thebes and Troy (161-165):

καὶ τοὺς μὲν πόλεμός τε κακὸς καὶ φύλοπις αἰνὴ  
τοὺς μὲν ὑφ’ ἑπταπύλῳ Θήβῃ, Καδμηίδι γαίῃ,  
ᾧλεσε μαρναμένους μῆλων ἔνεκ’ Οἰδιπόδαο,  
τοὺς δὲ καὶ ἐν νήεσσιν ὑπὲρ μέγα λαῖτμα θαλάσσης  
ἐς Τροίην ἀγαγὼν Ἑλένης ἔνεκ’ ἠυκόμοιο. 165

Yet there is also a notable difference between this age and the silver and bronze ages which preceded it, for while some of the heroes do die like their predecessors, others are instead placed by Zeus in the Isles of the Blessed (166-173):<sup>19</sup>

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θαλίῃς, *Od.* 11.602-603), a parallel which may illustrate further the divine state of the golden race. As will be discussed below, later poets such as Empedocles and Aratus certainly saw a connection between the golden race and the absence of *animal* sacrifice. In either case, the disconnect remains; either the need for sacrifice itself is a new development for the silver race or their neglect of that sacrifice is.

<sup>19</sup>Currie 2007, 169-170, sees an ethical contrast here between those heroes that simply die (like the bronze race) and those that are rewarded by the gods with a life reminiscent of the golden race. While such an argument is tempting, it cannot be supported by the text, as there is no distinction made between the actions in life of these two groups; both engage in some form of destructive Strife while still living. The distinction seems instead to be left to the



ἔνθ' ἣ τοι τοὺς μὲν θανάτου τέλος ἀμφεκάλυπεν,	
τοῖς δὲ δίχ' ἀνθρώπων βίοντα καὶ ἦθε' ὀπάσας	
Ζεὺς Κρονίδης κατένασσε πατὴρ ἐν πείρασι γαίης,	168
καὶ τοὶ μὲν ναίουσιν ἀκηδέα θυμὸν ἔχοντες	170
ἐν μακάρων νήσοισι παρ' Ὀκεανὸν βαθυδίνην·	
ὄλβιοι ἥρωες, τοῖσιν μελιδέα καρπὸν	
τρίς ἔτεος θάλλοντα φέρει ζεῖδωρος ἄρουρα.	

Here they dwell in a condition separate from the rest of humanity that is reminiscent of the life enjoyed by the golden race.<sup>20</sup> Just like the golden race, they enjoy hearts free from care (170; cf. ὥστε θεοὶ δ' ἔζων ἀκηδέα θυμὸν ἔχοντες, 112)<sup>21</sup> and their lands are granted an unnatural fertility, flourishing three times a year (172-173). As such, it would seem that neither group suffers from resource scarcity or the resulting need for the “good” Strife placed in the soil. Further, this life is again presented as a quasi-divine state as it is granted only to members of this semi-divine race by the special dispensation of Zeus (168). In Hesiod’s presentation of the first four ages, then, one can see the development, and incomplete resolution, of a divide between the gods and humanity. For the god-like golden race and those select heroes granted a place on the Isles of the Blessed in place of death, Strife of either kind is non-existent. For the humans of the silver and bronze races, however, as well as the heroes before their death or removal to the Isles of the Blessed, life is defined by Strife.

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discretion of Zeus; cf. Pind. *Ol.* 2.78-80, where Achilles is admitted to the Isles of the Blessed through his mother Thetis’ persuasion of Zeus.

<sup>20</sup>This connection between the golden race and the heroic afterlife on the Isles of the Blessed was eventually made more explicit by an interpolation (τηλοῦ ἀπ’ ἀθανάτων· τοῖσιν Κρόνος ἐμβασιλευεῖ, labeled line 173a in West 1978) that assigned rule of the Isles to Kronos, ruler of the gods in the Golden Age. By the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, Kronos’ place in the Isles was an accepted part of the tradition (see West 1978 *ad* 173a, who cites Pindar *O.* 2.70ff.). Vergil would later conflate this trope and the Roman tradition concerning Saturn’s rule over early Italy to portray that land in Golden Age terms; cf. *Geo.* 2.173, *Aen.* 6.792-794 and *passim*.

<sup>21</sup>Cf. *Th.* 61, where the Muses are described with the same phrase: ἀκηδέα θυμὸν ἐχούσαις.

After this tableau of the first four ages, Hesiod finishes his account with a description of the present iron race, worse than any of the preceding races, and an apocalyptic prediction of its end, when *Aidos* and *Nemesis* will leave the earth and humanity will be defenseless against evil. Yet all would not seem to be lost, for the poet moves from here to a protreptic towards justice, which is portrayed as a possible remedy to mankind's current debased condition. Exhorting Perses to embrace justice and reject *hybris*, Hesiod describes two cities, one just and the other unjust (225-247). In the image of the Just City, humanity comes as close as it now can to the life of the golden race.<sup>22</sup> Blameworthy Strife is entirely absent; peace is to be found throughout the land, as Zeus keeps war away from the citizens (229-230). Gone too are Hunger and Ruin (οὐδέ ποτ' ἰθυδίκησι μετ' ἀνδράσι Λιμὸς ὀπηδεῖ / οὐδ' Ἄτη, 230-231), listed as children of Strife in the *Theogony* (*Th.* 226-230). Instead, there is agricultural abundance. Even the city and its people are said to bloom (τοῖσι τέθηλε πόλις, λαοὶ δ' ἀνθέουσιν ἐν αὐτῇ, *WD* 227), and twice we are told that the land provides food for the people, once in lines that echo the description of the Golden Age and the Isles of the Blessed (καρπὸν δὲ φέρει ζείδωρος ἄρουρα, 237; cf. καρπὸν δ' ἔφερε ζείδωρος ἄρουρα, 117; καρπὸν / τρις ἔτεος θάλλοντα φέρει ζείδωρος ἄρουρα, 172-173).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>This resemblance has been repeatedly noted by scholars, who nevertheless emphasize the ultimate distinction between the Just City and the Golden Age. Cf. Benardete 1967, 156: "Hesiod seems to be all but suggesting that the iron age, if it were just, would thereby reestablish the heroic; for his description of the just city reads like that of the golden age, the only difference being that, as in the heroic age, women now bear children, and hence work is necessary." Querbach 1985, 6, focuses on the other half of the work/justice combination: "Even if a complete return to the Golden age is impossible, a good approximation of it, as described in lines 225-237, can be achieved through practicing *dike*." Clay 2003, 40, sees the comparison as ultimately empty: "Or are we to think that mankind will survive on acorns and honey and renounce agriculture?"

<sup>23</sup>A reminder of the Golden Age can also be detected in the references to distribution of goods and the enjoyment of feasts (231; cf. 119, 115). Later poets would indicate their

There is, however, an important difference between the life of the golden race and that of the Just City which is not emphasized, but is, I think, suggested. That is the latter's necessity for cultivation, and so, by implication, the presence of "good" Strife.<sup>24</sup> In the Golden Age, the land produces of its own accord and unstintingly (αὐτομάτη πολλόν τε καὶ ἄφθονον, 118), while in the Isles of the Blessed, the harvest comes three times a year (173). In the Just City, on the other hand, while there is a clear sense of abundance, there is little indication of "supernatural" production—the earth may provide πολλὸν βίον (232), but it is not unstinting, and for the most part is not said to come of its own accord.<sup>25</sup> As such, the productivity of the Just City would seem to require farming and cultivation, the labor motivated by "good" Strife. In this sense, the life of the Just City can only approximate the "god-like" life of the golden race or Isles of the Blessed.

In his Myth of the Ages and description of the Just and Unjust Cities, then, Hesiod presents his student with two requirements for a life that is as near to divine as the humans of our day can achieve: justice and farming. It is no accident that these are the two chief didactic subjects of Hesiod's poem. Exhorting Perses to a just livelihood centered on

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awareness of this connection between the Golden Age and the Just City, for despite the fact that lack of sea-faring would become a commonplace of Golden Age imagery, this lack is not mentioned in Hesiod's depiction of the golden race, but in his description of the Just City (236-237) instead.

<sup>24</sup>There may be vague lexical hints of cultivation in the Golden Age in the reference to ἔργα (119) but the focus is on the spontaneous nature (αὐτομάτη, 118) of the growth.

<sup>25</sup>There is a suggestion of some spontaneous growth, but this is limited to products that would normally require little or no active cultivation: acorns and honey (οὔρεσι δὲ δρυὶς / ἄκρη μὲν τε φέρει βαλάνους, μέσση δὲ μελίσσας, 232-233). Cf. West 1978 *ad loc.*, who sees in the passage another connection to and rationalization of traditional Golden Age motifs.

agricultural production, Hesiod intimates that this is the best life that may be lived, and the one that comes nearest to that of the gods.

It should be emphasized that in the case of Hesiod, this “divine assimilation” of the student is entirely metaphorical; no actual apotheosis of the student is implied. Hesiod makes sure to keep the gulf between humanity and gods visible from the beginning of his poem. In the opening lines of the *Works and Days*, Zeus’ absolute power over men is shown (Hes. *WD* 3-8):

ὄν τε διὰ βροτοὶ ἄνδρες ὁμῶς ἄφατοί τε φατοί τε  
ρήτοί τ’ ἄρρητοί τε Διὸς μέγαλοιο ἔκητι.  
ῥέα μὲν γὰρ βριάει, ῥέα δὲ βριάοντα χαλέπτει, 5  
ῥεῖα δ’ ἀρίζηλον μινύθει καὶ ἄδηλον ἀέξει,  
ῥεῖα δέ τ’ ἰθύνει σκολιὸν καὶ ἀγήγορα κάρφει  
Ζεὺς ὑψιβρεμέτης ὃς ὑπέρτατα δώματα ναίει.

Here the poet’s emphasis is on the god’s complete control over human affairs; the repeated antitheses highlight Zeus’ all-encompassing capacity for both good and ill, while the anaphora of ῥέα...ῥέα...ῥεῖα...ῥεῖα indicates the god’s facility in every action. Immediately after this passage Hesiod introduces his discussion of the two Strifes, and the extent of the gods’ control over humanity is again made clear. Both Strifes—depicted as inherent to contemporary life and as the central concerns that Hesiod’s instruction is meant to address—are god-given; blameworthy Strife is said to be honored “out of necessity, by the will of the immortals” (ἀλλ’ ὑπ’ ἀνάγκης / ἀθανάτων βουλῇσιν Ἔριν τιμῶσι βαρεῖαν, *WD* 15-16), while Zeus himself is said to have placed the better Strife in the roots of the earth (θῆκε δέ μιν Κρονίδης ὑψίζυγος, 18). Thus the very circumstances of human life that require Hesiod’s instruction would seem to be brought about by the gods.

Indeed, the gods’ responsibility for these circumstances and the Hesiodic instruction they necessitate is indicated repeatedly over the course of the *Works and Days*. This is

especially pronounced in the narrative of Prometheus and Pandora (42-105). Here Hesiod explains that the conditions his instruction is meant to address, the need for toil and the presence of hardship, were brought about through concealment and deception on the part of the gods—toil being a result of the gods’ concealment of livelihood (κρύψαντες γὰρ ἔχουσι θεοὶ βίον ἀνθρώποισιν, 42), and the presence of hardship being the ultimate result of Zeus’ deceptive gift, Pandora. In providing the information necessary to counter this deception, particularly in a manner that would liken human life to a divine state, Hesiod may appear similar to Prometheus, who also sought to counter the gods’ deception through the theft of fire. Yet crucially Hesiod’s instruction is in keeping with the will of the gods; after all, Hesiod’s ability to “speak forth the will of Zeus” was granted to him by the Muses (ἀλλὰ καὶ ὥς ἐρέω Ζηνὸς νόον αἰγιόχοιο· / Μοῦσαι γάρ μ’ ἐδίδαξαν ἀθέσφατον ὕμνον ἀεΐδειν, 661-662). Unlike Prometheus, who sought to alter the very conditions imposed by the gods through his theft of fire, Hesiod teaches how to live best *within* those conditions. Ultimately, the gods are shown as responsible both for the human condition and for Hesiod’s attempts to ameliorate that condition; Hesiod’s “god-like” life of the Just City is the life that most closely conforms to the gods’ will.

Not only do the gods impose the conditions that require Hesiod’s instruction, they also determine its efficacy. As the poem progresses, Hesiod increasingly emphasizes the unsure and contingent nature of his didaxis, and the student learns that Hesiod’s lessons are not sufficient by themselves.<sup>26</sup> Thus in his discussion of sailing, Hesiod claims that his

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<sup>26</sup>See Clay 2003, 46: “[T]he role of chance in human life—or is it the gods?—increases toward the end of the poem.” Cf. Benardete 1967, 166; Clay 1993, 32. For more on ambiguity and ambivalence in the poem, see Gagarin 1990.

teachings will lead to success, *provided that* Zeus or Poseidon not choose to cause shipwreck (665-669):

...οὐτέ κε νῆα 665  
καυάξαις οὐτ' ἄνδρας ἀποφθείσειε θάλασσα,  
εἰ δὴ μὴ πρόφρων γε Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων  
ἦ Ζεὺς ἀθανάτων βασιλεὺς ἐθέλησιν ὀλέσσαι·  
ἐν τοῖς γὰρ τέλος ἐστὶν ὁμῶς ἀγαθῶν τε κακῶν τε.

Likewise, agricultural knowledge will not provide sure success; though Hesiod expects his instruction to be effective (καί σε ἔολπα / γηθήσειν βίотου αἰρεόμενον ἔνδον ἐόντος, 475-476), he concedes that the mind of Zeus is changeable and difficult for mortals to comprehend (ἄλλοτε δ' ἄλλοιός Ζηνὸς νόος αἰγιόχοιο, / ἀργαλέος δ' ἄνδρεσσι καταθνητοῖσι νοῆσαι, 483-484). Even knowledge of justice is not sufficient on its own. Instead, the just man will be rewarded by the gods, *provided that* the rest of the community is also just, for a community is often punished for the wrongs of one member (πολλάκι καὶ ξύμπασα πόλις κακοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἀπηύρα, / ὅστις ἀλιτράινει καὶ ἀτάσθαλα μηχανάται, 240-241).<sup>27</sup> Here we see the most important qualification to the rhetoric of divinization used by Hesiod. While the knowledge granted by the poet—that of justice and farming—is necessary for the agricultural life of the Just City, it is not sufficient for that life. As the poet stresses, this requires in addition communal action and the goodwill of the gods.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Cf. *WD* 258-262, where the people are punished for the wickedness of their kings. The fate of humanity in the Prometheus tale may also be compared, where the entire species is punished because of the actions of Prometheus.

<sup>28</sup>See Benardete 1967, 158: “To be fully human and yet be perfectly just seems impossible.... Something else is necessary if men are to live up to their heroic ancestors. That something is, as the fourth section [of B.’s division of the poem] reveals, the city.”

## Empedocles

In examining Empedocles' depiction of the gods and humanity, sure conclusions are harder to reach, given the fragmentary nature of his text as we have it. It is clear from the extant fragments, however, that he saw giving an account of the gods as a primary concern,<sup>29</sup> and that his espousal of the transmigration of souls led to a radical stance on the relationship between men and gods. In one fragment, Empedocles even claims that he himself is “an immortal god, no longer mortal” (ἐγὼ δ' ὑμῖν θεὸς ἄμβροτος οὐκέτι θνητός / πωλεῦμαι, μετὰ πᾶσι τετιμένος, ὥσπερ ἔοικεν, DK 102.4-5), breaking down the division between gods and mortals that Hesiod saw as essential to the condition of contemporary humanity.<sup>30</sup> The tension between these two poets' worldviews would help shape the later didactic tradition—as will be seen, both Aratus and Vergil attempt to reconcile aspects of Hesiodic and Empedoclean thought. Taken independently as well, Empedocles can be seen to have a tremendous influence on subsequent poets. As Hardie has shown, Empedoclean thought—particularly as mediated through Ennius—is recurrent in the Latin epic tradition,<sup>31</sup> and references to the poet often emphasize his own claims of divinity; Lucretius speaks of Empedocles as “divine” and his teachings as seeming to come from an inhuman source (*carmina quin etiam divini pectoris eius / vociferantur et exponunt praeclara reperta, / ut vix humana videatur stirpe creatus*, DRN 1.731-733), while Horace near the end of his *Ars Poetica* gives an account of Empedocles' death, brought about by his desire to appear a god

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<sup>29</sup>See, e.g., DK 131.3-4: εὐχομένῳ νῦν αὖτε παράστασο, Καλλιόπεια, / ἀμφὶ θεῶν μακάρων ἀγαθὸν λόγον ἐμφαίνοντι.

<sup>30</sup>As Koning 2010, 165-169 argues, this element of Empedoclean thought may be indebted partially to Hesiod's description of the golden race, who become δαίμονες after their death.

<sup>31</sup>See Hardie 1995, 207-212; cf. Toohey 1996, 40-41.

(*deus immortalis haberi / dum cupit Empedocles...*, AP 464-465). Insight into Empedocles' portrayal of gods and men will thus aid greatly in our understanding of later poets.

It is all the more unfortunate, then, that scholars are in disagreement about many aspects of Empedocles' work. Even the number of poems to which his fragments are assigned has become subject to debate. Traditionally fragments have been assigned to one of two poems: the "scientific" *On Nature*, focusing on cosmogony and a description of the natural world, and the more esoteric *Katharmoi* ("Purifications"), to which are assigned the more religious fragments including those alluding to Empedocles' doctrine of transmigration. Recently, this division has come under some attack, most notably by Osborne and Inwood,<sup>32</sup> who argue that there is no compelling reason to view our fragments as necessarily coming from two separate poems, and prefer to hypothesize instead a single Empedoclean work from which all (or almost all) our extant fragments derive. For the purposes of the present argument, neither side need be accepted entirely, though a unity of Empedoclean thought is assumed that, in practice, shares much common ground with the one-poem hypothesis. Certainly, a certain unity is suggested by the extant fragments; even those fragments which seem heavily involved with Empedocles' "religious" arguments of Pythagorean transmigration, such as Empedocles' self-description as a fallen *daimon*, are nevertheless permeated with concepts (such as the role of Love and Strife as cosmic forces) which are intrinsic to his "physical" theories.<sup>33</sup> Further, as this chapter is meant to provide a basis for

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<sup>32</sup>Osborne 1987, Inwood 2001. For a strong opposition to this view, see O'Brien 1995.

<sup>33</sup>See esp. Kahn 1960. Cf., e.g., Wright 1981, 57-76; Abrosano 2011. Solmsen 1975, 135 n.32, could already claim that "[w]e have had occasions to emphasize the large area of common ground between the two poems. Awareness of it has in the last decades increased." Trépanier 2007, 247-249 discusses how the Strasbourg papyrus, published in 1999, shows an undeniable combination of physical and religious argument by Empedocles.



discussion of the later Latin didactic poets, it may be useful to attempt to isolate a single line of thought which those authors would have found particularly “Empedoclean.”

There is further difficulty, however, in determining exactly what Empedocles defined as a god. Our sources state that he viewed the elements—fire, water, earth, and air—as “gods,” along with Love and Strife, the motive forces of his cosmology that blend and separate the elements in an eternally recurring cycle.<sup>34</sup> In this case, then, a “god” is any of the fundamental entities of Empedocles’ physical system, eternal entities which are neither created nor destroyed.<sup>35</sup> At those periods in the cycle when Love’s influence is at its greatest, all the elements (and thus the universe as a whole) are blended and united in a sphere, the *Sphairos*, which is likewise considered a god.<sup>36</sup> Yet this would be a god with little effect on humans as such; after all, it only exists at a time when we, as human beings, do not. Here humans may be said to become a “part of god” (as would the rest of the

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<sup>34</sup>Hippolytus in his early 2<sup>nd</sup>-century CE *Refutatio omnium haeresium* claims that Empedocles regarded the four elements as “mortal gods” and Love and Strife as “immortal gods” (θεοὺς δέ, ὡς ἔφην, τέσσαρας μὲν θνητούς, πῦρ, ὕδωρ, γῆν, ἀέρα, δύο δὲ ἀθανάτους, ἀγεννήτους, πολεμίους ἑαυτοῖς διὰ παντός, τὸ νεῖκος καὶ τὴν φιλίαν, 7.29.23). It should be noted that Empedocles nowhere in our extant fragments explicitly refers to the elements as θεοί, though such a designation is suggested by their identification with various divinities (as at DK 6, where the elements are referred to as Zeus, Hera, Aidoneus, and Nestis; cf. the frequent association between Love and Aphrodite).

<sup>35</sup>For the eternal nature of the entities as a response to Parmenides’ critique of the concepts of creation and destruction, see, e.g., Inwood 2001, 24-29. Paradoxically, Empedocles makes a distinction between the eternal nature of Love and Strife and that of the elements; although both are considered “eternal,” since the elements can blend with one another, they are, or can become, “mortal,” while the eternally unmixed Love and Strife are “immortal” in contrast; cf. Inwood 2001, 31-32.

<sup>36</sup>There is significant disagreement over the “lifespan” of the *Sphairos*. To note extremes: Solmsen 1975, 139-141, assumes it exists for only an instant in the course of the cosmic cycle, while O’Brien 1995, 425, argues that this period of unity lasts for half of the entire cycle.

universe), but this is a natural and invariable occurrence; the Empedoclean student does not become divine in this fashion because of anything he or she does, or anything the poet teaches. In either case, then, following the traditional reading of the “physical” poem as a mechanistic description of the cosmos, we are left with entirely impersonal “gods” that are nevertheless immanent in every aspect of human existence, inasmuch as it is they as elements that constitute the world and every human in it. Yet, unlike Hesiod’s discourse on work and justice, which gives his student practical advice and strategies for improving one’s lot, Empedocles’ teaching on physics would do nothing to alter the student’s situation; in the physical cosmology of Empedocles, the student would be made of divine substance with or without knowledge of Empedocles’ doctrine.

Empedocles does not, however, present the gods only as impersonal features of his physical system. Although he often uses impersonal terms to identify the four elements, Love, and Strife as the essential building blocks of that system and the *Sphairos* as a particular configuration of that system, he also regularly identifies these entities with the Olympian deities, as for example at DK 6, where the elements are identified with Zeus, Hera, Aidoneus, and Nestis (τέσσαρα γὰρ πάντων ῥιζώματα πρῶτον ἄκουε· / Ζεὺς ἀργῆς Ἥρη τε φερέσβιος ἡδ’ Αἰδωνεύς, / Νῆστις θ’ ἢ δακρύοις τέγγει κρούνωμα βρότειον).<sup>37</sup> To a certain extent, this can be explained as a straightforward case of metonymy, with the gods’ names standing in for the elements which they represent. Yet such usage cannot be explained solely as metonymy, particularly in the case of Love, which Empedocles regularly conflates with

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<sup>37</sup>The identification of these four divinities with their corresponding elements is the subject of much debate. For one interpretation with background, see Kingsley 1995, esp. 13-48. Such allegorical interpretation, particularly of Homer, was common among Empedocles’ contemporaries; see esp. Buffiere 1956, 81-122.

the goddess Aphrodite,<sup>38</sup> portraying the force as a craftswoman creating the various aspects of nature.<sup>39</sup> More importantly for the topic at hand, the poet often gives a moralizing force to his depiction of the goddess, as is illustrated at DK 128, a passage traditionally assigned to the *Katharmoi*, where Empedocles, criticizing the present practice of animal sacrifice, depicts an idyllic past where “there was no god Ares or...Zeus as king, but Kypris as queen,” whom the people worshipped with proper vegetal sacrifices and libations instead of impious animal sacrifice (DK 128):

οὐδέ τις ἦν κείνοισιν Ἄρης θεὸς οὐδὲ Κυδοιμός  
οὐδὲ Ζεὺς βασιλεὺς οὐδὲ Κρόνος οὐδὲ Ποσειδῶν  
ἀλλὰ Κύπρις βασίλεια...  
τὴν οἱ γ’ εὐσεβέεσσιν ἀγάλμασιν ἱλάσκοντο  
γραπτοῖς τε ζῳοῖσι μύροισι τε δαιδαλεόδοις  
σμύρνης τ’ ἀκρήτου θυσίαις λιβάνου τε θυώδους,  
ξανθῶν τε σπονδὰς μελίτων ρίπτοντες ἐς οὔδας·  
ταύρων δ’ ἀκρήτοισι φόνους οὐ δεύετο βωμός,  
ἀλλὰ μύσος τοῦτ’ ἔσκεν ἐν ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστον,  
θυμὸν ἀπορραΐσαντας ἐέδμεναι ἡέα γυῖα.

Here Empedocles presents a much more immediate divine influence on the actions of humans, who, through their privileging of the goddess, act in a properly moral way. Crucially, this proper behavior is exactly that espoused by the poet’s didaxis; through adherence to the poet’s moral precepts, the student may live in accord with the goddess Kypris.

As one final divine category, Empedocles regularly refers to “long-lived gods” (θεοὶ

<sup>38</sup>Cf. DK 17.20, 23-24: καὶ φιλότης ἐν τοῖσιν, ἴση μῆκος τε πλάτος τε...τῇ τε φίλα φρονέουσι καὶ ἄρθμια ἔργα τελοῦσι, / Γηθοσύνην καλέοντες ἐπώνυμον ἡδ’ Ἀφροδίτην.

<sup>39</sup>As at DK 86: ἐξ ὧν ὄμματ’ ἐπηξεν ἀτειρέα δι’ Ἀφροδίτη. Cf. DK 87, 71, 73.

δολιγαίωνες), beings distinct from the fundamental cosmic entities discussed above.<sup>40</sup> It would seem that these gods are, like everything else in Empedocles' system, formed by elemental combination, part of a spectrum of living things that includes animals and humans.<sup>41</sup> The fact of their elemental constitution would explain why these are described not as immortal, but rather as “long-lived”; like everything else, they are subject to the separating and unifying actions of Strife and Love.<sup>42</sup> It would also suggest that there is no absolute qualitative difference between humans and these gods; both are elemental compositions.

This potential for fluidity between humans and gods helps to explain Empedocles' claim that he himself is “an immortal god, no longer mortal” (θεὸς ἄμβροτος οὐκέτι θνητός, DK 102.4), and is corroborated by another fragment traditionally assigned to the *Katharmoi*.<sup>43</sup> In fragment DK 115, the poet refers to an “ancient decree of the gods” (θεῶν ψήφισμα παλαιόν, 115.1) that compels “*daimones* who have obtained long-lasting life” (δαίμονες οἷτε μακραίωνος λελάχασι βίοιο, 115.5), whenever they have transgressed in some fashion,<sup>44</sup> to wander apart from the gods and take on the forms of various mortal creatures

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<sup>40</sup>*Pace* Primavesi 2007 who seeks to identify these gods with the elements and the *Sphairos*.

<sup>41</sup>See esp. DK 21.

<sup>42</sup>This is argued by Trépanier 2007, 249ff. Cf. Wright 1981, 60-61.

<sup>43</sup>Certainly there is a tension between Empedocles' claim to immortality here and his reference to the gods only as “long-lived” elsewhere, but this tension may be one of perspective. As compound bodies, these gods are “long-lived” but the elements that compose them are immortal; elsewhere, Empedocles notes the problems of such linguistic conventions, explaining that “birth” and “death” are no more than incorrect terms for elemental mixture and dissolution, and do not in fact exist (DK 8, 9).

<sup>44</sup>The lines describing the exact nature of this transgression (DK 115.3-4) are corrupt, though reference to a perjured oath is reasonably secure: ἐπίορκον ἁμαρτήσας ἐπομώσσει, 115.4. The other transgression is usually taken to be an act of violence, based on Stephanus' emendation of 115.3 describing the *daimon* “polluting his limbs with blood” (εὗτέ τις ἀμπλακίησι φόνῳ

(τρίς μιν μυρίας ὥρας ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀλλάλῃσθαι / φυόμενον παντοῖα διὰ χρόνου εἶδεα θνητῶν, 115.6-7)—including that of the poet, an exile from the gods himself (τῶν καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἰμι, φυγὰς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης, 115.13). Here, as in the fragment describing life under the goddess Kypriis, there is an indication that divine status is related in some way to moral status; the fallen state of the *daimones* is a direct result of improper conduct. From this it may be posited that proper moral conduct could lead to the restoration of divine status.

This is not a condition unique to the poet, but common to all humanity (and indeed all living things). Empedocles readily lists the various forms he has taken in past lives, both animal and human (DK 117), and suggests that prominent humans with the proper wisdom can themselves acquire a divine state.<sup>45</sup> This would then make sense of the numerous moral precepts given by the poet, as it is through such purification that individuals can be reborn into higher forms. Indeed, it seems that this is exactly the way that the author of the Pythagorean so-called “Golden Verses” took Empedocles’ claims; giving a poetic set of moral prescriptions, that poet ends with an explicit reference to Empedocles, claiming that the student who follows the stated injunctions will become “an immortal god, no longer mortal” (ἦν δ’ ἀπολείψας σῶμα ἐς αἰθέρ’ ἐλεύθερον ἔλθῃς, / ἔσσει ἀθάνατος, θεὸς ἄμβροτος, οὐκέτι θνητός, GV 70-71).<sup>46</sup>

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φίλα γυῖα μίην). The reading in all our mss., however, makes no reference to blood or pollution (εὖτέ τις ἀμπλακίῃσι φόβῳ φίλα γυῖα †μιν†) and Wright 1981 *ad loc.* is perhaps correct in rejecting the standard emendation.

<sup>45</sup>See DK 146: εἰς δὲ τέλος μάντις τε καὶ ὑμνόπολοι καὶ ἱητροί / καὶ πρόμοι ἀνθρώποισιν ἐπιχθονίοισι πέλονται· / ἔνθεν ἀναβλαστοῦσι θεοὶ τιμῇσι φέριστοι. Cf. DK 147.

<sup>46</sup>For more on the *Golden Verses*, see Thom 1995. Dates attributed to the work range widely, from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE to the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE; for a detailed discussion, see esp. Thom 1995, 35-58, who ultimately settles on a date of 350-300 BCE.

This also lends import to the “physical” teachings of the poem, with their emphasis on the eternal, unperishable nature of the elements; in learning how nature truly works—that humans are made of eternal elements which constantly take new forms—the student is able to acquire a proper moral behavior based on the true nature of things.<sup>47</sup> To take the most obvious example: by learning of the *daimon*’s eternal nature and the subsequent role of metempsychosis, the student learns of the impiety of animal sacrifice and can avoid the pollution it would cause.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, along with purity, knowledge seems to be an essential part of divinity in Empedocles’ worldview: as the Christian author Hippolytus explains, the poet describes the god Apollo as pure intellect, a holy *phren* darting through the cosmos (ἀλλὰ φρήν ἱερὴ καὶ ἀθέσφατος ἔπλετο μοῦνον, / φροντίσι κόσμον ἅπαντα καταΐσσουσα θοῇσιν, DK 134.4-5).

An overall pattern similar to that in Hesiod’s poem may thus be detected: the knowledge granted by the poet leads his students to a divine state.<sup>49</sup> Yet eschatological divergences between Hesiod and Empedocles lead to different conceptions of this state. Presupposing a finite view of human life, Hesiod can offer only the Just City’s approximation of the “life like the gods” enjoyed by the golden race (or postmortem

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<sup>47</sup>Cf. Toohey 1996, 42: “In a sense the material in the so-called *Purifications* represents a microscopic application of the macroscopic themes of the cosmogonical material, the so-called *On Nature*.”

<sup>48</sup>For Empedocles’ explicit connection between wisdom and an understanding of transmigration, see DK 129, wherein the poet praises a man, traditionally assumed to be Pythagoras, who “had obtained the greatest wealth of mind” (ὅς δὴ μήκιστον πραπίδων ἐκτήσατο πλοῦτον, 129.2) and “saw each of the things that are, even in ten and twenty lives of men” (ῥεῖ’ ὅ γε τῶν ὄντων πάντων λεύσσεσκεν ἕκαστον, / καὶ τε δέκ’ ἀνθρώπων καὶ τ’ εἴκοσιν αἰώνεσσιν, 129.4-5).

<sup>49</sup>Cf. Trépanier 2007, 259.

existence on the Isles of the Blessed). Empedocles, expounding a system of cyclical reincarnation, allows for the possibility of actual transcendence—an apotheosis which will happen not in this life, but the next (or maybe the one after that).

One other difference that may be noted is the seemingly individualized nature that deification takes in Empedocles' poem; focused on the purity of the individual student, Empedocles' instruction appears not to need that collective effort required for the Just City. Yet this reading of the poem may be only partly correct. In arguing for the unity of Empedocles' extant fragments, Catherine Osborne has sought to reconcile the apparent discrepancies between the physical system, with its divinity envisioned in the ultimate unity of the *Sphairos*, and the travails of the individual *daimon* that Empedocles describes.<sup>50</sup> In so doing, she has suggested that the initial wrong leading to the *daimon*'s expulsion from the gods may be identified with the fragmentation of the *Sphairos* into the universe as we know it; by "trusting to Strife," the *daimon* itself has caused division in the unity of the *Sphairos*. On this reading, the reunion with the gods that the *daimon* seeks (and that is the reward of the successful student) would be equivalent to the reunion of all matter under the reconstruction of the *Sphairos*. In this case, a certain amount of communal effort may still be required in Empedocles' system, for while the student may attain the status of "long-lived god" through individual purity, the reunion of the cosmos into the *Sphairos* would only occur when *all* individuals (and thus all the *daimones*) do so.

This is certainly a minority reading of the text, however. It may ultimately be safer in this case to take a slightly more cautious approach to Empedocles' work, seeing two cycles which may be identified with the two poems to which the fragments have traditionally been

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<sup>50</sup>See Osborne 1987, esp. 35-49.

assigned. In this case Empedocles would expound a physical system in which all the universe may be identified with “god” but that requires no effort or knowledge on the part of any human agent, and a religious system in which the knowledge provided by the poet contributes to the purity and eventual deification of the student.

