

Storing up Past Pleasures

The Soul-Vessel-Metaphor in Lucretius and in his Greek Models

Unlike most other chapters in this volume, dedicated to more basic aspects of Lucretius' work, the present piece deals with a couple of isolated sections of *De rerum natura* and pursues a quite restricted aim: to shed some new light on one single metaphor and to point to what may have been Lucretius' sources and literary models for it. Still, a few of the following observations seem to have some bearing on two major topics touched upon repeatedly during the Amsterdam conference: Lucretian orthodoxy, and his use of sources other than Epicurus.

1. There are two major passages in *De rerum natura* where the human mind is compared to a *vas*, to a vessel or jar. Towards the end of the third book, nature herself (931: *rerum natura*) is made to sharply rebuke those who are afraid of death and are unwilling to die. Here is the full text, with some graphic illustration of its structure (III.931-965):

	... si vocem rerum natura repente mittat et hoc alicui nostrum sic increpet ipsa 'quid tibi tanto operest, mortalis, quod nimis aegris luctibus indulges? quid mortem congemis ac fles?	
A. Right attitude	nam si grata ¹ fuit tibi vita anteacta priorque et non omnia pertusum congesta quasi in vas commoda perfluxere atque ingrata interiери, cur non ut plenus vitae conviva recedis aequo animoque capis securam, stulte, quietem?	935
B. Wrong attitude	sin ea quae fructus cumque es periere profusa vitaeque in offensast, cur amplius addere quaeris, rursum quod pereat male et ingratum occidat omne, non potius vitae finem facis atque laboris? nam tibi praeterea quod machiner inveniamque, quod placeat, nil est: eadem sunt omnia semper.	940 945
a. of young people	si tibi non annis corpus iam marcet et artus confecti languent, eadem tamen omnia restant, omnia si pergas vivendo vincere saecula, atque etiam potius, si numquam sis moriturus, ²	

¹ Naugerius' emendation (OQ *nam gratis fuit*). There can be no reasonable doubt that it is correct, nor about Lachmann's transposition of verse 955 (now 952).

	quid respondemus, nisi iustam intendere litem naturam et veram verbis exponere causam?	950
b. of old people	grandior hic vero si iam seniorque queratur atque obitum lamentetur miser amplius aequo, non merito inlacet magis et voce increpet acri?	[955] [952] [953]
	'aufer abhinc lacrimas, balatro, et compesce querelas. omnia perfunctus vitae praemia marces. sed quia semper aves quod abest, praesentia temnis, imperfecta tibi elapsast ingrataque vita et nec opinanti mors ad caput adstitit ante quam satur ac plenus possis discedere rerum.	955 [954] 960
	nunc aliena tua tamen aetate omnia mitte aequo animoque aedum +magnis+ concede: necessesst. iure, ut opinor, agat, iure increpet inciletque. cedit enim rerum novitate extrusa vetustas semper, et ex aliis aliud reparare necessesst ...	 965

We shall come back to this text more than once; now let us note only that two classes of people are distinguished: those who are 'grateful'; who are satisfied with their previous life (935: *si grata fuit ... vita anteacta*) and who did *not* whatever life has offered them 'pour it, as it were, into a perforated vessel,' and, on the other hand, those who, foolishly, have done just this: who have let pass away as through a sieve all *commoda* they had occasion to enjoy. In close analogy to verse 935 Lucretius says about them (941): *vita in offensa est*, 'they are dissatisfied with their (previous) life.' Let us also note that, oddly, both classes are characterized by more or less the same words and expressions, the antithesis being brought about by the use of negations: the sensible people's mind is *not* like a perforated vessel; they do *not* let the *commoda* pass away. But the opposition is clear: watertight vessel versus leaky or indeed perforated one.

The simile of the perforated jar is taken up shortly after with a clear allusion to the Danaids (III.1003-1010):

1003 deinde animi ingratham naturam pascere semper
atque explere bonis rebus satiareque numquam
...
hoc, ut opinor, id est, aevo florente puellas
quod memorant laticem pertusum congerere in vas
1010 quod tamen expleri nulla ratione potestur.

A significantly different version of the soul-vessel-metaphor is found somewhat earlier, a prelude, as it were, to the passages just considered (III.870-873):

proinde ubi se videas hominem indignarier ipsum,
post mortem fore ut aut putescat corpore posto
aut flammis interfiat malisve ferarum,
scire licet non sincerum sonere...

Those who cannot stand the thought of what will happen to their body after death do not 'ring true', as cracked jars do not 'ring true'. Allusion is made to the well-known

method of testing jars by knocking on them² – a method that not only helps to sort out cracked pieces of pottery but, as may be seen from the Philebus passage, to tell apart clean from putrid or otherwise rotten ones.

The two types of fault, cracks and rottenness, are mentioned one after the other and neatly distinguished in the second major Lucretian passage. Epicurus is praised for having freed mankind of all sorts of fear; he was able to do so, we are told, as he had seen and realized what was the root of all human lapses and errors (VI.9-27):

- 10 nam cum vidit hic ad victum quae flagitat usus
omnia iam ferme mortalibus esse parata
et, proquam possent, vitam consistere tutam,
divitiis homines et honore et laude potentis
affluere atque bona gnatorum excellere fama,
15 nec minus esse domi cuiquam tamen anxia corda,
atque animi ingratis vitam vexare <sine ulla>
pausa atque infestis cogi saevire querelis,
intellegit ibi vitium vas efficere ipsum
omniaque illius vitio corrumpier intus
20 quae collata foris et commoda cumque venirent,
partim quod fluxum pertusumque esse videbat,
ut nulla posset ratione explerier umquam;
partim quod taetro quasi conspurcare sapore
omnia cernebat, quaecumque receperat, intus.
25 veridicis igitur purgavit pectora dictis
et finem statuit cuppedinis atque timoris
exposuitque bonum summum quo tendimus omnes
quid foret, atque viam monstravit...

‘... he then did understand that it was the vessel itself which wrought the disease, and that by its disease all things were corrupted within it, whatsoever came into it gathered from without, yea even blessings; in part because he saw that it was leaking and full of holes, so that by no means could it ever be filled; in part because he perceived that it tainted as with foul savour all things within it, which it had taken in ...’ (17-23, Bailey’s translation).

