Natural Hierarchy in Greco-Roman Thought

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Abstract

According to one worldview available during the late Roman Republic, the universe has a hierarchical structure: the gods are virtual monarchs who preside over human beings, while humans, in turn, are entitled to use subaltern creatures as they see fit. In this view, the capacity for reason is a defining characteristic of gods and humans, setting them apart from non-human animals and allowing them to exercise control over their environment. Those who either lack reason entirely or are unable to apply it correctly—non-human animals but also, in many cases, women and enslaved people—are subject to the whims of the reasoning few. This system of thought assumes that domination, more than cooperation, is the key to human progress. This dissertation uses the philosophical works of Cicero to represent this hierarchical worldview before turning to three other authors of the late Roman Republic—Lucretius, Diodorus Siculus, and Varro—who offer alternative ways of understanding the natural order and the place of humans in it. Each author depicts interactions between humans and the natural world, including relations with the other beings—bestial or divine—that inhabit it. They also depict the early stages of human life on earth and the development of technological and societal innovations. Unlike the hierarchical model that assumes reason to be a point of separation between humans and other features of nature, Lucretius, Diodorus Siculus, and Varro more often emphasize the integrity of the natural world (of which humans are just one part) and continuity between humans and other living creatures.

Chapter 1: Introduction to Natural Hierarchy in Greco-Roman Thought

Why Study Conceptions of Nature?

Aldo Leopold begins his seminal essay "The Land Ethic" with an anecdote from Homer's *Odyssey* in order to illustrate how the human ethical sphere—that is, what we hold to be worthy of ethical consideration versus what we categorize as property only—can grow and shift over time to encompass new and different entities. His point is that, just as Odysseus' treatment of the slave women at the end of Homer's epic would now be considered abhorrent, so too should we move beyond the old Western way of viewing land, plants, and animals as commodities ripe for human use. Leopold argues that we should extend our ethical sphere—and our concept of community—to include the natural environment (1949:201ff.).

Scholars of environmental history recognize that we can learn a lot about a given culture or society by studying how people in it conceive of the natural world and the beings that inhabit it. Kate Soper, for example, examines the 'politics of nature' and argues that,

> Western configurations of nature—notably, its association with the 'primitive,' the 'bestial,' the 'corporeal' and the 'feminine'—reflect a history of ideas about membership of the human community and ideals about human nature, and thus function as a register or narrative of human self-projections. Attitudes to nature map the exclusions, devaluations and revaluations through which Western humanity has constituted and continuously re-thought its own identity (1995:10).

As Soper explains, societal norms and expectations influence the ways that people in a given society represent nature. It is also true that representations of nature reflect the particular *position of individuals* within a given society. In an article on representations of the American landscape

in the natural history literature of four specific female authors, for example, ecofeminist critic Vera Norwood notes a striking difference in how men and women may portray the environment: all four of the authors she examines "are concerned not with action on the environment, but with understanding how nature (particularly wilderness) acts on them" (1996:344; see also Garrard 2004:76).[1] In addition to gender, many other factors—including socio-economic status, family or tribal traditions, and relationship to power structures in a state or society—can affect the position from which a person views the natural world.[2]

The different ways in which people conceive of and represent nature are not trivial: there are practical implications of these different worldviews, particularly when they are held by those in positions of power.[3] The way that people conceive of the structure of the universe and the place of humans in it affects how they use natural resources and how they treat other living creatures. Among other scholars of antiquity, J. Donald Hughes has recognized the relationship between human moral or ethical values and how we use or abuse nature; he notes that, in antiquity, "differing ethical systems either provided strong motives for conservation, or left humans free to exploit the environment" (2014:43).Those who benefit from the exploitation (and in many cases, destruction) of other humans and of finite natural resources can help maintain the system that benefits them by promoting a conception of the universe that justifies these actions, for instance by appealing to the existence of superior beings and by assuming that those who lack rational thought also necessarily lack autonomy and the right to decide their own fate.

[1] For example, Norwood cites Rachel Carson's comment in the acceptance speech she delivered when receiving the National Book Award for *The Sea Around Us* (1951) that "It is impossible to understand man without understanding his environment and the forces that have molded him physically and mentally" (1996:335).

[2] Wendell Berry's books and essays on forest management provide a useful example of the different ways that people can approach a particular kind of landscape; see, e.g., Berry, W. 1996. *Another Turn of the Crank*. Counterpoint.

[3] Hughes notes, for example, that "Many Roman emperors were Stoics, and in a position to apply their philosophy in a way that would affect widespread areas of the Mediterranean basin and beyond" (2014:66).

The opposite is also true: those who wish to fight social ills and advocate for the rights of marginalized people in society can argue from the position that the suffering of the oppressed is not the product of their own nature (or natural hierarchy in the world as a whole), but an artificial condition imposed by some humans on other humans. Nelson Mandela represents this position in a speech he delivered in 2005 in London's Trafalgar Square; he states that, "Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is *not natural*. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings" (emphasis mine). So we see that attitudes towards nature are interconnected with questions of morality, social organization, and law.[4]

It is now widely acknowledged that culture and nature are interactive processes and that humans both shape and are shaped by the environment. Clarence Glacken finds evidence of this view in literature of the late Roman Republic, including that of Cicero, Lucretius, Varro and Vergil, each of whom "either implicitly or explicitly assumes that cultural history has at least in part been the history of environmental change and that the arts and science have brought about changes in the physical environment" (1967:138). Strabo, too, recognized the power of state policies and industry to shape nature: he reports that, according to Eratosthenes, Cyprus was overgrown with thick forests in earlier times and was unable to be cultivated, but that the timber demands of the mining and naval industries helped clear the land. Even so those in power were unable to stay on top of the growth, and as a result allowed people to hold as their own whatever land they could keep clear (14.6.5).

Some of the common people on Cyprus clearly benefited from the land tenure arrangement Strabo describes, since they gained access to arable land. On the other hand, those

[4] For a comparison of how people from "WEIRD" (i.e., Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) societies typically view nature in contrast to those from other societies, see Henrich et al. (2013).

who controlled and benefited the most from the mining and ship-building operations were not only consuming one 'natural resource' (timber) but also human labor. Raymond Williams explains how the exploitation of nature historically requires the exploitation of people:

> It is very significant that most of the terms we have used in this relationship—the conquest of nature, the domination of nature, the exploitation of nature—are derived from the real human practices: relations between men and men. …Capitalism, of course, has relied on the terms of domination and exploitation; imperialism, in conquest, has similarly seen both men and physical products as raw material. But it is a measure of how far we have to go that socialists also still talk of the conquest of nature, which in any real terms will always include the conquest, the domination or the exploitation of some men by others (1980:84).

Operating from a Marxist standpoint in the modern era, Williams uses modern terms like capitalism and socialism that of course do not apply directly to our study of the ancient world. Nevertheless, the basic principles Williams lays out in this quotation are generally appropriate in the context of ancient Greece and Rome. In order for certain factions to benefit from the exploitation of natural resources, another subset of humanity is put into service to extract and process those raw materials.