## **Aratus**

In discussing the Hellenistic poet Aratus, it will be most productive to read his *Phaenomena* against the work of his primary poetic model, Hesiod. Such a strategy was taken by at least one of Aratus’ contemporaries, as Callimachus claims in an epigram that both “the song and the manner are Hesiod’s” (Ἡσιόδου τό τ’ ᾄσισμα καὶ ὁ τρόπος, Callim. *Ep.* 27 = *AP* 9.507.1). Callimachus is quick to qualify this claim, however, noting that Aratus did not follow the earlier poet to excess, but only made use of the sweetest part of his verse (οὐ τὸν ἀοιδὸν / ἔσχατον, ἀλλ’ ὀκνέω μὴ τὸ μελιχρότατον / τῶν ἐπέων ὁ Σολεὺς ἀπεμάρξατο, 9.507.1-3). This distinction, followed as it is by a description of Aratus’ poetry as λεπταὶ ῥήσιες (9.507.3-4), has been viewed by scholars chiefly as one of style; the refined aesthetic of the Hellenistic poet is set in contrast to Hesiod’s rougher verse.<sup>51</sup> While this contrast is certainly apt, a similar comparison may be made between these poets in terms of subject matter as well.<sup>52</sup> Again Aratus may be seen to borrow extensively from Hesiod while at the same time adapting the earlier poet’s material and suiting it to contemporary taste. Both poets operate within the same basic framework, portraying the world and the humans who

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<sup>51</sup>See, e.g., Volk 2010, 199; Klooster 2011, 157-159. Tsantsanoglou 2009 argues that the epigram is discreetly critical of Aratus, but such an interpretation seems unlikely.

<sup>52</sup>For extensive analysis of Aratus’ adaptation of Hesiod, see esp. Fakas 2001.



inhabit it as entirely under the control of Zeus. Yet Aratus carefully adapts his Hesiodic model to “modernize” his divinity and portray an overwhelmingly benevolent conception of the divine.<sup>53</sup> As will be shown, a primary feature of this adaptation is Aratus’ incorporation of Empedoclean ideas within his Hesiodic framework; through a selective merging of the two earlier poets’ accounts, Aratus suggests mankind’s ability to return to a Golden Age in harmony with the gods.<sup>54</sup>

Aratus, following his generic predecessor Hesiod, begins with a hymn to Zeus (Arat. *Ph.* 1-16):

Ἐκ Διὸς ἀρχώμεσθα, τὸν οὐδέποτ’ ἄνδρες ἔωμεν  
 ἄρρητον· μεστὰ δὲ Διὸς πᾶσαι μὲν ἀγυαί,  
 πᾶσαι δ’ ἀνθρώπων ἀγοραί, μεστή δὲ θάλασσα  
 καὶ λιμένες· πάντη δὲ Διὸς κεχρήμεθα πάντες.  
 τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος εἰμέν. ὁ δ’ ἥπιος ἀνθρώποισι  
 δεξιὰ σημαίνει, λαοὺς δ’ ἐπὶ ἔργον ἐγείρει  
 μιμνήσκων βιότοιο· λέγει δ’ ὅτε δεξιάι ὦραι  
 καὶ φυτὰ γυρῶσαι καὶ σπέρματα πάντα βαλέσθαι.  
 αὐτὸς γὰρ τά γε σήματ’ ἐν οὐρανῷ ἐστήριξεν  
 ἄστρα διακρίνας, ἐσκέψατο δ’ εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν  
 ἀστέρας οἳ κε μάλιστα τετυγμένα σημαίνουσιν  
 ἀνδράσιν ὥράων, ὅφρ’ ἔμπεδα πάντα φύωνται.  
 τῷ μιν ἀεὶ πρῶτόν τε καὶ ὕστατον ἰλάσκονται.  
 χαῖρε, πάτερ, μέγα θαῦμα, μέγ’ ἀνθρώποισιν ὄνειαρ,

<sup>53</sup>There is a tendency among scholars, prevalent already in antiquity, to see this Aratean “modernity” in predominantly Stoic terms; see esp. Effe 1977, 40-56. While one may productively assume a certain similarity of outlook between Aratus’ poem and early Stoic thought (as do, e.g., James 1972 and Kidd 1997, 10-12), I refrain from seeing any specific doctrinal bent in the *Phaenomena*. Cf. Hunter 2008, 158-159, who, though ultimately taking a Stoicizing reading, notes that “[w]e can hardly speak of a firm body of ‘Stoic dogma’ at a date as early as that normally supposed for the *Phaenomena*...,” and Cusset 2011, who finds only tenuous support for Aratean Stoicism.

<sup>54</sup>This is not to say that Aratus accepts the belief systems of Empedocles or Hesiod; certainly, there is no suggestion of Empedoclean eschatological views in the *Phaenomena* and, as discussed in the previous fn., Aratus’ philosophical outlook is closer to that of the Stoics than to either of his poetic predecessors. I speak here solely of poetic borrowing.

In contrast to the ambivalent Zeus of Hesiod's poem, however, Aratus' Zeus is portrayed in the proem as entirely beneficent.<sup>55</sup> This beneficence is first hinted at through an omission in Aratus' claim that men never leave Zeus unmentioned (τὸν οὐδέποτ' ἄνδρες ἐῶμεν / ἄρρητον, 1-2). The phrase recalls Hesiod's earlier claim that Zeus causes men to be famous or unmentioned (ὄν τε διὰ βροτοὶ ἄνδρες ὁμῶς ἄφατοί τε φατοί τε / ῥητοὶ τ' ἄρρητοὶ τε Διὸς μέγαλοιο ἔκητι, Hes. *WD* 3-4), but in making Zeus himself the object of speech, Aratus removes half of the Hesiodic dichotomy. Through litotes, only the positive element of this dichotomy is retained, while the problematic aspect of Zeus in Hesiod's proem, his capacity to render individuals utterly unknown, is suppressed. Such suppression recurs throughout Aratus' proem; whereas Hesiod balances the beneficial and harmful aspects of Zeus' power, Aratus removes all such ambivalence. Everything Zeus is said to accomplish in the proem of the *Phaenomena*—the presentation of favorable signs (5-6), the rousing of men to work (6), the indication of agricultural timeframes through the positioning of stars (7-14)—has the ultimate aim of providing for man's livelihood and ensuring that all things grow continually (ὄφρ' ἔμπεδα πάντα φύωνται, 13).

Such a role is suggested further through Aratus' description of Zeus as ἥπιος (5). The term is regularly used in Homeric poetry to describe beneficent figures, particularly paternal ones; Telemachus uses it in the *Odyssey* to describe his absent father Odysseus (τὸ μὲν πατέρ' ἐσθλὸν ἀπώλεσα, ὅς ποτ' ἐν ὑμῖν / τοῖσδεσσιν βασίλευε, πατήρ δ' ὥς ἥπιος ἦεν, *Od.*

<sup>55</sup>It should be noted that this beneficence is not fixed over the course of the poem, as there are three instances (Arat. *Ph.* 293, 886, 936) where bad weather is said to be caused by Zeus. Yet, as Kidd 1997, 12, notes, these passages and all references to Zeus after line 777 “are expressed in traditional weather phrases,” i.e., when Zeus is identified with the actual sky.

2.46-47; cf. 2.234), while Helen describes Priam with the same term while contrasting his kindness with the cruelty of the other Trojans (ἐκυρὸς δὲ πατὴρ ὥς ἥπιος αἰεὶ, *Il.* 24.770).<sup>56</sup> By using this descriptor in his invocation of Zeus, and doing so immediately after announcing humanity's descent from the god (τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος εἰμὲν, *Arat. Ph.* 5),<sup>57</sup> Aratus emphasizes the role of benevolent caretaker that Zeus assumes throughout the poem.

Finally, the Zeus of Aratus' proem is contrasted with that of the *Works and Days* through discussion of the god's proximity to mortals. In Hesiod's proem, Zeus is portrayed in his traditional role as sky-god, dwelling in the "loftiest abodes" (Ζεὺς ὑψιβρεμέτης ὃς ὑπέρτατα δώματα ναίει, *Hes. WD* 8). While Aratus regularly makes this association between Zeus and the heavens in his poem, even using the god's name metonymically to refer to the sky, the poet avoids this connection in his initial positioning of Zeus. Instead, the god is said to fill the roads, marketplaces, sea, and harbors (μεστὰι δὲ Διὸς πᾶσαι μὲν ἀγυιαί, / πᾶσαι δ' ἀνθρώπων ἀγοραί, μεστὴ δὲ θάλασσα / καὶ λιμένες, *Arat. Ph.* 4-6).<sup>58</sup> This omnipresence of Zeus is often taken as an indication of the Stoicizing nature of Aratus' poem, wherein Zeus would here be identified with the life-giving *pneuma* which permeates the universe.<sup>59</sup> While this may be the case, Volk rightly points out that such an interpretation need not be read into

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<sup>56</sup>Cf. Kidd 1997, *ad Ph.* 5.

<sup>57</sup>The phrase provides another reference to Hesiod, recalling as it does the earlier poet's claim that gods and men have the same origin (ὁμόθεν γεγάασι θεοὶ θνητοὶ τ' ἄνθρωποι, *WD* 108).

<sup>58</sup>A suggestion of the traditional threefold division of the world into earth, sea, and sky can be seen here. Should such be the case, Aratus' omission of the third element, sky, would be all the more emphatic.

<sup>59</sup>Cf. e.g. James 1972, 36; Kidd 1997, *ad* 2.

these lines.<sup>60</sup> The focus here is rather on Zeus' involvement in human affairs, as all four areas mentioned are key locations for human activity.<sup>61</sup> Thus Aratus moves Zeus from the distant heavens to the centers of human society; ultimately it is *we humans* who all have need of Zeus (πάντη δὲ Διὸς κεχρήμεθα πάντες, 6).

In the proem of his *Phaenomena*, then, Aratus can be seen repeatedly referring back to the proem of Hesiod's *Works and Days*, correcting some passages and suppressing others to create a very different portrayal of Zeus. Such reworking of Hesiod recurs throughout the *Phaenomena*, though its manifestations are not always as straightforward as Aratus' reconstruction of Hesiod's opening hymn. Aratus takes a more nuanced approach in handling the discussion of Strife which follows Hesiod's hymn to Zeus in the *Works and Days* (Hes. WD 11-41). Aratus makes no mention of either Strife, yet he does incorporate the functions of both into his poem. Further emphasizing the benevolence of Zeus, Aratus transfers the function of the good Strife, who rouses men to work, to Zeus himself, who performs the same action (λαοὺς δ' ἐπὶ ἔργον ἐγείρει, 6) through the display of his astronomical signs. To be sure, in Hesiod's account, Zeus may be considered ultimately responsible for this, as it is he who placed the good Strife within the earth, yet Aratus underscores Zeus' role by removing the intermediary Strife. Aratus performs a similar transference with the blameworthy Strife. Whereas in the *Works and Days* war and conflict are brought about by wicked Strife and the gods, Aratus presents these as activities created

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<sup>60</sup>Volk 2010, 201.

<sup>61</sup>See *ibid.*: "The places enumerated are not features of the natural world as much as areas of human activity. This is true even for the sea, which was no doubt chosen qua locus of navigation and forms a pair with the harbors: the sea leads to the harbors as the roads lead to the squares."

and perpetuated by mortals; in her threats to the men of the Silver Age, the maiden Dike warns that humanity's degeneration will lead to war and bloodshed (καὶ δὴ που πόλεμοι, καὶ δὴ καὶ ἀνάρσιον αἶμα / ἔσσεται ἀνθρώποισι, Arat. *Ph.* 125-126). Again, Aratus alters the Hesiodic account to underscore the fundamental benevolence of Zeus, while also transferring the responsibility for evils from gods to men. In this way, Aratus creates a dialogue with the Hesiodic passage, correcting and suppressing problematic elements to provide a fundamentally different account of Zeus and divinity.

Aratus also suppresses the Hesiodic passages that immediately follow Hesiod's discussion of Strife. Explaining the necessity for labor in acquiring the means for survival, Hesiod claims that the gods hid this means from mortals, purposefully making life difficult for them (κρύψαντες γὰρ ἔχουσι θεοὶ βίον ἀνθρώποισιν, Hes. *WD* 43). Going on to describe the forms that this difficulty took, Hesiod narrates how Zeus first hid fire from mortals (42-52) and then gave them Pandora and her jar of evils (53-105). In both cases, the chief motivation assigned to Zeus is anger (ἀλλὰ Ζεὺς ἔκρυψε χολωσάμενος φρεσὶν ἦσιν, 47; cf. τὸν δὲ χολωσάμενος προσέφη νεφεληγερέτα Ζεύς, 53), and in both cases Zeus' actions are completed primarily through concealment and deception.<sup>62</sup> Underscoring this point, Hesiod uses the verb κρύπτω three times in nine lines while describing Zeus' concealment of fire (κρύψε δὲ πῦρ, 50; cf. κρύψαντες, 42; Ζεὺς ἔκρυψε, 47).<sup>63</sup> The delivery of Pandora to mortals is likewise accomplished through concealment. Hesiod gives two extended

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<sup>62</sup>Cf. Hunter 2008, 157-158.

<sup>63</sup>Deception is an essential feature of the entire episode, as it is also used by Prometheus, whose initial trickery of Zeus (itself completed through the concealment of sacrificial portions) is said to be the impetus for the god's angry actions (ὅττι μιν ἐξαπάτησε Προμηθεὺς ἀγκυλομήτης, 48). See Vernant 1981, esp. 48-50.

descriptions of Pandora, first when recounting Zeus' instructions to the other gods (60-68), then when portraying her actual creation (69-82). Each time, the initial focus is on the woman's attractive external appearance; only at the end of each description does Hesiod tell of Hermes' contributions to the new creation, which include deceit and the character of a thief (ψεύδεά θ' αἰμυλίους τε λόγους καὶ ἐπίκλοπον ἦθος, 78; cf. ἐν δὲ θέμεν κύνεόν τε νόον καὶ ἐπίκλοπον ἦθος, 67). In effect, Pandora is a faulty sign, whose external beauty belies her inner nature—an evil which men misrecognize and in which they thus take delight (δώσω κακόν, ᾧ κεν ἅπαντες / τέρπωνται κατὰ θυμόν, ἐὼν κακὸν ἀμφογαπῶντες, 56-57).

As should be expected, Aratus removes these tales, with their focus on Zeus' hostility towards humanity, from his account.<sup>64</sup> In contrast to the Hesiodic Zeus, Aratus' Zeus is above all a source of revelation—an appropriate god for a poem on visible signs. His first action in the poem is the granting of favorable signs to humanity (δεξιὰ σημαίνει, Arat. *Ph.* 6), and words with this σημ- root recur throughout the poem; Aratus explains that it was Zeus who fixed the signs in the sky (αὐτὸς γὰρ τά γε σήματ' ἐν οὐρανῷ ἐστήριξεν, 10) and ensured that the stars would give proper signs to mortals (ἐσκέψατο δ' εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν / ἀστέρας οἳ κε μάλιστα τετυγμένα σημαίνοιεν / ἀνδράσιν ὥράων, 11-13). Later on in the poem, at the opening of the so-called *Diosemeiai*, Aratus returns to this theme of revelation, announcing that all the year's signs have been made visible by Zeus (ἐκ Διὸς ἤδη πάντα πεφασμένα πάντοθι κεῖται, 743). Shortly afterward, Aratus does seem to alter this view somewhat, forced by the irregular occurrence of sea-storms to admit that Zeus has kept some knowledge hidden from humans (πάντα γὰρ οὐπὼ / ἐκ Διὸς ἄνθρωποι γινώσκομεν, ἀλλ' ἔτι πολλὰ /

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<sup>64</sup>Indeed, the description of civilization's beginnings given in the *Phaenomena* would seem incompatible with the tale of Pandora given in the *Works and Days*, as women are already present in Aratus' Golden Age (Arat. *Ph.* 103).

κέκρυπται, 768-770).<sup>65</sup> Yet the poet qualifies this statement, claiming that Zeus may yet reveal to humanity even those things which he has kept hidden (τῶν αἵ κε θέλη καὶ ἐσαυτίκα δώσει / Ζεύς, 770-771; cf. οὐπω, 768; ἔτι, 769), and reiterating that Zeus constantly benefits humanity through the signs which he does show (ὁ γὰρ οὖν γενεὴν ἀνδρῶν ἀναφανδὸν ὀφέλλει, / πάντοθεν εἰδόμενος, πάντα δ' ὃ γε σήματα φαίνων, 771-772). Thus even where he must put a limit on the aid provided by Zeus, Aratus' focus remains on the god's inherently beneficent nature.

In addition to this refutation of the concealment theme in the tales of Pandora and the theft of fire, refutations of specific lines from these passages can also be detected in the *Phaenomena*. Thus, whereas in the *Works and Days* Hesiod claims that the gods hid the means of subsistence from humanity (κρύψαντες γὰρ ἔχουσι θεοὶ βίον ἀνθρώποισιν, Hes. *WD* 43), Aratus explains that it is actually Zeus who through his signs reminds men of their livelihood (μιμνήσκων βίότιοι, *Arat. Ph.* 7). At the end of the Pandora narrative, Hesiod states that Epimetheus' acceptance of Pandora ultimately led to the spread of evils throughout the world; both the land and sea were filled with ills (πλείη μὲν γὰρ γαῖα κακῶν, πλείη δὲ θάλασσα, Hes. *WD* 101). Here too, Aratus provides an alternate account, claiming that the land and sea are filled (μεσταί) not with ills, but with Zeus himself (*Arat. Ph.* 2-4, quoted above). As in his adaptation of Hesiod's discussion of Strife, Aratus suppresses the narrative of these passages while altering their message to his own ends.

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<sup>65</sup>In telling contrast to Hesiod's repeated use of the verb (three times in *WD* 42-50 alone, as noted above), this is one of only two occurrences of the verb κρύπτω in the poem (the other is the participle κεκρύμμεναι at line 564, in reference to the concealment of the constellations by a mountain range). Kidd 1997 *ad* 770 refers to the usage here as "[a] partial concession to Hesiod..." but Aratus' overall claim here is actually opposed to that of Hesiod.

Aratus' most extensive dialogue with Hesiod occurs in his discussion of the constellation known as the Maiden (Arat. *Ph.* 96-136), wherein he sets that poet's worldview in juxtaposition with that of Empedocles.<sup>66</sup> Unlike his adaptation of other Hesiodic passages, here Aratus retains much of the narrative framework of Hesiod's account, though he does conflate two distinct passages: Hesiod's Myth of the Ages (Hes. *WD* 106-201) and discussion of Dike (213-285). At the same time, however, he incorporates elements of Empedocles' theology: the early rule of a benevolent goddess and a critique of meat-eating.<sup>67</sup> According to this tale, Aratus relates, the Maiden once dwelt among men, who knew her as Dike. This was the Golden Age, when no conflict existed, and humanity obtained its livelihood solely from agriculture and Dike herself, in ignorance of seafaring (Arat. *Ph.* 101-114). With the advent of the Silver Age, Dike removed herself from human affairs, dwelling in the hills and threatening humanity that violence would result should it not change its ways (115-128). Finally, the Bronze Age saw the development of banditry and meat-eating, and Dike departed in disgust to the heavens, where she can be seen even now (115-136).

In addition to the overall sequence of ages that frames the account, Aratus alludes to Hesiod at several points in this tale. In the initial description of the Maiden there may already be reference to the *Works and Days*, as she is associated closely with agricultural imagery; located at the feet of the plowman Bootes (96), she is said to carry an ear of grain in her hands (97). This reminiscence is encouraged by Aratus' claims concerning her lineage.

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<sup>66</sup>For a thorough discussion of Aratus' use of these poets in this passage, see Gee 2013, ch. 1.

<sup>67</sup>As Gee 2013, 29, notes, these two elements frame the Aratean tale, thus lending the whole an Empedoclean character. There is some debate as to whether Aratus' denouncement of the consumption of beef is a wholesale denouncement of meat-eating or a rebuke against the improper use of animals that aid man's agricultural work, though the Empedoclean context may suggest the former.



Although the poet states that she may be the child of Astraeus, the reputed father of the stars (98-99), her paternity is left uncertain, as she may also be the daughter of another (εἴτε τευ ἄλλου, 99). This could be viewed as the ambiguity typical of addresses to divinities, yet the eventual identification of the Maiden with Dike (105) suggests a learned allusion instead.<sup>68</sup> In the Hesiodic account, after all, Dike's father is Zeus himself (ἡ δέ τε παρθένος ἐστὶ Δίκη, Διὸς ἐκγεγαυῖα, Hes. *WD* 256; cf. *Th.* 902). By referring to an alternate lineage without explicitly naming Zeus, Aratus is able to suggest the connection while avoiding the attribution of impropriety to Zeus.<sup>69</sup> Aratus' most prominent allusion to the earlier poet, of course, is his similar division of human civilization into periods designated by metals. Keeping Hesiod's account prominent throughout this passage while framing it with allusions to Empedocles, Aratus invites comparison between his version and the earlier poets' and encourages us to notice divergences.

One such divergence can be detected early in Aratus' passage, in his description of the Golden Age (*Arat. Ph.* 101-114). Certainly, his depiction bears much similarity to Hesiod's. In particular, both focus on the easy subsistence and abundance of the Golden Age. Yet for Hesiod, such abundance is due solely to the fertility of the earth, which is said to produce of its own accord (καρπὸν δ' ἔφερε ζείδωρος ἄρουρα / αὐτομάτη πολλόν τε καὶ ἄφθονον, Hes. *WD* 117-118). While the humans of Aratus' Golden Age may have an easy existence, it is not quite so easy as that; for them, agriculture is already a necessity, and it is

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<sup>68</sup>See Schiesaro 1996, 14; Kidd 1997, *ad* 99.

<sup>69</sup>A more blatant example of this can be seen at *Ph.* 30-35, where Aratus explains the catasterism of the Bears by claiming that they reared the infant Zeus, thus avoiding the troublesome story of Zeus' rape of Callisto given by Hesiod fr. 163 M-W and alluded to by Aratus' contemporary Callimachus in his *Hymn to Zeus* (40-41).

their own labor and Dike which supply them with subsistence (ἀλλὰ βόες καὶ ἄροτρα καὶ αὐτή, πότνια λαῶν, / μυρία πάντα παρείχε Δίκη, δώτειρα δικαίων, Arat. *Ph.* 112-113).<sup>70</sup> This distinction is crucial for an understanding of the worldview portrayed in Aratus' poem, and should be taken closely with another feature which sets Aratus' account apart—the continuity of the races of man. In Hesiod's account, the ages are almost entirely distinct from one another, and repeated emphasis is placed on this dissimilarity (e.g. Hes. *WD* 129, 144, 159). Each transition between ages, save that between heroes and Iron Age, is marked by a complete break; the earth covers over one race (121, 140, 156) and the gods collectively or Zeus himself make a new one (128, 144, 158). Even humanity's physiology varies from age to age. The men of the Golden Age are different in stature and experienced no aging (113-114), while those of the Silver Age are said to have a century-long infancy (130-132)—both features alien to the humans of the Iron Age.<sup>71</sup> In contrast, Aratus' ages of man are only chronologically, not physiologically, distinct, as Dike makes clear when threatening the people of the Silver Age, calling them worse than their golden parents and their offspring worse in turn (οἷν χρύσειοι πατέρες γενεὴν ἐλίποντο / χειροτέρην· ὑμεῖς δὲ κακώτερα τεξεῖσθε, Arat. *Ph.* 123-124). In a fundamental sense, and utterly unlike Hesiod's account, there is no difference between Aratus' Golden Age and the present day.<sup>72</sup> The necessity of

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<sup>70</sup>The conditions of Aratus' Golden Age are strikingly similar to those of Hesiod's Just City; cf. Solmsen 1966, 125-127; Gee 2013, 25.

<sup>71</sup>Cf. Most 1997, 109-110.

<sup>72</sup>Gee 2013, 24, seems to notice this as well, claiming that “Aratus makes Hesiod's open-ended narrative of decline into a closed loop in which the notion of cyclicity replaces the Hesiodic timeline.” For Gee, this too is an incorporation of Empedoclean themes into Aratus' Golden Age myth, melding Empedocles' cyclic cosmology with Hesiod's diachronic account.

agriculture for survival is no modern ill brought about as a punishment by Zeus or through the introduction of Strife into the soil, but a feature of human life which has always been present. Any difference in human life has come about as a result of changes not in nature or physiology, but in mankind's character.

Aratus' emphasis on mankind's moral failure as the cause, not the symptom, of his altered state recalls Empedocles and his tale of the *daimon*'s exile, as well as his emphasis on moral purity as a means to reunion with the gods. Such an intertextual relationship is supported by the contrast between the constant natural conditions of Aratus' account and the fundamental alterations to human nature present in Hesiod's tale; in emphasizing the physical continuity of the ages, Aratus suggests that humanity truly can return to a "life like the gods," as he presents a return to the conditions of the Golden Age as something possible in truth, not the approximation that is the life of the Just City in Hesiod's account. Yet it must be stated that in Aratus' account there is no actual connection between his Golden Age and anything approaching a divine state, other than the presence of the goddess Dike. Any association is on a purely poetic level, recalled solely by allusion to Hesiod's golden race; unlike in Hesiod's myth, there has *always* been a fundamental separation between humans and gods in Aratus' version of history. Whether this should be taken as optimistic or pessimistic may be left open: while we have never been like the gods, neither are we fundamentally degenerate from a more divine original state. In either case, Hesiodic or Aratean, the end-point is the same; the student is left distinct from and subservient to the gods but capable of returning to a life in accord with them, either in the Golden Age-like Just City of Hesiod or in a return to the Aratean Golden Age.

This intertwining of Hesiodic and Empedoclean elements can be seen as well in the figure of Aratus' Dike herself. In keeping with the attitude towards divinity he takes in his proem, here Aratus suppresses the retributive aspect of Dike so prominent in Hesiod's version; in the *Phaenomena*, Dike, like Zeus, is responsible for no evils. Whereas Hesiod's Dike and Zeus are quick to destroy the armies of the unjust (Hes. *WD* 246-247), Aratus' Dike is presented as entirely averse to any hostile action. Instead, she is portrayed as akin to Empedocles' Kypris; under her reign, humanity is said to have been entirely ignorant of strife or battle (οὐπω λευγαλέου τότε νείκεος ἠπίσταντο / οὐδὲ διακρίσιος πολυμεμφέος οὐδὲ κυδοιμοῦ, Arat. *Ph.* 108-109), and it is in large part mankind's developing inclination for bloodshed which causes her departure (131-133; cf. 125-126).<sup>73</sup> This departure has been noted to have Hesiodic precedent as well, as it recalls the prophesied departure of Aidos and Nemesis in *WD* 197-200.<sup>74</sup> Again, Aratus' alterations are telling. Whereas Hesiod's departure scene is a warning of things to come at the end of the Iron Age, Aratus describes an event that has already occurred. Threat has become fact.

Yet despite this departure, mankind has not been completely abandoned by Dike, as she is still visible to mortals (ἔτι φαίνεται ἀνθρώποισιν, 135). Indeed, this visibility is repeatedly stressed by Aratus. In contrast to Hesiod's Dike, who is hidden from view (ἠέρα ἔσσαμένη, Hes. *WD* 223) even while on earth, the Aratean Maiden is explicitly described as visible to men in every age, even when she has withdrawn from contact with mortals (cf. ἤρχετο δ' ἀνθρώπων κατεναντί, Arat. *Ph.* 102; εἰς αὐτὴν...παπταίνοντας, 128). With the departure of Hesiod's Aidos and Nemesis, woes will be left for mankind and there will be no

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<sup>73</sup>See Emp. fr. DK 128; cf. Kidd 1997 *ad* 108; Nelis 2004, 17; Gee 2013, 29-30.

<sup>74</sup>Cf. Kidd 1997 *ad* 134.

defense against evil (τὰ δὲ λείπεται ἄλγεα λυγρὰ / θνητοῖς ἀνθρώποισι, κακοῦ δ' οὐκ ἔσσεται ἄλκή, Hes. *WD* 200-201). Upon the departure of Aratus' Dike, however, even Dike herself is not entirely absent from humanity; in this poem about seeking signs from the constellations, she too is visible to all as a constellation, once more confirming the essential optimism of Aratus' account. In the constellation of the Maiden, humanity has an ever-present protreptic to justice, and so to the character and life of the Golden Age.

It is in this respect that the relationship between Aratus' didaxis and the "life of the gods" suggested by his description of the Golden Age diverges from that of his predecessors. In Hesiod and Empedocles (or at least in Empedocles' *Katharmoi*), the poet's teachings may be said to affect directly the "divinity" (in this life or the next) of the student. For Hesiod, a knowledge of justice and the farming it requires is directly responsible for bringing about the life of the Just City, just as the purificatory rites of Empedocles' *Katharmoi* can lead directly to an improved reincarnation. In Aratus' poem, however, it cannot be argued that knowledge of the stars *qua* stars leads to a "divine life" for the student; instead, it is the knowledge signified by the stars that does.<sup>75</sup> Knowing where the Maiden is located in the sky does nothing to lead to a "life like the gods" or the Golden Age. Knowledge of what the Maiden represents and the exhortation to justice she embodies, however, can. Whereas the inconstant nature of Hesiod's gods required him to reveal information that had been hidden, Aratus' benevolent gods have already taken care of this aspect for us. The signs are already visible, and it is Aratus' role to help us to interpret them aright. Thus, in appropriately Hellenistic

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<sup>75</sup>In this respect, the knowledge offered by Aratus is akin to that in Empedocles' "physical poem" (if such there was); by describing the true nature of the universe, Empedocles provides a framework that provides the rationale and explains the necessity for his moral precepts.

fashion, Aratus allusively teaches a more essential truth; showing the constant nature of the stars and their significance for mortals, Aratus clarifies Zeus' order to his readers and exhorts them to that morality lost since the Golden Age.

## **Conclusion**

From a survey of these poets, some preliminary observations can be made. Most importantly, we should note the self-conscious engagement with poetic predecessors that each poet undertakes. This is of course most pronounced in the Hellenistic Aratus, who combines elements of both Hesiodic and Empedoclean ideology for his own purposes, but can be detected already in Empedocles' quasi-Golden-Age depiction of an earlier life of peace under Kypris. This self-conscious reflection will be developed further in the Latin didactic poets, who will deftly combine and critique strands of their predecessors' thought to portray their own ways of viewing the relationship between gods and humanity. Alongside this progression is the growing influence of "philosophical" thought, particularly in the case of Empedocles but also in the Stoicizing depiction of Zeus given by Aratus. As will be seen, this development will likewise be expanded upon by the Latin poets, who will exploit advances in philosophical thought in radical ways to present new ideas of what it means to be divine (or to push back against such ideas). Indeed, this increased influence of philosophy will become a prominent feature of the genre already in our first extant Latin didactic poem, and the subject of the next chapter, Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*.

## Chapter 2: Lucretius

In the third book of his *De Rerum Natura*, Lucretius gives an account of the composition of the soul (3.231-322), explaining that the soul is composed of four elements: wind (*aura*), heat (*vapor* or *calor*), air (*aer*), and an unnamed fourth component required for consciousness. Differing ratios in the combination of these elements lead to different character traits; as Lucretius explains, a disposition prone to anger is caused by excessive heat, while timidity is due to surplus wind and passivity to a predominance of air. To a certain extent, these traits are permanent; while training can mitigate this elemental imbalance, such a disposition of the soul will remain nevertheless (3.307-313):

sic hominum genus est: quamvis doctrina politos  
constituat pariter quosdam, tamen illa relinquit  
naturae cuiusque animi vestigia prima.  
nec radicitus evelli mala posse putandumst, 310  
quin proclivius hic iras decurrat ad acris,  
ille metu citius paulo temptetur, at ille  
tertius accipiat quaedam clementius aequo.

Yet despite this potential limitation, Lucretius claims, reason can ultimately overcome the greater part of these imbalances, so that nothing prevents us from living lives worthy of the gods (3.319-322):

illud in his rebus video firmare potesse,  
usque adeo naturarum vestigia linqui  
parvola quae nequeat ratio depellere nobis,  
ut nil inpediat dignam dis degere vitam.

Lucretius' claim here is largely a restatement of Epicurean doctrine.<sup>76</sup> The thought is expressed most clearly in Epicurus' *Letter to Menoeceus* (= D.L. 10.122-135) where the philosopher ends an explication of his ethical system by exhorting Menoeceus to practice these tenets day and night so that he may never be disturbed and live "as a god among men" (D.L. 10.135):

ταῦτα οὖν καὶ τὰ τούτοις συγγενῇ μελέτῃ πρὸς σεαυτὸν ἡμέρας  
καὶ νυκτὸς πρὸς τε τὸν ὅμοιον σεαυτῷ, καὶ οὐδέποτε οὔθ'  
ὑπαρ οὔτ' ὄναρ διαταραχθήσῃ, ζήσεις δὲ ὡς θεὸς ἐν  
ἀνθρώποις. οὐθὲν γὰρ ἔοικε θνητῷ ζῶν ζῶν ἄνθρωπος ἐν  
ἀθανάτοις ἀγαθοῖς.

This concept of likening oneself to a god is not, however, peculiarly Epicurean. As discussed in the introduction to this study, similar claims had already been put forth by earlier philosophers, such as Plato in his *Theatetus* and Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, leading to a common emphasis in Hellenistic philosophical systems on the similarity between the wise man and god. By making such a claim to his student, Lucretius can be seen operating within a broadly established philosophic tradition.

What has received comparatively little attention is that this passage has antecedents not only in Lucretius' philosophic tradition, but, as my previous chapter's discussion shows, in his poetic tradition as well.<sup>77</sup> This claim that we can live a "life worthy of the gods" can be compared to the rhetoric of earlier Greek didactic. Indeed, the claim is already suggested in Hesiod's description of the golden race that lived as gods (ὥστε θεοὶ δ' ἔζων, *WD* 112).

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<sup>76</sup>Though it is worth noting that the generality of Lucretius' stance here conflicts with certain Epicurean claims regarding the wise man, which apparently denied that humans of every physical state or nation could become wise (οὐδὲ μὴν ἐκ πάσης σώματος ἔξωτος σοφὸν γενέσθαι ἂν οὐδ' ἐν παντὶ ἔθνῃ, D.L. 10.117).

<sup>77</sup>Though see now Trépanier 2007, who sees Lucretius modelling the "plot" of his poem on that of Empedocles, particularly as regards the divinization of the student.



Yet whereas the ensuing comparison between the gods and the Hesiodic student is only implicit, founded on the similarities between the golden race and the life of the Just City, Lucretius' claim is much more explicit; through the power of *ratio*, *we (nobis, DRN 3.321)* may live a life worthy of the gods. As has been noted by Trépanier, this explicitness has more in common with another didactic predecessor and known influence on Lucretius—Empedocles.<sup>78</sup>

In this chapter, I examine this blending of poetic and philosophical models as it occurs in Lucretius' portrayal of the “divinization” of his student as Epicurean wise man. As I will show, this portrayal is one based as much on poetic precedent as it is on Epicurean doctrine. Accordingly, the first section is focused on examining the various forms this “divinization” takes, starting with the more philosophical arguments made by Lucretius and moving to “poetic” arguments based on allusion to earlier poets. From here I turn to a focus on the most explicit case of divinization in the poem, the apotheosis of Epicurus. Here too Lucretius presents an argument grounded in Epicurean doctrine that nevertheless diverges in various ways from the orthodox position. Again Lucretius will be shown to blend philosophical and poetic elements for his own rhetorical purposes, emphasizing the benefactions of the *deus* Epicurus to appeal to his Roman audience and reinforce the divinity accessible through the philosopher's teachings. I conclude with a discussion of Lucretius' portrayal of the adherents of *religio* and their own confused attempts at a “life like the gods.”