Strictly speaking, it is two different types of defect Lucretius talks of: firstly those people who prove unable to keep in their mind whatever advantages had ‘entered’ it from without, and so are never satisfied, indeed insatiable, and secondly those who have an unsound, a rotten mind so that whatever is received gets rotten as if by contagion.³

² See Plato *Phlb.* 55c: γενναίως δέ, εἴ πῆ τι σαθρὸν ἔχει, πᾶν περικρούωμεν, ὥς ὅτι καθαρῶτάτὸν ἐστ’ αὐτῶν φύσει, τοῦτο κατιδόντες εἰς τὴν κρίσιν χρώμεθα τὴν κοινὴν τοῖς τε τούτων καὶ τοῖς τῆς ἡδονῆς μέρεσιν ἀληθεστάτοις. Further *Tht.* 179d: προσιτέον οὖν ἐγγυτέρω ... καὶ σκεπτέον τὴν φερομένην ταύτην οὐσίαν διακρούοντα εἴτε ὑγιᾶς εἴτε σαθρὸν φθέγγεται. There may have been a half-conscious conflation of σαθρός and σαπρός in the spoken language. For *sincerum sonere* compare Ennius *fr. scaen.* 108 Jocelyn: *nam neque irati neque blandi quicquam sincere sonunt.*

³ If Plut. *De liberis educandis* 12 f is to be believed, Pythagoras may have been the first to compare a corrupt soul to a putrid vessel: ‘σιτίον εἰς ἀμίδα μὴ ἐμβάλλειν’· ἐπισημαίνει γὰρ ὅτι εἰς πονηρὰν ψυχὴν ἀστεῖον λόγον ἐμβάλλειν οὐ προσήκεν. See further Hor. *Ep.* 1.2.54: *sincerum est nisi vas, quodcumque infundis acescit*; Epictetus in Gellius XVII.19.3 (fr. 10 Schenkl): ἄνθρωπε, ποῦ βάλλεις; σκέψαι, εἰ κεκάθαρται τὸ ἀγγεῖον· ἂν γὰρ εἰς τὴν οἴησιν αὐτὰ βάλλῃς (viz. philosophical studies into self-conceit and vague opinion), ἀπόλετο· ἦν σαπῆ, οὖρον ἢ ὄξος γένοιτο ἢ εἴ τι τούτων χεῖρον. – As to Lucretius VI.17 ff. commentators point to Plato *Prt.* 314a-b: σιτία μὲν γὰρ καὶ ποτὰ πριάμενον παρὰ τοῦ κατήλου καὶ ἐμπόρου ἔξεστιν ἐν ἄλλοις ἀγγείοις ἀποφέρειν, καὶ πρὶν δέξασθαι αὐτὰ εἰς τὸ σῶμα πίνοντα ἢ φαγόντα, καταθέμενον οἴκαδε ἔξεστιν συμβουλεύσασθαι, παρακαλέσαντα τὸν ἐπαίοντα, ὅτι τε ἐδεστέον ἢ ποτέον καὶ ὅτι μὴ, καὶ ὁπόσον καὶ

But surely we are not to see the two types of defect as mutually exclusive: porosity may lead to putrescence, and vice versa. Regenbogen (1932) 33 (= repr. 329 f.) points to the different stylistic register ('Höhenlage') of the two images, and confidently concludes that Lucretius here must have availed himself of two different sources: the more exalted simile of the perforated vessel originating from time-honoured mystery religions, which Lucretius could have found in Plato (see presently on *Grg.* 493a-494a), whereas the vulgar picture of the foul stinking jar must have been borrowed from popular diatribe. There is something in the distinction. But let us not rashly determine 'sources': one recalls that Pythagoras is said to have likened a rotten soul to a chamber-pot and that the unclean-vessel-simile occurs in Plato as well as in more 'vulgar' genres (notes 2 and 3).

2. To the best of my knowledge, the soul-vessel-metaphor is not found in the extant writings of Epicurus.⁴ This need not seriously worry us, as Lucretius' simile seems to be perfectly in line with Epicurus' doctrine. To have a mind like a rotten vessel clearly means: to be unreasonable, to entertain unsound ideas, in short: to be not (or not yet) an Epicurean; so what Epicurus had to do is (VI.24) 'to purge people's hearts with his truthful words,' i.e. to convince people of his doctrine. And the soul as a 'leaky' vessel may easily be read as an appeal to keep in mind and so to store up all *commoda*, all pleasures received so far:⁵ after all, it is by a treasure of pleasant memories that perpetual happiness is guaranteed to the Epicurean sage. All this is undeniably true and quite undisputed.

But it is not the whole truth. We feel a certain shift of emphasis in Lucretius; the general trend of the third book passage, in particular, differs from what we are accustomed to read in Epicurus. The key-note of Nature's invective (III.933 ff.) is plain enough: 'If on the one hand you have proved able to duly receive and to store up the *commoda* I, Nature, have bestowed on you — if so, your vessel is full, you are (or ought to be) satisfied, and there is no reason not to give up life ungrudgingly. If on

ὁπότε· ὥστε ἐν τῇ ὄνῃ οὐ μέγας ὁ κίνδυνος. μαθήματα δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἄλλῳ ἀγγεῖῳ ἀπενεγκεῖν, ἀλλ' ἀνάγκη καταθέντα τὴν τιμὴν τὸ μάθημα ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ψυχῇ λαβόντα καὶ μαθόντα ἀπιέναι ἢ βεβλαμμένον ἢ ὠφελημένον. This is indeed a similar line of thought to that in Lucretius; but it should be noted that in Plato the contagion goes the other way round: we have to be careful when 'buying' thoughts and advice: we cannot carry them home in neutral containers as we can carry other things bought in the market — we have to pour 'bought' thoughts directly in our mind; so if the merchandise is putrid, it is bound to infect our *soul*, it being the 'vessel'.

⁴ There is no need to follow Usener (1887) 263 commenting on Lucretius VI.10: *similitudinem vasis statuo ab ipso Epicuro usurpatam, fortasse ex Bione sublatam* ...

⁵ Notoriously, the Garden's philosophical opponents denied that this was possible, the Epicurean 'goods' or 'pleasure' being basically physical ones which would not last beyond their actual experience. Carneades mocked at the doctrine of ἡδοναί memorized (Plut. *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum* 1089c = fr. 436 Us. = Carneades fr. 20 Mette): this was like noting down in a diary how often one had made love, enjoyed delicious food etc., and then reviving the experience by studying the lists; similarly Cic. *Tusc.* V.74: *...ut si quis aestuans ... recordari velit sese aliquando in Arpinati nostro gelidis fluminibus circumfusum fuisse; non enim video, quo modo sedare possint mala praesentia praeteritae voluptates*. And it was easy enough to argue that if past goods stored up in memory guaranteed happiness for ever then past evils, stored up likewise in everyone's memory, should result in perpetual misery, see e.g. Cic. *Fin.* II.104: *illud quale tandem est: bona praeterita non effluere sapienti, mala meminisse non oportere?* For a more subtle form of criticism, based on a vessel-metaphor, see Appendix a.

the other you have been unable to do so, i.e. you did *not* “keep” what you have enjoyed (940: *quae fructus cumque es*) and you “hate” your life (941: *vita in offensa est*), you are dissatisfied with your life — if so it does not make sense either to go on living, as whatever benefits of pleasures I might further bestow on you will be equally lost.’