Cicero recognizes this fact in *De Officiis* when he lists major building and public works projects that enable Romans to access and use water resources and asks how these could ever have been possible without human labor:

> Adde ductus aquarum, derivationes fluminum, agrorum inrigationes, moles oppositas fluctibus, portus manu factos, quae unde sine hominum opere habere possemus? Ex quibus multisque aliis perspicuum est, qui fructus quaeque utilitates ex rebus iis, quae sint inanima, percipiantur, eas nos nullo modo sine hominum manu atque opera capere potuisse (2.14).
>
> Consider too the aqueducts, the canals, the irrigation of the fields, the breakwaters, the harbors constructed by hand: how could we have these things without human labor? From these and many

> other examples it is evident that we could in no way capture the profits and benefits which accrue from these inanimate things without the manual labor of human beings.[5]

In the passage directly following this one, Cicero adds that animals, too, would be worthless to 'us' if it were not for the people who originally domesticated them and continue to tend them and process them into material goods:

> Qui denique ex bestiis fructus aut quae commoditas, nisi homines adiuvarent, percipi posset? Nam et qui principes inveniendi fuerunt, quem ex quaque belua usum habere possemus, homines certe fuerunt, nec hoc tempore sine hominum opera aut pascere eas aut domare aut tueri aut tempestivos fructus ex iis capere possemus; ab eisdemque et eae, quae nocent, interficiuntur et, quae usui possunt esse, capiuntur (2.14).
>
> Finally, what profit or advantage could be extracted from animals without the assistance of human beings? For it was humans, certainly, who first discovered what use we could make of beasts; in the present day too we would not be able to feed them or tame them or watch over them or extract profit from them in the right season without human labor. By these same people, too, those beasts which threaten us are killed and those which are useful to us are captured.

In both of these passages Cicero extols the achievements of human labor in the past and present exactly because this labor converts raw natural resources—the water conducted into Rome from a faraway spring, the beasts of the forest—into goods that people like Cicero can use personally but also turn into profit. In the next passage, Cicero extends this line of reasoning to explain that these products of human design are exactly the same comforts that make life civilized and allow human beings to be better than other animals:

> …qui victus aut cultus, nisi tam multae nobis artes ministrarent quibus rebus exculta hominum vita tantum distat a victu et cultu bestiarum (2.15)?

[5] All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

> What sustenance or way of life would we have, if there were not so many arts to serve us, because of which the cultivated life of humans is so far removed from the sustenance and way of life of beasts?

To summarize Cicero's point here: 'we' humans (i.e., Cicero's audience of fellow elite Roman citizens in particular) only have access to our refined and enjoyable way of life because we make use of the labor of other humans, whose work converts features of the natural environment—including non-human animals—into commodities and products that make our life different and better than the lives of those animals. Our humanity, or at least the civilized version of it that Cicero appreciates, depends on 'lower' humans and 'lower' animals, without which we would not enjoy an elevated status and the comforts that come with it.

Why the Late Republic?

John Douglas Minyard summarizes the traditional operating principles of Roman society leading up to the moment in history that I have chosen as the subject of this dissertation:

> This *mos* was the standard to which appeal could be made, the inheritance of custom, procedure, and attitude representing the settled assumptions of shared life, the constitution of the *res publica* which gave form to a *civitas* whose constituted groups might quarrel among themselves, but which formed their judgments on the same account of reality and an agreement about the nature, purposes, and patterns of life. These fundamental perceptions were held in common as the basis of both unity and disunity (1985:6).

The part that I would especially like to highlight in this passage is where Minyard draws attention to the "same account of reality and an agreement about the nature, purposes, and patterns of life" held by these elite citizens of Rome.[6] Minyard further explains that Cicero and

[6] Dutsch explains how writers like Ennius introduced Greek philosophy to Roman elites (including Scipio Aemilianus and Marcus Fulvius Nobilior) as "a form of sophisticated entertainment" but one which posed some threat to Roman *mores*, since philosophy, unlike literature, "purports to have a monopoly on knowledge about how

others who belonged to this system and sought to see it continue could accommodate differences of opinion and new ideas (e.g. from Greek philosophy) as long as they aligned with the same basic assumptions about the world and society held by those who represented the status quo (1985:29).[7] One central idea about the world and society is that they are both arranged hierarchically by nature.

According to one worldview available during the late Roman Republic, the universe has a hierarchical structure: the gods are virtual monarchs who preside over human beings, while humans, in turn, are entitled to use subaltern creatures as they see fit. The capacity for reason is a defining characteristic of gods and humans, setting them apart from non-human animals and allowing them to exercise control over their environment.[8] Those who either lack reason entirely or are unable to apply it correctly—non-human animals but also, in many cases, women and enslaved people—are subject to the whims of the reasoning few. This system of thought assumes that domination, more than cooperation, is the key to human progress.

Several of the late Republican authors who are most widely read and discussed today—Caesar, Catullus, and Cicero, for example,—embraced this worldview and the benefits it offered

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the world functions, how one should think, and how best to live one's life" and is therefore bound to compete with other kinds of ideology (2014:10).

[7] For more on the influx of Greek knowledge and ideas that came into Rome around this time, see Rawson, who explains that in the late Republic, "there was also a strongly-felt need to make available the mass of factual information, mostly collected by the Greeks, that was now available at Rome. ...There were now attempts [at syncing Greek and Roman chronology, translating Greek works on astrology, zoology, etc.] and to learn something of the more outlandish areas of or beyond the Empire, even if at a fairly superficial level. Diodorus' provision of a digest of the main Greek historians may also be noted. Without all this it would not have been possible for Rome, when her internal crisis was over, to have taken up the task of ruling her Empire in alliance with the educated classes of the Greek world—an alliance that was indeed to end in fusion" (1985:321).

[8] Atkins explains how, for Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, "reason prescribes what is good, how we should live, and how we should treat one another as social animals" and reminds us that this notion of reason has important political implications. For Cicero specifically, Atkins notes, "reason in its pure form is divine; it regulates the forces of nature and the pattern of the cosmos, along with the lives of human beings" (2013:5). For *Nous* as the providential regulating power of the universe, see Anaxagoras, *KRS* no. 476. See also Festugière, who explains that "It was again a dogma inherited from the Academy that man is essentially intellect, and that this intellect is of the same nature as the divine Intelligence" (1956:ix). Festugière notes that this concept was accepted by the Stoics to the letter.

them as members of the ruling elite.[9] Others, however, offered alternative ways to understand the organization of the universe, the role of reason in human affairs, and the relations between humans, gods, and non-human animals. In this dissertation, I am interested in the *competing* ideas of this period before the ascension of Augustus that did not gain as much traction in subsequent centuries as did, say, Stoicism, perhaps at least in part because they were not as useful in justifying Roman imperialism and expansionism as the hierarchical model was.[10] I begin by using Cicero as a representative of the hierarchical model before turning to Lucretius, Diodorus Siculus, and Varro, each of whom offers a different perspective on human interactions with the natural world that conforms to or challenges the hierarchical model in different ways and to different degrees. Each of them presents an alternative conception of relations between humans and gods that gives human beings more agency and responsibility over their own lives.