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<sup>78</sup>See esp. Trépanier 2007, 264: “The narrative of instruction is the strongest single point of resemblance between the two works. In both, the goal put before the student is the quest for divinisation, although the contours are not the same.”

## First Beginnings

### *The Hymn to Venus*

Though the passage from Book 3 discussed above is Lucretius' most explicit comparison of the successful Epicurean to the gods, this is by no means the only such comparison made in the *DRN*. In fact, Lucretius already lays a groundwork for establishing similarity between the Epicurean student and the gods in the poem's opening, during the famous Hymn to Venus (1.1-49). The passage has raised considerable consternation with critics, who would argue that the Hymn to Venus—in which the goddess is described as present in the world and able to effect change in it—is incompatible with the Epicurean philosophy of the rest of the poem.<sup>79</sup> Adding to the hymn's perceived difficulty are the closing lines 1.44-49, which describe the ataractic nature of the Epicurean gods. Though these lines are appropriately Epicurean, they have been seen as incompatible with the preceding hymn; if the gods truly are uninvolved with human affairs and affected by neither good works nor anger, it would seem to make no sense for Lucretius to ask the goddess to be his ally in composing or to provide peace to the beleaguered Roman state.<sup>80</sup> Taken to an extreme, this argument has led to the deletion of lines 44-49 from some editions as an

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<sup>79</sup>Cf. Bailey 1963, 589: "This invocation has caused difficulty from early times..."; Sedley 1998, 16: "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?"; Gale 1994, 208: "The most obvious problem with the lines is their apparent inconsistency with the Epicurean doctrine which the poet preaches in the rest of the poem." Friedländer 1939, 370, notes the discrepancy but credits it to "the fundamental discrepancy in the philosopher-poet himself." For a more balanced take on this apparent conflict, see now Trépanier 2004, 75ff., who argues that such an "indirect opening" is characteristic of the didactic poetry of Parmenides, Empedocles, and Lucretius.

<sup>80</sup>On the literary pedigree of the invocation of Venus as "ally," see O'Hara 1998.

interpolation from 2.646-651 by an early reader remarking upon the contradiction between the opening hymn and the rest of the poem.<sup>81</sup>

Here I do not intend to lay out lengthy arguments for the philosophical compatibility of the Venus hymn with the rest of the poem; much work has already been done on this front, arguing for a reading of the lines variously as Epicurean protreptic, polemic, or allegory.<sup>82</sup> Certainly, such readings do little to aid a first-time reader of the poem, as yet unaware that the work is on Epicurean philosophy and thus likely to accept the hymn at face value. Yet I would assert that the poet himself indicates one proper way to read the hymn in lines 44-49—lines that I do intend to defend, as even those critics favorable to allegorical interpretation of the opening hymn have expressed concern over the sudden reversal of the poet in these lines.<sup>83</sup>

As already mentioned, the main problem found with lines 1.44-49 is their inconsistency with the preceding hymn to Venus: how can a prayer to the goddess for peace end in a claim that prayer has no effect on the gods? Yet such an argument fails to take into account certain aspects of the passage in question as well as Epicurean theology. For despite their views on the disinterested nature of the gods, orthodox Epicureans did not deny the role

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<sup>81</sup>See Gale 1994, 215-217; Courtney 2001, 205: “I do not propose here to waste time on proving something so obvious as the interpolation of these lines...” Cf. Bailey 1940, 287-288, who changed his earlier position to argue for the preservation of the lines, basing his argument on a “suspension” of Lucretius’ thought. Bailey 1963 *ad loc.* provides a history of the issue.

<sup>82</sup>See, e.g., Friedländer 1939; Elder 1954; Asmis 1982; Gale 1994, 208-223; Courtney 2001, 207-211. O’Hara 2007, 57-64, situates the proem within a larger trend of initial “misdirection” in Latin poetry used for rhetorical purposes. Gale 1994, 208 n.2 provides a useful bibliographic overview of earlier scholarship.

<sup>83</sup>See esp. Gale 1994, 215-217; Courtney 2001, 205.

of prayer and other aspects of ritual as a boon to the *worshipper*.<sup>84</sup> As Philodemus informs us in his *De Pietate*, Epicurus instructed his pupils to sacrifice to the gods because contemplation of the divine state as it truly is would bring the pupils nearer to that state themselves.<sup>85</sup> In this case, Lucretius' request to the goddess for peace would be perfectly in keeping with his philosophy as it is presented throughout the *DRN*; prayer to a goddess described as living in perfect tranquillity would in fact bring peace to the members of the Roman state by offering them a model to emulate.<sup>86</sup>

It is this very point that I argue Lucretius makes in the closing lines of the hymn and 1.44-49. Entreating the goddess to bring an end to warfare (*effice ut interea fera moenia militiai / per maria ac terras omnis sopita quiescant*, 1.29-30), the poet claims that Venus alone can bring this about (*nam tu sola potes tranquilla pace iuvare / mortalis*, 1.31-3). Certainly, this is first presented as a result of the goddess' mythological associations; owing to her relationship with Mars, the goddess has a unique ability to subdue war (1.32-40). After his vivid depiction of the entwined gods, however, Lucretius puts forth another more philosophically consistent line of reasoning. Reiterating his request for peace (*suavis ex ore loquellas / funde petens placidam Romanis, incluta, pacem*, 1.39-40), Lucretius explains his

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<sup>84</sup>Certainly Lucretius takes a harsh stance on aspects of religious ceremony over the course of the *DRN*, especially at 5.1198-1203. Yet the focus here is that empty ritual without the proper understanding of nature (*placata posse omnia mente tueri*, 1203) is worthless.

<sup>85</sup>Philod. *De Piet.* 879-896 Obbink: «ἡμεῖς θεοῖς θύωμέν» φησιν «ὁσίως καὶ καλῶς οὗ καθήκει καὶ καλῶς πάντα πράττωμεν κατὰ τοὺς νόμους, μηθὲν ταῖς δόξαις αὐτοὺς ἐν τοῖς περὶ τῶν ἀρίστων καὶ σεμνοτάτων διαταράττοντες· ἔτι δὲ καὶ δίκαιοι θύωμεν ἀφ' ἧς ἔλεγον δόξης· οὕτω γὰρ ἐνδέχεται φύσιν θνητὴν ὁμοίως τῇ Διὶ νῆ Δία διάγειν, ὥς φαίνεται.» With this may be compared Lucretius' claim that true *pietas* is the tranquil contemplation of all things (5.1203).

<sup>86</sup>Cf. Sedley 1998, 27, who ultimately argues for a similar reading, positing the lines to be Lucretius' Epicurean corrective of an Empedoclean passage.

choice of both the object and the recipient of this entreaty. He prays for peace *because* while the state is in turmoil, neither he nor Memmius can give their full attention to the poem and the philosophy it contains (1.41-43):<sup>87</sup>

nam neque nos agere hoc patriai tempore iniquo  
possumus aequo animo nec Memmi clara propago  
talibus in rebus communi desse saluti.

He prays to Venus *because* the gods themselves enjoy the highest peace (*omnis enim per se divom natura necessest / immortalis aevo summa cum pace fruatur*, 1.44-45). This is exactly in keeping with the Epicurean theology discussed; as the poet himself states, he prays to Venus because she is the example that must be followed.<sup>88</sup>

Venus' role as an object of emulation is indicated further by the specific contrast between her divine state as described in 1.44-49 and the turmoil experienced by Memmius and Lucretius. Lucretius' inability to maintain *ataraxia* (*aequo animo*, 41) in the contemporary political climate is set against the gods' unaffected calm (1.47-49):

nam privata dolore omni, privata periclis,  
ipsa suis pollens opibus, nil indiga nostri,  
nec bene promeritis capitur neque tangitur ira.

At the same time, Memmius' need to act on behalf of the state in its difficulties (*talibus in rebus communi...saluti*, 43) is contrasted with the gods' removed indifference (*semota ab nostris rebus seiunctaque longe*, 46). Even if the poet's larger prayer for peace does not meet with success, then, the purpose behind his prayer for peace—his wish that he and Memmius be able to concentrate on the philosophical poem—may still be accomplished, should he and

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<sup>87</sup>Thus "peace" in this context may stand for both the absence of war and the mental tranquillity it would allow.

<sup>88</sup>Cf. Friedländer 1939, 373; Elder 1954, 97; Clay 1983, 95 (with n.39); Campbell 2014, 46.

Memmius follow the example of the goddess and abandon their concern for external affairs.<sup>89</sup>

Indeed, such self-distancing from the troubles of others will become a central characteristic of the successful philosopher over the course of the poem (cf. esp. 2.7-13)<sup>90</sup> and is demanded of Lucretius' student soon after the description of the divine state (*vacuas auris animumque sagacem / semotum a curis adhibe veram ad rationem*, 1.50-51).<sup>91</sup>

Such a connection between awareness of the goddess and the achievement of a "god-like" state is presented more allusively in the first section of the proem, as Lucretius depicts Venus' springtime arrival (1.6-9):

te, dea, te fugiunt venti, te nubila caeli  
adventumque tuum, tibi suavis daedala tellus  
summittit flores, tibi rident aequora ponti  
placatumque nitet diffuso lumine caelum.

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<sup>89</sup>I am not arguing that at this early point in the poem Lucretius is openly advocating for Memmius' withdrawal from public life, but the implication is there, and becomes much more pronounced in light of the rest of the poem, particularly given Lucretius' other descriptions of public life. In this we may compare the passage to the Venus proem more broadly, where an initial surface reading must be later supplemented with Epicurean thought. Cf. Gale 1994, 214-215: "The prayer for peace also takes on rather different connotations in the light of the Epicurean ethical code preached elsewhere in the poem. While physical security is a necessary precondition for the attainment of *ataraxia*, and Epicurus seems to have allowed participation in public life in exceptional circumstances, there are suggestions elsewhere in the poem that Memmius might serve the *communis salus* better by heeding the teachings of Epicurus."

<sup>90</sup>As I discuss below, the detachment expressed in these lines is similarly a marker of divine status. Such distancing from societal concerns was one of the primary critiques brought against the Epicureans in antiquity. While I don't necessarily want to argue that Lucretius is advocating wholesale political withdrawal for Memmius, the other portrayals of political life in the poem present such an undertaking in a negative light.

<sup>91</sup>Though perhaps not immediately after, as Bailey 1963, *ad* 50, among others, posits a lacuna between lines 49 and 50.

The description will be recalled in the introduction to book 3, where the poet presents the abode of the gods as revealed to him by Epicurus' teachings (3.18-24):<sup>92</sup>

apparet divum numen sedesque quietae  
quas neque concutiunt venti nec nubila nimbis  
aspergunt neque nix acri concreta pruina 20  
cana cadens violat semperque innubilis aether  
integit, et large diffuso lumine ridet.  
omnia suppeditat porro natura neque ulla  
res animi pacem delibat tempore in ullo.

Descriptively, both scenes are marked by the same serene setting, most specifically by the absence of wind and clouds.<sup>93</sup> The scenes are connected lexically too, sharing the use of the verb *rideo* with a topographical subject (*aequora*, 1.8; *aether*, 3.21) as well as the ablative absolute *diffuso lumine*, which occurs in the poem only in these two passages. Yet whereas such serenity is a constant for the gods' dwelling, it occurs in the mortal world only on the arrival of Venus; it is she for whom the clouds and wind depart (*te fugiunt*, 1.6) and at whom the sea "smiles" (*tibi*, 1.8; cf. 1.7). By depicting the conditions of the goddess' advent as essentially similar to the divine state, Lucretius presents metaphorically that which he will soon argue in a more philosophic mode: adherence to the Epicurean goddess can give a life like the gods to all.

In presenting such a relationship between the goddess and mortals in his proem, Lucretius makes an important shift in the hymnic opening form inherited from his didactic

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<sup>92</sup>This passage is itself based on a Homeric description of Olympus at *Odyssey* 6.42-46; cf. Kenney 1971, *ad* 18-22. On the similarity between this passage and the Venus proem, cf. Elder 1954, 110.

<sup>93</sup>Though the spring scene is not entirely without breeze, see 1.11.

predecessors.<sup>94</sup> Though Hesiod and Aratus had likewise begun their didactic works with invocations to the gods—to Zeus and the Muses in particular—their invocations serve much different purposes. For these Greek poets, Zeus and the Muses serve above all as symbols of authority: Zeus’ authority explains and validates the condition of the world as it is presented, while the Muses’ authority vouches for the poet’s truth. Lucretius’ Venus, in contrast, serves as a model to emulate.<sup>95</sup> (To get a sense of how different this is, we may imagine Hesiod’s reaction to the implication that his student should live like Zeus!)

This different utilization of the divine may help explain why Lucretius deviates from these earlier poets in choosing Venus as his patron goddess. Lucretius’ Venus owes a debt to Empedocles’ Aphrodite, and in this respect another layer of allusion can be detected, for in that poet’s work one of the goddess’ roles is as Kypris, ruler of a quasi-Golden Age when war was absent and men lived in peace performing bloodless sacrifices to the goddess.<sup>96</sup> Here, as in Lucretius’ passage, the choice of god worshipped can be seen to influence the worshippers’ character and lead them to a divine state.

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<sup>94</sup>Cf. Clay 1983, 109: “Lucretius does not treat this goddess as other poets treat their muses. He asks not for inspiration but for charm and peace.”

<sup>95</sup>Though the Muses do find a surrogate in the *DRN*, it is not Venus; see below.

<sup>96</sup>Although no specific reference to the Golden Age is made in the extant fragment, allusions to the passage made by later Latin poets show that they made the connection. Thus at the end of the second *Georgic* Vergil depicts a Golden-Age Italy “before an impious race fed on slaughtered cattle” (Verg. *Geo.* 2.536-538) referring back to Aratus and ultimately Empedocles; cf. Nelis 2004.



*The Opposition to Religio*

After a brief interlude to preview the content of the incipient poem (1.50-61), Lucretius turns to a passage that initially seems incompatible with his earlier portrayal of Venus. Whereas the goddess of the proem is described as the source of all good (*nec sine te quicquam dias in luminis oras / exoritur neque fit laetum neque amabile quicquam*, 1.22-23) before turning into a figure of benign withdrawal at 1.44-49, Lucretius now describes the tyrannical nature of *religio*, represented as oppressing humanity from on high, and *religio*'s overthrow by an unnamed Greek traditionally identified as Epicurus (1.62-79):<sup>97</sup>

Humana ante oculos foede cum vita iaceret  
in terris oppressa gravi sub religione,  
quae caput a caeli regionibus ostendebat  
horribili super aspectu mortalibus instans, 65  
primum Graius homo mortalis tollere contra  
est oculos ausus primusque obsistere contra,  
quem neque fama deum nec fulmina nec minitanti  
murmure compressit caelum, sed eo magis acrem  
inritat animi virtutem, effringere ut arta 70  
naturae primus portarum claustra cupiret.  
ergo vivida vis animi pervicit, et extra  
processit longe flammantia moenia mundi  
atque omne immensum peragravit mente animoque,  
unde refert nobis victor quid possit oriri, 75  
quid nequeat, finita potestas denique cuique  
quanam sit ratione atque alte terminus haerens.  
quare religio pedibus subiecta vicissim  
obteritur, nos exaequat victoria caelo.

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<sup>97</sup>For a second-time reader, this Greek is of course Epicurus, and I identify him as such in the discussion that follows, but this is not necessarily the case for a first-time reader, as Edelstein 1940 has argued. Trépanier 2007 makes a strong case for reading the *Graius homo*, at least in part, as Empedocles.

The scene is described in terms likening Epicurus' actions to a gigantomachic assault.<sup>98</sup> Stress is placed on the contrast between the celestial position of *religio* and the (initially) earthbound Epicurus; Lucretius states specifically that human life lay on the earth (*in terris*, 63) while *religio* pressed down from the sky (*a caeli regionibus*, 64) and this local association is emphasized by the etymological implications of *humana* (62) and *homo* (66), both derived from *humus* already in antiquity.<sup>99</sup> This imagery is reinforced as Epicurus mimics the giants' actions, ascending to heaven in a strikingly martial fashion (cf. *effringere...portarum claustra*, 70-71; *vis...pervicit*, 72; *refert...victor*, 75).<sup>100</sup> Ultimately, Epicurus goes even further than the giants, accomplishing what they could not by supplanting *religio*'s place (78-79).

The interplay between this passage and the Venus proem is particularly effective due to the anthropomorphic depiction of *religio*; the reader is led to think not of the abstract concept but of the traditional Olympian gods, including Venus herself, and thus forced to judge the passages against one another. In so doing, the contrast provides its own resolution, as the reader may view Venus (particularly as described at 1.44-49) as the "true" nature of divinity and *religio* as a stand-in for the false conceptions of popular religion. Thus Lucretius is able to operate on two levels, presenting his philosophy as both based on an emulation of the (real) gods and as an assault on the gods of *religio*. Yet despite the change of tone from the Venus proem, this victory in its own way accomplishes the same result as the earlier passage, as again humanity is likened (now more explicitly) to the gods (*nos*

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<sup>98</sup>Cf. Gale 1994, 192-193.

<sup>99</sup>Cf. Herescu 1948, 66-67.

<sup>100</sup>For more on the martial imagery of the passage, see Buchheit 1971.

*exaequat victoria caelo*, 79). Here the means is more straightforwardly philosophical, as the ultimate cause of our ascent is the knowledge brought back by Epicurus from his “flight of the mind”: what can occur, what cannot, and the limits of all things (75-77).

Nor is this elevation based on an understanding of the nature of things limited to Epicureans in the poem. In this regard, two non-Epicurean philosophers are paid particular attention: Democritus, whose thought is described as holy (*Democriti quod sancta viri sententia ponit*, 3.372=5.622), and Empedocles, whose poetry came from “his divine breast” (*carmina quin etiam divini pectoris eius / vociferantur et exponunt praeclara reperta*, 1.731-732) and who was the holiest thing to come from his island of Sicily (*nil tamen hoc habuisse viro praeclarius in se / nec sanctum magis et mirum carumque videtur*, 1.729-730). Unlike the ideal students of book 3 discussed in this chapter’s opening, Lucretius’s use of divinizing adjectives in describing these two philosophers cannot be ascribed to any strong accordance with Epicurean doctrine. Indeed, both claims occur in passages where Lucretius is refuting the earlier philosopher’s position; at 1.729-732, the poet is in the middle of his attack against Empedocles and others who adhered to the doctrine of four elements, while at 3.372 Lucretius critiques Democritus’ account of the soul’s distribution in the body.<sup>101</sup>

These philosophers can, however, be seen as important precursors to Epicurus’ thought and to Lucretius’ poetic project. Democritus’ own atomism was regularly portrayed as a forerunner to Epicurus’ physical system in antiquity, and the juxtaposition of that

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<sup>101</sup>The ultimate incorrectness of these philosophers’ doctrines may explain in part the limiting vocabulary used by Lucretius, who makes sure to stress the ultimately human nature of both. Thus while his *sententia* is *sancta*, Democritus himself is referred to emphatically as a *vir*; similar force is given to the contrast between Empedocles’ divine breast and his human origin (*ut vix humana videatur stirpe creatus*, 1.733). However, this need not be ascribed to any hostility on Lucretius’ part; such limiting strategies are utilized even in the poet’s descriptions of Epicurus himself.

philosopher's death with Epicurus' in the catalogue of dead men that rounds off book 3 (1024-1052; Democritus, 1039-1041; Epicurus, 1042-1044, linked by the repetition of *ipse*) suggests that Lucretius took a similar view. Though Empedocles did not have so clear an influence on Epicurus' philosophic program, regularly meeting with hostility from other Epicurean sources, his immense effect on Lucretius' poem cannot be denied.<sup>102</sup> These men are portrayed as they are not because they attained the godlike *ataraxia* that was the Epicurean ideal, then, but because they paved the way for that ideal to be attained by seeking explanations for the causes of things.<sup>103</sup> This rationale is suggested further, with an important addendum, by Lucretius' description of Empedocles' fellows, who held beliefs similar to Empedocles' regarding the elemental constitution of the world and in so doing acted "divinely" (*divinitus*, 1.736) and gave teachings "from the sanctuary of their heart, as it were, in a more holy way and with much surer reason than the Pythian oracle" (1.736-739):

...multa bene ac divinitus invenientes  
ex adyto tamquam cordis responsa dedere  
sanctius et multo certa ratione magis quam  
Pythia quae tripodi a Phoebi lauroque profatur...

The comparison with the oracle is particularly telling and clarifies Lucretius' position on the "divinity" of these early philosophers. They may be portrayed as divine, but only relatively so; by giving a more reasoned account of the true nature of things, these early philosophers are more divine than the fallacious proponents of *religio* without reaching the heights of Epicurus and his followers.

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<sup>102</sup>See esp. Furley 1970; Sedley 1989.

<sup>103</sup>This is especially likely if one accepts the contention of Edelstein 1940 that the *Graius homo* of the proem alludes to the pre-Socratics.

Lucretius later reuses lines 1.738-739 at 5.111-112 to refer to his own instruction. The context is appropriate, as Lucretius here argues explicitly against the proponents of *religio* by denying the divine nature of the celestial bodies. Presenting the potential objection of his student, “restrained by religion” (*religione refrenatus*, 114), Lucretius feigns concern that the Epicureans will be viewed as giants overthrowing the gods and their natural order (5.113-121):

multa tibi expediam doctis solacia dictis,	
religione refrenatus ne forte rearis	
terras et solem et caelum, mare sidera lunam,	115
corpore divino debere aeterna manere,	
proptereaue putes ritu par esse Gigantum	
pendere eos poenas inmani pro scelere omnis	
qui ratione sua disturbent moenia mundi	
praeclarumque velint caeli restinguere solem,	120
immortalia mortali sermone notantes...	

As has been noted by Volk and others, the comparison has a noteworthy pedigree in philosophical debate stretching back to Plato’s *Sophist*, wherein the Eleatic Stranger describes the debate between materialists and idealists as a gigantomachy (γίγαντομαχία τις, Pl. *Soph.* 246a5), likening the materialist philosophers to giants who “grab rocks and oaks and drag everything from heaven to earth” by referring everything back to matter (οἱ μὲν εἰς γῆν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀοράτου πάντα ἔλκουσι, ταῖς χερσὶν ἀτεχνῶς πέτρας καὶ δρυὲς περιλαμβάνοντες, 246a7-9).<sup>104</sup> Lucretius here recalls these earlier claims only to rebut them. His will be no assault on the gods, as there is nothing divine about the celestial bodies under discussion; indeed, they serve rather as examples of entirely inanimate objects (5.122-125):

quae procul usque adeo divino a numine distent,  
inque deum numero quae sint indigna videri,  
notitiam potius praebere ut posse putentur

<sup>104</sup>Cf. Reiche 1971; Bignone 1973, 2.77-81; Clay 1997, 190-192; Volk 2001, 103ff.

Again the poet compares philosophical argument—in this case, his own Epicurean argument—to the claims of traditional *religio* (and here idealist philosophy as well) and portrays the philosophical argument as more *divine* on the basis of its greater claim to truth.

Yet there is a certain tension in Lucretius' argument against the "gigantomachic" nature of his teachings, for despite his protests against such depictions, this characterization is in some ways supported by the poem itself. After all, Lucretius himself uses gigantomachic imagery in the poem's opening to depict the assault on *religio* by the *Graius homo* Epicurus (1.62-79). Indeed, echoes of the earlier passage can be found in Lucretius' denial here. Both passages express concern for the student's pious reticence, introduced with the identical phrasing *ne forte rearis* (1.80; 5.114). Yet whereas in the latter passage, Lucretius' opponents needlessly fear that the materialist "giants" will overthrow the walls of the world through their argument (*ratione sua disturbent moenia mundi*, 5.119), in the poem Epicurus himself is described as breaking down the gates of nature and proceeding beyond these very walls (*moenia mundi*, 1.73) with his mind (*mente animoque*, 1.74). Thus, while overtly distancing himself from accusations of "gigantomachy," Lucretius at the same time implicitly reminds us of earlier associations between his own position and that of the giants. In arguing such a reading I do not mean to return to the bugbear of an "anti-Lucretius" undermining his espoused philosophical position. Rather, the poet may be seen developing two levels of argument. On one overt level, Lucretius argues that his claims would not lead to an upheaval of the natural order (unlike the supposed assault of the giants). On an allusive secondary level, however, Lucretius continues a thematic development at work throughout the poem, for by implying a similarity between Epicureanism and these giants, Lucretius

again represents his system as one that seeks to challenge, and ultimately replace, the traditional gods of *religio*. Thus in its hostility towards *religio* Lucretius' Epicureanism may be likened to gigantomachy, while in its comprehension of the true nature of things it is near-divine (5.111-112).

It is worthwhile to return to the earlier passage, where Lucretius favorably compares his Greek predecessors to the Pythian oracle. Whereas Lucretius follows his own comparison to the oracle with an overt denial of the philosophical gigantomachy envisioned by Plato (5.113-125), in the earlier passage Lucretius immediately turns to denounce the mess these philosophers' philosophical system would have made of the world and announces that this led to their downfall (*principiis tamen in rerum fecere ruinas / et graviter magni magno cecidere ibi casu*, 1.740-741). When read against the corresponding passage in book 5, it is difficult not to see a recurrence of the "intellectual gigantomachy" motif in this passage, here voiced by Lucretius himself; though even they are "holier than the oracle," these philosophers and their untenable systems, says the poet, are the real giants, destroying the world in their folly.<sup>105</sup>

### **Allusive Argumentation**

The "deification" of the wise man seen in Lucretius' treatment of Epicurus in his proem and suggested in his mentions of Empedocles and Democritus takes subtler forms in the poem as well, as can be seen in the proem to the second book. Opening the book with a priamel, Lucretius declares that, though it is pleasurable to watch another toil at sea or a

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<sup>105</sup>Cf. Campbell 2014, 36-37, who notes the comparison but takes a less antagonistic reading than I.

battle from afar, nothing is more pleasurable than looking down on human life from the heights of learning (2.1-13):<sup>106</sup>

suave, mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis,  
e terra magnum alterius spectare laborem;  
non quia vexari quemquamst iucunda voluptas,  
sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave est.  
suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri 5  
per campos instructa tua sine parte pericli.  
sed nil dulcius est bene quam munita tenere  
edita doctrina sapientum templa serena,  
despicere unde queas alios passimque videre  
errare atque viam palantis quaerere vitae, 10  
certare ingenio, contendere nobilitate,  
noctes atque dies niti praestante labore  
ad summas emergere opes rerumque potiri.

On a surface reading, the lines serve to contrast the wise man with the man of action. The contrast is already operative in the first six lines, where the distressed sailors and soldiers are opposed to the tranquil observer enjoying the reminder of the evils he lacks, and initially the reader may be led to identify this observer with the Epicurean wise man. Yet the final member of the priamel forces us to adjust our assumptions, for while that observer's experience is sweet, it is ultimately surpassed (*sed nil dulcius est*, 7) by the vision of the figure inhabiting the *edita...sapientum templa* (8), who is able to look down upon all the range of human error, and who can truly be identified as wise (*doctrina, sapientum*, 8).

In this way, Lucretius actually sets up two comparisons: one between the observers of lines 1-6 and “men of action” and another between those observers and the ideal figure introduced at line 7. This could be viewed as a straightforward amplification of the basic comparison, serving simply to show the Epicurean sage as the “wisest of the wise.” There is,

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<sup>106</sup>For a metapoetic reading of these lines, see Roy 2013.



however, another reading possible, for the observers in lines 1-6 are depicted in terms reminiscent of the Homeric gods, able to watch the sailing and battles of heroes from afar. Indeed, such a spectacle could be considered a particular prerogative of the gods; after his observation of a battle from afar, Scipio is said to have remarked that only two before him had beheld a similar sight—Zeus and Poseidon at Troy.<sup>107</sup> By making the comparison, then, Lucretius prefers the Epicurean sage not only to the “man of action” but even to the Homeric gods.

A more sustained allusive argument that the successful Epicurean can achieve a “life like the gods” can be detected in the anthropology that forms the second half of *DRN* book 5. Throughout this section of the poem, Lucretius adapts the traditional mythological view of history to an account based in Epicurean natural science by explaining and correcting the errors and superstitious excesses of the earlier poets. Thus, for example, Lucretius still begins his account of human history with a quasi-Golden Age (5.924-1010)<sup>108</sup> when the earth provided food of its own accord and humanity was impervious to the elements and disease. Yet whereas for Hesiod this period was the result of the gods’ beneficence and a reflection of the golden race’s own moral qualities, Lucretius pointedly avoids such connections, instead arguing that humans were hardier owing to their creation from the earth (925-932), while

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<sup>107</sup>See Fowler 2002, 45, who cites Appian 8.71: ὁ δὲ Σκιπίων ἐθεᾶτο τὴν μάχην ἀφ’ ὑψηλοῦ καθάπερ ἐκ θεάτρου. ἔλεγέ τε πολλάκις ὕστερον, ἀγῶσι συνενεχθεῖς ποικίλοις, οὐποτε ᾧδε ἡσθῆναι· μόνον γὰρ ἔφη τόνδε τὸν πόνον ἄφροντις ἰδεῖν, μυριάδας ἀνδρῶν συνιούσας ἐς μάχην ἑνδεκα. ἔλεγέ τε σεμνύων δύο πρὸ αὐτοῦ τὴν τοιάνδε θεᾶν ἰδεῖν ἐν τῷ Τρωικῷ πολέμῳ, τὸν Δία ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰδῆς καὶ τὸν Ποσειδῶνα ἐκ Σαμοθράκης...

<sup>108</sup>Though prior to this passage Lucretius is quick to deny the possibility of an “actual” Golden Age containing such supernatural features as rivers of gold or giants (5.907-924).

crops grew abundantly owing to the world's youth (937-945).<sup>109</sup> Indeed, Lucretius plays up the equivalence in "quality of life" between this prehistoric race and the modern day, comparing primitive man's death by animal violence with the casualties of modern war (988-1010). Despite some final moralizing on how luxury has replaced poverty as a source of death, the stress of this passage is on continuity rather than change.

Traditionally, readers of the poem have seen a shift away from Lucretius' "Golden Age" description at 1011, with the depiction of humanity's development of familial ties, friendship, and "non-aggression pacts" (1011-1027):<sup>110</sup>

Inde casas postquam ac pellis ignemque pararunt, et mulier coniuncta viro concessit in unum ..... cognita sunt, prolemque ex se videre creatam, tum genus humanum primum mollescere coepit. ignis enim curavit ut alsia corpora frigus	1015
non ita iam possent caeli sub tegmine ferre, et Venus inminuit viris, puerique parentum blanditiis facile ingenium fregere superbum. tunc et amicitiam coeperunt iungere aventes finitimi inter se nec laedere nec violari,	1020
et pueros commendarunt muliebreque saeculum, vocibus et gestu cum balbe significarent imbecillorum esse aequum misererier omnis. nec tamen omnimodis poterat concordia gigni, sed bona magnaue pars servabat foedera caste;	1025
aut genus humanum iam tum foret omne peremptum, nec potuisset adhuc perducere saecula propago.	

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<sup>109</sup>Grilli 1995, 22-23, notes that the polemic here is more specifically directed against Plato's adaptation of the Hesiodic myth in the *Statesman*.

<sup>110</sup>Cf. Bailey 1963, 1483: "With this paragraph Lucr. passes away from the haphazard life of primitive man to the various stages of civilization..."

Yet it is perhaps better to think of this passage as a change in model rather than a change in “age,” as much of Lucretius’ description of this initial human society is reminiscent of those fragments identified as Empedocles’ Golden Age, when the goddess Kypris ruled in peace and worship of martial gods had not yet begun. Lucretius’ society is similarly united by Venus (here, as perhaps in Empedocles, the abstract force of love personified), who began to tame primitive man, causing him to develop emotional bonds with his children and prefer friendship to strife (1017-1020).<sup>111</sup> Tellingly, it is only after his depiction of this initial social formation that Lucretius describes the invention of fire, despite the fact that fire is clearly known to these early individuals (1015); by delaying mention of this pivotal discovery with its inherent implications of Promethean theft and humanity’s fall (emphasized by the poet’s mention of the thunderbolt as fire’s celestial source in 5.1092), Lucretius can suggest a prelapsarian state for this society without tainting his account with overt myth.<sup>112</sup>

This suggestion of a “fall” is further supported by Lucretius’ account of human development that follows upon his discussion of the discovery of fire. Political life is introduced in the form of kings, along with the increased fear of violence (see *arcem*, 1108; *praesidium*, *perfugium*, 1109) and desire for luxury (1110-1116). These kings are eventually replaced with magistrates and laws, which bring their own troubles—fear of punishment and the gods (1136-1240). With the ensuing account of mankind’s discovery of metals (1241-1296) and the development of warfare, Lucretius resumes his explicit references to Hesiod’s

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<sup>111</sup>In Venus’ presence here a unity between this and the earlier “Golden Age” of Lucretius’ previous passage may be detected, as the goddess’ presence is noted there as well (*et Venus in silvis iungebat corpora amantum*, 962).

<sup>112</sup>For a discussion of “Lucretius’ apparent violations of logic and chronology as elements of a thematic and imagistic organizing principle,” see Farrell 1994, 81.

system of metallic ages, recalling Hesiod’s sequence of gold-silver-bronze-iron in 1269-1296<sup>113</sup> and describing the transition from bronze usage to that of iron with an Hesiodic anaphora (*aere solum terrae tractabant, aereque belli...*, 1289; cf. τῶν δ’ ἦν χάλκεα μὲν τεύχεα, χάλκεοι δέ τε οἴκοι, / χαλκῷ δ’ εἰργάζοντο· μέλας δ’ οὐκ ἔσκε σίδηρος, Hes. *WD* 150-151).