The latter statement is not only harsh, it is discouraging. And that is surprising in a poem otherwise bursting with missionary zeal. Could not Nature have said: ‘If you have not succeeded so far, try better henceforth?’ Later on (959) it is at least hinted at that a conversion for the better is possible; but on the whole Lucretius, in our third book passage, follows one single and simple line: ‘Whether you are satisfied with your *vita anteacta* or utterly dissatisfied, there is no reason whatsoever to cling to life.’ What Nature states as her reasons for saying so sounds a bit small-minded and down-to-earth, as if she has taken offence at the rejection of her gifts: ‘You have tried everything I had to offer, and you did not like it. Do not wait for further pleasures to come — there are none, everything will be the same as before, everything will be repeated for ever’ (944-947, compare 1080 f.: *praeterea versamur ibidem atque insumus usque / nec nova vivendo procuditur ulla voluptas*).

A second rhetorical division follows (947-951; 952-965): of those who are dissatisfied first young persons are addressed, and it is repeated to them that there are no new *commoda* to come; then the elderly dissatisfied are told they had to go anyhow and make way for new generations, Nature needed the atomic material they were made of.

There is general agreement that the last third of *De rerum natura* III, from 830 onwards, is something like a *consolatio*: Lucretius is anxious to prove that there is no reason to be afraid of Death, and there is also agreement that most of the consolatory topics of this section are in close analogy to the ones found in Epicurus’ *Letter to Menoecus*.⁶ This is not true of our vessel-passage III.931-958. This section is not easily read as part of a *consolatio*: our passage is an outright invective against those who are unduly reluctant to die. Typically, Nature’s speech is introduced and commented upon by such verbs as *increpare* (932), *intendere litem* (950), *inclamare*, *increpare voce acri* (954), *increpare* plus the rare verb *incilare* (963). If a Greek source for this diatribic insertion is required, it is Bion of Borysthenes rather than Epicurus. Here we have a telling instance of the ‘grim’ side of Lucretius’ work ; it is sections like this Lucretius will have had in mind when he admitted his doctrine might seem to some a *ratio ... tristior* (I.943 f. = IV.18 f.).

But be it Bion or some other writer of diatribes: he did not invent the vessel-metaphor. In Plato’s *Gorgias* (493a-494b) we read a strikingly similar and more elaborate version. Both Lucretian passages are clearly influenced by it, not directly but through the intermediary of a diatribe, possibly more than one, as I am inclined to assume (which is not to say that Lucretius never read Platonic books). Socrates tells Callicles an ingenious man had likened the part of our soul in which the desires are located and which is ‘easily persuaded’ (*ἀναπειθεσθαί*) to a jar (*πίθος*). With undis-

⁶ A sensitive and detailed interpretation of III.931-971 may be found in Stork (1970) 86-102; 195-202.

ciplined people (ἀκόλαστοι) the jar is perforated (τετρημένος), so they can never become satisfied, neither in life nor after death in the Underworld, their soul being a sieve (493c): τὴν ... ψυχὴν κοσκίνῳ ἀπήκασεν τὴν τῶν ἀνοήτων ὡς τετρημένην, ἅτε οὐ δυναμένην στέγειν δι' ἀπιστίαν (Schleiermacher: ἀπληστίαν) τε καὶ λήθην, 'and the soul of the thoughtless he likened to a sieve, as being perforated, since it is unable to hold anything by reason of its unbelief (if Schleiermacher's conjecture is accepted: insatiability) and forgetfulness' (W.R.M. Lamb's translation).

Callicles is not yet ready to concede that the moderate way of life is to be preferred; so Socrates goes on with a closely related simile (493d-494a): The reasonable man (σώφρων) and the undisciplined one (ἀκόλαστος), both have a number of jars (πίθοι). The reasonable man's jars are 'sound' (ὕγιεις), so they could have been filled with wine, honey, and milk etc. The licentious one's are perforated (τετρημένα καὶ σαθρά), and therefore their owner has to fill them up, incessantly, all in vain ... Would not Callicles agree that it is much better to have one's vessel sound? Callicles does not agree (494a): 'You are wrong, Socrates. For that man who has taken his fill can have no pleasure any more; in fact it is what I just now called living like a stone,⁷ when one is filled up and no longer feels any joy or pain. But a pleasant life consists rather in the largest possible amount of inflow.' That sounds reasonable enough and indeed convincing: it is not precisely a thrilling experience to *possess* well-filled jars — it is much more exciting to get them filled. Or, to go back to Socrates' first simile: could it really be called 'pleasurable' to *have* one's desires fulfilled, once and for all; is it not rather the act of fulfillment that may rightly be called 'pleasure', is it not simply normal and natural to long for ever new and renewed joyful acts and experiences?

This dispute between Socrates and Callicles is, of course, a precise anticipation of the later dispute between Epicureans and Cyrenaics: Epicurus upheld that the true and only pleasure worth its name was καταστηματικὴ ἡδονή, 'static' pleasure, brought about by the total absence of pain and desire; whereas Aristippus and his followers, most notably Anniceris, thought that a 'static' condition was no pleasure at all — they preferred, just as Callicles had done, what Epicurus called ἡδονὴ ἐν κινήσει, pleasure 'in movement'.⁸ Lucretius, in his two vessel passages, of course, sides with Epicurus: happy are those whose souls are watertight vessels, and who have been able to store up a good number of past *commoda*. Their vessel is full. It is a clear implication of the vessel-metaphor that there is a limit to our hoarding up: when a jar is full, there is no point in trying to pour in ever more. This is in line with

⁷ *Grg.* 492e: οἱ λίθοι γὰρ ἂν οὕτω γε καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ εὐδαιμονέστατοι εἶεν (viz. if happiness is defined as absence of all desires).