By recognizing these features of their work, we gain a much more nuanced understanding of the complexity of Roman theology, politics, and social theory leading into the rise of Augustus and the Roman Empire. The hierarchical model has persisted as the dominant Western worldview into modern times; I am interested in the complexity of views available to Romans in the late Republic in part because we still face similar problems with social stratification and environmental degradation that continue to be justified by a hierarchical view of nature. Embracing alternative conceptions of nature and the place of humans in it might help us find solutions to these social and political problems.

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[9] Festugière discusses how the Stoic worldview validated the desire (and confidence) of men like Cato and Marcus Aurelius to rule: "Firmly convinced that his will is in conformity with the universal will he feels himself fit to govern other men. Nothing could stand in his way because he relied only on virtue and took account of nothing else. So the Stoic morality became the instructor of kings" (1956:x).

[10] Festugière ties Stoicism' success in part to the primacy it placed on conformity and submission: "Stoicism took the side of action and taught a set of rules. That is why it has played so important a part in the history of civilization" (1956:x).

The late Republic fascinates historians in part because it was a time of great transition. The most obvious kind of transformation occurred in the political realm, of course. With respect to the *De Re Rustica* in particular, Carin Green notes that within the fifteen years bounded by the dramatic date of the third book—generally accepted, since Linderski (1985), to be 50 BCE—and the date of composition (37 or 36 BCE, Varro's eightieth year, as he tells us in the proem to Book 1), "there occurred all the events that put a definitive end to the Republic and, at least in the West, established Octavian as princeps" (1997:432).

The generations leading up to this period had also seen significant changes in the way that Romans interacted with their physical environment. Romans under the Republic had to adapt to an environment that had already been greatly changed by human action. By the fifth century BCE, deforestation of hillsides had led to erosion and perpetual flooding of formerly fertile plains; farmers had little choice but to turn worn-out arable land into pasture and to plant vineyards and olive groves on the formerly wooded slopes (White 1973:443).[11] K.D. White identifies a whole litany of factors at work in the time of Cato the Elder that helped change the relationship between Romans and the environment, particularly in the realm of agriculture. These include an influx of slaves that had been captured in war, the confiscation of tracts of land in the southern Italian peninsula that were subsequently converted to public land, abundant capital flowing in from conquests in the East, and a higher standard of living among Romans that created a demand for certain agricultural products (1973:444-7). Once Rome gained control of the lower Apennines, Roman pastoralists were able to build larger-scale ranching operations, maintaining larger flocks which they drove over a larger geographic area (1973:458).

[11] According to White, Saserna's explanation (reported by Columella) of the new ability of Romans in his day to grow olives and vines in certain areas where they previously would not grow could be the earliest known reference to climate change (1973:459).

The late Republic was a transformative time for religious thought, too, partly due to the influence of Greek philosophy that authors like Cicero incorporated into their work. Mary Beard et al. notice a shift in the late Republic from merely *wondering* and *speculating* about the gods—activities that we can assume took place among the earliest Romans—to the first Roman authors committing these thoughts to a written, analytical form (1998:116). This critical analysis of religion was not limited to those authors whom we typically think of as philosophers; Beard et al. go on to say that from Cicero and Lucretius, but also Catullus, Varro, and Caesar,

> we can glimpse for the first (and arguably only) time in Roman history something of the complexity of religion and its representations, the different perspectives, interests, practices and discourses that constitute the religion of Rome (1998:117).

I am interested in the literature produced in Rome during the decades leading up to the principate in part because we see a plurality of voices and conflicting viewpoints regarding philosophy, religion, and political theory that may have been stifled or constricted once Augustus rose to power.[12] Augustus promoted a particular worldview that served his own ends and contributed to his continued hold on power.[13] This is not to say that writers and philosophers living under Augustus could not hold opinions that went against the ideas that Augustus promoted, but they do not seem to have been able to express them as freely as was possible prior to Augustus' reign. It is difficult to imagine Ovid, for example, being sent into exile a generation or two earlier.

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[12] Atkins explores the "intellectual revolution" that occurred in Rome during this period, noting that "at a time when traditional sources of authority were weakening, Roman intellectuals creatively and dynamically employed critical reasoning through such scientific forms of organizing and disseminating knowledge as rhetoric, grammar, medicine, architecture, law, historiography, and philosophy" (2013:7). For more on this period, see Rawson 1985. For intellectual opposition to Augustus, see Raaflaub and Samons 1990, especially pp.436-47.

[13] For some of Augustus' religious reforms, including the transformation of the colleges, the introduction of imperial anniversaries into the religious calendar, and the institution of public vows for the *princeps*, see Liebeschuetz 1979:64-5. Liebeschuetz explains how Augustus concentrated Roman religion on him and his office: "Henceforth the most important aspect of the *pax deorum* was the gods' protection and support of the *princeps*. …It was the change in the object of worship, with the result that intercession was made for the ruler rather than the commonwealth which was the essential transformation of the state religion in the reign of Augustus" (1979:65).

Augustus did not create a brand new worldview to match his reign; rather, he promoted a particular ideology that was an extension of one already available in the late Republic, while stemming the flow of perspectives that challenged this conception and, by extension, his rule. Emma Dench explains how integral social stratification was to the idea of Roman identity that Augustus encouraged and notes that "social roles were delineated for all sectors of society," which we can see even in the regulations on seating at the games (outlined in the *lex Julia theatralis*) according to gender, age, and social group (1998:144).

Beyond the reign of Augustus, there were far-reaching and long-lasting consequences of conceptions of nature that were promoted by certain thinkers in the late Republic. A recent volume, for example, traces the origins of Hugo Grotius' theory of natural law to the Stoics, and particularly the version of Stoicism that Cicero presents (Straumann 2015). Grotius developed this theory in service of the Dutch East India Company, which used his work to justify the legally questionable privateering sea operations that eventually allowed them to take control of Indonesia and other lands in the East Indian seas. More broadly, Glacken indicates the "exceedingly important consequences" of the anthropocentric account that Cicero presents in the *De Natura Deorum* through Balbus, his representative of Stoicism in the work (1967:57). As Glacken explains, Balbus' claim that everything in the world exists for the sake of humans contributed to a "strong utilitarian bias" in conceptions of nature that persisted until the mid-19th century (and, arguably, still persist in many circles today). Glacken notes that even those thinkers in the millennia since Cicero who rejected the idea that nature existed for man alone still studied the products of nature in terms of their usefulness to man (1967:58).[14]

[14] Steiner traces anthropocentric arguments and the status of animals from Aristotle through the Stoics, Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, and Kant and finds that "These philosophers' views of animals are linked by an underlying

For the remainder of this introduction I will outline key features of the hierarchical worldview in order to establish a basis of comparison. To be clear, this will not be an exhaustive study of Greco-Roman views of nature and humanity. By the nature of this project I will have to be highly selective in the particular examples I choose to present, both in terms of the perspectives they represent and in terms of specific authorship. My goal here is to provide a survey of the particular areas of philosophical and political thought to which I will return in the subsequent author-based chapters.

For the sake of argument, I will use examples of philosophical and political thought from Cicero's writings (primarily *De Finibus, De Natura Deorum, De Officiis,* and *De Re Publica*) to represent various permutations of the hierarchical worldview. J.L. Penwill justifies my use of Cicero for this purpose:

> The generally accepted spokesman for the ideology of the Roman *res publica* is Cicero. Cicero, the *novus homo* who having won his fight for acceptance into the ruling elite was motivated more than most to preserve the system which maintained it (1994:69).