What is important for our purposes is Lucretius’ inclusion, towards the end of this historical account, of the development of music (Lucr. *DRN* 5.1379-1411). Here Lucretius explains that the model for human song was that of birds, while pipe-playing was discovered by hearing wind blow through reeds. He then turns to the pleasure afforded by these inventions, depicting a springtime “picnic” where early humans relax in a traditional *locus amoenus*, accompanied by the “rustic muse” (*agrestis enim tum musa vigebat*, 1398).<sup>114</sup> The scene is pleasant but simple; the participants are content with a sufficiency of food (*cum satiate cibi*, 1391) and need no great wealth for their pleasure (*non magnis opibus iucunde corpora habebant*, 1394). In many ways, such a state may be considered a representation of the Epicurean good life.<sup>115</sup> Indeed, much of this description is taken from a passage at the opening of book 2, where Lucretius commends such a state as sufficient to the demands of nature, and to be preferred by the Epicurean wise man in his *templa serena* (2.20-36; 2.29-33≈5.1392-1396).

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<sup>113</sup>Cf. Farrell 1994, 92 n. 26.

<sup>114</sup>For the scene as *locus amoenus*, see most recently Morelli 2012, 459-467.

<sup>115</sup>Cf. Armstrong 2014, 96, who compares the passage to Philodemus’ discussion of the gods’ intercourse and Horace’s *noctes cenaque deum* (*Sat.* 2.6.65).

The passage also recalls the earlier “Golden Ages” of Lucretius’ historical account. The pleasures enjoyed by these rustics are openly compared to those experienced by the early earthborn humans (*neque hilo / maiorem interea capiunt dulcedini’ fructum / quam silvestre genus capiebat terrigenarum*, 5.1409-1411; cf. *terram...matrem*, 1402), while the genial social interaction (cf. *tum ioca, tum sermo, tum dulces esse cachinni*, 1397) may suggest the *concordia* of the first communities (1019-1027). Even the renewed presence of Venus is implied by the setting’s description, which evokes the spring day of the poem’s opening with its emphasis on floral growth and, as noted above, the bold metaphor of a smiling landscape (*tempestas ridebat*, 5.1395; *tibi rident aequora ponti*, 1.8).<sup>116</sup> Thus, by weaving strands of allusion together, Lucretius depicts his Epicurean ideal as a possible return to the Golden Age, adapting the strategy seen in the earlier Greek poets to again portray Epicurean success as a life like the gods.

## Epicurus

Lucretius’ most explicit claims of divinization are reserved for Epicurus himself. In my discussion of the proem I have already argued that the “flight of the mind” of 1.62-79 points in this direction by presenting Epicurus in a successful gigantomachic assault against the heavens. Lucretius returns to the philosopher again in the introduction to book 3, where Lucretius portrays his desire to emulate Epicurus while acknowledging the philosopher’s superiority, as Lucretius himself is dependent on Epicurus’ teachings, which are “golden”

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<sup>116</sup>Morelli 2012, 460-461, notes that Lucretius alters his pastoral models by situating his *locus amoenus* in a spring setting instead of the summer. Such a variation would make the poet’s connection between this passage and Venus’ spring arrival (or even the spring setting of the gods’ abodes in the proem to book 3) all the stronger.

and “most worthy of eternal life” (*omnia nos itidem depascimur aurea dicta, / aurea, perpetua semper dignissima vita*, 3.12-13). One may detect a suggestion of a god-like state in the reference to immortality, though Lucretius is careful to avoid pressing the point to an unphilosophical end; it is the philosopher’s writings, not his corporeal form, which are worthy of immortality.<sup>117</sup> The suggestion is in turn reinforced by the following lines, wherein Lucretius expands upon his debt to Epicurus, explaining that “as soon as your [i.e. Epicurus’] reason begins to expound on the nature of things as it arises from your divine mind, the mind’s horrors withdraw, the walls of the world recede, I see matter conducted through all the void” (*nam simul ac ratio tua coepit vociferari / naturam rerum, divina mente coortam, / diffugiunt animi terrores, moenia mundi / discedunt, totum video per inane geri res*, 3.14-16).

It is important to note exactly how the divine terminology is at work throughout this passage. For while it is *implied* rather strongly that Epicurus is himself a divine figure, this divinity is specifically associated with Epicurus’ intellect—in particular, of course, with his philosophical thought.<sup>118</sup> Thus it is his mind that is described as *divina* for properly expounding upon the nature of things and giving the true account of the abodes of the gods and the non-existence of Acheron (3.14-30), while his teachings on these very matters, his *aurea dicta*, are what Lucretius actually declares as worthy of eternal life.<sup>119</sup> This

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<sup>117</sup>For immortality as one of the two attributes required of the gods in Epicurean philosophy, see D.L. 10.123.

<sup>118</sup>A similar point is made by Edirisinghe 2010, 118ff.

<sup>119</sup>The frequent tension between Epicurus’ god-like status and ultimate mortality in the *DRN* is exemplified by Lucretius’ use of the perfect verb *fuit* at 5.8: *deus ille fuit...*

formulation is in keeping with our earlier discussion of Lucretius' treatment of the pre-Socratics; it is his insight into the true nature of existence that makes Epicurus divine.

This connection is reiterated in the introduction to book 5, where Lucretius openly declares Epicurus a god (5.7-12):

nam si, ut ipsa petit maiestas cognita rerum,  
dicendum est, deus ille fuit, deus, inclute Memmi,  
qui princeps vitae rationem invenit eam quae  
nunc appellatur sapientia, quique per artem  
fluctibus e tantis vitam tantisque tenebris  
in tam tranquillo et tam clara luce locavit. 10

Here Epicurus' discovery of the nature of things (*maiestas cognita rerum*, 7; cf. *rationem invenit*, 9) is extolled, just as with Lucretius' treatment of the pre-Socratics. In addition—and in contrast to the depiction of those earlier philosophers—Lucretius describes the *ataraxia* arising from this discovery (10-12). This is of course the defining characteristic of Epicurus' divinities and the primary characteristic presented as godlike by Epicurus in the *Letter to Menoeceus* discussed above (οὐδέποτε οὐθ' ὕπαρ οὔτ' ὄναρ διαταραχθήσῃ, ζήσεις δὲ ὡς θεὸς ἐν ἀνθρώποις, D.L. 10.135). By asserting Epicurus' divine status as a result of his ataractic nature here, Lucretius is following standard Epicurean doctrine. By including it over and above the criteria for which the pre-Socratics were represented as partially divine earlier in the poem, however, Lucretius emphasizes Epicurus' greatest accomplishment.

The characterization of Epicurean divinity seen so far may be described as ontological or “absolute” divinity.<sup>120</sup> That is, the successful Epicurean student (or Epicurus

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<sup>120</sup>For a contrast between this and “relative” divinity, see esp. Gradel 2002, 1-53. Focusing on the practice of emperor worship, Gradel argues for the predominance of a “relative” notion of divinity in the ancient world by which “[h]onours bestowed on a man (or god) by other men defined relative status, and the power structure between the two parties involved. The highest honours—divine worship—expressed the maximum status gap and the absolute power wielded by the person worshipped over his worshipper” (52). “Absolute” divinity, by

himself) is not here likened to a god because of his power status vis-à-vis other mortals or honors received from them but solely owing to his internal state of mind (as befits an entity who is in no way affected by external stimuli, like the gods described at 1.44-49). Yet this is not the only form that Lucretius' "deification" of Epicurus can take. As Monica Gale has discussed in her 1994 monograph, elements of Euhemerism (in a broad sense, not restricted by Euhemerus' specific teachings) can also be detected in the praise of Epicurus which opens book 5 of the *DRN*.<sup>121</sup> Even before lauding Epicurus for his own achievement of *ataraxia*, Lucretius stresses Epicurus' role as benefactor to the human race, praising the philosopher not only for his discoveries themselves but for the fact that he shared them with all humanity (*qui talia nobis / pectore parta suo quaesitaque praemia liquit*, 5.4-5). This leads into a discussion of other supposed benefactors, such as Ceres and Liber, who discovered grain and wine, culminating with the monster-slayer Hercules (5.13-42). As Lucretius argues, these figures' supposed beneficences are of little value compared to those of Epicurus; while it is entirely possible to live without wine or grain (15-16), and countless beasts *do* in fact still remain on the earth (39-42), it is impossible to live well without Epicurus' teachings, and for this reason he rightly seems like a god to us (*at bene non poterat sine puro pectore vivi; / quo magis hic merito nobis deus esse videtur*, 18-19; cf. 49-51).

Here can be seen a much more relational, rather than absolute, portrayal of divinity, as Epicurus' status as god is predicated entirely on his superior position to, and interaction with, the rest of humanity. This relational aspect is emphasized by the dative *nobis* in line

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contrast, presupposes a divinity considered divine on its own merits, and not because of its status relative to a worshipper.

<sup>121</sup>Gale 1994, 75-80. Cf. Erler 2002, who wants to see this not as a case of Euhemerist rhetoric, but a furthering of the ὁμοίωσις θεῶ trope.



5.19; Epicurus seems like a god *to us* because of his teachings. This statement too finds parallels in actual Epicurean practice, as Epicureans often performed sacrifices to their deceased master—a practice frequently cited by critics of the school, who argued it flew in the face of the school’s own teachings. Despite these critiques, there is an internal consistency to such practice. It will be remembered that Epicurean practice encouraged contemplation of the gods as models of behavior, and it seems such contemplation could extend to the “god-like” Epicurean sage; in his 32<sup>nd</sup> *Vatican Saying*, the philosopher claims “reverence of the wise man is a great good for the worshipper” (Ὁ τοῦ σοφοῦ σεβασμὸς ἀγαθὸν μέγα τῷ σεβομένῳ ἐστὶ).

Though both the ontological and relational aspects of Epicurus’ divinization have long been recognized, the ontological aspect has traditionally been viewed as primary; thus Gale, while noting the beneficent role of Epicurus in the poem, argues that “it was above all his *own* achievement of *ataraxia*, and only secondarily the fact that he enabled others to achieve it, which earned him the title of *deus*.”<sup>122</sup> Yet this interpretation seems to stick too strictly to philosophical doctrine without taking the poem itself into account, as in every passage where Epicurus is portrayed as divine, the ultimate focus is on the philosopher’s beneficence to mankind. In the culmination to his argument for Epicurus’ superiority in book 5 (discussed above), Lucretius argues that Epicurus deserves to be counted in the number of the gods *especially* because he gave discourses (*dicta*) on the gods and on nature (*nonne decebit / hunc hominem numero divom dignarier esse? / cum bene praesertim multa ac divinitus ipsis / immortalibu’ de divis dare dicta suerit / atque omnem rerum naturam*

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<sup>122</sup>Gale 1994, 79 (emphasis Gale’s). Cf. Erler 2002, 177.

*pandere dictis*, 5.50-54). The emphasis is not solely on Epicurus' discovery of these facts (though this is praised as well), but on his *communication* of them.

This focus on the connection between Epicurus' so-called divinity and his role as teacher is present yet again in the proem to book 6 of the poem. Indeed, the opening claim that "Athens first gave grain-bearing produce to wretched mortals" (6.1-2) directly recalls the Euhemeristic proem to the preceding book, wherein Epicurus was favorably compared to Ceres and her gift of agriculture (5.14). So too does the claim at 6.7-8 that on account of Epicurus' "divine discoveries, his fame is borne to heaven" (*cuius et extincti propter divina reperta / divulgata vetus iam ad caelum gloria fertur*), mirroring as it does the Euhemerist position that renown on earth may lead to divine status.<sup>123</sup> Of course, it could be argued that the focus here is instead on Epicurus' unique beatitude and that his *reperta* are divine because of the *ataraxia* which they provided for Epicurus himself. Certainly the philosopher is contrasted with the mass of humanity; with the detachment which is recurrent throughout the poem,<sup>124</sup> Epicurus is portrayed as removed from human life, able to view the incongruity between man's anxieties and his affluence (6.9-23). Yet the ultimate cause of Epicurus' *divulgata gloria* would seem to be his instruction. As Lucretius explains it, Epicurus' renown has reached heaven because (*nam*, 6.9) he understood that humanity's ills were really psychological and *therefore* (*igitur*) he "purged their hearts with true-spoken words," "explained what the highest good to which we all tend was," and "showed the way...by which we could head straight to it" (6.24-28):

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<sup>123</sup>Note that in the very act of calling Epicurus' teachings divine Lucretius stresses his mortality (*extincti*); in no way should we confuse the argument to suppose that Lucretius presents Epicurus as an actual immortal god.

<sup>124</sup>Cf. De Lacy 1964 [repr. in Gale 2007].

veridicis igitur purgavit pectora dictis  
et finem statuit cuppedinis atque timoris  
exposuitque bonum summum quo tendimus omnes  
quid foret, atque viam monstravit, tramite parvo  
qua possemus ad id recto contendere cursu.

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Here I would argue that the priority of Lucretius' presentation is actually opposite that argued by Gale; Epicurus is *first* divine because of his teachings and only secondly due to his own *ataraxia* (though, of course, this contributes to the former as well).

In the proem to book 3 as well, it is Epicurus' teachings (*dicta*, 12) that are golden and worthy of eternal life (3.11-12). Explaining this claim, Lucretius describes the benefit to *himself* which the philosopher's teachings have caused: "for<sup>125</sup> as soon as your [i.e. Epicurus'] reason begins to expound on the nature of things as it arises from your divine mind, the mind's horrors withdraw, the walls of the world recede, I see matter conducted through all the void" (*nam simul ac ratio tua coepit vociferari / naturam rerum, divina mente coortam, / diffugiunt animi terrores, moenia mundi / discedunt, totum video per inane gerires*, 3.14-16). The result is that a divine pleasure (*divina voluptas*) overcomes the poet because nature has been revealed to him by Epicurus (*his ibi me rebus quaedam divina voluptas / percipit atque horror, quod sic natura tua vi / tam manifesta patens ex omni parte resecta est*, 3.28-30). Again, Epicurus' "divinity" is inherently connected with his ability to share his teachings with others.

This aspect of the divinization of Epicurus has important consequences for the poem. After all, the vision that comes to Lucretius after Epicurus' teachings cause the *moenia mundi* to recede is that of the gods and their abodes (*apparet divum numen sedesque quietae*,

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<sup>125</sup>The introductory *nam* serves to indicate the clause's function as an explanation for Lucretius' praise of Epicurus' *aurea dicta*.

3.18), making the student Lucretius here much like the quasi-divine Epicurus of the proem, whose assault on *religio* led him to pass beyond “the flaming walls of the world” (*flammantia moenia mundi*, 1.73). This elevation of the student may be suggested further by the experience of *divina voluptas*, a loaded term which associates the notion of divinity with the *voluptas* that in the poem’s opening line stands, in part, for the pleasure that is the Epicurean’s ideal. Through the divine teachings of Epicurus, Lucretius himself (and so the Epicurean student—or Lucretian reader—as well) can reach the god-like state which is the school’s *telos*.

This emphasis on Epicurus’ divine state and his ability to bestow that divinity to others can be detected in the most famous depiction of Epicurus in the *De Rerum Natura*, the so-called “flight of the mind” discussed above (1.62-79). Though Epicurus is not presented as a god explicitly here (indeed, his humanity is stressed by the appellation of *Graius homo*), he is portrayed as equal to the gods. And again, as in the proems to book three and six, the ultimate effect of this portrayal is to emphasize not only Epicurus’ individual achievement, but its meaning for humanity. Effectively, Epicurus acts as humanity’s champion, fighting against the tyrant *religio* (*humana ante oculos foede cum vita iaceret / in terris oppressa gravi sub religione*, 1.62-3). This fight leads him to traverse beyond the walls of the world where he discovers what can and cannot come to be before reporting this information back to us (*unde refert nobis victor quid possit oriri, / quid nequeat, finita potestas denique cuique / quanquam sit ratione atque alte terminus haerens*, 1.75-8). Through Epicurus’ victory, we are all made equal to heaven (*nos exaequat victoria caelo*, 1.79).

Intertextual allusions found in the passage serve to further this argument that Epicurus’ divinization leads to the divinization of the student. In addition to the overt

gigantomachic imagery on display, Lucretius also makes allusion here to Empedocles' cosmic cycle. Narrating Epicurus' "flight of the mind," Lucretius describes how the force of Epicurus' mind was victorious and "proceeded far beyond the flaming walls of the world and wandered the unbound universe in thought and mind" (1.72-74):

ergo vivida vis animi pervicit, et extra  
processit longe flammantia moenia mundi  
atque omne immensum peragravit mente animoque...

Based on these lines, as well as the reference to Epicurus as an anonymous *Graius homo*, Furley has seen in the passage an allusion to Empedocles fr. DK 129, where the earlier poet describes an anonymous individual (τις...άνήρ), traditionally identified with Pythagoras, who similarly saw the whole of existence through the power of his mind:<sup>126</sup>

ἦν δέ τις ἐν κείνοισιν ἀνὴρ περιώσια εἰδώς,  
ὃς δὴ μήκιστον πραπίδων ἐκτήσατο πλοῦτον.  
παντοίων τε μάλιστα σοφῶν ἐπιήρανος ἔργων·  
ὅπποτε γὰρ πάσησιν ὀρέξαιτο πραπίδεςσιν,  
ρεῖ' ὃ γε τῶν ὄντων πάντων λεύσσεσκεν ἕκαστον,  
καί τε δέκ' ἀνθρώπων καὶ τ' εἴκοσιν αἰώνεσσιν.

Certainly there are similarities between the two passages, yet as Trépanier has rightly noted, Lucretius' description may refer more closely to another passage from Empedocles, in which the Sicilian describes the nature of the gods (DK 134):<sup>127</sup>

οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀνδρομέη κεφαλῇ κατὰ γυῖα κέκασται,  
οὐ μὲν ἀπὸ νότοιο δύο κλάδοι αἰσσοῦσι,  
οὐ πόδες, οὐ θοὰ γοῦν', οὐ μήδεα λαχνήεντα,  
ἀλλὰ φρὴν ἱερὴ καὶ ἀθέσφατος ἔπλετο μοῦνον,

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<sup>126</sup>Furley 1970, 61-2.

<sup>127</sup>Trépanier 2007, 272. Our source for the passage, Ammonius, states that the passage is specifically a description of the god Apollo, but that Empedocles talked about the divine in general in the same way (Ammonius, Commentary on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* 249.3-5): ἐπήγαγε προηγουμένως μὲν περὶ Ἀπόλλωνος, περὶ οὗ ἦν αὐτῷ προσεχῶς ὁ λόγος, κατὰ δὲ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον καὶ περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ παντὸς ἀπλῶς ἀποφαινόμενος...

φροντίσι κόσμον ἅπαντα καταίσσουσα θοῇσιν.

Here we have a literal flight of the mind, as Empedocles' divinity, conceived of solely as mind isolated from the trappings of the body, darts through the universe (κόσμον ἅπαντα; cf. *omne immensum*, *DRN* 1.74) with its "swift thoughts." The passage is actually a better fit for Lucretius' depiction of Epicurus than the intertext argued by Furley, as it maintains a similar focus on spatial movement in both passages that is lost in a comparison to the Pythagoras passage with its focus on expanded temporal knowledge. If DK 134 is taken as the primary text to which Lucretius here refers, the poet would be comparing Epicurus not only to the wise man Pythagoras but to an Empedoclean god.

Pressing the point further, we may note that lines 2-3 of the passage describing the holy *phren* are transmitted to us in a slightly different form by another source, who tells us that Empedocles described the *Sphairos*, discussed briefly in the previous chapter, with these lines.<sup>128</sup> Given Empedocles' predilection for recycling his verses, it is perhaps unsurprising that he describes these two forms of divinity in a similar manner. Yet this similarity opens the possibility that Lucretius, or a Lucretian reader, may identify the description of the holy *phren* with that of the *Sphairos*. Should this be the case, Lucretius' text could compare Epicurus not only to a standard Empedoclean divinity, of the type that a person could become after enough successful transmigrations, but to the *Sphairos* itself.

This is not so large a cognitive leap as it may seem. As has been well documented by Furley and Sedley, among others, the proem to the *DRN* is rife with allusions to Empedocles'

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<sup>128</sup>Hippolytus, *Refutatio* 7.29.13: καὶ περὶ μὲν τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ιδέας, ὅποια τίς ἐστὶν ὑπὸ τῆς φιλίας κοσμουμένη, λέγει τοιοῦτόν τινα τρόπον·

οὐ γὰρ ἀπὸ νώτοιο δύο κλάδοι αἰσσονται,  
οὐ πόδες, οὐ θοὰ γοῦν', οὐ μήδεα γεννήεντα (=DK 29.1-2)  
ἀλλὰ σφαῖρος ἔην...

work, to the extent that Sedley has argued for the use of Lucretius' proem to reconstruct the proem of Empedocles' *On Nature*.<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, Lucretius himself has already established a connection between his philosophical program and Empedocles' *Philia* in the figure of Venus, the *voluptas* of gods and men, who is routinely conflated with *Philia* in Empedocles' poetry and who, in a nod to Empedoclean cosmology as well as Homeric myth, has already been portrayed by Lucretius as the peaceful force uniquely able to overcome the martial god of Strife.<sup>130</sup> Indeed, this particular point of Empedocles' system is recast in the depiction of Epicurus' battle with *religio*, leading to a further allusion that ensures the likelihood of a comparison between Epicurus and the *sphairos*, as Lucretius draws on the Homeric depiction of Strife (*Il.* 4.440-445; see esp. 443: οὐρανῷ ἐστήριξε κάρη καὶ ἐπὶ χθονὶ βαίνει) to depict *religio*, representing her as a giant figure, looming over mortals with her head in the heavens (*quae caput a caeli regionibus ostendebat / horribili super aspectu mortalibus instans*, *DRN* 1.64-65).<sup>131</sup> This portrayal of Epicurus' foe *religio* in the guise of Empedoclean Strife again encourages the reader to associate Epicurus with Strife's counterpart, *Philia*—an encouragement that is confirmed with the intertextual reference to the *Sphairos* discussed above. Drawing on the previous chapter's discussion of Empedocles' cosmology, we may recall that in that system the period of *Philia*'s dominance consists of universal unification into the divine *Sphairos*. Again, the implication is made that Epicurus' divinity will lead to the divinity of all. Or as Lucretius puts it: *nos exaequat victoria caelo* (*DRN* 1.79).

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<sup>129</sup>See Furley 1970; Sedley 1998, ch. 1. For a critique of Sedley's reconstruction, see Trépanier 2004, 38-44, who nevertheless emphasizes the close interplay between Lucretius and Empedocles.

<sup>130</sup>Cf. Furley 1970, 57-60.

<sup>131</sup>Cf. Summers 1995, 54-55.

Lucretius' statements directly following his account of the sacrifice of Iphigenia provide one more example of humanity's ultimate ability to achieve the same state as Epicurus through the philosopher's teachings. Here Lucretius acknowledges that the student may one day attempt to abandon Epicurus' teachings due to the "horrifying words of priests/poets" (*vatum / terrioloquis...dictis*, 1.102-3), who create fictions to disturb people's lives by positing eternal torments in death. According to the poet, were men to see that there is a certain limit to their troubles (*si certam finem esse viderent / aerumnarum homines*, 107-108), these fictions would have no effect, and men could oppose religious institutions and the threats of *vates* (*aliqua ratione valerent / religionibus atque minis obsistere vatum*, 108-109). In its diction, the act here described is quite similar to Epicurus' "flight of the mind" earlier in book 1; there Epicurus too opposes (*obsistere contra*, 67) *religio*, with the result that he learns the limits of nature (75-77). Here we have the same process in reverse; by learning the *certam finem* taught by the philosopher, humanity too can oppose *religio* just as Epicurus has.

This focus on the benevolent aspect of Epicurus' divine state has two further implications that should be drawn out. The first concerns Lucretian parallels to the authoritative gods of earlier didactic. As mentioned above, though Venus occupies the same proemial position in the *DRN* as Zeus and the Muses do in Hesiod's *Works and Days* or Aratus' *Phaenomena*, she does not occupy the same role. For Hesiod and especially for Aratus, these gods serve as guarantors of their expressed knowledge. Hesiod declares himself to be "speaking forth the mind of Zeus" with the aid of the Muses, much as Aratus recounts the signs already placed in the heavens by Zeus. Venus, though invoked by Lucretius to be his "ally" (1.24), is not the source of his material in the same way; she may provide the



peaceful *conditions* for Memmius' education or grant the poem its charm

(*aeternum...leporem*, 1.28), and may even govern the poem's subject matter (*rerum naturam*

*sola gubernas*, 1.21), but she does not grant knowledge of that subject matter to the poet.

This is instead the task of Epicurus, whose signs Lucretius will follow and expound (*inque*

*tuis nunc / ficta pedum pono pressis vestigia signa*, 3.3-4) much as Aratus follows the signs

of his Muses (ἐμοί γε μὲν ἀστέρας εἰπεῖν / ἧ θέμις εὐχομένῳ τεκμήρατε πᾶσαν ἀοιδήν, Arat.

*Phaen.* 17-18), and whose mental achievements (*naturam rerum, divina mente coortam*,

*DRN* 3.14) he explains just as Hesiod does the mind of Zeus.

At the same time, this focus on Epicurus' benevolence serves to adapt Lucretius' argument to his Roman context. Earlier scholars have noted how Lucretius' depiction of Epicurus in the proem to book 5 corresponds to contemporary interest in Euhemerism, popularized in Rome by an Ennian work on the subject.<sup>132</sup> The doctrine was especially agreeable to the Stoics, who found it compatible with their own belief in the divinizing power of virtue. Indeed, Lucretius' comparison of Epicurus to the deified Hercules in the book's opening has been viewed as a directed attack on the Stoics, as the hero was regularly utilized by that school as an exemplar of the wise man.<sup>133</sup> By showing Epicurus to be superior to the hero specifically as regards benefactions to humanity, Lucretius proves the superiority of Epicurus on the Stoics' own terms.

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<sup>132</sup>See Gale 1994, 75-80.

<sup>133</sup>See Pigeaud 1972, 154-162, and Packman 1976, who argues that Lucretius, by comparing Epicurus with the Stoic Hercules, shows Epicurus to be the more beneficent figure in the Stoics' own terms as put forth by Cicero in his various dialogues. See also the allegorization of Heracles' deeds in Heraclitus (*Hom. Quaest.* 33), wherein Heracles' various labors are represented as symbolic of mental feats similar to those for which Lucretius praises Epicurus. It is tempting to see here Lucretius draining a more traditional allegory of its symbolic content and transferring it to Epicurus.

Such appropriation need not be directed against the Stoics alone. In a recent book on deification in Cicero's writings, Cole has made a compelling case that Cicero's discussions of deification in his works form part of a larger context of "experimentation" with divinization taking place in the later years of the Republic. For Cicero, divinization becomes the reward of the ideal statesman, earned as a result of civic accomplishments.<sup>134</sup> For the Epicurean, on the other hand, such political involvement was generally to be shunned—an attitude for which the school received frequent criticism from adversaries, including Cicero himself. By focusing on the public benefit gained by Epicurus' discoveries, Lucretius is able to accomplish much the same feat as he does in his comparison of Epicurus to the Stoic Hercules, showing the philosopher as better than the statesman on the statesman's own terms.<sup>135</sup>

### **The Gods of *Religio***

As discussed above, Lucretius' ever-present distinction between the gods of *religio* and his Epicurean gods allows him to take a variety of positions over the course of the poem

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<sup>134</sup>See Cole 2013, 16: "Cicero's experimental modality makes for a lack of doctrinal precision that leaves room for the ongoing adaptation of his ideas. There is, however, one critical constant running through Cicero's manifold experimentation: he invariably premises divinization on moral responsibility and civic accomplishment. This concept was not commonplace at Rome when Cicero arrived on the scene, but it started to become more prevalent after he left."

<sup>135</sup>This recasting of Epicurus in Roman terms can be seen at work elsewhere in the poem. As Buchheit 1971 has shown, the opening's flight of the mind depicts Epicurus in part as a Roman *triumphator* (itself a position where human and divine are conflated), while Cox 1971, 7, sees the Epicurus of book 3's proem presented as a Roman father. For more on Lucretius' use of "propagandistic strategies" to dispose his Roman audience favorably to Epicureanism, see Schrijvers 2007, esp. 54-67.

by representing the wise man variously as a pious suppliant, a godlike sage, or a gigantomachic iconoclast. In this section I take a look at another important result of this distinction, for by shifting between these perspectives, the poet is able to present not only the successful Epicurean as godlike, but the non-Epicurean as well. Yet, as shall be seen, this likeness takes a dramatically different form, for while the Epicurean models himself on the example of the true Epicurean gods, the non-Epicurean is shown to be an exemplar for the gods of *religio*.<sup>136</sup>

Throughout the poem, Lucretius forges a connection between the non-Epicurean life, regularly conceived as the life of the politician or general, and the worship of the traditional gods. Indeed, this connection is forcefully made in the poem's first description of religious activity, the sacrifice of Iphianassa at Aulis (1.84-101). The participants in the sacrifice are specifically identified by their political status; her slayers are the *ductores Danaum delecti* (86) while the spectating crowd are identified as *civis* (91). Agamemnon's privileging of his political status is most clearly shown, as Lucretius juxtaposes his titles of *rex* and *pater* to stress his impiety (94). The result of the act is performed likewise for political gain: to obtain a propitious departure for the Greek fleet (*exitus ut classi felix faustusque daretur*, 100).

Again at the beginning of book 3 the extremities of political misconduct are tied to an addiction to religion. Here Lucretius speaks of "exiles from their homeland and the sight of

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<sup>136</sup>In certain respects, my argument here is similar to that of Long and Sedley 1987, 146, who argue that for Epicurus "a person's conception of the divine nature is both a measure and a cause of his own state of moral health." For Long and Sedley, however, this is part of a larger argument meant to prove that the Epicurean gods are nothing more than thought-constructs—a much-debated claim whose most recent arguments for and against can be found in Sedley 2011 and Konstan 2011. While the position is compelling, it is not necessary for my argument—given his view of the gods and the "deified" wise man, Epicurus clearly sees it as an accepted psychological fact that our thoughts on the gods condition our own behavior (as does Lucretius, cf. 6.72-79).

men, tainted by a foul charge” who nevertheless embrace religion all the more fervently (3.48-54):

extorres idem patria longeque fugati  
conspectu ex hominum, foedati crimine turpi,  
omnibus aerumnis adfecti denique vivunt, 50  
et quocumque tamen miseri venere parentant  
et nigras mactant pecudes et manibu’ divis  
inferias mittunt multoque in rebus acerbis  
acrius advertunt animos ad religionem.

The poet does not specify the nature of the *crimen* in these lines, but given the state of the republic at the time of the poem’s composition and Lucretius’ own remarks on the matter in the Venus proem, the reader is surely led to think of political motivations.<sup>137</sup> This impulse is reinforced by the following passage, where Lucretius explains that greed and desire lead men to transcend the bounds of justice in their quest for power (3.59-64).<sup>138</sup>

The gods of *religio*, in turn, are represented as the culmination of such passions—tyrannical figures who have obtained the power at which their worshippers grasp.<sup>139</sup> The point is clearly made in the beginning of book 6, where Lucretius explains that ignorance of meteorological causes makes humans fearful and leads them to attribute these causes to the rule of the gods (6.50-55). This attribution is presented in political terms; these frightened individuals hand over affairs to the *imperium* and *regnum* of the gods (*ignorantia causarum*

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<sup>137</sup>Cf. Fowler 1989, 136: “[Lucretius’ reader] would surely think here of an exiled *politician*, since a political trial is by far the likeliest reason for a Roman to go into exile” (emphasis Fowler’s).

<sup>138</sup>Line 3.62 and the first half of 3.63 (*noctes atque dies niti praestante labore / ad summas emergere opes*) are repeated from the description at 2.12-13 of those erring mortals that the sage looks down on from the heights of wisdom.

<sup>139</sup>See Castner 2003, 161-168, for an analysis of the thematic connection Lucretius develops between tyranny and the thunderbolt.

*conferre deorum / cogit ad imperium res et concedere regnum*, 6.54-55).<sup>140</sup> The language specifically recalls Lucretius' earlier discussion of the first kings, who strove for excessive power and came to ruin—a tale that shows how much better it is to obtain tranquillity than to rule (*ut satius multo iam sit parere quietum / quam regere imperio res velle et regna tenere*, 5.1129-1130).<sup>141</sup> Mortals are presented as slaves in comparison, prostrate in the manner of a proskynesis (*animos humilis, depressos...ad terram*, 6.52, 53).<sup>142</sup> The metaphor is pressed even further in the following lines, as the gods are referred to as “stern masters” (*dominos acris adsciscunt*, 6.63).<sup>143</sup>

For the Epicurean poet, this resemblance between the gods of *religio* and tyrants is natural and predicated on the fear of death. As Lucretius tells us, man's own desires for power and wealth are founded on this fear (3.59-64); poverty seems too close to death itself, and for this reason must be avoided (3.65-67):

turpis enim ferme contemptus et acris egestas	65
semota ab dulci vita stabilique videtur	
et quasi iam leti portas cunctarier ante...	

Discussing the origins of belief in the gods, Lucretius shows that this connection—between power and immortality on the one hand and poverty and death on the other—led to the

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<sup>140</sup>Cf. Godwin 1991 *ad loc.*, who comments on the charged valence of *regnum* for a republican Roman.

<sup>141</sup>Most editors move lines 5.1131-1132 ahead of line 1127, making the lines quoted 1129-1130, but these lines may be numbered differently in some editions.

<sup>142</sup>The language here directly recalls that of *religio*'s oppression in the proem to book 1 (*humana ante oculos foede cum vita iaceret / in terris oppressa gravi sub religione*, 1.62-63); this characterization of *religio* is by no means new here, only at its most explicit.

<sup>143</sup>The connection is by no means limited to this passage; see, e.g., *DRN* 2.1090-1092, where an understanding of natural law enables the student to see nature “freed from proud masters” (*dominis privata superbis*, 1091).

attribution of power and immortality to the gods. According to the poet, early humans saw visions of the gods, unchanging in form and mighty in strength (5.1169-1174). Assuming that anything so powerful could not be destroyed, humans then attributed eternal life to the gods (1175-1178). From there they attributed supreme blessedness on the basis of their immortality (1179-1182).

This last assumption on the part of these early humans suggests that there is, in fact, little difference between the goals of the Epicurean sage and the unenlightened worshipper. Both attempt to reach a life of the greatest happiness, and both see the gods as examples to be followed to achieve this goal. Lucretius points out the hopeful aims of those who strive for power when describing early rulers, who wanted to be illustrious and powerful to ensure the stability of their fortunes and to carry out a peaceful life (5.1120-1122):

at claros homines voluerunt se atque potentes, 1120  
ut fundamento stabili fortuna maneret  
et placidam possent opulenti degere vitam.