⁸ Clemens Alex. *Strom.* II.21, 130.7-8 (= fr. 168 Mannebach, SSR IV G 4): οἱ δὲ Ἀννικέρειοι καλούμενοι ... τοῦ μὲν ὄλου βίου τέλος οὐδὲν ὄρισμένον ἔταξαν, ἐκάστης δὲ πράξεως ἴδιον ὑπάρχειν τέλος, τὴν ἐκ τῆς πράξεως ... ἡδονήν. οὗτοι οἱ Κυρηναῖκοι τὸν ὄρον τῆς ἡδονῆς Ἐπικούρου, τοῦτέστι τὴν τοῦ ἀλγοῦντος ὑπεξαίρεσιν, ἀθετοῦσιν νεκροῦ κατάστασιν ἀποκαλοῦντες, D.L. II.89 (= fr. 204 Mannebach, SSR IV A 172, on the Cyrenaics in general): ἡ ... τοῦ ἀλγοῦντος ὑπεξαίρεσις (ὡς εἴρηται παρ' Ἐπικούρῳ) δοκεῖ αὐτοῖς μὴ εἶναι ἡδονή, οὐδὲ ἡ ἀηδονία ἀλγηδῶν ... ἡ ἀπονία οἰονεὶ *καθεῦδοντός* ἐστὶ κατάστασις, D.L. X.136 (= fr. 206 Mannebach, SSR IV A 200, on Epicurus): διαφέρεται δὲ πρὸς τοὺς Κυρηναίκοις περὶ τῆς ἡδονῆς. οἱ μὲν γὰρ τὴν καταστηματικὴν οὐκ ἐγκρίνουσι, μόνην δὲ τὴν ἐν κινήσει.

Epicurean doctrine: as soon as a human being has managed to do away with all pain and all desire, he experiences ἡδονή καταστηματική, ‘static’ pleasure: happiness in the highest conceivable degree; there is no way to increase it.

The tenet was dear to the Epicureans: it is by this very idea of ‘fullness’ that they could compete with the other schools’ claims that perfect happiness was to be achieved and that its perpetuity could be guaranteed. Suffice it to look at two out of many passages in which the idea is expounded. The first one is Diogenes of Oenoanda fr. 108 Smith: [οὐ χρησιμώτερον τὸν παρὰ] φύσιν πλοῦτο[ν ἢ ὕδωρ ἀν]γείω τινὶ πλήρει, [ὥστε] περιρεῖν ἔξωθεν, [ὑπολημ]πτέον (‘[one] must regard wealth [beyond] what is natural [as of no more use than water] to a container that is full to overflowing’ (Smith’s restoration and translation)); the second one is Seneca *Ep.* 66.45: ... *apud Epicurum duo bona sunt, ex quibus summum illud beatumque componitur: ut corpus sine dolore sit, animus sine perturbatione. haec bona non crescunt si plena sunt: quo enim crescet quod plenum est?* (‘We find mentioned in the works of Epicurus two goods, of which his Supreme Good, or blessedness, is composed, namely, a body free from pain and a soul free from disturbance; these goods, if they are complete, do not increase; for how can that which is complete increase?’ (R.M. Gummere’s translation)). Who would contradict? The argumentation seems irresistible. Obviously, to convey the idea of absolute fullness, the vessel-metaphor is singularly appropriate.

And it is also highly appropriate in support of a closely related Epicurean dogma which is likewise a key-note of Nature’s invective (III.931-965): ‘little, very little is needed to get satisfaction.’ Jars are not normally of an excessive size; so it is suggested that it is very easy indeed to have one’s jar filled. It is on the same line that Lucretius, in the proem of book VI (following a diatribe, we assume) affirms us that all that life ‘clamours for’ as necessary (*flagitat usus*) is ‘ready at hand for man’ (*omnia mortalibus esse parata*, VI.9 f.), and that in II.17 Nature herself is introduced as ‘bellowing’ or ‘barking’ (*latrare*) for nothing other than absence of physical and mental pain. Again, the tenor is: so little is needed, it is so easy to fulfil man’s real and basic demands. But as most people fail to see this there is also a clear note of anger and reproach. To bring home this idea of modesty the vessel-metaphor is highly suggestive.

3. And yet there is also a serious shortcoming in our simile. It is only part of the truth that removal of mental and physical pain is the ultimate goal for an Epicurean. ‘Static’ pleasure, καταστηματική ἡδονή, is not a state of mind which, once attained, is invariable for ever. True, it is pleasure in the highest degree, it cannot be increased in intensity, and in this respect it is stable and absolutely ‘full’. But it can be ‘varied’ by the experience of all sorts of ‘moving’ pleasures (ἡδοναὶ ἐν κινήσει), and therefore it is not monotonous. This, presumably, was the Epicureans’ answer to the Cyrenaics who had cavilled that Epicurus’ ethical τέλος was rather that of sleeping or indeed dead people, and it will be remembered that Callicles in his dispute with Socrates (Plato *Grg.* 494a, above 198) had argued likewise: living without desires was like ‘living as a stone’ (notes 7 and 8).

The *locus classicus* for the Epicurean reply is *Key Doctrine* 18: οὐκ ἐπαύξεται ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ ἢ ἡδονή, ἐπειδὴν ἅπαξ τὸ κατ’ ἐνδειαν ἀλγοῦν ἐξαιρεθῆ, ἀλλὰ

μόνον ποικίλλεται, ('the pleasure in the flesh does not increase when once the pain of need has been removed, but it is only varied' (Sedley's translation)). In Latin, there are no less than four equivalents to ποικίλλειν (literally 'to colour'), all found in Cicero and Seneca: *variare*, *distinguere* = to structurize, *condire* = to flavour, *oblectare*.⁹ None is found in Lucretius. An essential aspect of Epicurus' doctrine: 'catastematic' pleasure being 'varied' or 'flavoured' by the more worldly pleasures, is simply absent from his work. My suspicion is that this is due to the imagery we are dealing with. To convey the idea of 'variation' the vessel-metaphor is inappropriate; worse: it is outright incompatible with it.¹⁰

That this is so is obvious in the *Gorgias* passage, which we assumed was an indirect model of Lucretius (above 197). He who has his jars well filled with wine, honey, milk etc. is in possession of just these jars and just these goods, and Plato thinks he is happy with them. There is no reason to 'vary' the actual contents, nor is there, within the simile, a feasible physical way to do so: how to vary and to flavour what is in the filled jar?¹¹ Similarly, in Lucretius we get the impression that those who have the right attitude, i.e. those who 'keep' Nature's *commoda* and do not allow them to 'flow away' as in a sieve, who do not let them 'perish unenjoyed' — that those brave people have their jar filled fairly soon (all the more as little is needed to fill them) and that henceforth nothing really touches them: they simply live on in 'catastematic' ἡδονή. So it is consistent that Lucretius, following up his simile, does not even allude to the idea of 'variation', i.e. that the happy man might also experience and enjoy some sort of ἡδονή ἐν κινήσει: pleasure in a more familiar sense. Given this austere confinement to 'catastematic' pleasure, inevitably, Callicles' and the Cyrenaics' objection comes to mind once more: Is n't it preferable not to have one's jar filled up to the brim as soon as ever possible, but rather to wait for some more thrilling type of pleasure to come? But exactly this is the fault of the other group: of the insatiable and ingrateful ones. Lucretius' (more precisely: Nature's) answer to their wait-and-see-attitude (which does not seem in itself unforgivable) is odd: 'There is no point in waiting; the goods which might be offered will be the same in all eternity; no new *commoda* will ever turn up.' This sounds surprisingly sombre and dismal.