When I use terms like "dominant ideology" or "status quo" in this dissertation, I refer to the system made up of the ruling elite that Penwill mentions in this quote. At times the claims of Cicero's interlocutors will contradict each other or will otherwise prove philosophically or practically unsound; the point of this section is not to say that the philosophies of Lucretius, Diodorus Siculus, and Varro are more consistent or actionable than the schools of thought Cicero

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logic: that all and only human beings are worthy of moral consideration, because all and only human beings are rational and endowed with language" and by extension, the capacity for self-determination and moral responsibility (2005:2). By contrast, Steiner examines how, for Homer, Hesiod, Pythagoras, and Empedocles, "all four acknowledge important differences between human beings and animals but do so against the background of a commitment to the fundamental continuity between humans and animals as natural kinds subject to fate and the ravages of time" (2005:39).

represents, nor do I assume that the views Cicero represents are his own.[15] Rather, Cicero offers a variety of contemporaneous viewpoints that were available to Roman men in the late Republic and which, taken as a group, provide a useful point of comparison to the particular authors I have isolated for study.

The hierarchical worldview Cicero represents is especially relevant to my discussion in chapter two, where I examine Lucretius' holistic view of the universe and the place of humans within it, along with his criticism of the belief, held by many of his contemporaries, that there is a divine plan or purpose for humanity. In chapter three, I focus on Diodorus Siculus' emphasis on human ingenuity and euergetism as the primary motivation for the development of human society and for positive interactions between humans and their natural environment. The fourth chapter further explores reason, progress, and the constructive use of natural resources through Varro's agricultural prescriptions. I will provide additional introductory material at the beginning of each of these latter two chapters to help position them within the project as a whole.

Human(s and) Nature

What is Nature?

Thus far in this introduction, I have used terms like "nature," "the natural world," "the environment," and even "the universe" almost interchangeably. It will be useful to pause and

[15] Even if Cicero does try to represent his own viewpoint through one of these interlocutors at some point in a dialogue, it does not mean that his views on that matter remained consistent; Momigliano shows how Cicero's beliefs may have changed over the course of his career. The Cicero of 51 BCE had ambitions to reform Rome on religious grounds: "The *Somnium Scipionis* was a remarkable attempt to link the political program with religious aspirations: the good Roman leader was promised immortality in this precise sense. At the same time the book on *Laws* modified, but substantially defended, the traditional Roman attitude to sacred laws, to *auspicia*, and to the ancestral cults. Six or seven years later very little of that was left." According to Momigliano, *De Natura Deorum* offers "a rigorous denial of the possibility of demonstrating the existence of the gods" (1984:209). For more on the difficulties in pegging down Cicero's own philosophical views, see Atkins 2013:8-9.

consider the semantic range of terms like these in modern usage as well as the equivalent terms in Greek and Latin. What do we mean when we talk about "nature"?

In the introduction to *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, William Cronon lays out a variety of representations of nature that appear in literature, philosophy, and environmental thought. Nature has been represented as everything from a "demonic other" or an "avenging angel" to "a monolith that can be described holistically in much the same way as God" (1996:35-51). Other categories Cronon supplies that may be useful for thinking about representations of nature include nature as moral imperative, nature as artifice, nature as virtual reality, and nature as contested terrain. One purpose in enumerating all of these categories is to show that what we call 'nature' is a "profoundly human construction" and that "the way we describe and understand the world is so entangled with our own values and assumptions that the two can never be fully separated" (1996:25). The way in which a person conceives of nature is shaped by cultural factors and the way one represents nature to others contains implicit biases and objectives.

The situation was no different in antiquity. Greek and Latin terms that we might translate as 'nature'— *physis*, *kosmos*, *natura*, and *mundus*, among others—are far from precise and can take on very different meanings in different time periods, genres, and individual authors. Hughes identifies *ta panta* as "the closest word in ancient Greek to what is today termed the 'natural environment'" (2014:46), but any of the other terms I list at the beginning of this paragraph can carry a similar connotation. Walter Burkert credits the Greeks with "creat[ing] the very concept of 'nature,'" which Burkert defines as "an independent and persistent reality that should be a

subject of discourse" (1999).[16] Burkert explains the development over time of the terms *physis* (which Burkert notes was translated in Latin as *natura*, both of which in their most basic usage relate to simply 'being' but which also have to do with processes of birth and growth) and *kosmos*, which has more to do with order in the universe (1999).[17] Ancient thinkers could conceive of and describe the universe as a whole with these terms, but their day-to-day interactions with a particular type of 'nature' certainly influenced how they conceived of nature generally: Glacken notes that Greeks and Romans describing nature frequently seem to be thinking of "a domesticated nature, a pleasant commingling of nature and art," such as a village near the shore, cultivated fields, or olive groves (1967:12).

Some ancient thinkers tried to provide their own terminology to help communicate a particular conception of the whole of nature; so we see, for example, Anaximander use the term ἄπειρον ("the boundless") to describe a universe that is ordered, though not necessarily teleologically (*KRS* no. 108; see also Glacken 1967:8). In *De Natura Deorum*, Cicero notes that Cleanthes, a successor of Zeno the Stoic, applied the name 'god' to the "mind and spirit of the whole of nature" (*Cleanthes autem…tum ipsum mundum deum dicit esse, tum totius naturae menti atque animo tribuit hoc nomen*, 1.37). In the same work, Balbus the Stoic characterizes the universe as an intelligent being that "embraces and contains every kind of nature within herself" (*omnis naturas ipsa cohibet et continet*, 2.13). The Pythagoreans and followers of Orphic cosmology went one step further and conceived of the entire world as a living, breathing organism (Guthrie 1957:49; Hughes 2014:53). This line of thought draws on earlier conception

[16] The quotations come from an online journal that does not provide page numbers; all subsequent references to this article will use the year only.
[17] On *kosmos*, see Glacken, who explains that "The history of the Greek word κόσμος suggests that observation of order in human affairs may have inspired its wider application to the organic world and then to the universe" (1967:16).

such as Plato's Myth of Er (*Timaeus* 30D), which includes the notion that the cosmos is one great living creature containing all other living creatures.[18]

Nature as Other

One rather extreme perspective conceives of humans as more or less separate from nature—indeed, according to this dualistic notion, "nature" is defined as whatever happens in the world without human intervention.[19] Once humans impose their will on a space, it becomes part of human culture. Hughes locates the origin of this concept in antiquity and states that "Greek philosophers invented the idea of nature (*physis*) as everything that exists in the world outside human culture (*nomos*), and regarded it as a proper object of rational investigation" (2014:56).[20] Cronon identifies the central paradox of this line of thought, specifically in reference to more modern representations of 'wilderness' as spaces that are desirable exactly because they are thought to have been left untouched by human hands: "If we allow ourselves to believe that nature, to be true, must also be wild, then our very presence in nature represents its fall"

[18] Hughes offers several more versions of the concept of Oneness with Nature: "the mysteries of Eleusis also identified the life and death of humankind with the dying and rising of vegetation and its goddesses in the never-ending cycle of being: people die and, like seeds, are buried in the earth. But as seeds send forth shoots in response to healing moisture, the initiates of the mysteries would flourish again and live a happy life in the other world" (2014:52). See also Anaxagoras: "Nothing exists apart; everything has a share of everything else [fr.6]" (2014:56). Anne Carson represents this concept of continuity with the world around us as a product, at least in part, of an oral society, whose inhabitants "live much more intimately blended with their surroundings than we do." Carson sees such a worldview in Empedocles' 'emanations,' for example: "Empedocles and his contemporaries posit a universe where the spaces between things are ignored and the interactions constant" (1986:49).