In these rulers' goal of a peaceful life, an attempt to match the peaceful existence of the gods can already be detected, much as the line-ending phrase *degere vitam* recalls the successful Epicurean who will lead a life worthy of the gods (*dignam dis degere vitam*, 3.322).<sup>144</sup> The described outcome of these rulers' attempts invites comparison between these different figures. In a now familiar trope, Lucretius portrays the rulers as gigantic figures, who aimed at the highest position only to be struck down by the thunderbolt and removed to Tartarus (5.1123-1126):<sup>145</sup>

<sup>144</sup>Cf. Bailey 1963 *ad* 5.1122: “*placida vita* is the Epicurean life of ἀταραξία...”

<sup>145</sup>Fish 2011, 82-87, argues that Lucretius here presents an extreme view of the standard Epicurean position that otherwise allowed for the occasional possibility of safety in positions

nequiquam, quoniam ad summum succedere honorem  
certantes iter infestum fecere viai,  
et tamen e summo, quasi fulmen, deicit ictos  
invidia interdum contemptim in Tartara taetra...

1125

In presenting these men in the same gigantomachic terms as those elsewhere used of Epicurus and his school, Lucretius shows that the goal for all these figures—a godlike status—is identical. Yet whereas Epicurus (and thus his—and Lucretius’—students) were able to succeed at attaining this goal through their understanding of the true nature of things, these tyrants in their ignorance suffered the same failure as the giants.<sup>146</sup>

## Conclusion

Over the course of the *De Rerum Natura*, then, Lucretius builds on the tradition of student divinization already established by the Greek poets. This is influenced in part by the philosophical framework in which he is writing, but cannot be explained entirely by this framework; particularly in passages where he turns to Golden Age imagery, or draws comparisons between the wise man and the Homeric or Epicurean gods, Lucretius shows himself to be working in a poetic tradition as much as a philosophical one. Further, while his most esteemed exemplar of knowledge-based divinity is his master Epicurus, even this portrayal serves to reinforce the potential divinity of the student; above all, Epicurus is a god because he has allowed us all to be.

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of power, but this seems unlikely; for the Epicurean, a position that is only occasionally safe would still be a position full of mental turmoil, and so should be rejected for that reason.

<sup>146</sup>In this respect, these tyrants are similar to the pre-Socratics of book 1, who suffer a similar gigantomachic failure.

### Chapter 3: Vergil's *Georgics*

From the lofty philosophy of Epicurean physics, we move to the earthy rusticity of Vergil's *Georgics*. Despite the heavy debt it owes to the *De Rerum Natura*, Vergil's poem is in many respects a corrective to the earlier work. Whereas Lucretius had sought to dispel the fears of mankind by banishing the gods and commending a withdrawal from worldly concerns, Vergil reverses these efforts, producing a text that is deeply rooted in religious and political ideology. Ironically, as shall be seen, this provides a point of contact for the two poets. For Vergil, as for Lucretius, there is a close connection between the political life and the "life of the gods" of traditional religion. Yet whereas Lucretius sees in this connection an indication of the ultimate undesirability of both lifestyles, Vergil reasserts the primacy of the political life, even while moving it outside the reach of his student.

This two-pronged strategy utilized by Vergil, which asserts a divinizing strategy while denying its applicability to the majority of his readers, points to a larger discrepancy between the poet and his Epicurean predecessor, centered not on differences of ideology but in how ideology is even portrayed. For modern readers, Lucretius is an idealized version of the didactic poet, who fashions his text for the singular purpose of communicating a body of knowledge to his student; that is, Lucretius really "means" it when he articulates the elements



of Epicurean physics.<sup>147</sup> In large part, this is a view encouraged by the text itself; Lucretius rarely allows dissenting viewpoints inside his poem, and those that occur are invariably refuted. In this respect, the *De Rerum Natura* is a relatively straightforward text, and a reader questioned as to the poem's meaning would have little trouble answering with a quick synopsis of Epicurean thought.

Such is not the case with the *Georgics*. Indeed, the polyvalence of the text has become a commonplace of scholarship on the poem. Opinions as to even the most basic outlook of the work, traditionally evaluated in terms of relative “optimism” and “pessimism,” have run the gamut between these two poles, leading scholars to call the very terms of the debate into question and to examine instead the ways in which the poem itself encourages this multiplicity of readings.<sup>148</sup> This in turn has led to salubrious discussion of the “dialogic” nature of the text, and the ways in which divergent or even conflicting viewpoints are

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<sup>147</sup>See, e.g., Effe 1977, 77-78, who makes Lucretius the exemplar of his “sachbezogen” form of didactic, in which the surface message and the true meaning of the work are one: “Angesichts der strikten, funktionalen Ausrichtung der poetischen Mittel auf den zu lehrenden Gegenstand und der Identität von dargestelltem Stoff und Thema erweist sich das Lehrgedicht des Lukrez als Repräsentant des ‘sachbezogenen’ Typs. Indem Stoff und Thema als Objekt tatsächlicher und direkter Didaktik zusammenfallen, wird der kompliziert strukturierte, vielschichtige Komplex der hellenistischen Lehrdichtung eines Arat und Nikander durch eine von stärkstem persönlichen Engagement getragene, direkt appellierende, einschichtige Form abgelöst, die unmittelbar auf die Anfänge didaktischer Dichtung zurückzugreifen scheint.” Cf. Martindale 2005, 185: “One can readily imagine the indignation of Lucretius if he had been told that his arguments for the mortality of the soul were simply ‘pseudo-statements’. It seems obvious that he writes to persuade his reader to embrace his version of philosophical truth.”

<sup>148</sup>See, e.g., Ross 1987, 8, who, while taking a largely pessimistic view of the poem, compares Vergilian poetry to music, which “is expressive, but...can make no statements.” For a brief bibliography of recent approaches to the issue, see Kronenberg 2009, 13 n.54, who likewise argues for “the dialogic and polyphonic nature of Virgil’s text” (14). Nelis 2013 sees this oscillation as a result of the historical “periodization” of the work, encouraging a transition between pre- and post-Actium perspectives.

sustained over the course of the work.<sup>149</sup> Unlike the *De Rerum Natura*, there is no “authorized” way to make final sense of the *Georgics* as a whole; as Perkell argues, “the ambiguities that readers have always recognized are not problems to be solved, but rather may be perceived as the poem’s deepest meaning.”<sup>150</sup>

As such, it must be emphasized that any reading of the poem, including the one offered here, deals necessarily with contingencies, and will be most productive when examining the potential questions raised and answers afforded by various readings of the texts. Here too I am led by the poem itself, which encourages the possibility for divergent readings through its multiplicity of addressees. While Vergil first addresses his poetic subject matter to Maecenas (1.2), as he will do at the opening of each subsequent book (2.41, 3.41, 4.2), the poet’s patron seems unlikely to be the primary student of the poet’s instruction, as Memmius is portrayed to be in the *De Rerum Natura*. Even leaving to one side historical considerations as to the likeliness of Maecenas’ involvement in agricultural affairs, Vergil seems to emphasize his patron’s uninvolvement with the technical matters of his instruction by relegating mention of Maecenas to the less technical proems of his work.<sup>151</sup> Nor can the Caesar invoked in the proem be the poet’s primary pupil, despite the important arguments made for Octavian’s status as an indirect student of the poem, meant to receive

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<sup>149</sup>As Batstone 1997, 133-134 notes, this polyphony can be found in one of Vergil’s key source texts for the *Georgics*, Varro’s dialogic *Res Rusticae*. Van Noorden 2015, 51-65, sees this multiplicity of voices present already in Hesiod.

<sup>150</sup>Perkell 1989, 17.

<sup>151</sup>Cf. Schiesaro 1993, 134: “L’invocazione agli dei e poi a Cesare separa in modo netto la citazione iniziale di Mecenate dall’inizio della narrazione vera e propria. A differenza del *De rerum natura*, dove il *tu* del verso 50 si riferisce naturalmente a Memmio, nominato anche poco prima (al v. 42), le *Georgiche* danno avvio alla trattazione del primo argomento senza più traccia di un destinatario privilegiato.”

advice on the nature of rule;<sup>152</sup> called on to aid Vergil in his endeavor and take pity on those farmers “ignorant of the way” (1.40-42), Octavian would seem to have no need of further agricultural instruction. The ostensible students of the poem would seem then to be these farmers themselves, although they are never addressed as such over the course of the poem. Vergil’s reader is thus left with an array of potential addressees, an abundance of possible viewpoints—and a corresponding lack of definitive answers.<sup>153</sup>

In what follows, I focus my examination on the effects of Vergil’s didaxis on this last group in particular, while still keeping an eye open to the potential responses of other addressees. As such, I first examine the opening invocation and assumed deification of Octavian, attempting to uncover what the *princeps*’ divine status means both for him and for the agricultural student. From here, I turn to a more direct investigation of this student, looking at the potential rewards for knowledge as they are depicted in both the *makarismos* and rustic “Golden Age” that conclude book 2 and the devastation of the plague that ends book 3, and focusing particularly on the ways in which Vergil uses conflicting intertextual references to complicate this depiction. I conclude, as does the poem, with the fourth book’s tale of Aristaeus and Orpheus, wherein Vergil provides a potential exemplar for the successful student and suggests a correspondence between instruction and initiation.

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<sup>152</sup>On the political education of Octavian in the *Georgics*, see Hardie 2004 and esp. Nappa 2005.

<sup>153</sup>Cf. Schiesaro 1993, 135: “In realtà i destinatari delle *Georgiche* sono tutti questi—Cesare Mecenate gli *agricolae*—e non solo questi. Il testo si rivolge a un pubblico più vasto e meno definito, e la moltiplicazione interna dei riferimenti segnala la polivalenza intrinseca del messaggio georgico, ne garantisce un valore che trascende la specializzazione tecnica.”

## The Invocation to Octavian

While a certain correspondence with the praise poetry of the Hellenistic period can be detected in the opening invocation to Augustus, my discussion here will largely avoid this aspect.<sup>154</sup> Instead, I focus on those parts of the proem that diverge from this background, seeking to uncover the features of Augustus' divinization that are unique to Vergil's treatment here and his self-positioning within the didactic genre. A useful entry point for this purpose will be Vergil's dialogue in the *Georgics* with Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*. Lucretius' influence on the *Georgics* is well-established; though recent scholarship has located the strongest Lucretian influence in books 2 and 3,<sup>155</sup> reference to the earlier poet can be detected in the opening invocation of the *Georgics*.<sup>156</sup> This reference is most strongly felt through aspects of Vergil's diction that recall Lucretius' own opening invocation to Venus: in particular, the participial use of the verb *labi* with a form of *caelum* in relation to celestial movements (*lumina*, *labentem caelo quae ducitis annum*, *Geo.* 1.6; *caeli subter labentia signa*, *DRN* 1.2) and Vergil's reuse of the adjective *alma* to refer to an invoked goddess (*Liber et alma Ceres*, *Geo.* 1.7; *alma Venus*, *DRN* 1.2).<sup>157</sup> These allusions serve to introduce, and are reinforced by, another allusion made in Vergil's choice of the first two gods he names, Liber and Ceres, who are called upon specifically for their gifts to humanity, wine

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<sup>154</sup>For Vergil's use of Hellenistic praise poetry in the invocation and elsewhere in the *Georgics*, see esp. Cadili 2002, 17-91.

<sup>155</sup>See Farrell 1991, 188: "Despite an important Lucretian presence in Book 1, even a cursory glance shows clearly that the most obvious and extensive allusions to *De Rerum Natura* occur in *Georgics* 2 and 3."

<sup>156</sup>For a thoughtful and extended comparison of the proems of Vergil and Lucretius, see Gale 2000, 24-31.

<sup>157</sup>Cf. Nethercut 1973, 41.

and grain (*Geo.* 1.7-9). The same pair are discussed at the opening of Lucretius' fifth book, as the poet argues for Epicurus' divinity by demonstrating that his beneficence to humanity is greater than that of these gods, who provided for physical needs instead of spiritual needs (*DRN* 5.13-21).

As discussed in the previous chapter, much of Lucretius' argument in that passage is founded on Euhemeristic claims, and Vergil's allusion here may put us on the lookout for a similar argument in his proem. In a sense, this is exactly what we get, as the gods invoked are mentioned almost uniformly in conjunction with the discoveries by which they have benefitted humanity.<sup>158</sup> Indeed, Triptolemus is identified solely by his discovery of the curved plow (*Geo.* 1.19), while Aristaeus, described obliquely as a *cultor nemorum*, is said in some accounts to have been worshipped precisely because of his discoveries concerning bees (cf. Serv. Auct. *ad loc.*). Even the more "established" gods such as Minerva and Neptune are here presented predominantly as *protoi heuretai*—Minerva as the *inventrix oleae* (1.18-19), Neptune for his creation of the horse (1.12-14)—suggesting that they too are worshipped primarily for their benefits to humanity.<sup>159</sup> This approach to the gods of the invocation has strong implications for the deification of Augustus that forms the second half of the invocation, for it suggests that he too will be made a god primarily for his good works. This is already indicated in Vergil's enumeration of the possible roles Augustus may fulfil as a guarantor of crops (1.25-28) or protector of sailors (1.29-31), but the Euhemeristic element is perhaps most pronounced in the invocation's final request of Augustus to grant an easy

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<sup>158</sup>Though Wissowa 1917, 94, notes that this breaks down somewhat, particularly in the cases of Pan, Silvanus, the Fauns and Dryads, and (oddly) Aristaeus.

<sup>159</sup>Cf. Frentz 1967, 6; Nappa 2005, 27.

course and take pity on those farmers “ignorant of the way” (*da facilem cursum atque audacibus adnue coeptis, / ignarosque viae mecum miseratus agrestis...*, 1.40-41). In effect, Augustus is asked to perform the very feat that granted godhood to figures like Aristaeus and Triptolemus; it is in his fulfillment of his benefaction that he can become a god according to the parameters established by the proem.<sup>160</sup>

It is this nebulous state that is negotiated throughout the poem.<sup>161</sup> It may help to explain the futurity of Vergil’s statements in the beginning of book 3, where the poet claims that he *will* erect a temple for Augustus (*in medio mihi Caesar erit templumque tenebit*, 3.16). It can also explain the use of the iterative verb *adfectat* for Augustus’ move towards Olympus at the end of the poem; though in some ways Augustus has already assumed the role of a god, casting thunderbolts at the Euphrates and giving laws to subjected peoples (*Caesar dum magnus ad altum / fulminat Euphraten bello victorque volentis / per populos dat iura viamque adfectat Olympo*, 4.560-562), the final phrase *viamque adfectat Olympo* suggests the process of his deification is not yet complete—there is still some way to go before the *princeps* achieves Olympus.

This discussion of the end of book 4 can be taken further. Here the near-divine Augustus is contrasted with the poet Vergil, who concludes the poem by referring to his leisurely singing and quoting the first line of his earlier *Eclogues* (4.563-566):<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup>In this, one could even see a suggested double meaning to the futurity of Augustus’ deification. More than just a statement of the *princeps*’ current mortal status, it may also indicate that Octavian has not yet accomplished the works that will grant him godhood.

<sup>161</sup>Cf. Nelis 2013, 246, who argues that “[t]he poem as a whole is underpinned by this narrative of apotheosis...”

<sup>162</sup>For the connection between *Georgics* and *Eclogues* established by this self-reference, see esp. Cadili 2002, 26-34.

illo Vergilium me tempore dulcis alebat  
 Parthenope studiis florentem ignobilis oti,  
 carmina qui lusi pastorum audaxque iuventa,  
 Tityre, te patulae cecini sub tegmine fagi. 565

In so doing, Vergil recalls the context of the first *Eclogue* and Tityrus' own leisurely singing, granted by the beneficence of an unnamed *iuvenis* whom Tityrus will henceforth worship like a god (*O Meliboe, deus nobis haec otia fecit. / namque erit ille mihi semper deus...*, *Ecl.* 1.6-7).<sup>163</sup> It was already a common reading strategy in antiquity to see the characters of Vergil and Octavian latent in the first *Eclogue*, but even if one does not want to read such straightforward identifications into the poem, Vergil himself, through the reference made in the *Georgics*' sphragis, presents at least an equivalence between the relationship of Tityrus and the *iuvenis* on the one hand and himself and Octavian on the other.<sup>164</sup> Again, then, Octavian is portrayed as a god on account of his benefactions—more specifically, the actions that allow others a life of peace and leisure.<sup>165</sup> In this, then, Vergil constructs a ring structure referring back to the opening of the poem, and the similar criteria for Octavian's deification there.

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<sup>163</sup>The *Eclogues* passage in turn contains reference to Lucretius' deification of Epicurus (*dicendum est, deus ille fuit, deus, include Memmi, DRN 5.8*), further supporting the connection between Lucretius' Epicurus and Vergil's Octavian. Vergil would again refer to the Lucretian line in the fifth *Eclogue* while describing the apotheosis of the shepherd Daphnis (*ipsa sonant arbusta: 'deus, deus ille, Menalca,' Ecl. 5.64*).

<sup>164</sup>This equivalence is strengthened by Vergil's reference to Octavian as *iuvenis* at the close of the first *Georgic* (*hunc saltem everso iuvenem succurrere saeclo / ne prohibete, Geo. 1.500-501*).

<sup>165</sup>Though the portrayal of Octavian and Vergil at the close of the fourth book may be further complicated by its positioning immediately after the epyllion of Aristaeus and Orpheus, discussed in more detail below. In particular, one may wonder what it means that Octavian's victories allow for Vergil's Neapolitan idleness at the poem's close, while Aristaeus' actions lead to Orpheus' downfall, or that the poet Orpheus can, in his own way, limit or qualify Aristaeus' success.

Returning to Vergil's reuse of Lucretius in the proem of the *Georgics*, we may note that this focus on benefaction as the chief criterion for deification encourages an implicit comparison between Octavian and the Lucretian Epicurus. At the same time, Octavian's role as subject of the *Georgics*' opening invocation, as well as his role in providing the leisurely atmosphere required for Vergil's composition, instead portray the *princeps* as a figure equivalent to Lucretius' Venus, asked to provide the peace necessary for Lucretius' poetry and Memmius' instruction. Vergil thus unites the two guiding forces of the *De Rerum Natura* into the singular person of Octavian, presenting him as the ultimate source of inspiration for the work as a whole. Unlike Venus and Epicurus, however, Octavian has little connection to the content of the poem or its implied students, other than the pity he is asked to show to the farmers (1.41). That is, Octavian is not responsible for revealing the content of the poem, as Epicurus is, nor does he serve as an exemplar for the student to imitate, as do both Epicurus and Venus. Whereas the figures of Lucretius' poem provide a means by which the student may achieve a divine state, Vergil here offers no corresponding lesson; in the deification of Octavian, the reader is shown a path applicable to the *princeps* alone.

### **The Agricultural Life and the Golden Age**

While such instruction on the path to divinity may be useful for Octavian as he embarks on his post-Actium pursuits, this emphasis on deification through benefaction will be much less pertinent to those farmers that are the ostensible recipients of Vergil's agricultural instruction. To these students, Vergil offers a different paradigm—the “life like the gods” of the Golden Age, presented in the *laus ruris* (2.458-540) that concludes book 2. Reference to the Myth of the Ages has already occurred in the *Georgics*, in the so-called



“Aetiology of Labor” at 1.118-159. There Vergil had traced humanity’s change in condition, from a communistic Golden Age in which farming did not yet exist (1.125) and the earth provided in abundance (1.127), to the present Iron Age of Jupiter’s reign, in which humanity must toil for its existence and contend with scarcity (1.145-146). The aetiology effectively sets the stage for the remainder of the *Georgics*, providing an explanation for the necessity of Vergil’s agricultural knowledge in much the same way as the Myth of the Ages does for Hesiod’s instruction. As a result, the *laus ruris* of book 2 provides something of a shock, as Vergil depicts a modern agricultural existence composed from a mosaic of Golden Age tropes. Here strife is absent (*procul discordibus armis*, 2.459) while the earth pours out its bounty with ease (*fundit humo facilem victum iustissima tellus*, 460; cf. *ipsa volentia rura / sponte tulere sua*, 500-501). There is no need for gold or bronze (*nec varios inhiant pulchra testudine postis / inlusasque auro vestis Ephyreiaque aera*, 463-464) nor is wool stained with dye (*alba neque Assyrio fucatur lana veneno*, 465).<sup>166</sup> The presence of wild animals and the hardiness of the youth (*illic saltus ac lustra ferarum / et patiens operum exiguoque adsueta iuventus*, 471-472), while seemingly incongruous with the traditional depictions of the “soft” Golden Age discussed elsewhere, do recall the “hard” Golden Age depicted by poets such as Lucretius (*DRN* 5.925-987).<sup>167</sup> At the end of the passage, Vergil makes the comparison explicit, informing the reader that “this was the life golden Saturn lived on earth” (*aureus*

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<sup>166</sup>Compare the wool of the renewed Golden Age in *Eclogue* 4.42 (*nec varios discet mentiri lana colores*), where dye is absent, however, due partly to the self-dying nature of the sheep (43-45)(!).

<sup>167</sup>Ovid would later rephrase 2.472 in his description of the hardy humans created by Deucalion: *inde genus durum sumus experiensque laborum*, *Met.* 1.414).

*hanc vitam in terris Saturnus agebat*, 2.538).<sup>168</sup> Despite the historicizing nature of these references, however, Vergil quickly reiterates that this is in fact a contemporaneous life, taking place in the Iron Age; adapting a feature from Aratus' Myth of the Ages (*Ph.* 100-136) discussed in chapter 1, Vergil informs us that Justice has departed from here as from everywhere else (*extrema per illos / Iustitia excedens terris vestigia fecit*, *Geo.* 2.473-474), though her lingering presence in the country prior to her departure suggests the way in which the farmer's life straddles the distance between golden and iron worlds.

This intermediary nature of contemporary country life is crucial to Vergil's depiction here, and may be fruitfully compared with the strategies taken by our Greek models in presenting a possible "life like the gods" to their students. Drawing on a theme common among Roman agricultural writers, Vergil in this passage emphasizes the Golden Age conditions of the country through contrast with the decadence and decay of city life.<sup>169</sup> In this contrast of two contemporary states, I would argue one may be reminded also of the contrast between Just and Unjust Cities in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, where the moral virtue of the preferred state is again set against the disastrous excesses of its counterpart. Indeed, Vergil uses many of the same tropes as Hesiod. Both poets emphasize the abundance afforded to their preferred state; in the Just City the land provides abundant livelihood (τοῖσι φέρει μὲν γαῖα πολὺν βίον, *WD* 232) as does the farmer's countryside in the *Georgics* (*Geo.*

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<sup>168</sup>The transferred epithet plays on Saturn's rule during the Golden Age.

<sup>169</sup>Nearest to Vergil's own time, Varro makes the comparison in the opening of the third book of his *Res Rusticae*, a passage which certainly influenced Vergil's own work. For Varro's direct comparison of the rural life to the Golden Age, see, e.g., *RR* 3.1.5: *nec sine causa terram eandem appellabant matrem et Cererem, et qui eam colerent, piam et utilem agere vitam credebant atque eos solos reliquos esse ex stirpe Saturni regis*. For this contrast in the related genre of satire, see Braund 1989.

2.460; 500-501; 516-522). In both poems, particular stress is placed on the divergent social conditions of the two societies compared. Thus, just as the citizens of the Just City live in peace, spared from war by Zeus (*WD* 228-229), so too is the farmer exempt from political and martial strife (*Geo.* 2.495-498; cf. 459), while the Unjust City and Vergil's city are wracked by violence and war (*WD* 245-246; *Geo.* 2.495-498; 503-504; 510-511). The domestic conditions of the Just City and country life are no less secure, as the chastity of the household is assured (τίκτουσιν δὲ γυναῖκες ἑοικότα τέκνα γονεῦσιν, *WD* 235; *casta pudicitiam servat domus*, *Geo.* 2.524). In an earlier chapter, I have discussed the rhetorical role played by Hesiod's depiction of the Just City in his instruction. Vergil's idyllic representation of the countryside performs much the same purpose. Following in the tradition of Hesiod and Aratus by presenting the subject of his instruction as the basis for a quasi-Golden Age existence, the poet implies that his didaxis will grant his students a life like the gods.

This implication is strengthened by further intertextual associations in Vergil's comparison of the farmer's life to that of the philosopher in the famed *makarismos* of 2.490-494:<sup>170</sup>

felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas	490
atque metus omnis et inexorabile fatum	
subiecit pedibus strepitumque Acherontis avari:	
fortunatus et ille deos qui novit agrestis	
Panaque Silvanumque senem Nymphasque sorores.	

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<sup>170</sup>Cf. Fenik 1962, 75-77, who sees in the *laus ruris* intertextual engagement with the proem of *DRN* book 2, where Lucretius contrasts the philosophical life with that of the "man of action" (and, as discussed in the previous chapter, implies that the philosophical life is akin to that of the gods).

Here and in the passage leading up to it (2.475-489), Vergil seems to contrast two distinct forms of poetry—the philosophical didactic of poets such as Lucretius and Empedocles, and his own agricultural, even bucolic, didactic.<sup>171</sup> Certainly the subject matter of the two forms is contrasted, as is the outlook of their respective students; while the *felix* of 2.490-492 is described in terms chosen to recall Lucretius’ Epicurus, who trampled *religio* underfoot (*religio pedibus subiecta*, *DRN* 1.78; cf. *subiecit pedibus*, *Geo.* 2.492), the *fortunatus* is identified by his knowledge of the traditional gods. Even the poet’s esteem for the two (sub-) genres is shown to differ. Utilizing a form of *recusatio*, Vergil first expresses his desire to sing of natural philosophy (2.475-482) and takes the rural life as his subject only when the “cold blood about his heart” (484) prevents him from loftier song (2.483-489). Yet even with these contrasts concerning the *type* of knowledge offered by Vergil and his philosophical predecessors, I would argue the *makarismos* ultimately stresses the similarity in the *results* of this knowledge.<sup>172</sup> Vergil immediately follows the *makarismos* with an extended description of the ills from which the *fortunatus* is free (2.495-512):<sup>173</sup>

illum non populi fascēs, non purpura regum	495
flexit et infidos agitans discordia fratres,	
aut coniurato descendens Dacus ab Histro,	
non res Romanae perituraque regna; neque ille	
aut doluit miserans inopem aut invidit habenti.	

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<sup>171</sup>*Pace* Mynors 1990 *ad* 2.494, who sees in the *fortunatus* a reference to bucolic *as opposed to* didactic poetry. Clay 1976, 238-240, however, sees the *makarismos* as a distinction not between types of poetry at all, but between philosophy and poetry.

<sup>172</sup>On the conflation of *felix* and *fortunatus*, cf. Schiesaro 1997, 85; Morgan 1999, 147-148; Nappa 2005, 106; Kronenberg 2009, 139-142. *Contra* Gale 2000, 8-11, who sees the conflict between these two figures as “a dilemma which lies at the heart of the poem in both a literal and a figurative sense” (11).

<sup>173</sup>I identify the *fortunatus* here with the farmer, as does, e.g., Volk 2002, 142-144, but this is not always how the passage is read; see Clay 1976, 241, who does, however, see a similarity between the life of the *fortunatus* and the *felix*.

quos rami fructus, quos ipsa volentia rura	500
sponte tulere sua, carpsit, nec ferrea iura	
insanumque forum aut populi tabularia vidit.	
sollicitant alii remis freta caeca, ruuntque	
in ferrum, penetrant aulas et limina regum;	
hic petit excidiis urbem miserosque penatis,	505
ut gemma bibat et Sarrano dormiat ostro;	
condit opes alius defossoque incubat auro;	
hic stupet attonitus rostris, hunc plausus hiantem	
per cuneos geminatus enim plebisque patrumque	
corripuit; gaudent perfusi sanguine fratrum,	510
exsilioque domos et dulcia limina mutant	
atque alio patriam quaerunt sub sole iacentem.	

The life avoided by Vergil's *fortunatus* is portrayed in a manner reminiscent of the opening of *DRN* book 3 (3.31-93), wherein Lucretius describes the lengths to which the fear of death drives men.<sup>174</sup> Vergil's non-*fortunatus* is defined by two primary characteristics, his desire for political involvement (*Geo.* 2.495-499; 508-510) and his greed (2.503-507); these same characteristics are, for Lucretius, the result of the fear of death (*denique avarities et honorum caeca cupido...non minimam partem mortis formidine aluntur*, *DRN* 3.59, 64). For both poets, these passions ultimately lead to treason (*hic petit excidiis urbem miserosque penatis*, *Geo.* 2.505; *nam iam saepe homines patriam carosque parentis / prodiderunt*, *DRN* 3.85-86), exile (*exsilioque domos et dulcia limina mutant / atque alio patriam quaerunt sub sole iacentem*, *Geo.* 2.511-512; *extorres idem patria longeque fugati / conspectu ex hominum, foedati crimine turpi*, *DRN* 3.49-50), and fratricide (*gaudent perfusi sanguine fratrum*, *Geo.* 2.510; *crudeles gaudent in tristi funere fratris*, *DRN* 3.72).

As Lucretius' depiction here is based on a characterization of the fear of death, one might expect that Vergil would use this passage in a discussion of his Lucretian *felix*, whose

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<sup>174</sup>Cf. Fenik 1962, 77.

victory over the fear of death does indeed hint at the Lucretian discussion (compare *metus omnis...strepitumque Acherontis*, *Geo.* 2.491-492 and *metus ille...Acheruntis*, *DRN* 3.37). By recalling the passage instead in his extended portrayal of the *fortunatus*, Vergil effectively unites the two figures of his *makarismos*, portraying both the religion-spurning *felix* and the pious *fortunatus* as attaining the accomplishments of the Lucretian student and his philosophical version of the “life like the gods.”

This conflation is continued in Vergil’s depiction of the rural life of the *fortunatus* farmer (*Geo.* 2.513-531):

agricola incurvo terram dimovit aratro:	
<u>hic</u> anni labor, <u>hinc</u> patriam parvosque nepotes	
sustinet, <u>hinc</u> armenta boum meritosque iuencos.	515
nec requies, quin aut pomis exuberet annus	
aut fetu pecorum aut Cerealis mergite culmi,	
proventuque oneret sulcos atque horrea vincat.	
venit hiems: teritur Sicyonia baca trapetis,	
glande sues laeti redeunt, dant arbuta silvae;	520
et varios ponit fetus autumnus, et alte	
mitis in apricis coquitur vindemia saxis.	
interea dulces pendent circum oscula nati,	
casta pudicitiam servat domus, ubera vaccae	
lactea demittunt, pinguesque in gramine laeto	525
inter se adversis luctantur cornibus haedi.	
ipse dies agitat festos fususque per herbam,	
ignis ubi in medio et socii cratera coronant,	
te libans, Lenaee, vocat pecorisque magistris	
velocis iaculi certamina ponit in ulmo,	530
corporaque agresti nudant praedura palaestra...	

I have already cited portions of these lines, with their focus on agricultural abundance and domestic harmony, in discussing Vergil’s allusions to the imagery of the Golden Age and Hesiod’s Just City. These lines contain further references to the Epicurean good life as

portrayed by Lucretius.<sup>175</sup> A Lucretian context will have already been suggested to the reader by the depiction of the *felix* and the negative portrayal of city life. This context is reinforced by the opening anaphora of *hic* and *hinc* in lines 514-515, which recalls a similar anaphora in the spring-like *hieros gamos* of *DRN* 1.250-261, itself a Lucretian rewriting of the Golden Age motif.<sup>176</sup>

Postremo pereunt imbres, ubi eos pater aether	250
in gremium matris terrai praecipitavit;	
at nitidae surgunt fruges ramique virescunt	
arboribus, crescunt ipsae fetuque gravantur;	
<u>hinc</u> alitur porro nostrum genus atque ferarum;	
<u>hinc</u> laetas urbes pueris florere videmus	255
frondiferasque novis avibus canere undique silvas;	
<u>hinc</u> fessae pecudes pingui per pabula laeta	
corpora deponunt, et candens lacteus umor	
uberibus manat distentis; <u>hinc</u> nova proles	
artubus infirmis teneras lasciva per herbas	260
ludit lacte mero mentes perculsa novellas.	

As in our Vergilian passage, there is a focus here on agricultural and familial abundance (*hinc laetas urbes pueris...hinc fessae pecudes*, *DRN* 1.255-257; *hinc patriam parvosque nepotes / sustinet, hinc armenta boum meritosque iuvenco*s, *Geo.* 2.514-515), while fertility is further pronounced in the repeated imagery of mothers' milk (*DRN* 1.258-261; *Geo.* 2.524-525).

The Lucretian referent is altered somewhat with Vergil's depiction of goats competing with one another *in gramine laeto* (2.525). Here Vergil's use of the adjective *laetus* recalls the term's repeated use in Lucretius' *pabula laeta* and the idyllic associations

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<sup>175</sup>For more connections between the *laus ruris* here and portions of Lucretius' *DRN*, including bk. 2, see Thomas 2007, 97-98.

<sup>176</sup>On the use of "allusive anaphora" in Latin poetry, see Wills 1996, 354-362.

of life under Venus, while the full phrase *in gramine laeto* echoes the *in gramine molli* (*DRN* 5.1392; 2.29) used by Lucretius in his depiction of the quasi-Golden Age “picnics” enjoyed by early humanity and his Epicurean students (*DRN* 5.1390-1404; 2.29-33). This echo is followed by Vergil’s own depiction of such gatherings, where his farmers spread out on the grass and engage in festival competitions (*Geo.* 2.527-531). Assimilating his farmer to the picnickers of Lucretius, Vergil further likens his didaxis to Lucretius’, and presents the farming life as Lucretius’ “life like the gods.”

This presentation of the rustic life as a Golden Age or god-like is not simple or univocal, however. Much has been made of Vergil’s “lies” in sections such as the *laus ruris*, wherein the poet’s excessively positive portrayal is at odds with his presentation elsewhere in the poem.<sup>177</sup> This sort of intratextual contradiction has been well-covered, and I limit my discussion of the trend here. Instead, I prefer to look at some examples of “intertextual contradiction,” where the poet’s relationship with other texts serves to undercut the ostensible purpose of his text. This may be detected, for example, in Vergil’s description of the farmer’s domestic life at *Geo.* 2.523: *interea dulces pendent circum oscula nati*. The line is based on a line of Lucretius’ (...*nec dulces occurrent oscula nati*, *DRN* 3.895), and it would at first seem tempting to see this Vergilian borrowing as another instance of comparison between his and Lucretius’ students. The context of the Lucretian original would indicate otherwise, however, as the line occurs in a passage (*DRN* 3.894-899) representing not the state of the Epicurean student, but the worries of a non-Epicurean frightened of death and foreseeing the loss of his family. Lucretius’ response to this claim, of course, is that the dead have no desire for such things (*nec tibi earum / iam desiderium rerum super insidet una*,

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<sup>177</sup>See esp. Ross 1987, 109-128 and Thomas 1988 *ad* 2.458-540.