True, the general idea is perfectly in line with Epicurean doctrine. As it is only a few essentials that man needs to be satisfied it should not surprise us that the same basic *commoda* be offered in ever repeated succession; and it is easily understood

⁹ Cic. *Fin.* I.38: *omnis autem privatione doloris putat Epicurus terminari summam voluptatem, ut postea variari voluptas distinguique possit, augeri amplificarique non possit*; Sen. *Ep.* 66.46: *si qua extra blandimenta contingunt, non augent summum bonum, sed, ut ita dicam, condiunt et oblectant*. Note that none of these verbs has a pejorative connotation: there is nothing wrong for an Epicurean in pursuing 'moving' pleasures, provided, of course, they will not result in some sort of pain later on, or are liable to outbalance the 'catastematic' state of mind.

¹⁰ This must have seemed so queer to Bailey that he, paraphrasing VI.26-28, interpolated the notion of pleasure being varied (p. 1554): '... the limit of pleasure is the removal of pain and ... anything beyond that is variation, not increase of pleasure.' There is not a hint of this doctrine in Lucretius.

¹¹ In the discussion at Amsterdam it was suggested Epicurus might have thought that the contents of the jars was 'consumed' in moderate doses; if so, now and then minor 'refills' could be enjoyed. It was also considered whether a constantly filled jar might not be conceived of as 'varying' as to its contents. Neither scheme seems compatible with the clear image of a full vessel.

that Nature speaks of such desires only which are both natural and necessary, the more exciting species of pleasure being left aside as they are deemed unnecessary or even unnatural. Commentators are right in pointing to the Epicurean tenet just mentioned: that 'catastematic' pleasure is pleasure in the highest conceivable degree, and so cannot increase with duration. If this is true, why not fill up the jar as soon as possible and then live on enjoying this maximum of ἡδονή and εὐδαιμονία?

None the less, on the whole, it cannot be denied that Lucretius, in III.931-964, strikes a strangely pessimistic and basically un-Epicurean note, reminiscent as has been pointed out,¹² rather of the Preacher's (1.9) *nihil sub sole novum* than of Epicurus' *glad tidings*; quite a contrast is felt with the praise of Nature and her wonders we find elsewhere in Lucretius.

Let me repeat my suggestion that the sad and dismal tone of our passage springs largely from the vessel-metaphor employed. Within the simile, everything is coherent: if it is our only task to have our jar filled, then indeed all the rest of what is going on around us may be dismissed as a series of unhelpful and tedious repetitions. Lucretius, fond of images, is inclined to follow them up as far as possible. So he may have been seduced and 'swept away,' as it were, by the soul-vessel-metaphor he had found in a diatribe, 'caught' and 'trapped' by the image he had fallen in love with — and so did not say all he ought to have said on strictly orthodox lines. Epicurus would have hardly been pleased by Lucretius' reticence on 'moving' pleasures and on 'colouring' and 'varying' the static one.

We feel and take it for granted that the 'form' should suit the contents, not vice versa; and it may seem strange that a philosophical doctrine (or, for that matter, some other type of 'message') should be curtailed or modified by a piece of imagery introduced to illustrate just this doctrine. But I have a feeling that the phenomenon is wide-spread. It frequently happens that a writer does not in advance consider carefully all the implications of an image he is fond of (with good reasons, we may surmise); and when faced later on with unwelcome and less suitable aspects of his simile he may, now and then, give preference to the image — and so be 'swept away' by it. There is something like an 'autonomous power' in metaphors which should not be underestimated. It may be worthwhile to investigate whether more such cases may be found in *De rerum natura* and elsewhere.¹³

4. This last section might be entitled 'The missing term'. There seems to be a peculiar gap in the terminology of Epicurean ethics. I had become aware of it when I recently studied the Horatian *carpe diem* and its semantic field,¹⁴ and my impression that we lack an important technical term has been confirmed in examining the vessel-metaphor. Let us recall: in III.931-958 Lucretius first characterizes what he thinks is the sensible and rational attitude (931-937), then the opposite type of behaviour. We would expect a positive description in the first section (931-937), and in fact we find

¹² By Kenney (1971) 215, on III.945.

¹³ For another instance of 'thought modified by linguistic form' see Görler (1992).

¹⁴ Görler (1995a). W.D. Furley has drawn my attention to Pandora's Jar (Hesiod *Erga-Works* 94 ff.) as an outstanding early example.

(935) *si grata fuit tibi vita anteacta* (as opposed to 941: *vita in offensa est*, 958: *ingrata*). But apart from this the correct way of life is described only indirectly; quite oddly, Lucretius in the first (positive) part uses largely the same words and expressions as in the reproving one, availing himself of negations: it is *wrong* 'to let one's life slip away (*elabi*) incompleated'¹⁵ and unenjoyed; the sensible man has *not* heaped the blessings he had been imparted as in a vessel full of holes, he has *not* let them run away as if through a sieve etc. So, what is the right attitude in positive terms?

An obvious answer, of course, is gratitude. The Epicurean sage is grateful for what he has been allowed to enjoy; admirably, he manages to remember firmly all agreeable experiences and to forget painful ones (see note 5); so grateful memory can bring about permanent ἡδονὴ καταστηματικὴ. But I wonder whether this will do. Are we really to assume that the difference between the sage and the average person emerges only subsequently, some time after the actual event — namely that the sage keeps in his memory all he has enjoyed, whereas the non-sage, having experienced and enjoyed the same *commoda* in the same way, is prone to forget them sooner or later? Should not the experience itself differ? That is certainly suggested by the simile of the sound and the leaky vessel. What is poured into a perforated jar or a sieve is lost right away, not some time after¹⁶ (for that evaporation could serve as an image). The act itself of receiving the *commoda* should be different with the Wise Man and with the insatiable person; it should be a different way of 'taking in', another type of 'appropriation'.