[19] See, for example, Burkert 1999 on *physis* as "the opposite of 'manipulation'" and an entity which "occurs outside the conscious efforts of peoples and nations, their decrees, conventions, actions, and coercions."

[20] For the *nomos-physis* controversy in Greek thought, see e.g. Guthrie, who explains the issue as a question of "whether moral laws are a part of the order of nature with an absolute and universal validity, or something secondary and artificial, and relative to the temporary conventions of a particular order of society" (1957:93). Guthrie cites Plato at the beginning of *Laws* 10 saying that sophists do wrong by contrasting *physis* and *nomos*; Plato's later correction is that law and nature are the same thing: there is order in the universe—therefore there is an ordered plan or intelligence underlying nature (1957:106-7).

(1996:81).[21] Cronon is addressing a contemporary audience that includes self-identified environmentalists who extol the virtues of supposedly pristine landscapes and view human impact on the natural world as a potential scourge; thus he challenges his audience,

> to stop thinking of such things according to a set of bipolar moral scales…[which binaries] serve as our conceptual map for understanding and valuing the world. Instead, we need to embrace the full continuum of a natural landscape that is also cultural, in which the city, the suburb, the pastoral, and the wild each has its proper place, which we permit ourselves to celebrate without needlessly denigrating the others (1996:89).

Another version of the dualistic notion of nature and culture views nature not as a pristine and desirable space free from the taint of human intervention, but as a dangerous Other. The wilderness in this conception is not an idealized virginal landscape, but a terrifying place full of beasts and other threats.[22] This conception is much more common in ancient literature than the version Cronon is addressing.[23] So we see, for example, Catullus' Attis, stuck in the forested wilds of Phrygia among deer and boars, lament their loss of civilization (63.58-72) and eventually fall victim to Cybele's lions (78-89).

The concern Catullus displays in this poem, which he concludes by asking Cybele to keep her fury far from his house (63.92), combines anxiety around gender boundaries and powerful female figures, the integrity of the human body, foreign cults, animals, and wilderness. It is not at all uncommon for Greek and Roman authors to collapse these categories and treat

[21] Horden and Purcell revisit the question of human interactions with the environment and, like Cronon, find a paradox in the way that scholars often approach the topic: "The view that humans have had almost entirely negative impacts on nature—widespread among environmental historians, historical geographers, ecologists and environmentalists—paradoxically perpetuates the old Western stereotypes of humanity as active, dominating, and separate from a nature that is passive and static" (2000:338-9).

[22] See Hughes 2014:49 for wilderness (*erēmia* in Greek, *solitudo* in Latin) as a sacred place where gods were manifest.

[23] One only need think of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and all the terrible things—both bestial and divine—that people encounter in the forest.

them as an Other in need of control by rationality and civilization, both of which were coded as masculine. Emma Dench explains how, in ancient thought, "the feminine sphere is frequently elided with other conceptual categories, such as foreigners, slaves, and animals, which, if uncontrolled, may pose a similar threat to society," and how the identification of the controlling force of moral superiority with masculinity allowed a certain subset of males to justify holding power (1998:121). Dench finds that Octavian in particular appropriated this model and promoted the virtues of self-control and austerity as a way to legitimize his power over others (1998:122).

Dench recognizes that "the application of these constructed categories is neither static nor simple" and that the position of individuals within these hierarchies could always be called into question (1998:122-3). On a related issue, Maud Gleason explains how authors like Polemo try to enforce binary notions of gender identity "that purport to characterize the gulf between men and women but actually serve to divide the male sex into legitimate and illegitimate players" (1995:xxviii). Likewise, as I will demonstrate in this dissertation, when authors talk about the differences between humans and other animals, they are also talking about distinguishing certain humans relative to others.

Orienting Humanity in Nature

When examining a worldview that does see humanity as part of nature, rather than outside or separate from it, there are any number of ways that one could orient humanity relative to other living entities (mortal or immortal). I have found it useful for my purposes to conceive of humanity relative to nature and other living creatures—and to examine texts from antiquity in these terms—in three dimensions: backwards and forwards, upwards and downwards, and inwards and outwards. The first of these axes refers to orienting humans as we live now (from

the perspective of the author) relative to the people who came before us and those who will follow. This perspective includes accounts of the past such as theories about the lives of the earliest human beings and what they may or may not have had in common with animals, the first formations of human society, and how humans gained new knowledge and abilities over time. This axis also includes conjecture about the future of humanity; this feature may be implicit or explicit in any given text.[24] For the second axis, "upwards and downwards," I refer to efforts to orient human beings relative to other species or entities considered to be either superior or inferior to humanity on a cosmic scale. This second axis requires a hierarchical conception of the universe. The third dimension, "inwards and outwards," refers to the view of the world as consisting of a center and edges, with the center thought to be more civilized (and therefore more human, if humanity is defined by civilization) and the edges less so.[25] Authors who seek to orient humanity along any (or all) of these three dimensions typically apply a value judgment about where on an axis an individual or particular society falls.

These three dimensions—temporal, philosophical, and spatial—are interconnected, so that, for example, nomadic or tribal peoples who live 'near the edges of the earth' are considered inferior to those who live in cities (particularly Rome) because their way of life is older (and therefore inferior to contemporary people who have attained a supposedly better way of life) and thought to be more similar to the way that animals live than to the life of the gods. Wilderness, too, is considered to be inferior to cultivated land and to the physical spaces that humans have

[24] How people conceive of early human history and the interactions between people and nature (including animals) says a lot about how they conceive of nature more generally: is it hostile to us, and if so, has it always been? If we are fundamentally different than other animals, has that always been the case? Have humans experienced an ongoing process of differentiation from the rest of nature (especially animals), or was there a particular turning point that set us apart (e.g. a gift from the gods, a discovery by an individual human)? For 19th-20th century perspectives on questions like these, see Barker 2006.

[25] See especially Romm 1992.

constructed for themselves (i.e., houses, towns, and cities); humans in their earliest state *did* inhabit wild spaces, which persist on the outer reaches of the earth where humans have had less of an impact on the landscape. All three of these dimensions will appear to some extent in my analysis of ancient texts, but I will focus in particular on the vertical axis that seeks to orient humans relative to gods and animals.