*DRN* 3.900-901). Thus in the same extended passage, Vergil establishes comparison between his *fortunatus* and both the Lucretian *felix* that has overcome the fear of death and a Lucretian exemplar of that same fear, undercutting his presentation of the successful georgic student.

This dissonance between Vergil's portrayal and its Lucretian comparanda may be detected further in the contrast between the countryside gathering of the *Georgics* and its model. Indeed, Vergil immediately indicates the non-Lucretian nature of his gathering by situating it in the context of a Bacchic festival (*Geo.* 2.527-529). Thus, while Lucretius' shepherds crown themselves with floral garlands (*tum caput atque umeros plexis redimire coronis*, *DRN.* 5.1399), Vergil's farmers crown their wine vessels (*socii cratera coronant*, *Geo.* 2.528), which may lead a mindful reader to recall the wine-filled gatherings described immediately prior to the *laus ruris* (*Geo.* 2.455-457).<sup>178</sup>

Bacchus et ad culpam causas dedit; ille furentis  
Centauros leto domuit, Rhoecumque Pholumque  
et magno Hylaeum Lapithis cratera minantem.

The potential for violence indicated by the Bacchic context is in turn reinforced by the competitive activities in which the farmers engage. Lucretius' focus in the proto-Epicurean "picnic" of *DRN* 5.1390-1404 is on the role of music in the life of early man and its pacifying effects; as such, the harmonious social interaction of the community is emphasized (*tum ioca, tum sermo, tum dulces esse cachinni / consuerant; agrestis enim tum musa vigebat*, *DRN* 5.1397-1398). In contrast, Vergil's farmers involve themselves solely in antagonistic sporting activities (*velocis iaculi certamina ponit in ulmo, / corporaque agresti nudant*

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<sup>178</sup>Smith 2007, 74, claims that Vergil "restores the wine bowl's reputation by the fact that it is here used appropriately," but this seems an especially optimistic reading, especially given the other hints of strife in the passage.

*praedura palaestra*, *Geo.* 2.529-530).<sup>179</sup> Again, the poet shows potential contradictions between the farmer-student and the tranquil Epicurean student (or even his own earlier portrayal of the peaceful farmer!).<sup>180</sup>

This potential for discord is fully realized in the subsequent comparison of this life to that of the early Romans (2.532-540):<sup>181</sup>

hanc olim veteres vitam coluere Sabini,  
hanc Remus et frater; sic fortis Etruria crevit  
scilicet et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma,  
septemque una sibi muro circumdedit arces. 535  
ante etiam sceptrum Dictaei regis et ante  
impia quam caesis gens est epulata iuvenis,  
aureus hanc vitam in terris Saturnus agebat;  
necdum etiam audierant inflari classica, necdum  
impositos duris crepitare incudibus ensis. 540

Critics have long noted the suppressed allusion to Romulus' act of founding fratricide (and the civil wars it foreboded) in Vergil's reference to *Remus et frater* here.<sup>182</sup> One could also

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<sup>179</sup>Even their animals aggressively contest with one another: *pingues in gramine laeto / inter se adversis luctantur cornibus haedi*, *Geo.* 2.525-526. One could, of course, read this as the "good Strife" of Hesiod, which drives individuals to competition, but there would then still be contradictions between the Vergilian farmer, who elsewhere does not envy his successful neighbor (*neque...invidit habenti*, 2.498-499) and the Hesiodic individual who heeds good Strife (cf. ζῆλοι δὲ τε γείτονα γείτων / εἰς ἄφρονος σπεύδοντ'· ἀγαθὴ δ' Ἔρις ἥδε βροτοῖσιν, *Hes. WD* 23-24).

<sup>180</sup>We may also note a case of atemporal intertextuality here. Vergil would later reuse the phrase *fususque per herbam*, here used of the festive farmer, at *Aeneid* 9.164, *fusique per herbam*, where the phrase is again used of rustics drinking wine in a field, but in an explicitly belligerent context—the Rutulian siege of the Trojan camp.

<sup>181</sup>In the development here from athletic competition to civil war, one could see a suggestion of the two Strifes of Hesiod's *Works and Days*. Yet whereas in that poem the two are completely distinct, Vergil here elides the two.

<sup>182</sup>See, e.g., Ross 1987, 127: "Remus and his unnamed brother must suggest the ultimate fratricide attending Rome's foundation: there was no escaping the association when, as Suetonius reports, the honorific *Romulus* was suggested in 27 B.C. for Octavian (*Augustus*

see a reference to the foreign wars on which Rome was founded in the juxtaposition of Roman growth (*rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma*, 2.534) with the peoples she conquered and assimilated (*Sabini*, 532; *fortis Etruria*, 533); the reference is reinforced by mention of Rome's defensive fortifications (*septemque una sibi muro circumdedit arces*, 535). As with the discrepancies between the portrayal of the Vergilian student and Lucretius' philosophical student, these reminders of Rome's violent history serve to problematize the success of Vergil's student. Previously, the reader had been told that the *fortunatus* farmer's life was free from such strife (2.495-498):

illum non populi fascēs, non purpura regum  
flexit et infidos agitans discordia fratres,  
aut coniurato descendens Dacus ab Histro,  
non res Romanae perituraque regna...

If it is now found that the Roman "Golden Age" was already filled with this violent discord, is there any actual distinction between this idealized past and the present day? Is the farmer's life really any different than that of the city-dweller?

This blurring of boundaries continues in Vergil's claim that "this was the life golden Saturn lived, before the rule of the Dictaeon king, before an impious race feasted on slaughtered cattle" (536-538). For of course Vergil has already told us in his first book that no farming, idyllic or otherwise, took place before the rule of Jupiter, "the Dictaeon king" (*ante Iovem nulli subigebant arva coloni*, 1.125). Thus the very life that the poet attributes in book 2 to the Golden Age could exist only after the foundation of Jupiter's Iron Age rule.<sup>183</sup> Similarly, we may note the contradiction inherent in the farmer's similarity to those

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was the far safer alternative), and no mention of the twins in Augustan verse is without suggestion of civil war."

<sup>183</sup>Cf. Ross 1987, 127-128.

individuals who lived “before an impious race fed on slaughtered cattle,” as the farmer of Vergil’s poem is throughout encouraged to acts of piety of which animal sacrifice is a central part. Thus the poet speaks of the “happy victim” (*felix...hostia*, *Geo.* 1.345) involved in the rites to Ceres in book 1, the cooking of goat meat in the Bacchic festival of book 2 (*et ductus cornu stabit sacer hircus ad aram / pinguique in veribus torrebimus exta columnis*, 2.396-7), his own sacrifice in Octavian’s honor at the opening of book 3 (*iam nunc sollemnis ducere pompas / ad delubra iuvat caesosque videre iuencos*, 3.22-3), and the farmer Aristaeus’ propitiatory sacrifices at the finale of book 4 (4.534-553).<sup>184</sup> In such a context, the comparison of the farmer to such a lifestyle would seem doubly inappropriate, both in connecting the farmer to a period devoid of sacrifice and in characterizing such activity as impious.

In examining the finale of book 2, then, I would propose two major conclusions. First, Vergil makes use of his predecessors’ depictions of successful students to characterize his own successful student, adapting the “lives of the gods” afforded by Golden Age imagery and Epicurean *ataraxia* to his own ends and so utilizing a rhetorical strategy shown to be a generic feature of didactic poetry. Indeed, the nature of this characterization as a rhetorical commonplace is emphasized by Vergil’s failure to match form and content here. Whereas

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<sup>184</sup>The question of whether the feasting that concludes book 2 and Aristaeus’ propitiatory acts can properly be termed “sacrifice” have been the subject of debate; see Habinek 1990 and Thomas 1991. Dyson 1996, 279, is perhaps correct in arguing that Vergil “leaves the words indeterminate, allowing them to be colored by their context here and elsewhere in the poem,” but also notes that Vergil’s phrase for the slaughtered cattle here, *caesi iuenci*, is used by the poet to refer to sacrifice in almost all other instances. Indeed, this is the case at the opening to the next book of the poem, where Vergil claims he will sacrifice cattle to Octavian (*iam nunc sollemnis ducere pompas / ad delubra iuvat caesosque videre iuencos*, 3.22-23). Dyson further notes the only other use of the phrase in the poem is in reference to the bougonia at 4.284.

Hesiod's precepts on justice directly support the morality necessary for life in the Just City, and Lucretius' lessons on Epicurean physics allow for the freedom from fear that grants tranquillity, there is no such straightforward connection between Vergil's agricultural precepts and the life portrayed at the book's close. The farmer's absence from the strife of city life is presented as the ultimate guarantor of his blessed state, but this is nowhere taught by the poet.<sup>185</sup> This divide between form and content, along with the "intertextual contradictions" discussed above, leads to a second conclusion: Vergil ultimately problematizes the ability of his student to reach a "godlike" state, thus suggesting the potential for didactic failure.

### **The Golden Age Inverted**

The potential failure of Vergil's didactic project is raised anew in the depiction of the plague that ends book 3 (3.478-566). As at the close of book 2, one may detect a return to some "Golden Age" conditions, but here the portrayal is one of grim irony. Thus the wolf, sent by Jupiter to ravage flocks at the onset of the Iron Age (1.130), finally ceases from its plunder as it is overcome by disease (*non lupus insidias explorat ovilia circum / nec gregibus nocturnus obambulat: acrior illum / cura domat*, 3.537-539).<sup>186</sup> The venomous snake, another product of the Iron Age (1.129) and absent from the idealized Italian countryside of

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<sup>185</sup>See Perkell 1989, 43-44, who contrasts the farmer here with the Epicurean, as the farmer's "happiness" is brought about by ignorance instead of any actual knowledge. Cf. Thomas 2007, 72, who claims that "[t]he poem is full of meaning, but devoid of didactic functionality."

<sup>186</sup>In addition to the "godlike" conditions of the Golden Age, the abeyance of wolves occurs as well in the divinization of Daphnis in the fifth *Eclogue*: (*nec lupus insidias pecori, nec retia cervis / ulla dolum meditantur: amat bonus otia Daphnis*, *Ecl.* 5.60-61).

book 2 (2.154-155), meets a similar end, dying just as it will in the Golden Age of Vergil's fourth *Eclogue* (*interit et curvis frustra defensa latebris / vipera et attoniti squamis astantibus hydri*, 3.544-545; *occidet et serpens*, *Ecl.* 4.24). Violence towards animals ceases as well; the Iron Age *ars* of hunting (*Geo.* 1.139-140) is now absent, as prey animals wander among the houses and dogs of their former hunters (3.539-540), while fishing is rendered irrelevant by the abundance of (dead) marine animals that wash up on the shore (3.541-543).<sup>187</sup> Indeed, the division between human and animal, already blurred over the course of the third book, is completely elided as people in the absence of livestock work the earth with their own bodies, eventually using their hands to break the soil and hitching themselves to ploughshares (3.534-536):<sup>188</sup>

ergo aegre rastris terram rimantur, et ipsis  
 unguibus infodiunt fruges, montisque per altos  
 contenta cervice trahunt stridentia plastra.

As human civilization is overcome by the plague, all the advances made through the advent of the Iron Age disappear. *Artes*, the Iron Age's defining feature (1.145), no longer serve their purpose, instead doing harm, and the figures of rationality Chiron and Melampus withdraw, replaced by the frenzied forces of Hades (3.549-553):

quaesitaeque nocent artes; cessere magistri,  
 Philyrides Chiron Amythaoniusque Melampus.  
 saevit et in lucem Stygiis emissa tenebris  
 pallida Tisiphone Morbos agit ante Metumque...

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<sup>187</sup>The detail is out of place, as Noricum is landlocked. By including these lines, Vergil universalizes the extent of the disease and further emphasizes the divergence from traditional "Iron Age" life.

<sup>188</sup>In this animalistic portrayal of humanity, one may see a suggestion of the "hard" Golden Age described by Lucretius, as compared to the "soft" version otherwise described by Vergil.

In such scenes Vergil inverts the values normally associated with the Golden Age, and suggests the potential dangers inherent in such an existence.

Not only does the poet show in this passage the folly of longing for a “Golden Age” existence, but also the inadequacy of those lives earlier lauded at the conclusion to book 2. Throughout the plague scene, the farmer’s inability to counter the disease in any meaningful way is shown. A first attempt is made through religious ritual (3.486-493). This is exactly in keeping with the poet’s instruction up to this point; the student is told in the first book to “honor the gods foremost” (*in primis venerare deos*, 1.338) as a way to deal with another destructive force, storms. Despite the worshippers’ frequent attempts (*saepe*, 3.486), however, the instruction is of no use, as the victims die of illness before they can be sacrificed, or provide entrails unsuitable for offering. The subsequent list of recognizable plague symptoms in horses (3.498-508) emphasizes the failure of didaxis by providing a parody of the poet’s earlier instruction. Presented as a list of features to examine, the passage recalls the earlier catalogue of features observable in well-bred horses (3.75-88). Yet unlike the earlier passage, this list of symptoms is ultimately unhelpful for the farmer, informing him only that his once-valuable horses (*victor equus*, 3.499) are going to die.

Any attempts to acquire knowledge of the disease are shown to be fruitless. At one point, the poet appears to offer hope of a cure, informing the reader that the administration of wine seemed to aid the afflicted horses (*profuit inserto latices infundere cornu / Lenaeos; ea visa salus morientibus una*, 3.509-510). This immediately proves fruitless, as the cure leads to a more violent end (3.511-514):

mox erat hoc ipsum exitio, furiisque relecti  
ardebant, ipsique suos iam morte sub aegra  
(di meliora piis, erroremque hostibus illum!)  
discissos nudis laniabant dentibus artus.

Ultimately even the knowledge and *artes* acquired by the mythical teachers Chiron and Melampus are shown to fail (*quaesitaeque nocent artes; cessere magistri, / Phillyrides Chiron Amythaoniusque Melampus*, 3.549-550).

The inability of the poet's agricultural knowledge in the face of the plague is most emphatically displayed in the death of the plow-ox at 3.515-530. Here Vergil describes a plow-ox dying in the very act of agricultural toil (*ecce autem duro fumans sub vomere taurus / concidit*, 3.515-516), forcing the farmer to abandon his own work (*it tristis arator...atque opere in medio defixa reliquit aratra*, 3.517, 519). The shade, fields, and streams of the idyllic rustic landscape, presented as an essential feature of the farmer's blessed existence at the close to book 2 (2.467-471), lose their grandeur, unable to provide relief to the dying animal (3.520-522):

non umbrae aliorum nemorum, non mollia possunt                    520  
prata movere animum, non qui per saxa volutus  
purior electro campum petit amnis...

Ultimately, the validity of the very qualities that characterize the farmer (and the poet's instruction) is called into question, as the poet asks what good are *labor*, good works,<sup>189</sup> or plowing in such a situation (*quid labor aut benefacta iuvant? quid vomere terras / invertisse gravis?*, 3.525-526).

This is not only a failure of agricultural knowledge, however. As in book 2, Vergil here closely associates the farmer's lifestyle with that of the philosopher, presenting the plow-ox's simple existence in terms reminiscent of Epicurean moderation (3.526-530):<sup>190</sup>

...atqui non Massica Bacchi

<sup>189</sup>We may note that the derogation of *benefacta* here serves to undermine not only the achievements of the farmer, but those of Augustus as well.

<sup>190</sup>See especially the contrast between necessary and unnecessary pleasures at *DRN* 2.16-36.



munera, non illis epulae nocuere repostae:  
frondibus et victu pascuntur simplicis herbae,  
pocula sunt fontes liquidi atque exercita cursu  
flumina, nec somnos abrumpit cura salubris.

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Yet whereas the comparison between farmer and philosopher in book 2 served to denote the success of the agricultural life and its possible similitude to the Epicurean “life like the gods,” here the comparison marks the failure of both forms of knowledge; neither the toil of the farmer nor the abstinence of the philosopher can save the plow-ox from death by disease.

The reader is left, then, with the “dialogic” argument seen throughout the poem, wherein contradictory passages can be used to show the ambivalence of the poet’s world and gods. Certainly, a reader could recognize these oppositions and come to the conclusion that those positive depictions of agricultural life and the Golden Age are “lies,” shown as such by the pessimistic portions of the poem. A return to Vergil’s Hesiodic model may provide a more nuanced reading, however. Just as in the *Works and Days* the student’s efforts are not the sufficient cause of the Just City, but require as well the right action of the entire community and the will of the gods, so too is the success of the Vergilian student shown to be contingent;<sup>191</sup> in the presence of a Tisiphone, human knowledge alone is not enough (3.549-553). Thus Vergil tempers Lucretius’ optimism in the power of reason with an understanding of Hesiodic contingency, and shows the limits of human agency in achieving a “life like the gods.”

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<sup>191</sup>For this contingency to the successful use of knowledge elsewhere in the poem, see Schiesaro 1997, 68-80.

## The Education of Aristaeus

One final example of the interconnection between knowledge and divinity can be detected in the story of Aristaeus that concludes the poem as a whole. Already invoked as a god in the poem's opening through Vergil's periphrastic reference to the farmer from Cea (1.14-15) and so listed among other *protoi heuretai*, Aristaeus is again introduced in book 4 by his status as a benefactor, to which his divinity is explicitly linked as Vergil asks what god introduced the knowledge of bougonia (*quis deus hanc, Musae, quis nobis extudit artem?*, 4.315). Taken this way, Aristaeus may be seen as an exemplum of the benefactor god that Octavian is encouraged to become, both in the opening invocation and at the poem's end. As such, his godhood would seem to be independent of the poet's knowledge, and in some ways prior to it; just as the poet relies on Octavian to provide the conditions necessary for his composition (cf. 1.40-42, 4.559-566), so too does he rely on Aristaeus' discovery for the ultimate knowledge of bougonia.

Yet Vergil is quick to complicate this simple understanding of Aristaeus' divinity with his initial description (4.317-332):<sup>192</sup>

pastor Aristaeus fugiens Peneia Tempe,  
amissis, ut fama, apibus morboque fameque,  
tristis ad extremi sacrum caput astitit amnis  
multa querens, atque hac adfatus voce parentem: 320  
“mater, Cyrene mater, quae gurgitis huius  
ima tenes, quid me praeclara stirpe deorum  
(si modo, quem perhibes, pater est Thymbraeus Apollo)  
invisum fatis genuisti? aut quo tibi nostri  
pulsus amor? quid me caelum sperare iubebas? 325  
en etiam hunc ipsum vitae mortalis honorem,  
quem mihi vix frugum et pecudum custodia sollers

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<sup>192</sup>This complication may occur even sooner, as Vergil's second question to the Muses (*unde nova ingressus hominum experientia cepit?*, 4.316) points to a gradual discovery resulting from human ingenuity rather than the sudden revelation of a divine benefactor.

omnia temptanti extuderat, te matre relinquo.  
 quin age et ipsa manu felicis erue silvas,  
 fer stabulis inimicum ignem atque interlice messis, 330  
 ure sata et validam in vitis molire bipennem,  
 tanta meae si te ceperunt taedia laudis.”

Here Aristaeus is very much concerned with the question of his own divinity. Having lost his bees to disease and malnutrition (4.318), the farmer expresses doubt at his potential deification (*quid me caelum sperare iubebas?*, 4.325) and even at Cyrene’s claims regarding his divine parentage (4.322-324). Now, Aristaeus believes, he has lost even the honors befitting mortals (4.326).<sup>193</sup> For Aristaeus, then, the reclamation of his bees is the prerequisite for his reclaimed divinity; having lost his hive, previously described as immortal by the poet (*at genus immortale manet, multosque per annos / stat fortuna domus*, 4.208-209; *omnia, nec morti esse locum, sed viva volare / sideris in numerum atque alto succedere caelo*, 4.226-227), he fears for his own state. Of course, these doubts are ultimately assuaged, as Aristaeus’ eventual success and discovery of bougonia restore bees to him and thus assure his own divinity. Yet in accomplishing this task, Aristaeus shows a path to divinity different from that of simple benefaction, as he does not come to his discovery on his own, but rather is shown the way by his two instructors, Cyrene and Proteus.

These two figures are portrayed in terms that closely liken them to the didactic poet.<sup>194</sup> Indeed, Proteus is styled a *vates* from his introduction (4.387, 392, 450), a term appropriate for his role as seer but also for an inspired poet; the line between these two roles is further blurred by the claim that he knows what is, was, and will be (*quae sint, quae*

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<sup>193</sup>Aristaeus’ doubts are reinforced by the intertextual allusion at work in these lines, referring back to Achilles’ laments to his mother Thetis. As with that hero, Aristaeus here has a possibility of either immortal renown or mortal obscurity.

<sup>194</sup>Cf. Schiesaro 1997, 67-68.

*fuerint, quae mox ventura trahantur*, 4.393)—a line recalling the knowledge of both the Homeric seer Calchas (ὅς ἤδη τά τ' ἐόντα τά τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα, *Il.* 1.70) and the Hesiodic Muses (εἴρουσαι τά τ' ἐόντα τά τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα, *Th.* 38), as well as that of the Muse-inspired Hesiod himself (ἵνα κλείοιμι τά τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα, *Th.* 32). His role as a *didactic* poet is indicated by the terms used to describe his speech: he will give *praecepta* (*Geo.* 4.398) and he will explain the *morbi causam* (4.397) just as our poet does (*possum multa tibi veterum praecepta referre*, 1.176; *morborum quoque te causas et signa docebo*, 3.440). Proteus is even appropriate as an *agricultural* didactic poet, being a shepherd himself (4.394-395; 433-436). Cyrene, while nowhere portrayed as a poet herself (though an attentive listener to poetry, 333-349), is similarly presented as an instructor, providing *praecepta* to Aristaeus throughout his quest (*deum praecepta*, 448; *matris praecepta*, 548).<sup>195</sup>

At the same time, Aristaeus is portrayed as an ideal student, quick to carry out his instruction to the letter. His exactness is denoted by Vergil's heavy repetition of passages; Cyrene's detailed explanation of the proper manner to bind Proteus (396-414) is closely followed by Vergil's description of the event (437-450),<sup>196</sup> while the account of Aristaeus' final propitiation borrows whole lines from his mother's instructions (*quattuor eximios praestanti corpore tauros...delige, et intacta totidem cervice iuencas*, 538, 540 ≈ *quattuor*

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<sup>195</sup>Schiesaro 1997, 65 notes “the intriguing analogy between the role and behavior of Cyrene in her dealings with Aristaeus and those of the georgic poet who instructs the farmer in the rest of the poem.”

<sup>196</sup>Cf. the complain of Wender 1969, 428: “We expect an adventure at this point, but Cyrene's complete instructions anticipate the action to such a degree that by the time we reach it, the binding of Proteus has become less a thrilling test of courage for Aristaeus than a rather unpleasant ritual to be endured.”

*eximios praestanti corpore tauros / ducit et intacta totidem cervice iuvenecas*, 550-551; *post, ubi nona suos Aurora ostenderit ortus, / inferias Orphei Lethaea papavera mittes / et nigram mactabis ovem, lucumque revises*, 543-545  $\approx$  *post, ubi nona suos Aurora induxerat ortus, / inferias Orphei mittit, lucumque revisit*, 552-553).

Aristaeus' role as a successful student is emphasized by the failure of Orpheus, who loses Eurydice for the second time precisely because he fails to heed the injunction of Proserpina (4.487).<sup>197</sup> Viewed from any other perspective, his error here is no different from Aristaeus'; just as Aristaeus' *eros* leads to the death of Eurydice and loss of his bees, so too do Orpheus' *eros* and fatal backward glance lead to Eurydice's second death. Indeed, in other respects, Orpheus' error is portrayed as less of a wrongdoing than Aristaeus'. Whereas Proteus charges Aristaeus with *magna commissa* (454), Orpheus is portrayed as pitiable (*miserabilis Orpheus*, 454)<sup>198</sup> and later, worthy of forgiveness (*ignoscenda quidem, scirent si ignoscere Manes*, 489). Even Eurydice denies responsibility to the poet, presenting herself and her lover both as victims (*quis et me...miseram et te perdidit, Orpheu, / quis tantus furor*, 494-495). Aristaeus, meanwhile, shows no concern over his actions, other than their effects

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<sup>197</sup>Chomarat 1974, 201, sees the distinction as a matter almost of timing; though Aristaeus' crime is more severe, it is performed prior to his "initiation," while Orpheus, already "initiated" and violating an expressed prohibition of the gods, is lost. Cf. Conte 1986, 133-134.

<sup>198</sup>The contrast between the two may be felt even more strongly, depending on one's reading of the text (454-456): *magna luis commissa: tibi has miserabilis Orpheus / haudquaquam ob meritum poenas, ni fata resistant, / suscitatur...* Thomas 1988 ad 4.455 prefers to see the adverbial phrase *haudquaquam ob meritum* as modifying *poenas*: "penalties which you have by no means deserved [because you did not intend Eurydice's death]." Yet he notes the possibility for the phrase to be read in relation to *miserabilis*: "Orpheus, wretched by no means according to his deserts." Although Thomas ultimately rejects this latter option as "somewhat harsh grammatically," such a reading is possible, especially given the otherwise sympathetic portrayal of Orpheus in relation to Aristaeus.

on his bees. It is telling that in the lines describing his ultimate expiation (549-553), which otherwise adhere so closely to his mother's instruction, there is no mention of the sacrifice to Eurydice prescribed by Cyrene (*placatam Eurydicen vitula venerabere caesa*, 547); only Orpheus and the Nymphs, presented by Proteus and Cyrene respectively as the instigators of the bees' death (453-456; 532-534), receive their due. Despite these discrepancies, Aristaeus is successful where Orpheus fails, and he does so through his ability to heed the words of his divine instructors.

In this respect, then, Aristaeus may be seen as an exemplar for the agricultural student of the poem.<sup>199</sup> If it is above all by following the instructions of the *vates* Proteus and Cyrene that Aristaeus is able to reclaim his bees and a path to divinity, then this will also be the best option for our student; by following the instructions of the vatic Vergil, which include ritual actions such as those performed by Aristaeus, the student too can reach a form of divinity. Indeed, in Aristaeus' status at the end of the poem there is a similarity to the figures of the *makarismos* at 2.490-494, themselves potential models for a "life like the gods." Through the tale of Proteus, Aristaeus achieves a knowledge of the *causae rerum* recalling that of the *felix*, while Cyrene's instruction provides knowledge of the rustic gods, particularly the *Nymphas sorores* (2.494) that are also the subject of the *fortunatus*' knowledge. Again, there is a discrepancy in these two sorts of knowledge, for while Aristaeus learns the *causae* of his plight from Proteus, he is unable to understand them on his own, responding only with fear (*timentem*, 4.530). The interpretation of Cyrene is required

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<sup>199</sup>Morgan 1999, 50-101, argues that Aristaeus' binding of Proteus represents the forceful ordering of chaos, and sees in this a similarity to the renewed order brought by Augustus' victories; on a somewhat humbler level, however, we might compare this to the farmer's victories over the natural world.

to make this knowledge of any use, and it is that interpretation that leads to the ritual instruction the goddess provides.<sup>200</sup> Aristaeus' success, then, is not predicated on the comprehension achieved by the philosophic *felix*, but on close adherence to the precepts offered by a divine interpreter.<sup>201</sup>

This focus on proper action over true understanding may serve to advance another theme running throughout the Aristaeus epyllion, that of initiation. Chomarat and Morgan, among others, have shown that several features of the passage are reminiscent of initiation into mystery rites.<sup>202</sup> Indeed, the theme is suggested in the very introduction to the bougonia passage. Here Vergil portrays the practice as an inherently Egyptian act, locating its roots in the Nile delta (4.285-294)—this despite the fact that its creator is an Arcadian (*Arcadii...inventa magistri*, 4.283) and the events that lead to its creation take place in Thrace and Macedonia. One may thus wonder at the inclusion of Egypt here. Yet Vergil's association of the bees' resurrection from the corpse of a bull harmonizes well with the ideology associated with the Nile, whose recurring flood provided sustenance for agriculture in the otherwise barren land of Egypt. As Morgan argues, this flood was itself an integral part of the mysteries of Serapis, Isis, and Osiris, from whose body the Nile originated.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>200</sup>Cf. Schiesaro 1997, 67-68.

<sup>201</sup>This line of thought can be compared with the *makarismos* in the *Works and Days* as well, wherein Hesiod declares “best is the man who will know all by himself, but good too is the man that obeys another speaking well” (οὗτος μὲν πανάριστος, ὃς αὐτῷ πάντα νοήσει... ἐσθλὸς δ’ αὖ κακέινος ὃς εὖ εἰπόντι πίθηται, 293, 295).

<sup>202</sup>Chomarat 1974; Morgan 1999, 141-149. Cf. Campbell 1982. For mystery elements in the *Georgics* more generally, see esp. Scazzoso 1956 and Hardie 2002 with further bib.

<sup>203</sup>Morgan 1999, 141-143. Chomarat 1974, 186-189, discusses the importance of the Nile here as well.

Tying his own tale of regeneration to that linked to these gods, Vergil may hint at a mystical framework for his account.

The connection is furthered by the inserted narrative of Orpheus, traditionally regarded as the inventor of mystery rites and frequently linked to the mysteries at Eleusis (e.g. Ὀρφεὺς μὲν γὰρ τελετάς θ' ὑμῖν κατέδειξε φόνων τ' ἀπέχεσθαι, Aristoph. *Frogs* 1032; cf. Ps.-Dem. 25.11, Eurip. *Rh.* 943-944).<sup>204</sup> Indeed, connection between mystery rituals, Orpheus, and Egypt is made by Diodorus Siculus. Writing shortly before Vergil, Diodorus asserts the claim made by Egyptian priests that Orpheus obtained most of his mystic rites from them (Diod. Sic. 1.96):<sup>205</sup>

Ὀρφέα μὲν γὰρ τῶν μυστικῶν τελετῶν τὰ πλεῖστα καὶ τὰ περὶ τὴν  
ἑαυτοῦ πλάνην ὀργιαζόμενα καὶ τὴν τῶν ἐν Ἄιδου μυθοποιίαν  
ἀπενέγκασθαι. τὴν μὲν γὰρ Ὀσίριδος τελετὴν τῇ Διονύσου τὴν  
αὐτὴν εἶναι, τὴν δὲ τῆς Ἰσιδος τῇ τῆς Δήμητρος ὁμοιοτάτην  
ὑπάρχειν, τῶν ὀνομάτων μόνον ἐνηλλαγμένων.

Further connections may be made. Indeed, the very presence of bees in this account may hint at mystery aspects.<sup>206</sup> Writing a later allegoresis on the Homeric cavern of the nymphs in *Odyssey* 14, Porphyry claimed that bees were a common symbol for the soul (Porph. *De ant. nym.* 18-19)—a connection likely known to Vergil, who would later compare the souls of the dead in the underworld to a buzzing crowd of bees (*Aen.* 6.703-709). In the same passage, Porphyry uses this connection to explain the name given to Demeter's initiates, themselves referred to as bees: καὶ τὰς Δήμητρος ἱερείας ὡς τῆς χθονίας θεᾶς μύστιδας μελίσσας οἱ

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<sup>204</sup>For our collection of sources on the classical portrayal of Orpheus, see esp. Linforth 1941. For discussion of recent Orphic scholarship, see now Edmonds 2013.

<sup>205</sup>For discussion of the passage, see Linforth 1941, 190-192.

<sup>206</sup>Cf. Chomarat 1974, 189; Morgan 1999, 144.



παλαιοὶ ἐκάλουν αὐτὴν τε τὴν Κόρην Μελιτώδη, Porph. *De ant. nym.* 18). Vergil's use of the Proteus narrative in this section may contribute further to this initiatory theme. As Farrell has shown at length, Vergil's use of the Proteus myth here is heavily influenced by that tale's reinterpretation by Homeric commentators, who believed the tale to be an allegorical veil used by Homer to conceal philosophical truth.<sup>207</sup> In speaking of this hidden meaning, Heraclitus the allegorist, writing in the century after Vergil, actually describes such interpretation as initiation (εἴθ' ἡ πολυπρόσωπος εἰς ἅπαντα ἃ βούλεται Πρωτέως μεταμόρφωσις ποιητικοὶ καὶ τεράστιοι μῦθοι δοκοῦσιν, εἰ μὴ τις οὐρανίῳ ψυχῇ τὰς ὀλυμπίους Ὀμήρου τελετὰς ἱεροφαντήσκει, Heracl. All. 64.4).

Thus the Aristaeus epyllion may be seen to be rife with initiatory imagery. In this case, it is not unreasonable to see in Aristaeus the role of initiate granted him by Chomarat, who emphasizes the ritualistic nature of Aristaeus' actions: the katabatic journey to the Nymphs' abode, the focus on propriety (*fas illi limina divum / tangere*, *Geo.* 4.358-359), the prayer and triple libation that introduce Cyrene's instruction (4.380-385).<sup>208</sup> It is worth noting as well that the aetiological tale Proteus tells Aristaeus shares many structural similarities with the aetiological myth of the Eleusinian Mysteries, best known to us from the Homeric Hymn to Demeter—in both, the act of rape leads to a girl's abduction to the underworld (Eurydice/Persephone), a grief-stricken loved one attempts a rescue (Orpheus/Demeter), and the rescue ultimately fails due to the neglect of an arbitrary rule (prohibition from eating/prohibition from looking back). Even should one choose not to see a one-to-one correspondence between Aristaeus and initiate, however, I would argue that the

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<sup>207</sup>Farrell 1991, 253-272; cf. Morgan 1999, 61-101.

<sup>208</sup>Chomarat 1974, 191-192.

passage establishes elements of an initiatory theme that serve to mark this closing section of the poem as revelatory in some way.

All of this serves to color Aristaeus' actions, so that when his tale ends with his proper ritual conduct, it is easy for the reader to see him in the guise of a successful initiate, led by the hierophant Cyrene. So too, the agricultural student may be seen as an initiate of sorts, instructed by the poet rather than Cyrene, and the poem at times encourages us to do so, as at the depiction of the farmer's *arma*, where several agricultural implements are likened to the accoutrement of mystery religion (*Geo.* 1.160-175).<sup>209</sup> Thus repeated allusion to Eleusis is made; the wagon is described as belonging to the "Eleusinian mother" (*tardaque Eleusinae matris volventia plaustra*, 1.163), while obscure reference is made to the "equipment of Celeus" (*virgea praeterea Celei vilisque supellex*, 1.165), the Eleusinian king who hosted Demeter. Similarly the winnowing-fan is associated with the god Iacchus, and specifically described as suitable for a *mystes* or initiate (*mystica vannus Iacchi*, 1.166).