Why is there, in Lucretius, no positive term to denote the proper way to accept Nature's gifts? Here, once more, we meet with the limitations of our vessel-metaphor. It would have been jejune and banal to tell Memmius and the other readers that Nature's *commoda* should be poured into sound vessels only, and what could Lucretius have said to stress the antithesis? Warn us to have our soul vessels checked at regular intervals, to have all eventual holes carefully stopped? This would have spoil the image, making it fussy and over-punctilious. So we should not be surprised that there are no positive details in Lucretius' vessel-metaphor, nor a positive term naming the right way to make Nature's gifts one's own.

What I do find surprising is that it is quite hard to find such a technical term elsewhere in Lucretius or in the *Corpus Epicureum*. Still, some passages and some phrases come near to it. It seems worthwhile to review them briefly, and so to complement what has been observed on the vessel-metaphor.

Ingrateful people, i.e. those who let 'flow away' what is offered to them, typically, have their eyes fixed upon the future. They scorn what is at hand, as they — stupidly — wait for more attractive things or circumstances to come. Their attitude is criticized in the 14th *Vatican Saying* and quite fittingly labeled μελλησιμός: 'propensity

¹⁵ For the manifold philosophical connotations of (*im*)*perfectus* in Hellenistic philosophy see Görler (1996).

¹⁶ Note however that in Plato *Grg.* 493c forgetfulness (and with it subsequent gradual forgetting) is likened to a sieve; see further Plut. *De tranquillitate animi* 473d: οἱ ... τῆ μνήμη τὰ πρότερον μὴ στέγοντες ἀλλ' ὑπεκρεῖν ἐῶντες, *Marius* 46.3: τοὺς ἀμνήμονας ... ὑπεκρεῖ τὰ γινόμενα μετὰ τοῦ χρόνου.

to looking to the future'.¹⁷ These people are urged to pay more attention to the present, see e.g. Plato *Grg.* 493c (reverse of the leaky vessel imagery, see above 198): ... τὸν κοσμίως καὶ τοῖς ἀεὶ παροῦσιν ἱκανῶς καὶ ἐξαρκούντως ἔχοντα βίον ἐλέσθαι; Cic. *Fin.* I.59: *praesentibus frui*; Hor. *C.* III.8.27: *dona praesentis cape laetus horae*; *C.* I.31.17 f.: *frui paratis* ('what is at hand,' not 'what I have provided for myself') ... / *Latoe dones* ... But *capere* and *frui* are pretty general verbs, and strangely, it is about the same in most other texts: we hardly ever read definite positive advice as to what actually to do with the present goods. Of course, we easily understand that they should be accepted, gratefully accepted, should be used, should be enjoyed. And yet, almost invariably, the idea is conveyed in general terms only, or — more often — indirectly: we are warned not to scorn the present blessings, *not* to lapse into μελλησιμός. Some typical examples: *Vatican Saying* 35: 'one must not spoil (λυμαίνεσθαι) the present out of eagerness for what is not yet at hand;' Cic. *Fin.* I.41 (on the Epicurean sage): *nec praeteritas voluptates effluere patiat*; *Tusc.* V.96: 'Epicurus taught the Wise Man's mind did *not* let past pleasures flow away.'

I have only come across a few positive terms with a 'technical ring'. Let us consider first *Vatican Saying* 17 (about the old man): he 'has lowered his anchor as though in harbour, and with secure gratitude has *stowed* (or *made fast*) the good things ...', ἀσφαλεῖ κατακλείσας χάριτι. Κατακλείειν has a clear connotation of firmness, and may function as a counterpart to 'letting pass' or 'flow off'. But note that it is only the old man, as opposed to the young one, who has this treasure; so it is doubtful whether the 'clamping' occurs right after or indeed coincides with the act of receiving itself; once more just memory may be meant.¹⁸

In Plut. *De tranquillitate animi* 473d (quoted in note 17) the wrong attitude is once more characterized by the metaphor of 'letting flow away'; here it is paraphrased by the negation of the right type of behaviour: μὴ στέγοντες μηδ' ἀναλαμβάνοντες, 'those who are not leakproof and who do not adopt past advantages.' Στέγειν, evidently, is part of the simile. Ἀναλαμβάνειν has a different connotation: it often denotes biological conception; so here, too, it seems to have the narrower meaning of 'taking in for good', 'internalize in a proper way'. This does not, of course, prove that the term was regularly used in Epicurus' school.

In Latin authors such as Horace, Seneca, and Martial there are several fine metaphors for what to do with present goods and pleasures. With none of them can it be demonstrated that it ever served as a technical expression to denote a definite philosophical concept; nor should the passages in question be seen as undisputed evidence for orthodox Epicureanism. Still, the three authors mentioned were, to say the

¹⁷ Γεγόναμεν ἅπαξ ... σὺ δὲ οὐκ ὄν τῆς αὔριον κύριος ἀναβάλλῃ τὸ χαῖρον· ὁ δὲ βίος μελλησιμῶ παραπόλλυται ... Compare Plut. *De tranquillitate animi* 473d: οἱ δὲ τῇ μνήμῃ τὰ πρότερον μὴ στέγοντες μηδ' ἀναλαμβάνοντες (on which see presently) ἀλλ' ὑπεκρεῖν ἔωντες ... ποιοῦσιν ἑαυτοῦς ... τῆς αὔριον ἐκκρεμαμένους (Sen. *Ep.* I.2: *ex crastino pendere*; *Brev. vit.* 9.1: *maximum vivendi impedimentum est expectatio quae pendet ex crastino, perdit hodiernum*); Hor. *C.* I.9.13: *quid sit futurum cras fuge quaerere* ...; Sen. *Ep.* 15.10 (= fr. 491 Us. = fr. 242 Arrighetti): *stulta vita ingrata est ... tota in futurum fertur*, etc.

¹⁸ That is clearly so in Plut. *Non posse* 1089a (= fr. 579 Us.): ... τοῦτ' ἄλλιστ' ὅν τὸν σοφὸν ... διαφέρειν, τῷ μνημονεύειν ἐναργῶς καὶ συνέχειν ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὰ περὶ τὰς ἡδονὰς φάσματα καὶ πάθη καὶ κινήσεις.

least, well acquainted with the Garden's doctrine and indeed open to it. So it is more likely than not that they have latinized one or other Epicurean 'term'.