Ethics and the Natural Order

According to a line of thought that became prominent in the Hellenistic period and eventually made its way into Roman philosophy—particularly Roman Stoicism—human morality is grounded in the natural order, and a primary goal of philosophy is to better understand nature in order to inform human ethics.[26] This is true for all of the major philosophical schools of the Hellenistic period but perhaps especially the Stoics, who "push this interconnectedness [between their logic, physics, and ethics] in such a way as to ground their entire theory of virtue in their conception of nature" (Lehoux 2012:57-8). In *De Finibus,* Cicero has Cato, for example, insist that understanding physics is a necessary virtue because "it is not possible to judge good and evil correctly unless one understands the whole system of nature" (*nec vero potest quisquam de bonis et malis vere iudicare nisi omni cognita ratione naturae*, 3.73). The basic goal of living in accordance with nature was common to these philosophical schools, but there were important differences in how they thought humans should actually interact with the natural world.

[26] The major philosophical schools were divided, however, on the question of whether this natural order was the product of divine ageny: "The conception of a designed earth was strongest among the Academic and Stoic philosophers, but even among the Epicureans there could exist a harmony between man and nature, orderly even if not the product of design" (Glacken 1967:147).

Most or all ancient thinkers viewed the world from an anthropocentric standpoint that assumes some degree of human exceptionalism.[27] In this worldview, humans are part of nature but somehow also separate from other living things. Glacken explains how this works for Balbus, a figure representing the Stoic viewpoint in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*:

> Unlike the rest of the creation, man has been given a mind to understand, his senses to observe and feel, and a hand to do things; he is part of nature but his endowments allow him more freedom in his physical environment, a more wide-ranging experience, and greater opportunities to assist in the improvement of nature and to profit by its use (1967:60).

In this conception, which is common to Stoics, Academics, and other philosophical schools available to Romans in the late Republic, humans belong to the natural order and are subject to it, but we are also uniquely able (among animals) to use reason to change the world around us.[28]

In this worldview, and especially in the Stoic version of it, humans have an exceptional role to play in the natural order: we are not only supposed to live within the bounds that nature places on us as members of the system, but we are also entitled—even obligated—to impose our own will on nature and help shape it more to our liking.[29] This attitude gained momentum in the Hellenistic age along with advances in geography, applied sciences, technology and math; W.K.C. Guthrie explains that, up to Aristotle, philosophical work regarding nature was more speculative, focusing on general principles more than technical progress: "its object was simply

[27] Some ancient thinkers, at least, were also concerned about human exceptionalism posing danger to the natural world: Glacken notes that "Pliny [*NH* 2.63] wonders if wild animals, so hostile to man, were not intended to be guardians of the earth, protecting her from his sacrilegious hands" and finds that in the *NH*, "The beauty and bounty of the earth are set against the imperfections of man, who is constantly abusing her" (1967:73).

[28] Steiner contrasts Hesiod's understanding of human exceptionalism with that of the Stoics: Hesiod says that Zeus did not give Justice to animals—this is why they eat each other, and we do not eat other humans—but that in this worldview, "The capacity for justice is not based on abilities that human beings possess and animals lack [as Stoics later claim for rationality]. Instead, justice is a gift of the gods pure and simple, as is the flourishing that ensues when we act justly" (2005:43).

[29] Hadot calls this dominating attitude towards nature "Promethean" in contrast to an "Orphic" attitude that appreciates nature from an aesthetic standpoint (2006:92ff.). Stoics could, of course, both appreciate nature's beauty and seek to bring about *more* beauty by imposing more order.

to understand nature, not to dominate her" (1957:14). Glacken, too, sees a shift over time in the characterization of human control over nature, with a "widening realization of man's ability to change the natural order" in agricultural works from Xenophon to Vergil (1967:137).[30] Humans have played this role since early in our history; as Cicero puts it, "What advantage and convenience could have been realized from the brute creation, had not men assisted?" (*De Officiis* 2.4).

One can conceive of agriculture—particularly the cultivation of previously wild lands—as a way to participate in an ongoing process of cosmic ordering. According to this conception of nature, the act of creation at the beginning of the universe brought order from chaos, and humans have the intellectual and physical means to help continue this process in their own lives by converting wilderness to farmland.[31] Mircea Eliade explained how, for many cultures in human history, wild spaces such as deserts, uncultivated lands, and unknown seas "are assimilated to chaos; they still participate in the undifferentiated, formless modality of pre-Creation" and that, according to this line of thought, "settlement in a new, unknown, uncultivated country is equivalent to an act of Creation" (1957:9-10). Though the 'act of Creation' part is not necessarily explicit, Hughes finds a similar sentiment in Greek and Roman literature from Hesiod to the

[30] Glacken also characterizes Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* and Pliny's *Natural History* as representative of Greek and Roman agricultural treatises in that they have "the strong flavor of nature study, of watching and observing nature to learn the arts of sowing, tilling, and plant breeding." Glacken elaborates on the practical knowledge pursued by Roman agronomists like Varro, Columella, and Pliny, who were all "deeply interested in the improvement of soils, methods of plowing, irrigation, drainage, removal of stones, clearing away of thickets, winning of new lands for cultivation, manuring, and insect control" (1967:13). Glacken notes, however, that these authors focus almost entirely on changes to arable land, whereas other kinds of land, like forests and tracts used for grazing, are primarily a modern concern with a few medieval precedents.

[31] Nelson (1998:100ff.) explains how the successive generations of the gods in Hesiod bring about more order, particularly in Zeus' acquisition of cunning as a complement to his might. The gods had to defeat monsters so strange they could not even be depicted by human hands: "The Monsters are destroyed by the civilizing, ordering force of Zeus' children; Typhoeus must be destroyed by Zeus himself. This is because Typhoeus, as pure force, completely divorced from intelligence, is also the embodiment of disorder. As such, he is the source, even after his defeat, of the erratic and irregular winds which wreak havoc on the sea and in farmers' fields (*Th*. 871-85)." Humans continue this process of ordering in their own sphere of influence: agriculture.

Stoic philosophy of Seneca: writers praised agriculture as a means by which humankind could improve nature "by creating ordered patterns of beauty as well as producing food." Hughes summarizes the Stoic view as follows:

> Human beings were the natural caretakers of the Earth, and its creatures were placed in their custody. Well-planned efforts make the world more beautiful and serviceable for human purposes; in this view, beauty and utility are synonymous. Mankind improves plants and animals through domestication. In the same way, the extension of civilization was seen as making up a defect of the wilderness, which was a 'haunt of beasts' or 'barren waste' (2014:64).

Glacken characterizes the Stoic view—as reported in Cicero, especially following the contributions of Panaetius and Posidonius—similarly: "man cooperates with nature and ever improves on its pristine condition; the changes which he has made and is to make are in fact part of the divine purpose in creating the world" (1967:144). In this worldview, human craftsmanship is an extension of divine creative energies (i.e., Logos). According to Panaetius, as Glacken explains, humans have, with the help of Logos, used their hands and senses to create a 'second nature' in nature.[32] Posidonius added that man's goal is to work in conjunction with nature and to put his energies into the ordering of the Cosmos (1967:144). Our role within the natural order is to *bring about more order* in the natural world.