What this initiatory aspect means for the student, however, is not entirely clear, as the benefits resulting from initiation vary in our sources.<sup>210</sup> Guarantees of both mortal prosperity and privileged status in the afterlife were often made. Thus already in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* it is said that the uninitiated receive a different fate after death than the initiated, but also that those loved by Demeter and the other goddesses will become happy and wealthy (*HH Dem.* 480-482, 486-489):

ὄλβιος ὃς τάδ' ὅπωπεν ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων·  
ὃς δ' ἀτελὴς ἱερῶν, ὃς τ' ἄμμορος, οὗ ποθ' ὁμοίων

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<sup>209</sup>Cf. Scazzoso 1956, 10-11; Hardie 2002, 178-179.

<sup>210</sup>Thus, for example, Clinton 2003, 55, notes that mystery cult "holds forth a promise of prosperity in this life and *usually* also in the afterlife" (emphasis mine), while Burkert 1987, 12-29, focuses on the psychological results of initiation practices.

αἶσαν ἔχει φθίμενός περ ὑπὸ ζόφῳ εὐρώεντι...  
 ...μέγ' ὄλβιος ὃν τιν' ἐκεῖναι  
 προφρονέως φίλωνται ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων·  
 αἶψα δέ οἱ πέμπουσιν ἐφέστιον ἐς μέγα δῶμα  
 Πλοῦτον, ὃς ἀνθρώποις ἄφενος θνητοῖσι δίδωσιν.

Adeimantus in Plato's *Republic* focuses on the expiatory effects of initiation, criticizing figures such as Orpheus for teaching rites that devalue justice by offering easy ways to avert punishment even after death (Plat. *Rep.* 364e-365a):

βίβλων δὲ ὅμαδον παρέχονται Μουσαίου καὶ Ὀρφέως, Σελήνης τε καὶ Μουσῶν ἐκγόνων, ὥς φασι, καθ' ἃς θυηπολοῦσιν, πείθοντες οὐ μόνον ιδιώτας ἀλλὰ καὶ πόλεις, ὥς ἄρα λύσεις τε καὶ καθαρμοὶ ἀδικημάτων διὰ θυσιῶν καὶ παιδιᾶς ἡδονῶν εἰσι μὲν ἔτι ζῶσιν, εἰσι δὲ καὶ τελευτήσασιν, ἃς δὴ τελετὰς καλοῦσιν, αἱ τῶν ἐκεῖ κακῶν ἀπολύουσιν ἡμᾶς, μὴ θύσαντας δὲ δεινὰ περιμένει.

Elsewhere in Plato, the posthumous rewards for initiation are again emphasized; here the initiated receive a status not only superior to the uninitiated, but amongst the gods (Plat. *Phaedo* 69c):<sup>211</sup>

καὶ κινδυνεύουσι καὶ οἱ τὰς τελετὰς ἡμῖν οὗτοι καταστήσαντες οὐ φαῦλοί τινες εἶναι, ἀλλὰ τῷ ὄντι πάλαι αἰνίττεσθαι ὅτι ὃς ἂν ἀμύητος καὶ ἀτέλεστος εἰς Ἄιδου ἀφίκηται ἐν βορβόρῳ κείσεται, ὃ δὲ κεκαθαρμένος τε καὶ τετελεσμένος ἐκεῖσε ἀφικόμενος μετὰ θεῶν οἰκήσει.

There is thus a wide gamut of potential benefits accruing from initiatory ritual, and no clear way to discern which is to be assumed as “correct” for our text. After all, each of these benefits is obtained by Aristaeus. The final sacrifice he performs enables him to avert his punishment, assuaging the anger of the nymphs and restoring his bees; at the same time, one may presume, this contributes to his material prosperity. In accomplishing the resurrection

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<sup>211</sup>For the likelihood that the mysteries referred to are those at Eleusis, see Clinton 2003, 55-56.

of his bees, Aristaeus achieves a control over death that may be compared to the “better portion” allotted to the initiate after death, and it also places Aristaeus, like the initiate described in the *Phaedo*, in the company of the gods.

Yet while the evidence of the *Phaedo* passage combined with the knowledge of Aristaeus’ eventual deification may encourage us to see the poem’s initiatory imagery as another indication that Vergil’s georgic instruction is meant to lead to a divine state, this is nowhere confirmed by the text itself. While it may be the case that the ritual performed by Aristaeus allows for his deification, we have seen that elsewhere the fact of his deification is attributed to his benefaction—his status as the inventor and instructor of the art of *bougonia*. His ritual actions and the knowledge they allow him may help him achieve this end, but they are not identical with this end.

Vergil thus overdetermines the causation of Aristaeus’ divinity, presenting the reader with diverging possibilities. Based on the rhetoric of *protoi heuretai* with which Vergil opens the poem as a whole and the Aristaeus epyllion itself, Aristaeus is now a god because of the benefactions he has made to humanity in his discovery of the *bougonia*. Based on the initiatory imagery pervading the epyllion, in contrast, Aristaeus is divine because of his proper ritual conduct and obedience to the gods’ instructions. In the former case, Aristaeus’ value as exemplar is limited to, perhaps, Augustus—the student would not need the didactic poem, but rather a discovery of his or her own. In the latter, Aristaeus’ tale serves to show that adherence to the didactic poet’s precepts can lead to a divine state.

By suggesting both possibilities while never explicitly linking Aristaeus’ ultimate divinization to any single cause, Vergil achieves much the same aporia that I have shown is essential to the *makarismos* of book 2 and the plague of book 3. Indeed, one may think of

further complications raised by Vergil's narrative: Would Aristaeus' acts be so efficacious were his mother not a goddess herself? If Aristaeus is to be viewed as an initiate, then why do the actions of Orpheus, the supposed founder of the mysteries, result in failure? Again and again, the poet alludes to the divinizing potential of the knowledge he relates, only to suggest the ultimate futility of that same knowledge.

## **Conclusion**

In the varying portrayals of divinization offered by Vergil over the course of the *Georgics*, the defining features of the genre are laid bare. Juxtaposing the frameworks of deification used by his predecessors—the Golden Age of Hesiod and Aratus and the philosophical life extolled by Lucretius—Vergil emphasizes the centrality of the practice for his chosen genre while at the same time displaying its limitations. As he shows his student an Italian Golden Age where strife is already present, or philosophy's inability to prevent the tragedy of plague, the poet repeatedly problematizes the notion that any student may live a "life like the gods." Indeed, in conflating plague and Golden Age, he may cause us to question what a "life like the gods" even is. With his concluding tale of Aristaeus and Orpheus, Vergil achieves much the same result, giving us hints, but no clear path, for how to become like a god.

## Chapter 4: Manilius

The astrological poet Manilius has been less extensively studied than the other poets of this investigation, particularly in English-language scholarship, though this tide has begun to turn. Recent works, particularly Volk's monograph on Manilius' intellectual background and a collection of essays edited by Volk and Green, have brought renewed interest to the poet.<sup>212</sup> Nevertheless, it will be useful to begin the chapter with a brief overview of Manilius and his poem.

Of the historical Manilius, next to nothing is known. Pliny the Elder mentions a Manilius Antiochus, noted for his interest in astrology and said to have arrived as a slave on the same ship as a mime writer Publilius Lochius<sup>213</sup> and the grammarian Staberius Eros (*HN* 33.199): *talemque Publilium Lochium, mimicae scaenae conditorem, et astrologiae consobrinum eius Manilium Antiochum, item grammaticae Staberium Erotem eadem nave advectos videre proavi*. Yet, given that the Publilius mentioned is generally assumed to be the mime author Publilius Syrus, and our knowledge that both he and Staberius Eros were active in the first half of the first century BCE, it is highly unlikely that this Manilius

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<sup>212</sup>Volk 2009; Green and Volk 2011. See now also Green 2014.

<sup>213</sup>The name is given in different editions as Lochius or Antiochius, the latter an emendation based on the claim of kinship with Manilius Antiochus.

Antiochus could be the author of our *Astronomica*.<sup>214</sup> Internal evidence allows us to give the poem a *terminus post quem* of 9 CE, as Manilius refers to the massacre of the Teutoburg Forest (*externas modo per gentes ut, foedere rupto / cum fera ductorem rapuit Germania Varum / infecitque trium legionum sanguine campos*, 1.898-900); the *modo* of line 898 would seem to indicate the event as a relatively recent affair, and the poem is typically dated to the second decade of the first century CE. More certainty than this seems impossible to obtain, though not for lack of trying; the debate over the publication date of the *Astronomica* has long been a fiercely contested issue, due chiefly to the difficulty in determining to which Caesar, Augustus or Tiberius, Manilius dedicates his work.<sup>215</sup> In the chapter that follows, I assume an identification of Manilius' Caesar with Augustus, though the specific identity of Manilius' dedicatee is relatively unimportant for my purposes.

This uncertainty over Manilius' identity has not extended to questions concerning his ideology; much like his fellow astronomical poet Aratus, Manilius has been consistently

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<sup>214</sup>For discussion of the passage of Pliny and its use in identifying our Manilius, see Volk 2009, 4-5, with further bibliography at 4 n.8. For our evidence for the historical Manilius, see esp. Volk 2009, 1-6. For an attempt to reconcile Pliny's information with our knowledge concerning the date of the poem, see Scarcia, Flores, and Feraboli 1996, 1.xix-xxiii.

<sup>215</sup>The debate is complicated further by an uncertainty over whether certain references to Augustus imply the *princeps* is living or dead. For arguments concerning the identity of Manilius' Caesar and the likely dating of the work, see Steele 1931, Flores 1960-1961 (arguing for an Augustan date); Gebhardt 1961, Neuberg 1993, 243-257 (arguing for a Tiberian date). Baldwin 1987 argues for a late date of 22 CE for the fifth book on the basis of a reference therein to a fire at the Theatre of Pompey. Housman 1903-1930, 1.lxix-lxxii, argues for a piecemeal dating attributing the first two books to Augustus' reign and at least the fourth book to Tiberius', and is followed by Goold 1977, xii. Volk 2009, 137-161, gives a review of the passages discussing Caesar and argues for an all-Augustan date for at least books 1-4. Colborn 2013 gives an argument for the relative chronology of the poem as subsequent to Germanicus' *Aratea* on the basis of a shared acrostic.

viewed as Stoic by scholars.<sup>216</sup> Yet as with Aratus, there is little concrete evidence to support such an identification for Manilius; while Manilius often makes claims that resonate with Stoic ideology, this could be as much a result of the philosophical climate in Rome at the time as a sign of specific doctrinal allegiance on the part of the poet. As Manilius, unlike his didactic predecessor Lucretius, makes no explicit claim of adherence to any philosophical system, and in fact frequently draws on more eclectic philosophical traditions (as will be discussed below), the present study remains agnostic on the question of Manilius' Stoicism, allowing for the possibility but not requiring it.<sup>217</sup>

What can be determined from analysis of Manilius' text is his familiarity with his poetic predecessors, particularly Vergil and Lucretius. In what follows, Manilius will be seen repeatedly engaging with the tradition as shaped by these earlier poets, and grappling with the same questions over the relationship between knowledge and divinity that I have delineated in their works. As will be shown, Manilius follows his predecessors in depicting a divine status based on the instruction he offers, while adjusting his rhetoric to allow for his own vision of the divinity of the cosmos and the pervasive presence of god within it. In the first section, I examine Manilius' portrayal of the deified Augustus in the poem's opening, comparing it in particular to Vergil's invocation of the *princeps* in the proem to the *Georgics*. Subsequently, I turn to Manilius' cultural history, discussing the poet's manipulation of the now-familiar tropes of "intellectual gigantomachy" and the Golden Age and showing how he

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<sup>216</sup>For bibliography, see Volk 2009, 226 n. 13, who notes, however, the isolated arguments of Lanson 1887, 29-53, and MacGregor 2005 against Manilius' Stoicism. Volk 2009, 226-234, presents the case for Manilius' Stoicism.

<sup>217</sup>For a discussion of other potential influences perceptible in Manilius' worldview, see esp. Volk 2009, 234-251.



develops tensions within these tropes to his own ends. I end with a discussion of the influence of Hermetic thought on the *Astronomica* and Manilius' portrayal of the inherent divinity of humanity.

### **Caesar *deus ipse***

As Vergil does in the *Georgics*, Manilius first introduces deification as the prerogative of Caesar (1.7-10):<sup>218</sup>

hunc mihi tu, Caesar, patriae princepsque paterque,  
qui regis augustis parentem legibus orbem  
concessumque patri mundum deus ipse mereris,  
das animum viresque facis ad tanta canenda.

Whereas Vergil's poem is written at a time of transition and focuses on the *possibility* of Augustus' deification, however, Manilius, writing over 30 years later, treats this deification as fact. In Manilius' invocation the concretization of certain features of the didactic invocation can be seen as well. Thus, just like Lucretius' Venus and Vergil's Octavian, Manilius' Augustus here is singled out for providing the conditions necessary for the composition of the poem (cf. *Geo.* 1.40-42; *DRN* 1.21-49).<sup>219</sup> Chief among these conditions is the guarantee of peace; echoing Lucretius' claim that composition is impossible in times of civil strife (*DRN* 1.40-41), Manilius informs us that his work is only possible in peacetime (*hoc sub pace vacat tantum*, *Astr.* 1.13).<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>218</sup>Here assumed to be Augustus, see above.

<sup>219</sup>Cf. Flores 1982, 114, who notes that we may also think of Aratus' invocation to Zeus here.

<sup>220</sup>This connection between poetry and peace was seen as a central feature of Hesiodic didactic in particular; cf. Koning 2010, 276-284.

At the same time, Manilius maintains a division between Caesar as guarantor of the conditions for his work and the god Mercury as discoverer of his poetic subject matter (*tu princeps auctorque sacri, Cyllenie, tanti*, 1.30).<sup>221</sup> In so doing, he again follows the example of Lucretius in particular, who portrays Venus as the “guarantor” of his work while identifying Epicurus as the “inventor” of his subject.<sup>222</sup> This allows him to make a rhetorical move similar to that of Vergil, who likewise portrayed Octavian in a manner recalling Lucretius’ Venus and thus compared the *princeps* to an Epicurean divinity. Whereas Vergil had collapsed the distinction between “guarantor” and “inventor,” however, presenting Octavian as an Epicurus-like benefactor as well, Manilius reintroduces this separation; while Vergil’s Octavian may one day control even the countryside of his georgic poem (*Geo.* 1.26-28), Manilius’ Caesar remains subject to the will of the heavens.<sup>223</sup>

Other than such suggestions, and in contrast to the portrayal of Octavian in the *Georgics*, there is little concern for the process of *how* one achieves divine status. In Manilius’ description of Caesar’s “august laws” (*augustis...legibus*, 1.8), one may recall Vergil’s claim at the end of the *Georgics* that Octavian is making his way to Olympus while giving laws to his conquered peoples (*Caesar dum magnus ad altum / fulminat Euphraten bello victorque volentis / per populos dat iura viamque adfectat Olympo*, *Geo.* 4.560-562), and so see here a similar note of divinity based on benefaction, which would strengthen the parallel between Caesar here and the Lucretian Venus. Yet the reference to the “world

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<sup>221</sup>See Flores 1982, 115-117, on connections between Caesar and Mercury.

<sup>222</sup>Flores 1982, 111-112, makes a similar connection.

<sup>223</sup>Though echoes of the Lucretian distinction may still remain in the *Georgics*, albeit reversed; we may see the rustic gods of the poem, praised for their discoveries, as the “inventors” of Vergil’s subject, with Augustus occupying Venus’ role of guarantor of peace.

granted to [Caesar's] father" (*concessumque patri mundum*) instead suggests a divinity of descent; as a *divi filius* (supposing our Caesar is here Augustus), so too is this Caesar a *deus ipse*. Neither reference does more than hint at an answer, and the reader is left with little more than the fact of Caesar's divinity.

An answer may be supplied later in book 1, in Manilius' discussion of the Milky Way (1.684-804). Recounting various explanations for the presence of this celestial phenomenon, Manilius finally wonders whether the Milky Way may be the final abode for worthy souls after death (1.758-761):

an fortes animae dignataque nomina caelo  
 corporibus resoluta suis terraeque remissa  
 huc migrant ex orbe suumque habitantia caelum 760  
 aetherios vivunt annos mundoque fruuntur?

The question is followed by a lengthy catalogue of potential celestial residents including the heroes of the Trojan War (1.762-770), Greeks famed for their wisdom (771-776), and Roman historical figures (777-804), "now the largest crowd," which culminates with the figures of Augustus and Romulus (799-804):

...descendit caelo caelumque replebit,  
 quod regit, Augustus, socio per signa Tonante, 800  
 cernit et in coetu divum magnumque Quirinum...<sup>224</sup>  
 altius aetherii quam candet circulus orbis.  
 illa deis sedes: haec illis, proxima divum  
 qui virtute sua similes fastigia tangunt.

Such a conception has clear literary precedent in the *Somnium Scipionis* of Cicero's *De*

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<sup>224</sup>Housman 1903-1930 *ad loc.* supposes a dropped verse after this line: for discussion of the issues involved see also Volk 2009, 142-144.

*Republica*, wherein the orator posited such immortality as a reward for the political life.<sup>225</sup> In Manilius' version too, the overwhelming focus is on individuals who have provided service for the state; the list of wise Greeks begins with Solon and Lycurgus, for example, while even the Iliadic heroes are portrayed in their political role as kings (cf. *reges*, 765 and 769).<sup>226</sup>

This focus would seem to encourage an understanding of divinity based on political benefaction, as suggested in the opening invocation to Augustus and discussed at length in previous chapters. Yet Manilius complicates the issue with a feature not found in his Ciceronian model. Though there is some uncertainty over the text, Manilius appears to posit two distinct abodes for the figures of his catalogue, as Augustus and Romulus seem to be located in a region above the Milky Way reserved for the gods (*altius aetherii quam candet circulus orbis. / illa deis sedes*, 1.802-803), while the other figures are in a location near to them, close to the gods on account of their similar virtue (*haec illis, proxima divum / qui virtute sua similes fastigia tangunt*, 803-804).<sup>227</sup> Thus, it seems that while political virtue can

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<sup>225</sup>See Landolfi 1990, however, for the argument that Manilius' passage is based on no single source, but draws from a lengthy literary tradition. Volk 2009, 45, notes the idea was associated with Pythagoras. For the role of the *Somnium Scipionis* in Cicero's developing ideas on deification, see Cole 2013, 96-102. On Manilius' use of the *Somnium Scipionis* elsewhere in his poem, see Wilson 1985, 292-294.

<sup>226</sup>Habinek 1989, 234-236, notes the similarity between the catalogue given by Cicero and the catalogue of the residents of Elysium given by Anchises at *Aeneid* 6.756-853, and remarks that Vergil's catalogue is generally more inclusive than Cicero's, which is focused on political accomplishments. Remarkably, Manilius' list here is even more exclusive than Cicero's, for while Cicero allows for the inclusion of poets and philosophers (Cic. *De rep.* 6.18.4: *quod* [i.e. the music of the spheres] *docti homines nervis imitati atque cantibus aperuerunt sibi reditum in hunc locum, sicut alii qui praestantibus ingeniis in vita humana divina studia coluerunt*), Manilius' focus is almost exclusively on political figures; cf. Landolfi 1990, 92-95.

<sup>227</sup>Cf. Landolfi 1990, 97; Volk 2009, 142.

obtain for an individual a state *similar* to that of the gods, only Augustus and Romulus are actually capable of becoming gods. Manilius does not make explicit his reasoning for this division, but it is perhaps reasonable to connect this to the privileged status of Augustus and Romulus in Roman cult. Unlike the other historical figures mentioned, these two would have received worship in state cult and as such could be considered gods. Should such be the case, Manilius would not only be delineating a divinity based on benefaction, but a hierarchy within this system; good works are enough to attain a place near the gods, but recognition by the state is required for deification itself.

In discussing the deification of Octavian in Vergil's *Georgics*, I have noted that the poet there presents a means of achieving divinity that is, for all practical purposes, unattainable by the ostensible student of his poem. In the *Astronomica*, we may see much the same. Presenting a near-divine status as the reward for preeminent statesmanship and divinity itself as an honor reserved for the state to bestow, Manilius emphasizes benefaction and political success as a means of divinization but gives no indication that such a means will be of use to his student; further, even should the student reach this point, they would be unlikely to attain the heights of Romulus and Augustus, and unable to do so without the intercession of the state. As will be discussed in later sections, this does not mean that this Milky Way excursus has no implications for our student, however. In portraying a celestial abode for these deceased statesmen, Manilius establishes a close relationship between the human soul and the *mundus* that he will develop over the course of his poem. Yet as with Vergil's agricultural student, Manilius' astrological student must ultimately find a path to divinity unlike that of the statesman.

## The Iron Age Redeemed

Suggestions of this alternate route to divinity can already be detected in the passage following the opening invocation. As in the invocation to Augustus, much of Manilius' subsequent proem engages directly with the work of his didactic predecessors. Indeed, in many respects the proem can be read as an anti-Lucretian rebuttal to the *De Rerum Natura*—an understandable inclusion, as (even setting aside the question of Manilius' Stoicism) the Epicurean's casuist philosophy is completely at odds with the fatal machinations of Manilius' astrological system.<sup>228</sup> Thus, for example, Manilius refutes Lucretius' claim that earlier generations of human beings had no fear at the daily setting of the sun (*DRN* 5.972-981), arguing instead that early humanity's ignorance made it terrified of even such routine occurrences (*Astr.* 1.66-72). More notable for our purposes is the divergent religious attitude of Manilius' proem. Whereas Lucretius spends much of his time in the *DRN*'s opening creating a divide between himself and religious practitioners, seeing the individuals known as *vates* as his chief intellectual rivals (*tutemet a nobis iam quovis tempore, vatum / terriloquis victus dictis, desciscere quaeres*, *DRN* 1.102-103), Manilius embraces religion, portraying his own subject matter as divine in the poem's opening line (*divinas artes*, *Astr.* 1.1) and self-identifying as a *vates* (1.23) performing a religious ritual (*bina mihi positae lucent altaria flammis, / ad duo templa precor duplici circumdatus aestu / carminis et rerum*, 1.20-22; cf. *sacra ferens*, 1.6).

This contrasting presentation of religious matters is particularly marked in Manilius' address to Mercury, whom the poet claims as the founder of his craft (1.25-37):

Quem [sc. mundum] primum interius licuit cognoscere terris    25

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<sup>228</sup>For Manilius in relation to Lucretius, see, e.g., Rösch 1911; Steele 1932, 324-331; Di Giovine 1978; Wilson 1985, 286-289; Abry 1999; Volk 2009, 192-196.

munere caelestum. quis enim condentibus illis	
clepsisset furto mundum, quo cuncta reguntur?	
quis foret humano conatus pectore tantum,	
invitis ut dis cuperet deus ipse videri,	
sublimis aperire vias inumque sub orbem,	32
et per inane suis parentia finibus astra?	
tu princeps auctorque sacri, Cyllenie, tanti;	30
per te iam caelum interius, iam sidera nota	
nominaque et cursus signorum, pondera, vires,	34
maior uti facies mundi foret, et veneranda	
non species tantum sed et ipsa potentia rerum,	
sentirentque deum gentes qua maximus esset.	

Manilius here polemically reworks Lucretius' description of the founder of his own system, Epicurus, in the flight of the mind of *DRN* 1.62-79.<sup>229</sup> The contrast between human and god, the claims of divine opposition, and the traversal of extraterrestrial spaces all serve to recall the Lucretian passage but are here presented as impossibilities through a series of rhetorical questions—what human could accomplish such a task? In Manilius' account, such revelation comes not from a human but from the gods themselves (*munere caelestum*, *Astr.* 1.26); in fact, this revelation *cannot* come from a human unless the gods permit. Further, whereas Epicurus' discoveries serve to overcome the gods of *religio* and substitute humanity in their place, Mercury's knowledge does the opposite, actually increasing worship of the divine by magnifying the power of god (1.35-37). All of this serves to portray an epistemology quite different from that of Manilius' Lucretian model, presenting knowledge not as a means to rival the gods, but as a gift bestowed by (and thus relying on) those very gods.

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<sup>229</sup>Cf. Flores 1982, 118; Wilson 1985, 287-288.

This new model of divinely-guided epistemology is reinforced in the following passage, wherein Manilius gives a historicizing explanation of astrology's development to supplement the theological explanation (1.40-65): <sup>230</sup>

et natura dedit vires seque ipsa reclusit	40
regalis animos primum dignata movere	
proxima tangentis rerum fastigia caelo,	
qui domuere feras gentes oriente sub ipso,	
[quas secatur Euphrates, in quas et Nilus abundat]	
qua mundus redit et nigras super evolat urbes.	45
tum qui templa sacris coluerunt omne per aevum	
delectique sacerdotes in publica vota	
officio vinxere deum; quibus ipsa potentis	
numinis accendit castam praesentia mentem,	
inque deum deus ipse tulit patuitque ministris.	50
hi tantum movere decus primique per artem	
sideribus videre vagis pendentia fata.	
singula nam proprio signarunt tempora casu,	
longa per assiduas complexi saecula curas:	
nascendi quae cuique dies, quae vita fuisset,	55
in quas fortunae leges quaeque hora valeret,	
quantaque quam parvi facerent discrimina motus.	
postquam omnis caeli species, redeuntibus astris,	
percepta, in proprias sedes, et reddita certis	
fatorum ordinibus sua cuique potentia formae,	60
per varios usus artem experientia fecit	
exemplo monstrante viam, speculataque longe	
deprendit tacitis dominantia legibus astra	
et totum aeterna mundum ratione moveri	
fatorumque vices certis discernere signis.	65

Even in this “historical” version, Manilius’ emphasis is on divine revelation. The kings who first receive knowledge of the stars do so not out of any obvious investigation on their part, but because nature itself (regularly identified with god or the universe by Manilius) revealed

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<sup>230</sup>On this passage, see Di Giovine 1978, 398-403; Marchi 1983, 9-10; Flammini 1990, 43-48; Volk 2009, 68-72.



itself to them.<sup>231</sup> So too with the priests who obtain more systematic knowledge of the heavens. Devotion to god, not inquiry into nature, guides their initial actions; only after the divine presence has inspired them do these men begin their study of the heavens. Manilius' subsequent description of astronomical investigation and the work these priests perform (1.53-65) does take on a more anthropocentric cast as inspiration gives way to empirical observation (*per varios usus artem experientia fecit / exemplo monstrante viam*, 1.61-62), yet even this serves to highlight the ultimate power of god, reflected in the rule of the stars and eternal reason (*deprendit tacitis dominantia legibus astra / et totum aeterna mundum ratione moveri*, 1.63-4).

Intertextual allusion to Vergil may strengthen the point. Claiming that these priests were the first to perform such work by means of *ars* (*hi tantum movere decus primique per artem / sideribus videre vagis pendentia fata*, 1.51-52), Manilius echoes the so-called “theodicy” of Vergil’s *Georgics*, wherein Jupiter is the first to “move the fields” by means of *ars* (...*pater ipse colendi / haud facilem esse viam voluit, primusque per artem / movit agros*, *Geo.* 1.121-123) during the transition from Golden Age to Iron. Manilius perhaps even “corrects” the passage; after all, it is highly unlikely that Jupiter himself is to be imagined working the land, and the Vergilian passage may be readily understood as a description of Jupiter’s compulsion of humanity to farming. Realizing this, Manilius cuts out the middle step, making his priests the subjects of the action, but using the Vergilian context to indicate an ultimate divine impetus.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>231</sup>For discussion of these kings, and their usual identification with figures such as Zoroaster and Belus, see Volk 2009, 68-69.

<sup>232</sup>Manilius’ lines depicting experience-driven progress (*per varios usus artem experientia fecit / exemplo monstrante viam*, 1.61-62) may perform a similar function, as they too recall

Such use of intertextual reference can lead to problematic slippage, however. For while this is perhaps the most likely reading of this passage, it is not the only way to read Manilius' reference. Instead, the reader may refuse to take the "middle step" and instead take Manilius' priests as not only a direct grammatical substitution for Vergil's Jupiter, but also a functional substitution—that is, one may see Manilius positing human agency in place of divine agency as the source of cultural development. Of course, in this scenario, such a distinction is ultimately rather slight; after all, these priests are still subordinate to, and inspired by, their god. Yet this change of focus would allow for the possibility of a more active role for humanity in Manilius' account of development.

Indeed, this sort of ideological slippage can be detected throughout the proem. While no individual case may be seen as blatant enough to argue decisively for an antagonistic reading to the interaction between humans and gods in the proem, the aggregation of such incidences does indicate the potential for such a reading, and in this respect Manilius' poem may express a polyvalence similar to that used by Vergil in the *Georgics*. Thus, for example, Manilius' description of his astrologer-priests includes the claim that these priests "bound god through their service" (*officio vinxere deum*, 1.48). In the potential violence implicit in the verb *vincire*, one may see the suggestion of assault against the god;<sup>233</sup> it is left to the reader to determine whether this is suitably mollified by the qualifying ablative *officio*.

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the Vergilian "theodicy," where Jupiter is said to make natural conditions more difficult so that humans may develop their crafts through experience (*ut uarias usus meditando extunderet artis*, *Geo.* 1.133).

<sup>233</sup>Cf. Volk 2001, 108-113, and 2009, 257-258, for Manilius' use of violent language here and elsewhere to describe scientific inquiry.

Following this discussion of the kings' and priests' astrological achievements, Manilius retrojects even further in time, describing humanity's condition prior to the discovery of astrology and other civilizing arts in a cultural history (1.66-122)—by this time, a regular feature of the didactic genre.<sup>234</sup> After emphasizing early humans' fears arising from their ignorance of the celestial bodies' movements (in a polemical allusion to Lucretius, discussed above), Manilius portrays early humanity in the stereotypical terms of the Golden Age, noting their lack of the traditional arts of farming (1.76), mining (76), and sailing (77-78). Manilius differs from his predecessors, however, in attaching no positive features to this period, either through Vergil's intimations of an earlier fertility and ease of life or Lucretius' contrasts with the moral failures of contemporary life, instead focusing solely on the ignorance of the age before turning to the gradual development of civilization (1.79-84):

sed cum longa dies acuit mortalia corda  
et labor ingenium miseris dedit et sua quemque  
advigilare sibi iussit fortuna premendo,  
seducta in varias certarunt pectora curas  
et, quodcumque sagax temptando repperit usus,  
in commune bonum commentum laeta dederunt.

Here too Manilius fills his discussion with references to Vergil's earlier culture history.<sup>235</sup> Describing the role of time and harsh circumstance in the development of civilization (1.79-80), Manilius again recalls Jupiter's role in the transition from Golden to Iron Age (*curis acuens mortalia corda*, *Geo.* 1.123). As with the earlier reference to the passage, any mention of Jupiter himself is suppressed by Manilius, and in this instance, there is no prior

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<sup>234</sup>On Manilius' culture history, see esp. Effe 1971; Romano 1979; Baldini Moscardi 1980a and 1980b; Flammini 1990, 49-61, and 1993.

<sup>235</sup>For Manilius' use of Vergil's *Georgics* here, see esp. Effe 1971; cf., e.g., Habinek 2007, 236-237.

mention of divinity as there was in the case of the astronomer-priests. Instead, Manilius seems to deny divine causation for the event altogether, presenting the development of civilization instead as the natural result of historical forces coupled with human ingenuity.

The mention of *labor* in this context adds to such an interpretation. For Vergil, *labor* is the culmination and final product of the Iron Age transition, a necessary feature of survival in the world as conceived by Jupiter. For Manilius, however, *labor* is an initial condition, representing not the culmination of an historical process as envisioned by Vergil but only the initial hardship suffered by early humanity. As such, it, like the passage of time, here replaces Jupiter as the initial cause in the development of human society, and is seen not as a necessary end in itself but rather as something to be overcome through human invention. Indeed, Manilius himself points to this distinction; whereas in the *Georgics*, *labor* has overcome and pervaded all aspects of life (*labor omnia vicit*, *Geo.* 1.145), in the *Astronomica* this task is performed by human skill (*omnia conando docilis sollertia vicit*, *Astr.* 1.95).

Taken as a whole, Manilius' depiction of cultural development points to a view radically different from that of his predecessors, who typically portray the Iron Age as a marked deterioration of the human condition.<sup>236</sup> Yet again, this change is signified through reference to Lucretius and Vergil. In his claim that individuals provided for the common good as their abilities developed (*in commune bonum commentum laeta dederunt*, 1.84), Manilius directly echoes Lucretius, who in his rationalizing account of history denied the ability of early humanity to look to the common good (*nec commune bonum poterant*

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<sup>236</sup>Cf. Romano 1979; Volk 2009, 248 n. 54: "Manilius' entire history of civilization is unusual in presenting as positive a number of cultural practices...that in other ancient, especially Roman, treatments of the same topic are viewed as ambivalent, if not downright nefarious..." See also Abry 2007, 11-13, who sees in Manilius' account a rejection of the Aratean Myth of the Ages.

*spectare*, DRN 5.958). At the same time, the Manilian claim also recalls the Vergilian description of the Golden Age, wherein unlike Lucretius' early peoples, the residents of the Golden Age do work for the benefit of the community (*in medium quaerebant*, *Geo.* 1.127). In making this change, Manilius goes farther than Lucretius, whose denial of a Golden Age is based on the inherent continuity of the human condition, to invest his Iron Age with those positive features, such as social harmony and abundance, traditionally assigned to the earlier, happier age.

