It has therefore to be said that, though it contains material which it has cost F. considerable pains to collect and which will be of value to future critics and editors, this is not the authoritative plain-text edition which might have supplanted Martin's Teubner (now, it seems, out of print). For practical purposes, Smith's Loeb is still the most consistently helpful guide to what Lucretius wrote. Whether Volume II of F.'s edition will give cause to modify these judgements remains to be seen.

Cambridge E. J. KENNEY

A NON-DIDACTIC LUCRETIUS?

L. RUMPF: *Naturerkenntnis und Naturerfahrung. Zur Reflexion epikureischer Theorie bei Lukrez.* (Zetemata 116.) Pp. 285. Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2003. Paper, €59.90. ISBN: 3-406-51181-3.

More than a quarter of Lorenz Rumpf's revisionist monograph on Lucretius is taken up by a methodological preface (Chapters 1 and 2). R. declares his dissatisfaction with recent approaches to the *DRN* (e.g. those of D. Clay, M. Gale, and D. Sedley), which offer contextualized readings of the poem and view it as primarily didactic, that is, geared toward teaching Epicureanism. In R.'s opinion, such interpretations, which explain the text by continually referring to something external, are in danger of missing features inside the poem that contribute to its complexity and cannot be ascribed to its presumed didactic function. R. himself therefore proposes to offer an 'immanent' reading of the *DRN*, one that proceeds in a deliberately naive manner and endeavours not to make use of any contextual knowledge. (In making the case that such an approach is viable, R. refers to the universalist linguistic theory of J. Searle, claiming that all texts, even those from different periods and cultures, are in their essence immediately understandable on account of all humans' shared linguistic and cultural competence.) The focus of R.'s approach is on the structure of meaning created by the text itself, not on the presumed authorial intention, and his goal is to uncover tensions within the poem and to complicate the view of Lucretius as a straightforward teacher of Epicureanism. While R. distances himself from the old-style 'anti-Lucrèce chez Lucrèce' approach, he is avowedly in search of 'further voices' in the *DRN* (pp. 30–1, with reference to R. O. A. M. Lyne's book on the *Aeneid*).

R. puts his method to the test in the interpretation of individual passages in Chapters 3–8 and summarizes his findings in the final Chapter 9. He comes to the conclusion that Lucretius is not simply reporting Epicurean doctrine but—in the very way in which he represents it—subtly reflecting and enlarging on it, and at points even contradicting and deconstructing it. In particular, Lucretius appears to hint that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, that is, that (contrary to Epicurean orthodoxy) there is more to the world than atoms and void. In R.'s opinion, Lucretius shows a remarkable interest in the surface structure of the perceptible world, and repeatedly seems to dwell on the individual, whether it be an individual phenomenon, such as Mt Etna, an individual person's life, or our individual world—even though, according to his own teaching, the individual is insignificant *vis-à-vis* both the infinity of the whole and the microstructure of atoms. Lucretius would thus stress the importance of the individual subject and its relation to the world and to advocate not only 'Naturerkenntnis' but crucially also 'Naturerfahrung'.

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While R.'s approach and findings are certainly thought-provoking, there are a number of problems. First, there are difficulties inherent in this decontextualized way of reading. Not surprisingly, at points it turns out not to be so decontextualized after all, especially in those instances where R. reasonably enough takes recourse to his knowledge of what 'genuine' Epicurean teaching is like. At other points, however, dispensing as much as possible with outside information gives R. license to engage in wild subjectivity and interpret the text in whatever way he likes.

Secondly, the individual interpretations rather differ in quality (here, obviously, my opinion is subjective—but after all, subjectivity is the name of R.'s own game). R.'s reading of the hymn to Venus (Chapter 3) strikes me as bizarre, especially the claim that Venus is a cultivating force and inspires animals not just with sexual desire, but also with the ability to participate in a loving relationship (*incutiens blandum per pectora amorem* [1.19] need not mean that the animals themselves become 'charming' in their pursuit of love); I am unconvinced by his claim (Chapter 4) that the combined analogies of wind and river in *DRN* 1.271–97 hint that the perceptible world is somehow 'more' than a conglomerate of atoms (in fact, they seem to me a beautiful example of how even complex phenomena *can* be reduced to atoms); and his interpretation of the honeyed-cup simile (Chapter 5), while fine, is not particularly original. By contrast, there are many perceptive observations in the close readings of Chapters 6–8 (on the finale of *DRN* 2; the diatribe against the fear of death; and two passages having to do with infinity), where R. convincingly demonstrates Lucretius' fascination with the concrete and individual. These are, in my opinion, the most successful chapters of the book.

Finally, R. coyly refuses to speculate about authorial intention or even about the function of the textual features he uncovers (interpretive moves associated with the 'didactic' school of Lucretian scholarship he is reacting against). Still, while R. is supposedly simply describing his findings, there nevertheless emerges a picture of what, in his opinion, the *DRN* is all about: his Lucretius is neither a single-minded teacher of orthodox Epicurean theory nor an 'anti-Lucrèce chez Lucrèce'-type pessimist, but instead some kind of romantic, who revels in the individual soul's sublime experience of the wonders of nature (R.'s emphatic, sometimes nearly spiritual, diction in this context is remarkable; witness, for example, his claim that in the hymn to Venus, the poet 'macht das Weltgeschehen zum Sinnbild für seine eigene Erweckung', p. 95). However, would it not be possible to explain Lucretius' unorthodox delight in describing the real world differently, e.g. (*pace* R.) as a didactic strategy, if not simply a function of the *DRN*'s being, well, poetry? Perhaps for Lucretius, joyous 'Naturerfahrung' is indeed the honey on the rim of the sometimes bitter cup of 'Naturerkenntnis'.

Columbia University KATHARINA VOLK

THE *GEORGICS* AND LUCRETIUS

M. GALE: *Virgil on the Nature of Things. The* Georgics, *Lucretius and the Didactic Tradition*. Pp. xiv + 321. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Cased, £40. ISBN: 0-521-78111-6.

This book sets out to explore the ground between strongly oppositional (aka 'pessimistic') readings of the *Georgics*, as represented chiefly in the writings of David

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