Xenophon's Ischomachus appears to subscribe to a similar notion: the gentleman-farmer "seeks out uncultivated land so that he can make it better (*Oeconomicus* 20.22), just as Socrates seeks to improve souls" (Kronenberg 2009:55). Leah Kronenberg takes Ischomachus' interest in order and his quest for profits to be two sides of the same coin: "Ischomachus' desires all lead in a materialistic direction, and his ideal consists of perfect order in the physical world" (2009:61).

[32] Cicero has Balbus say something very similar at *De Natura Deorum* 2.152.

Noting that Vergil's depiction of Proteus in the *Georgics* has been read as a representation of "the farmer's struggle to order nature on a physical level," Kronenberg reads the figure instead as representing "the attempt to force a *moral* order on the world" (2009:177-8).[33] Both efforts are consequences of a worldview that values domination and assumes that human-created spaces are preferable to ones that do not show evidence of human activity.

This domination-based worldview persists in the modern era. As just one example, Ada E. Georgia, in the preface to her 1920 agronomical handbook, *A Manual of Weeds*, contrasts the work that Nature performs of her own volition with the superior produce she yields when subdued by the human farmer:

> Nature is the great farmer. Continually she sows and reaps, making all the forces of the universe her tools and helpers. The sun's rays, wind, rain, frost and snow, insects and birds, animals small and great, even to the humble burrowing worms of the earth, all work mightily for her and a harvest of some kind is absolutely sure….Yet, when man interferes with the Great Mother's plans and insists that the crops shall be only such as may benefit and enrich himself, she seems to yield a willing obedience, and under his guidance does immensely better work than when uncontrolled. But Dame Nature is an 'eye-servant'; only by the sternest determination and the most unrelaxing vigilance can her fellow-worker subdue the earth to his will…(1920:ix)

Twice in her preface, Georgia refers to agriculture as a "contest with nature," and she quotes Genesis 3:17 for support of her quasi-Hesiodic position that this struggle is a divinely-ordained feature of human nature: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the

[33] Kronenberg concludes that Vergil's Proteus is "a story of failure, and particularly the failure of human beings to change the laws of nature and conquer death" (2009:180). For more on natural order in the *Georgics*, see Nelson: "Vergil opens the *Georgics* with a Hesiodic picture of plowing and with a Hesiodic program, proposing to discuss how the farmer must learn nature's laws and adapt himself to her order. The topics here proposed, nature's order, nature's rich variety, and the natural suitability of crop to climate, will, in fact, be addressed in the second Georgic. Here nature's presumed order stands in stark contrast to what Vergil does discuss, not nature's laws, but nature's extremes, and human beings' consequent need to carve for themselves a small but ordered refuge. …The ordering comes not from nature, but from ourselves (1.100-10)" (1998:114).

days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat of the herb of the field." For Hesiod, as for Georgia, farming is not just another way to make a living, but the way of life that Zeus (or the Hebrew and Christian God) determined we should have. To farm is to fulfill the role that Zeus assigned to us (Nelson 1998:127).

Natural Hierarchy

The hierarchical conception of the universe in antiquity assumed that humanity occupies a middle position between animality and divinity. This hierarchy is assumed to be a static and permanent system, but individual humans can move up or down the scales and approach closer to divinity or animality.[34] Some categories of humans—women, slaves, foreigners—are thought to be intrinsically closer to animality.[35] No one who follows this model *wants* to be animalistic, of course; the goal for individual humans and even humanity as a whole is to transcend the part of nature that we share with animals and amplify the part that we share with the gods (see, e.g., Epictetus' *Discourses* 1.3).[36]

[34] Stoics and other thinkers who adopted this hierarchical worldview drew on Plato, but took the division between humans and other animals more seriously than Plato did. As Steiner explains, "Plato is not at pains to study the boundary between human beings and animals, but focuses instead on human beings proper. Plato does not hold up the notion of animality as a symbol of what human beings should not aspire toward—he equates irrational human beings with the irrationality of animals, and urges us to cultivate our rationality so as to elevate ourselves above our animal tendencies—but he never makes an essential distinction between human beings and animals" (2005:55). In this worldview, Steiner explains, human beings are animals but are unique in their ability to subjugate desires to wisdom. Furthermore, metempsychosis (which Plato depicts in *Timaeus* and *Phaedo*, but which we do not find incorporated into Stoicism) requires that animals and humans not be essentially different, at best perhaps by degree, though human certainly have priority over other animals (2005:55).

[35] This is true for these broad categories, but could also apply to individuals of any gender, class, or legal status. Maud Gleason explains how Aristotle, for example, conceived of some people as sharing both inner and outer characteristics of certain kinds of animals: "Some physiognomic observations appear well-grounded in nature: if a man has a distinctly bovine face, we are entitled to conclude that he is sluggish and take the cow as our proof [*Phys*. 811b]. Similarly one may cite the hawk to prove the rapacity of men who have eyes like birds of prey (813a)" (1995:35).

[36] Sallust, for example, represents a mind-body divide and says we should use our minds to rule if we wish to surpass the other animals (*Cat*. 1.1-3).

Gary Steiner, a moral philosopher who has written on anthropocentrism throughout history, notes that the idea of humans as a midpoint between gods and animals has been persistent in Western thought; challenges to one part of this system—particularly the representation of the gods as supreme beings—also call into question "our privileged status as lords of nature" (2005:1). The notion of rule within the hierarchical system is tied to a spatial configuration that maps onto the physical landscape of the world. Lynn Thorndike, for example, contextualizes this hierarchical notion within ancient theories of astrology by thinkers such as Posidonius and Ptolemy and finds that, "the earth was thought of as the center and bottom of the universe, and it was fitting that inferiors should be ruled and governed by superiors—the heavenly bodies" (1955:274). Cicero's Balbus also finds evidence of superiority in the habitats of different kinds of organisms, and even within the human race:

> An ne hoc quidem intellegimus omnia supera esse meliora, terram autem esse infimam, quam crassissimus circumfundat aer: ut ob eam ipsam causam, quod etiam quibusdam regionibus atque urbibus contingere videmus, hebetiora ut sint hominum ingenia propter caeli pleniorem naturam, hoc idem generi humano evenerit, quod in terra hoc est in crassissima regione mundi conlocati sint (*De Natura Deorum* 2.17).
>
> And indeed do we not also understand that everything higher is better, and that the earth is the lowest thing and that the densest air presses upon it? So for the same reason we see that this also pertains to certain regions and cities, since the wits of the people there are duller on account of the thicker atmosphere, and that this also applies to the whole human race, because it inhabits the earth, that is, the densest region of the world.

As terrestrial creatures, humans generally are at a disadvantage relative to divinity within this system; certain humans were considered to be lower or denser as a result of inhabiting lower, denser regions.[37]

Another quotation from Balbus—this time, citing his Stoic predecessor Chrysippus—shows how this worldview rests on the assumption that hierarchy is the primary organizing principle in the universe and that the ability to reason is the primary requirement for an individual or species to hold a privileged place within the system:

> etenim si di non sunt, quid esse potest in rerum natura homine melius? in eo enim solo est ratio, qua nihil potest esse praestantius; esse autem hominem qui nihil in omni mundo melius esse quam se putet desipientis adrogantiae est; ergo est aliquid melius; est igitur profecto deus (*De Natura Deorum* 2.16).
>
> For indeed if gods do not exist, what in the natural world could be superior to a human? For in him alone does reason exist, and nothing can possibly be more excellent than that. But to think that there is nothing in the entire world better than a human would be delirious arrogance; therefore there is something better; therefore a god absolutely does exist.