First, Hor. C. III.29.32-34: ... *quod adest memento / componere aequus: cetera fluminis / ritu feruntur* ..., Maecenas (and all sensible persons) 'should unerringly have in mind to *take in and store away* what is at hand, the rest being carried off as by a river.' *Componere* comes very near to the meaning we are looking for: 'to store up for good'; the verb is often used in the sense of 'bringing into a store room', with the connotation of 'arranging properly'. I was amazed when I read in Christoph Wilhelm Mitscherlich's commentary (Reutlingen 1814): '*componere*, hoc est συγκατατίθεσθαι, εὔ διοικῆσαι'. The latter is fine, the former is clearly wrong: συγκατατίθεσθαι means nothing else but 'to give assent to', a meaning *componere* simply cannot have. It may be just a minor slip: κατατίθεσθαι is an ideal candidate for what we are in search of; Liddell/Scott translate 'lay by', 'lay up in store'; a fine example is Theognis 409: θησαυρὸν παισὶ κατατίθεσθαι. Likewise something may be said in favour of συντίθεσθαι. In Philodemus (?) (*On Choices and Avoidances*) = *Ethica Comparaeti* col. 19.15-19 we read (about unreasonable people): ... πρὸς ἀναβολὴν ζῶσιν ὡς ἐξεσόμενον αὐτοῖς ὕστερον ἀγαθῶν μετασχεῖν· κᾶτα διὰ παντὸς ἀσύνθετοι διατελοῦσιν. Wolfgang Schmid (ed. 1939) thought ἀσύνθετος meant 'not having added up', 'not having struck the balance', Indelli & Tsouna-McKirahan (1995) understand 'unbalanced' in an ethical sense.¹⁹ I cannot see why the well-attested notion of storing and arranging should be discarded — could Horace's *componere* be a rendering of συντίθεσθαι?

But it is quite possible that what Mitscherlich had in mind when suggesting συγκατατίθεσθαι as a Greek equivalent of Horace's *componere* was after all the well-known epistemological term. Again, this is wrong; *componere* is not a possible translation. None the less there is something to the idea. Συγκατατίθεσθαι, in the Stoic sense, means 'to accept consciously', as opposed to simply 'experience' an impression. Could not those who duly appreciate things present and at hand be characterized as 'consciously accepting them', 'approving' of them? True, there is not the slightest evidence that the Epicureans ever spoke of 'assent' to or 'approval' of (συγκατάθεσις) pleasures experienced. It is different with a term denoting an even stronger type of acceptance: Cicero and Seneca often make *gaudia, voluptates* etc. be governed by *percipere* — and both knew perfectly well that *percipere* was the Latin equivalent of the epistemological term καταλαμβάνειν (Cicero had coined the Latin translation himself). In *Tusc. V.96 percipere* comes very near to the notion of 'grasping firmly', opposed to the subsequent 'let flow away': (Epicurus teaches) ... *animum et praesentem (voluptatem) percipere pariter cum corpore et prospicere venientem nec praeteritam praeterfluere sinere*. Could Epicurus and his followers, teaching that present pleasures should be 'grasped', have used καταλαμβάνειν?²⁰ It is conceiv-

¹⁹ PHerc 1251 was first edited by Domenico Comparetti in 1879; he also tentatively suggested what has now become the traditional title of the fragment. There is no certainty as to the author. For further interpretations of ἀσύνθετοι see Indelli & Tsouna-McKirahan (1995) 207 f. W.D. Furley: 'ἀσύνθετοι would be tempting.'

²⁰ Lucretius does not use *percipere* in this special sense. But it should be considered (as has been pointed out to me by Jaap Mansfeld) whether *perpotare* of the honey-cup simile (1.940 = IV.15) might

able; all the more as we learn from Diogenes Laertius that Aristippus and the Cyrenaics explicitly taught that τὰ πάθη, i.e. most notably pleasure and pain, were καταληπτά.²¹ But we cannot be sure: in Latin, *percipere gaudia* etc. is a common phrase, mostly used in a non-technical sense,²² and in Aristippus the stress is different: τὰ πάθη εἶναι καταληπτά is not so much an appeal to grasp pleasure firmly, but an assertion: our feelings can be reliably ‘grasped’ and ‘perceived’, whereas everything else is ἀκατάληπτον.

A fine image of how to accept and to use the present time properly is to be found in Seneca’s first letter (*Ep.* 1.1-2): *omnes horas complectere: sic fiet, ut minus ex crastino pendeas, si hodierno manum inieceris*. Martial has an even more suggestive comparison (*I.*15.8 ff.):

gaudia non remanent, sed fugitiva volant;
haec utraque manu complexuque adsere toto,
saepe fluunt imo sic quoque lapsa sinu.

‘Grasping’ the *gaudia* firmly, so as not to lose them again, is compared to a Roman law procedure: ‘asserting’ ownership by laying a hand on a fugitive slave: a vivid and highly graphic image. Mentioning ‘both hands’ Martial intimates that the usual act will not suffice to get firm hold of *gaudia fugitiva*. And this tempts me to fly a last kite. Cicero (*Acad.* II.145) tells us that Zeno was in the habit of visualizing approval, comprehension, and knowledge by gestures; κατάληψις he likened to a fist; then ‘he brought his left hand against his right fist and gripped it tightly and forcefully, and said that scientific knowledge was like this ...’ Now, knowledge, according to Stoic doctrine, cannot be lost. Could Martial, when mentioning both hands, have had this or a similar image in mind? If so, this is a further support for the candidate καταλαμβάνειν.

Here I finish my speculations about the missing term, as we simply do not know whether Epicurus did use a technical term at all. But if he left the gap I hinted at, it was filled elegantly later on, as may be seen from the Latin examples.

Appendix

It seems appropriate to mention briefly three variants of the vessel simile which are basically different but have some bearing on the type discussed above.

(a) *Soul as a ‘decanter’*. Plut. *Non posse* 1088e = fr. 429 Us. (partly) (I give here Einarson & De Lacy’s paraphrases and translations): [the Epicureans are right in beginning with the body, where pleasure first appears, and then passing to the soul as having more stability; but] ‘when you hear their loud protest that the soul is so constituted as to find joy and tranquillity in nothing in the world but pleasures of

carry an analogous connotation: it is only here that the prefix expresses intensity (‘drink up’, ‘drink thoroughly and completely’); in all other instances *perpotare* means ‘to drink all night long.’

²¹ D.L. II.92 = fr. 15 Mannebach = SSR IV A 166 (172): τὰ τε πάθη καταληπτά· ἔλεγον οὖν αὐτά, οὐκ ἄφ’ ὧν γίνεται.