Preference for the Iron Age is also evident in Manilius' celebratory list of the *artes* discovered by humans. Here there is neither the ambivalence of Lucretius' history, in which intellectual development is balanced by the development of new vices, nor is there Vergil's pessimism, in which new crafts are required to meet the increasing demands made by nature.<sup>237</sup> Instead, Manilius sees these advances as a net gain, focusing solely on the new abilities allowed to humanity (1.85-95):

tunc et lingua suas accepit barbara leges,	85
et fera diversis exercita frugibus arva,	
et vagus in caecum penetravit navita pontum	
fecit et ignotis iter in commercia terris.	
tum belli pacisque artes commenta vetustas;	

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<sup>237</sup>See Verg. *Geo.* 1.129-135, wherein Jupiter worsens conditions to induce humanity to develop *artes*:

ille [i.e. Jupiter] malum virus serpentibus addidit atris	
praedarique lupos iussit pontumque moveri,	130
mellaque decussit foliis ignemque removit	
et passim rivis currentia vina repressit,	
ut varias usus meditando extunderet artis	
paulatim, et sulcis frumenti quaereret herbam,	
ut silicis venis abstrusum excuderet ignem.	135

Similarly, the development of agriculture is a direct result of the earth's failing bounty at *Geo.* 1.147-149:

prima Ceres ferro mortalis vertere terram  
instituit, cum iam glandes atque arbuta sacrae  
deficerent silvae et victum Dodona negaret.

semper enim ex aliis alias proseminat usus.	90
ne vulgata canam, linguas didicere volucrum,	
consultare fibras et rumpere vocibus angues,	
sollicitare umbras imumque Acheronta movere,	
in noctemque dies, in lucem vertere noctes.	
omnia conando docilis sollertia vicit.	95

The inferiority of the natural state is repeatedly emphasized by the negative valence of the adjectives Manilius uses—*barbara, fera, caecum*. In contrast, where development could be seen in a negative light, as in the creation of war at 1.89, Manilius glosses over the fact, here closely joining that discovery to the more positive topic of peace.

Manilius ends this portion of his list with the discovery of ornithomancy, extispicy, and magical acts including necromancy. The combination is an odd one, as the political status of ornithomancy and extispicy—both means of divination explicitly endorsed by the Roman state religion—is at odds with the suspicion or even hostility traditionally felt towards other magical feats.<sup>238</sup> By conflating these categories, Manilius appears to be attempting to grant magic the same status afforded to traditional means of divination, and this too may be seen in part as a response to Vergil. Speaking of the Etruscan seer Asilas in *Aeneid* 10, Vergil lists the forms of divination in which he was proficient (*Aen.* 10.175-177): *tertius ille hominum divumque interpret Asilas, / cui pecudum fibrae, caeli cui sidera parent / et linguae volucrum et praesagi fulminis ignes*. As in the Manilian passage, Vergil here describes ornithomancy and extispicy, but by including the claim that the stars are intelligible to Asilas, Vergil suggests an early form of astrology as well. Thus already in Vergil

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<sup>238</sup>See Dickie 2002, 459-465. Cf. Volk 2009, 247: “With the exception, perhaps, of the first two, which could pass as comparatively benign, all these practices involve breaking the laws of nature for the benefit of the acting human being and can properly be described as (black) magic.” For a more positive appraisal of the magical acts described here, see Baldini Moscadi 1980a.

astrology is linked to other traditional forms of divination. By alluding to this passage, Manilius reminds his readers of this association; further, by presenting knowledge of divination as prior to knowledge of astrology, Manilius perhaps suggests that astrology is a result of these earlier practices.<sup>239</sup>

A similar Vergilian connection can be made between astrology and the more explicitly magical items in Manilius' list. Describing the ability to cause snakes to burst through speech, Manilius alludes to a passage from the *Eclogues*, wherein the shepherd Alpheisiboeus describes the power of magical song, including its ability to rupture snakes and draw the moon from the sky (*Ecl.* 8.69-71): *carmina vel caelo possunt deducere lunam / carminibus Circe socios mutavit Ulixi, / frigidus in pratis cantando rumpitur anguis*. Again, Manilius refers to a Vergilian passage wherein the cultural discovery he is describing is united with astrological phenomena, and it is likely this that leads to the conflation of more "orthodox" practices such as extispicy and ornithomancy with more magical activities. Both, in the eyes of the poet, are directly related to astrology.

Manilius' self-portrayal as a magician is discussed in greater detail below; here I content myself with one further note on the role of magic in Manilius' cultural history. Referring to the discovery of necromancy (*sollicitare umbras imumque Acheronta movere*, *Astr.* 1.93), Manilius yet again draws from Vergil. In book 7 of the *Aeneid*, Juno, wroth at

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<sup>239</sup>*Contra* Dickie 2002, 451. On the basis of lines 4.911-14,  
 huic in tanta fidem petimus, quam saepe volucres  
 accipiunt trepidaeque suo sub pectore fibrae.  
 an minus est sacris rationem ducere signis  
 quam pecudum mortes aviumque attendere cantus?

Dickie argues that Manilius views extispicy and ornithomancy not as "forerunners of astrology, but inferior techniques for discovering the divine will...." Yet in the passage Manilius doesn't denigrate these skills; he simply seeks that astrology be accorded the same esteem (*in tanta*) given to other forms of divination.

Aeneas' arrival in Italy, seeks to halt his progress in any way she can. Unable to receive aid from the Olympians, she turns to the denizens of the underworld instead: *flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo* (*Aen.* 7.312). By recalling the words of Juno, Manilius illustrates two important points. First, he suggests that, through magic, men can rival the deeds of the divine; while Juno can move Acheron, so too can a skilled magician. Second, he reminds his readers that the gods' powers are limited. Immediately preceding her decision to seek infernal aid, Juno laments that her powers are insufficient for her task: *quod si mea numina non sunt / magna satis...* (7.310-11). Indeed, she has actually been bested by a human: *vincor ab Aenea* (7.310). For a reader familiar with Vergil (as Manilius seems to expect his reader to be), the poet's discussion of magic here continues the problematic portrayal of humanity's relationship with divinity hinted at throughout the poem.

This portrayal reaches a climax in the culmination of Manilius' culture history, as humanity completes its discoveries with the development of natural philosophy and, finally, astrology (1.96-112). Here Manilius explicitly evokes the theme of "intellectual gigantomachy," familiar from our discussion of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*.<sup>240</sup> Though Manilius has previously rejected the *topos*, denying that humans would strive with the divine in his attribution of astrological knowledge to Mercury (1.25-37), the poet here seems to reverse his stance, stating that this process of discovery had no limit until human *ratio* ascended to heaven and comprehended the nature of things (1.96-98): *nec prius imposuit rebus finemque modumque / quam caelum ascendit ratio cepitque profundam / naturam rerum causis viditque quod usquam est*. Manilius does not stop there, but doubles down on this gigantomachic rhetoric, describing the comprehension of the thunderbolt's natural causes

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<sup>240</sup>See esp. Volk 2001, 100-114.



in Promethean terms; in his account, human reason stole Jove's own thunderbolt and returned its constituent parts to their proper locales—the sound of thunder to the winds, fire to the clouds (1.104-105): *eripuitque Iovi fulmen viresque tonandi / et sonitum ventis concessit, nubibus ignem*. With this final assault, the nature of the cosmos was revealed to humanity and the art of astrology developed (1.106-112):

quae postquam in proprias deduxit singula causas,  
vicinam ex alto mundi cognoscere molem  
intendit totumque animo comprehendere caelum,  
attribuitque suas formas, sua nomina signis,  
quasque vices agerent certa sub sorte notavit  
omniaque ad numen mundi faciemque moveri,  
sideribus vario mutantibus ordine fata.

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A possible source for Manilius' passage, Cicero's *De Natura Deorum* 2.153, describes the same process of *ratio* reaching towards heaven. Yet here the gigantomachic imagery of Manilius' rendition is largely absent, as Cicero's Balbus emphasizes the subsequent development of *pietas*, claiming that it is this that ultimately provides a godlike life to mortals.<sup>241</sup>

quid vero? hominum ratio non in caelum usque penetravit?... quae  
[sc. celestial workings] contuens animus accedit ad cognitionem  
deorum, e qua oritur pietas, cui coniuncta iustitia reliquaeque  
virtutes, e quibus vita beata existit et similis deorum, nulla alia re  
nisi immortalitate, quae nihil ad bene vivendum pertinet, cedens  
caelestibus.

The conception of investigation as assault in the Manilian passage would seem to be the poet's innovation.

The aggressive imagery in this passage, coupled with the Promethean imagery of a fiery theft from Jupiter, may lead us to reconsider Manilius' earlier rejection of divine

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<sup>241</sup>For Manilius' knowledge of Cicero and this passage, see Volk 2009, 230-234.

antagonism in his invocation of Mercury. As discussed above, in this passage Manilius opens with a series of rhetorical questions seemingly designed to emphasize the gulf between humanity and the gods. Who, asks Manilius, would have stolen the *mundus* from the gods had they intended to hide it? (1.26-29):

...quis enim condentibus illis  
clepsisset furto mundum, quo cuncta reguntur?  
quis foret humano conatus pectore tantum,  
invitis ut dis cuperet deus ipse videri...

On our earlier reading of the passage, it was argued that the lines are, above all, a critical response to Lucretius' portrayal of the Epicurean flight of the mind and his corresponding attack against *religio*. The ablative absolute *condentibus illis* then serves the role of a protasis to a past contrafactual clause—if the gods had hidden the *mundus*, it would not have become intelligible to humans (but it is, so they didn't hide it).

As Valvo has argued, however, there is another way to read this passage. After all, the culture history that follows Manilius' address to Mercury, with its emphasis on the ignorance and hardship that characterized humanity's primitive state, would seem to imply that there was in fact a time when the gods kept such knowledge from humanity. Should this be the case, there would then be no need to treat *condentibus illis* as contrafactual, but rather as a straightforward temporal phrase—who would have stolen the *mundus* when the gods were hiding it?<sup>242</sup> The following address to Mercury (*tu princeps auctorque sacri, Cyllenie, tanti*, 1.30) would then be not an abrupt shift from the line of questioning that precedes, but

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<sup>242</sup>Valvo 1978, 115: "Un tempo effettivamente gli dei nascosero i tesori che l'universo racchiudeva, non dando agli uomini la capacità comprendere: quel 'condentibus illis' del verso 26 prima citato, non indica un'ipotesi irreal, ma una situazione allora tristemente e crudelmente reale." Cf. Volk 2001, 109-110.

an answer to these questions: Mercury, in a role similar to that of the Hesiodic Prometheus, revealed to humanity the secrets hidden by the gods.<sup>243</sup>

The Promethean role assigned to Mercury on such a reading is not out of keeping with his portrayal elsewhere in Augustan poetry. Valvo notes the parallel between the Manilian passage and a passage from Horace (*Mercuri, facunde nepos Atlantis, / qui feros cultus hominum recentum / voce formasti catus...*, *Odes* 1.10.1-3).<sup>244</sup> Here too, Mercury is placed in the role of culture-bringer, and again there is a hint of disruptiveness; referring to Mercury's familial ties with Atlas, Horace calls attention to the Titanic aspect of the god. Horace subsequently describes various areas of Mercury's influence, including the god's facility at theft (*callidum quidquid placuit iocoso / condere furto*, *Odes* 1.10.7-8); read back into the Manilian passage, this characterization of Mercury, familiar from his depiction in the *Homeric Hymn*, squares nicely with that individual who would have stolen the *mundus* (*clepsisset furto mundum*).<sup>245</sup> Finally, Valvo draws comparisons between the optimistic view of Manilius' culture history, instigated by Mercury, and Prometheus' account of his own actions in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, seeing the same combination of dismay for human ignorance and pride in their ultimate attainment of knowledge in both works.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>243</sup>Such a reading would gain even more force on the reading of Flores 1982, 117-121, who argues that Hermes Trismegistos would have been seen as a human who became a god—thus responding also to Manilius' question *quis foret humano conatus pectore...*

<sup>244</sup>Valvo 1978, 121-123. For another possible example of Manilius' use of Horace, see Baldini Moscati 1980b.

<sup>245</sup>On *clepsisset* here, see also Flores 1982, 118-119.

<sup>246</sup>Valvo 1978, 123-128.

As Volk has rightly asserted in her discussion of Valvo's argument, however, such a reading is hard to take as a "primary" reading of the passage.<sup>247</sup> After all, there is little before the invocation to Mercury that would encourage a subversive first reading. Further, as I have argued above, the clear polemic with Lucretius in this passage, aimed against the gigantomachic portrayal of Epicurus by the earlier poet, reinforces the "pious" interpretation of these lines, with the devout Manilius railing against those individuals who would dare stand against the will of the gods. Even in the more overtly antagonistic passage that concludes the section, as Manilius portrays human *ratio* wresting the thunderbolt from Jupiter's grasp, Manilius is unwilling to remove divinity entirely, or to portray humanity in absolute control; to the poet, all our victory over Jupiter grants us is the recognition that all things are controlled by the *numen mundi* (1.111).<sup>248</sup>

Thus there remains a fundamental tension in the worldview presented by the poet, as his source material is shown as both an assault on the gods and a gift from those same gods. In her own analysis of this tension, Volk has tended to attribute such inconsistencies to a failure on the part of Manilius, for whom the imagery afforded by these various portrayals is more important than ideological consistency.<sup>249</sup> Leaving to one side the question of such consistency as a laudable or even achievable goal in a poetic undertaking, I would argue that such variances point less to the inconsistent mind of Manilius than to a fundamental tension within didactic poetry by Manilius' time. As seen in the previous chapters, such

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<sup>247</sup>Volk 2001, 110. Cf. Volk 2009, 255-257.

<sup>248</sup>This may be a reference to the Ciceronian passage quoted above, wherein Balbus claims that such investigation leads *ad cognitionem deorum*.

<sup>249</sup>See Volk 2001, 113-4; 2002, 208 and *passim*; and 2009, 251-258.

“inconsistency” is a central feature of both Lucretius’ and Vergil’s didactic projects. Thus Lucretius defends his chosen philosophy as an exemplar of true piety and attempts to refute charges of gigantomachic aggression, while at the same time presenting his hero Epicurus in terms directly recalling this gigantomachic aggression. Vergil similarly presents internal contradictions, though these revolve not around the relative orthodoxy of his teachings but their very efficacy. At one moment the student is told that the poet’s instruction will lead to a life similar to the philosopher’s and reminiscent of the Golden Age; at another, that neither farmer nor philosopher can withstand the desolation brought about by the plague. It should come as no surprise, then, to see such inconsistencies in the *Astronomica*, and we would do well to examine them against the backdrop of generic precedent rather than as the failing of an incapable author. Seeking to reconcile a pious attitude towards the gods with humanity’s potential to rival those same gods, Manilius may be seen operating fully within the didactic tradition.

### **Hermetic Thought and the Divinity of Humanity**

In addition to his use of the poetic tradition, Manilius also draws upon more esoteric forms of discourse in portraying the relationship between his student and the divine.

Manilius’ surprisingly positive view of magic as presented in his anthropology has already been discussed, but this view can be detected from the poem’s outset, as the poet claims that his task is to draw down the stars and his craft (characterized as divine) through his song

(1.1-6):

Carminē divinas artes et conscia fati  
sidera diversos hominum variantia casus,  
caelestis rationis opus, deducere mundo  
aggredior primusque novis Heliconā movere

cantibus et viridi nutantis vertice silvas  
hospita sacra ferens nulli memorata priorum.

This opening act of drawing celestial bodies from the sky is taken from a Vergilian passage, *Ecl.* 8.69-71, also referred to by Manilius in his mention of magical acts at *Astr.* 1.91-95 and quoted in my discussion above. The feat is a common one, often associated with Thessalian magicians and routinely included in lists of magical exempla.<sup>250</sup> Manilius' self-characterization in such terms places the poet in a tradition of magician-poets, in which may be included mythical figures such as Orpheus along with historical poets like Empedocles.<sup>251</sup>

Manilius' process of self-representation is furthered by his claim to "move Helicon with his song" and make its trees nod (1.4-5). In a process by now familiar to us, the idea is borrowed in part from Vergil. As Vergil tells us, Orpheus too had the power to move trees with his song (*Orpheaque in medio posuit silvasque sequentis*, *Ecl.* 3.46; cf. *mulcentem tigris et agentem carmine quercus*, *Geo.* 4.510), and the claim here is another indication of Manilius' connections to the legendary poet.<sup>252</sup> The claim also has generic significance. In Silenus' song in the sixth *Eclogue*, Vergil describes Linus' gifting of pipes to Gallus; giving

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<sup>250</sup>Flores 1982, 109-110, gives literary parallels. See also Maltby 2002 on Tibullus 1.2.45-46.

<sup>251</sup>This method of self-representation emphasizes the contradictory aspects of Manilius' poetry mentioned above; in the second book, Manilius will claim that it is *nefas* to draw down the mundus unwillingly, and the language used is similar enough to suggest an uncomfortable self-contradiction with Manilius' own act here (*quis neget esse nefas invitum prendere mundum / et velut in semet captum deducere in orbem*, 2.127-128); cf. Volk 2001, 92-100. Manilius addresses the risk of such contradiction by stressing the unwillingness of the *mundus* in the forbidden version of this act, and claiming that in his own case the universe itself is calling him to his task. The argument is similar to that in the "intellectual gigantomachy" of the culture history, where a seemingly impious act, wresting the thunderbolt from Jupiter, serves to show us the ultimate power of god.

<sup>252</sup> Cf. Wilson 1985, 289-290.

the pipes' history, Linus explains that an "old Ascraean" once used them to lead ash trees down from the mountains (*Ecl.* 6.69-71):<sup>253</sup>

dixerit: 'hos tibi dant calamos (en accipe) Musae,  
Ascraeo quos ante seni, quibus ille solebat  
cantando rigidas deducere montibus ornos.

Combined with the reference to Helicon, the allusion to these lines shows Manilius positioning himself within the tradition of Hesiodic didactic.

The reference can be pressed further. Silenus too, as he begins his song in the same *Eclogue*, is said by Vergil to cause the trees to nod (*tum vero in numerum Faunosque ferasque videres / ludere, tum rigidas motare cacumina quercus*, *Ecl.* 6.27-28). The initial subject of Silenus' song is the creation of the world, presented in terms that sound first Lucretian, then Empedoclean, and one may at first see this, too, as fitting within the didactic tradition (*Ecl.* 6.31-34):

Namque canebat uti magnum per inane coacta  
semina terrarumque animaeque marisque fuissent  
et liquidi simul ignis; ut his exordia primis  
omnia, et ipse tener mundi concreverit orbis...

In this case, whether the reader identifies Manilius in his role as charmer of nature with Hesiod or with Silenus, Manilius' self-representation as didactic poet would remain constant.

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<sup>253</sup>These lines would have a magical resonance as well; cf. Verg. *Aen.* 4.487-493, where Dido gives a list of magical arts that includes the movement of trees from mountains:

haec se carminibus promittit solvere mentes  
quas velit, ast aliis duras immittere curas,  
sistere aquam fluviiis et vertere sidera retro,  
nocturnosque movet Manis: mugire videbis  
sub pedibus terram et descendere montibus ornos.  
testor, cara, deos et te, germana, tuumque  
dulce caput, magicas invitam accingier artis.

For the *Aeneid* passage and its relation to the *Eclogue*, see O'Hara 1993, 21-22. For Hesiod's conflation with Orpheus in the *Eclogues* passage, see Ross 1975, 23-24, who perhaps goes too far in seeing *ille* as actually referring to Orpheus.

Silenus quickly moves on, however, to a more mythological discourse, recounting tales such as the creation of humanity, Saturn’s reign, and Prometheus’ theft and punishment (*hinc lapides Pyrrhae iactos, Saturnia regna, / Caucasiasque refert volucris furtumque Promethei, Ecl.* 6.41-42). This combination of what may be called “scientific” and “mythological” discourses may also be seen in some ways as “Hesiodic,” but there is a closer parallel. In the opening book of the *Argonautica*, Orpheus is said to perform a song strikingly similar to that of Silenus, starting with an Empedoclean description of creation (Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 1.496-499):

Ἦειδεν δ’ ὥς γὰρ καὶ οὐρανὸς ἡδὲ θάλασσα,  
τὸ πρὶν ἔτ’ ἀλλήλοισι μιῇ συναρηρότα μορφῇ,  
νεῖκεος ἐξ ὀλοοῖο διέκριθεν ἀμφὶς ἕκαστα...

Like Silenus’ song, Orpheus’ quickly turns to “mythological” matters, narrating the rise of Kronos and Rhea to the throne of Olympus and foreshadowing Jupiter’s victory over the Titans (Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 1.503-511).<sup>254</sup> Representing himself as a singer akin to Silenus, then, Manilius aligns himself with both Hesiod and Orpheus. Thus Manilius compounds this issue of self-representation, portraying himself not simply as a didactic poet but as a didactic poet of a specific kind. As with Vergil in the *Georgics*, Manilius identifies his didaxis with Orphic poetry, and in so doing, I would argue, allows for his poetry to be taken as initiatory.

Other elements in the poem’s opening serve to reinforce this initiatory aspect.

Indeed, Manilius emphasizes the religious nature of his work, repeatedly portraying his poem as part of a holy rite.<sup>255</sup> He even ties this into his Orphic self-representation; it is in the act of “moving the trees with his song” that he claims to be conducting sacred rites unknown to

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<sup>254</sup>Cf. Ross 1975, 25-26.

<sup>255</sup>For this mystical aspect in Manilius’ poetry, see Volk 2009, 211-215. Cf. Flores 1982, 110; Schrijvers 1983, 147-148.



earlier generations (*hospita sacra ferens nulli memorata priorum*, *Astr.* 1.6). Shortly afterwards, he presents both his poetic composition and his instruction in terms of religious worship—it is to the altars of his song and his subject matter that he prays (*bina mihi positis lucent altaria flammis, / ad duo templa precor duplici circumdatus aestu / carminis et rerum...*, 1.20-22). The “flight of the mind” that Manilius describes in this section, speaking of living in the heavens where he may study the stars, may also serve this purpose; as Landolfi has argued, the imagery has a long pedigree in literary references to initiation, recurring since the time of Parmenides.<sup>256</sup>

These initiatory features of the poem are involved in a broader strain of Manilian thought that has often been seen as Hermetic in origin. The poet’s address to Mercury in his proem encourages such a connection; calling upon the god as the founder of astrology, Manilius appears to refer to the instantiation of the god known as Hermes Trismegistos—a syncretizing version of the Greek Hermes and the Egyptian god Thoth said to be the originator of the Hermetic corpus. Certainly, several similarities have been detected between the ideas expressed in the Hermetic corpus and those of Manilius’ poem, and it is compelling to see in Manilius’ work a version of the revelatory outlook found in that corpus.<sup>257</sup> Ultimately, however, Manilius’ direct knowledge of Hermetism cannot be guaranteed; as Volk and others have noted, Hermetism is a conglomeration of various earlier thought-systems, and it is perfectly feasible that Manilius is drawing from these earlier traditions

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<sup>256</sup>See Landolfi 1999. Cf. Volk 2009, 212.

<sup>257</sup>See esp. Vallauri 1954 and Valvo 1956. While the notion of a Hermetic tinge to Manilius’ thought has become common, there has been some pushback; Volk 2009, 234-239 gives an overview of the salient arguments with bibliography.

instead.<sup>258</sup> What is important for our purposes are the portions of Manilian thought commonly seen as Hermetic and their implications for the poem—above all the focus on god as the primary object of knowledge, the necessity of this knowledge for the well-being of humanity, and the essential divinity of humanity.

As discussed previously, Manilius presents his poetic instruction as a form of religious worship. Similarly, the object of that instruction is portrayed in quasi-religious terms. Throughout the *Astronomica*, Manilius takes care to emphasize the heavens' role as an exemplum of divine reason. Already in the opening lines, Manilius describes his subject as such (*caelestis rationis opus*, 1.3) and this is reiterated in the poet's address to Mercury; as Manilius explains it, Mercury taught humanity astrology so that they would "recognize god where he was greatest" (1.35-37):

maior uti facies mundi foret, et veneranda  
non species tantum sed et ipsa potentia rerum,  
sentirentque deum gentes qua maximus esset.

In the course of the poem, Manilius expands on these claims, portraying the celestial sphere as not just the work of god, but as god itself. Thus after remarking on the constancy of the heavens (1.474-481), the poet uses this immutability to argue that the universe is both controlled by god and is god (1.483-485):<sup>259</sup>

Ac mihi tam praesens ratio non ulla videtur,  
qua pateat mundum divino numine verti  
atque ipsum esse deum, nec forte coisse magistra... 485

<sup>258</sup>Volk 2009, 237.

<sup>259</sup>Cf. 1.521-523:

idem semper erit quoniam semper fuit idem.  
non alium videre patres aliumve nepotes  
aspicient. deus est, qui non mutatur in aevo.

By the proem of the second book, Manilius overtly refers to the subject of his song as god. In a particularly Stoicizing passage, the poet claims that he will sing of “god, imbued in heaven and earth and sea, guiding the great mass by uniform agreement” (2.60-66):

namque canam tacita naturae mente potentem 60  
infusumque deum caelo terrisque fretoque  
ingentem aequali moderantem foedere molem,  
totumque alterno consensu vivere mundum  
et rationis agi motu, cum spiritus unus  
per cunctas habitet partes atque irriget orbem 65  
omnia pervolitans corpusque animale figuret.

Lest the student become alarmed at the magnitude of this undertaking, Manilius attempts to offer reassurances. Even animals, ignorant as they are, observe the stars and recognize the change of the seasons (2.99-104). Who, asks the poet, would then hesitate to link humanity with the heavens (*quis dubitet post haec hominem coniungere caelo?*, 2.105). Manilius then proceeds to enumerate the advantages that god has given humanity above and beyond mere animals, and ends with his boldest claim—that of god’s presence in man (2.106-108):

eximium natura dedit linguamque capaxque  
ingenium volucremque animum, quem denique in unum  
descendit deus atque habitat seque ipse requirit...

Repeating his earlier statement that astrology was granted to humanity by the gods (*quem* [sc. *mundum*] *primum interius licuit cognoscere terris / munere caelestum*..., 1.25-26), Manilius explains that knowledge of heaven has been granted by heaven, and that the astrologer may discover god because he himself is part of the gods (2.115-116):

quis caelum posset nisi caeli munere nosse,  
et reperire deum, nisi qui pars ipse deorum est?

Here Manilius makes his own variation to the rhetoric of divinization seen in his poetic predecessors; whereas earlier poets had made knowledge the prerequisite of divinity, Manilius turns the figure on its head, making the essential divinity of humanity proof of our ability to acquire knowledge. In this, Manilius' stance may be compared to that of Empedocles when expounding his physical system. Just as no essential knowledge is needed for the divinity of Empedocles' student, who is composed of immortal elements and will eventually become part of the divine *Sphairos* with the rest of the universe, so too for Manilius' student divinity would seem to be taken as assumed, and unaffected by the poet's instruction.

Yet Manilius suggests a slightly more nuanced relationship between knowledge and divinity later in his poem. In the middle of his fourth book, Manilius explains the system of "decans," a method by which zodiacal signs are assigned to portions of other signs to compound their influences (4.310-362). Having described this complexity, the poet supposes a confused student, who responds in frustration at this complication (4.387-389):<sup>260</sup>

"Multum" inquis "tenuemque iubes me ferre laborem,  
rursus et in magna mergis caligine mentem,  
cernere cum facili lucem ratione viderer."

Attempting to assuage the student's concern, Manilius explains that the task's rewards are worth the difficulty, as the object of the student's inquiry is god, and the ultimate goal is the ascent of heaven and mastery of the universe (4.390-393):

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<sup>260</sup>Green 2014, 39-44, sees the student's projected despondency here and near the end of book 4 as part of the larger didactic failure that Manilius inscribes into his poem. While Green is certainly right to note the complexity this presumed frustration adds to the "didactic plot" of the poem, he neglects to treat the book's finale, in which Manilius rebuffs the student's complaints and makes some of his most forceful claims for the divinity of man, with anything more than a casual dismissal: "It goes without saying that the student will not share Manilius' final assessment in the book..." (43).

quod quaeris, deus est: conaris scandere caelum  
fataque fatali genitus cognoscere lege  
et transire tuum pectus mundoque potiri.  
pro pretio labor est nec sunt immunia tanta...

390

In a reuse of the “intellectual gigantomachy” trope used in the cultural history of book one, Manilius here presents the acquisition of knowledge in aggressive terms, as something approaching an assault on the heavens. In so doing he also reasserts the necessity of knowledge in the acquisition of divinity; the student cannot achieve this *pretium* without first undergoing the requisite *labor*.

This causal relationship can again be seen in the conclusion to the fourth book. Having described the potential effects of eclipses on the power of the zodiacal signs (4.818-865), Manilius again presents the potential response of his student, overcome by the difficulty of the task, whose mind resists and whose fear “keeps him from heaven’s threshold” (4.866-868):

Sed quid tam tenui prodest ratione nitentem  
scrutari mundum, si mens sua cuique repugnat  
spemque timor tollit prohibetque a limine caeli?

There is a key ambivalence in this final phrase. One may read *prohibetque a limine caeli* figuratively to mean that fear keeps the student from practicing astrology, and thus approaching the “threshold of heaven”; the phrase may also be taken literally, to indicate that fear keeps the student from ascending to the heavens and thus becoming divine. I would argue that both readings are valid, and, for Manilius, amount to the same thing: by blocking the student from studying astrology, fear would also prevent the student from the divine state. Here again Manilius presents a relationship between divinity and knowledge more akin to that seen in the other didactic poets, where the subject of the poet’s instruction provides the means by which the student achieves divinity.

Manilius insists upon this relationship for the rest of the fourth book in an attempt to remove any remaining doubt from his student. Displaying the same optimistic view of human progress as that seen in his cultural history, the poet explains that “now nature nowhere lies hidden; we have perceived everything...and approach the stars from which we were born” (4.883-885):

iam nusquam natura latet; pervidimus omnem  
et capto potimur mundo nostrumque parentem  
pars sua perspicimus genitique accedimus astris. 885

The importance of knowledge’s role is here emphasized by the sequence of narration; though we may be born of the stars, it is only once humanity has investigated nature in its entirety that we may return to them. Book 1 is echoed again twenty lines later, as Manilius once more redeploys the trope of “intellectual gigantomachy,” describing how humanity “victoriously raises its eyes to the stars and investigates Jupiter” (4.906-910):

...victorque ad sidera mittit  
sidereos oculos propiusque aspectat Olympum  
inquirique Iovem; nec sola fronte deorum  
contentus manet, et caelum scrutatur in alvo  
cognatumque sequens corpus se quaerit in astris. 910

With the book’s closing words, Manilius reminds his student of the all-powerful force of *ratio*, promising that humans may witness the divine, as they are now creating gods themselves in the person of Augustus (4.932-935):

...ratio omnia vincit.  
ne dubites homini divinos credere visus,  
iam facit ipse deos mittitque ad sidera numen,  
maius et Augusto crescet sub principe caelum.

## Conclusion

In this concluding passage of book 4, Manilius ties together the disparate rhetorical threads he has used over the course of his poem: the potential transcendence of humanity, the divinizing power of *ratio*, and the apotheosis of Augustus. As argued previously, the political apotheosis of Augustus described in book 1 cannot provide a perfect exemplum of *how* the student is to achieve divinity, but here Manilius uses the simple fact of the *princeps*' apotheosis to argue for the same possibility for his student. Through the ultimate power of *ratio*, idealized in the poet's subject of astrology, humanity has been led from an ignorant Golden Age to equality with Jupiter himself. While Augustus has shown that humanity can create its own gods, Manilius presents his instruction as the means by which the student can understand the divine, and in so doing, recognize his or her own divinity.

## Conclusion

Over the course of this study, I have argued for a continuity in the didactic poetic discourse based on a conception of the divinizing power of knowledge. This conception is found already in the genre's foundational text, Hesiod's *Works and Days*, wherein the poet compares the life of the Just City to that "life like the gods" enjoyed by the humans of the golden race, and would be developed by Hesiod's poetic successors to advance their own forms of epistemologically-driven divinity. In this development, the Hesiodic Myth of the Ages would play a central role; I have shown how each subsequent didactic poet shaped the myth to his own ends, from Lucretius' portrayal of society's suspiciously Epicurean beginnings, to Vergil's rustic Golden Age located at the origins of the Roman state, to Manilius' optimistic upheaval of the mythic order and his assertion of the superiority of the Iron Age. Philosophical developments would also play their part. While the similarity of Hesiod's Just City and Golden Age allow for the suggestion of the student's deification, only with the philosophical poem of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* do we encounter a poet openly avowing the possibility of a student's "life like the gods" and it is hard to imagine the pantheistic optimism of poets such as Aratus or Manilius without the prevalence of Stoicizing thought.

Recognition of the pervasiveness of this connection between knowledge and divinity in didactic poetry may suggest fruitful areas for further inquiry. While the focus of this study has been the divinizing effect of knowledge on the student, one may also consider



what implications this connection has for the poet's self-representation; if the acquisition of knowledge is enough for the attainment of deification, what is to be made of the poet as a purveyor of this knowledge? In this connection, the poet's sources may also be considered, from the Muse-granted inspiration of Hesiod, to Lucretius' careful adherence to his master Epicurus' precepts, to the autoptic empirical knowledge to which Vergil lays claim. It is notable that in our first extant didactic poem lacking mention of the Muses, Nicander's *Theriaca*, the poet in the opening lines suggests an equivalence between himself and Zeus.<sup>261</sup>

Further inquiry may look to another branch of the didactic tradition represented by Callimachus' *Aetia* and Ovid's *Fasti*. While the works of this study have been what may be called "systemic," providing ideologically-driven methods by which the student may look at the world, this latter branch by contrast may be considered "scholastic," focused more on the collection of information than the (overt) exposition of a particular worldview.<sup>262</sup> As such, would the poet's instruction be expected to have the same effect on the student? Especially in the case of the *Fasti*, in which the poet's information is presented as a direct conversation between himself and the gods, one would expect the interaction between knowledge and divinity to be of particular importance.

For the present, however, I aim to have shown both the importance of knowledge-driven deification in the didactic genre, and its role in the didactic discourse as a way to

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<sup>261</sup>See Clauss 2006, 162-169.

<sup>262</sup>Cf. the distinction of Harder 2007, 25-29, between "instructive" poetry of the former type and "informative" poetry of the latter.

engage with one's poetic predecessors. Certainly, Hesiod's quasi-"life like the gods" of the Just City bears little resemblance to the transmigratory divinity offered by Empedocles, which itself differs greatly from the ataractic state of the Lucretian wise man or the recognition of an inherent divinity portrayed by Manilius. Yet each of these poets can be seen self-consciously working within a shared tradition, portraying their new articulations on the divinizing role of knowledge in ways meant to recall their poetic predecessors. This evocation of previous models can be used for recontextualization, as when Aratus refashions the Hesiodic Golden Age in an image more suitable to his optimistic outlook, or Lucretius offers two complementary "Golden Ages" to fit his philosophical needs—one a portrayal of "hard" primitivism, the other a simulacrum of the Epicurean good life. It can also be used for refutation, as in Vergil's *Georgics*, where the poet's models are evoked to call the entire enterprise into question and foreground the contradictions and impossibilities inherent in this system of didactic divinization. In the work of all of these poets, however, we can see a central preoccupation with the connection between knowledge and divinity, and the potential for the student to live "a life like the gods."

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