²² See e.g. Sen. *Ep.* 99.5: *ingrati adversus percepta spe futuri sumus*: if the past goods had been ‘accepted’ as they should have then there could be no ‘ingratitude’.

the body either present or anticipated, and that it is its good, do they not appear ... to be using the soul as a decanter of the body (διεράματι τοῦ σώματος χρῆσθαι τῇ ψυχῇ) and to imagine that by decanting pleasure, like wine, from a worthless and leaky vessel (ἐκ πονηροῦ καὶ μὴ στέγοντος ἀγγείου) and leaving it to age in its new container, they are turning it into something more respectable and precious?'; *ib.* 1089d: ὄρα δὴ πρῶτον μὲν οἷα ποιοῦσι, τὴν εἶθ' ἡδονὴν ταύτην εἴτ' ἀπονίαν ἢ εὐστάθειαν ἄνω καὶ κάτω μετερῶντες ἐκ τοῦ σώματος εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν, εἴτα πάλιν ἐκ ταύτης εἰς ἐκεῖνο τῷ μὴ στέγειν ἀπορρέουσιν καὶ διολισθάνουσιν ἀναγκαζόμενοι τῇ ἀρχῇ συνάπτειν ... (= fr. 431 Us.), 'pleasure is poured into the soul, then back into the body'. Note that both body and soul are likened to leaky vessels: the body being unable to *keep* pleasure as it has no memory, the soul being unable to keep *bodily* pleasures as such: 1088f: τῆς δ' ἡδονῆς ἢ ψυχῆ παραλαβοῦσα τὴν μνήμην ... ἄλλο δὲ οὐδὲν φυλάσσει· ζέσασα γὰρ ἐπὶ σαρκὶ κατασβέννυται, καὶ τὸ μνημονευόμενον αὐτῆς ἀμαυρόν ἐστι καὶ κνισῶδες ... (whereas a good new vessel preserves the wine that has settled in the course of time and improves its flavour) 'in the case of pleasure the soul preserves the memory of it ... and nothing else; for the pleasure effervesces in the flesh and goes flat and what is left of it in recollection is faint ...'; compare 1089c, quoted above note 5. This is brilliant polemic: by the simile of pouring to and fro, both ways in vain, the Epicurean concept of καταστηματικὴ ἡδονή is effectively reduced to absurdity. Plutarch's (or his model's) starting point may have been the concept of the soul as a leaky jar which we read in Lucretius only; if so it seems to follow that the simile was not wholly absent from Greek Epicurean texts. Of course, no Epicurean would have ever considered comparing the body to a leaky pot.

(b) *Jars tend to keep the smell of what has been first poured into them.* Horace *Epistle* I.2.69f. has become proverbial: *quo semel est imbuta recens servabit odorem / testa diu*; compare Quint. *Inst.* I.1.15: *natura tenacissimi sumus eorum, quae rudibus annis percepimus, ut sapor, quo nova imbuas <vasa> durat*; more instances in Otto (1890) s.v. *testa*; add Hieronymus *Ep.* 107.4: *difficulter eraditur, quod rudes animi perbiberunt. lanarum conchylia quis in pristinum candorem revocat? rudis testa diu et saporem retinet et odorem quo primum imbuta est.* The simile primarily warns parents and educators not to 'fill' unclean thoughts into the 'fresh vessel' of a tender soul. The tenacity of vessels being stressed, this variant is almost a reverse of the leakiness type. Note that it is not by itself pejorative; Carneades used it in a positive sense: Plut. *De tranquillitate animi* 477b-c (= Carneades fr. 7 b² Mette): οὐ γὰρ αἱ μὲν λιβανωτρίδες ... κἂν ἀποκενωθῶσι, τὴν εὐωδίαν ἐπὶ πολλὸν χρόνον ἀναφέρουσιν, ἐν δὲ τῇ ψυχῇ τοῦ νοῦν ἔχοντος αἱ καλαὶ πράξεις οὐκ αἰεὶ κεχαρισμένην καὶ πρόσφατον ἐναπολείπουσιν τὴν ἐπίνοιαν; (in Helmbold's translation: 'for do not censors ... even if they have been completely emptied, retain their fragrance for a long time, and in the soul of the wise man do not fair actions leave behind the eternally delightful and fresh remembrance of them ...?') In Hor. *Ep.* I.2.69 f. (quoted above) the metaphor is shortly preceded (54) by *sincerum est nisi vas, quodcumque infundis acescit* (on which see above 195 with note 3), basically a different line of thought. But the two concepts are compatible: as long as a 'vessel' is still infected by the evil smell of its first contents, there is no use in filling in clean goods — they will all putrefy.

(c) *Body as the 'vessel' of the soul.* This is a widespread and popular topic. It originates with the Pythagorean doctrine of transmigration, and is often read in Plato. The Stoics used it to upgrade the soul and to depreciate the body: Cic. *Tusc.* I.52: *nam corpus quidem quasi vas est aut animi receptaculum*; Philo *Quod det.* 170: τὸ ψυχῆς ἀγγεῖον τὸ σῶμα; *De migr. Abr.* 193: ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἡμέτερος νοῦς ... περιέχεται ὡς ἐν ἀγγεῖῳ τῷ σώματι; *De Somniis* I.26: τὸ σῶμα ... ψυχῆς ἐστὶν ἀγγεῖον; Sen. *Consol. ad Marciam* XI.3: *quid est homo? quolibet quassu vas et quolibet fragile iactatu ... imbecillum corpus et fragile ... ad omnes fortunae contumelias proiectum*; Marc. Aurel. XII.2: ὁ θεὸς πάντα τὰ ἡγεμονικὰ γυμνὰ τῶν ὑλικῶν ἀγγείων καὶ φλοιῶν καὶ καθαρμάτων ὀρᾷ; cp. III.3; VIII.27; X.38. It seems odd that Lucretius, too, avails himself of the comparison, and that in the second half of book III where shortly after the vessel-soul-analogy will figure large: III.440: *corpus, quod vas constituit eius* [sc. *animae*]; 545 f.: *... animus per se non quit sine corpore et ipso / esse homine, illius quasi quod vas esse videtur* (compare 793). There is even a salient correspondence with Seneca (*Marc.* XI.3): both the Epicurean (III.441 *conquassatam*) and the Stoic emphasize the weakness and fragility of the human body. And yet the respective aims of argumentation are opposite; the Stoics endeavour to prove immortality, Lucretius argues that the human soul is mortal: like the body, it is material, only its atoms are finer; it can subsist as long as it is 'held together' by the body being its 'vessel'. It serves Lucretius' purpose to stress the 'vessel's' fragility: if the vessel itself is weak and transitory, it is simply evident that the soul's atoms will be dissipated a fortiori. Strictly speaking, Lucretius' body-vessel-analogy is not a metaphor or a simile as it is in Plato and with the Stoics, but a piece of physical doctrine: for an Epicurean the body is in fact a 'vessel' in a quite literal sense.²³

²³ I am indebted to W.D. Furley (Heidelberg University) for emending my English in this chapter.