As this quotation shows, Balbus (like Chrysippus before him) is so dedicated to hierarchy as the only possible organizational model for the universe that it unquestionably underlies this proof for the existence of divinity. *Of course* there is something in the universe better than humans; to believe otherwise would be supreme arrogance. Balbus does not even entertain the idea that the universe may not be organized along the lines of relative superiority and inferiority, and so he does not bother to state this assumption as part of his logical proof.

[37] For a brief history of scholarship on environmental determinism since antiquity and in Herodotus and the Hippocratic corpus in particular, see Presti 2011:173-5. Hughes notes that "Environmental determinism had an optimistic side, too. Some Romans explained their rule over other people by appealing to Rome's superior environmental situation. If environments shape nations, then the nation with the best environment must inevitably prevail, possessing a natural right to rule" (2014:63).

Balbus later declares that everything in the entire world is the property of gods and men and ought to be used accordingly:

> principio ipse mundus deorum hominumque causa factus est, quaeque in eo sunt ea parata ad fructum hominum et inventa sunt. est enim mundus quasi communis deorum atque hominum domus, aut urbs utrorumque; soli enim ratione utentes iure ac lege vivunt (*De Natura Deorum* 2.154).
>
> In the first place, the world itself was made for the sake of gods and humans, and all the things which are in it were provided and devised for the enjoyment of humans. For the world is a sort of common home for gods and humans, or a city belonging to both; for they alone make use of reason and therefore live according to justice and law.

According to this conception on the world, justice requires reason; humans are entitled to extract profit from non-human animals and even kill them without violating justice because the latter group lacks reason and does not belong to the world community of gods and men.[38] Stephen Newmyer ties Balbus' "starkly anthropocentric account" to Aristotle's declaration at *Politics* 1256b15-23 that non-human animals exist for the sake of humans, but also to the Chrysippean view of animals as living commodities: "Just as Chrysippus had claimed that pigs live only to be slaughtered and eaten by humans, so Cicero's Balbus asserts that the sheep lives only to await its conversion into clothing for humans" (2010:75). Cicero makes a similar point in other works through other interlocutors, for example at *De Finibus* 3.67, where Cato, a Stoic, claims that there is no "bond of right" between man and animal, and so humans can use animals however they please without committing an injustice:

> et quomodo hominum inter homines iuris esse vincula putant, sic homini nihil iuris esse cum bestiis. praeclare enim Chrysippus,

[38] Hughes explains how "The Stoics accepted Hesiod's dictum that 'human beings have no compact of justice with irrational animals,' [*WD* 277-9] and Aristotle's hierarchy of plants, animals, and man. All decisions regarding the environment should therefore be made with respect to the possible effects on other humans" (2014:58).

> cetera nata esse hominum causa et deorum, eos autem communitatis et societatis suae, ut bestiis homines uti ad utilitatem suam possint sine iniuria.
>
> And just as they consider there to be bonds of right among humans, so they consider there to be no such bonds between humans and beasts. For Chrysippus brilliantly stated that all other things were created for the sake of humans and gods, but that they [i.e. humans and gods] were created for their own community and fellowship, so that people can use beasts for their own advantage without injustice.

Cicero presents a similar division between humans and the things they are entitled to use at *De Officiis* 2.11, where he explains that human life as we know it depends upon our use of inanimate materials such as gold and silver, but also upon the toil of irrational animate commodities (*animalia…rationis expertia*):

> Quae ergo ad vitam hominum tuendam pertinent, partim sunt inanima…partim animalia, quae habent suos impetus et rerum appetitus. Eorum autem rationis expertia sunt, alia ratione utentia. Expertes rationis equi, boves, reliquae pecudes, apes, quarum opere efficitur aliquid ad usum hominum atque vitam. Ratione autem utentium duo genera ponunt, deorum unum, alterum hominum.
>
> Of the things, then, that are necessary for the maintenance of human life, some are inanimate … and some are animate and have their own instincts and appetites. Of these [animate ones], some lack the capacity for reason, but others do use it. Those lacking reason include horses, cattle, other herd animals, and bees; the labor of these contributes something to the human life and experience. There are two races of beings that do make use of reason: the one divine, the other human.

Unlike most of the other quotations I draw from Cicero's work in this chapter, Cicero presents this view in his own voice, making it more likely that he actually did hold this worldview.

Cicero and his interlocutors are adamant that humans are the only mortal creatures that possess the capacity for reason, which elevates us as a species above the level of non-human

animals.[39] At *De Officiis* 1.11—just one passage characteristic of a belief consistent throughout many of Cicero's works—the author acknowledges that every living creature is endowed by Nature with an instinct for avoiding harm and pursuing the necessities of life, but claims that man alone is able to transcend the immediate sensations and stimuli in his environment through reflections on the past and predictions for the future. Later in the dialogue, he explains that reason also allows humans alone to perceive and appreciate order, beauty, and limit (*De Officiis* 1.14).[40]

Cicero and his interlocutors can find commonalities between humans and other animals, but they can also use this commonality to further argue for human exceptionalism. In Cicero's *De Re Publica*, Scipio claims that men who support democratic forms of government exclaim "…that even to wild animals nothing is sweeter than liberty, and that humans everywhere are deprived of it whether they serve a king or nobles" (*libertate ne feris quidem quicquam esse dulcius; hac omnes carere, sive regi sive optimatibus serviant*, 1.55). The implication is that if even beasts want liberty, liberty should be non-negotiable in human society. Allowing some concessions of quasi-human characteristics to non-human animals (such as supposing that they desire *libertas*) only reinforces the superiority of humans over them: it is taken as a given that humans *are* (and *want to be*) better than non-human animals, so if animals do possess some positive quality, humans must possess something better. Cicero makes this belief explicit at *De Finibus* 2.109-110, where he—in his own voice—responds to Torquatus' Epicurean tactic of using children and non-human animals as a 'mirror' for adult human behavior. Contradicting the

[39] Similarly, Aristotle claimed that man's greater instinct for mimesis and way of learning through it sets him apart from other animals (*Poetics* 1448b); for the idea that man alone possesses reason, see also Polybius 6.6.
[40] At *Laws* 1.8.24, Cicero makes the related claim that only man has religious sensibilities. Xenophon voices a similar sentiment at *Memorabilia* 1.4.13.

view of non-human animals as driven by appetite alone that he presents in other works, Cicero admits here that non-human animals *do* exhibit behaviors that demonstrate that they have motivations other than appetite: producing and rearing offspring require tenderness and self-sacrifice, and some animals "because of their social behavior resemble the unity of a society in a certain sense" (*congregatione aliae coetum quodam modo civitatis imitantur*). Some birds, he goes on, exhibit "devotedness, recognition, recollection, and…even grief for the lost" (*videmus in quodam volucrium genere non nulla indicia pietatis, cognitionem, memoriam, in multis etiam desideria videmus*). Rather than use these points to argue that human and non-human animals are not that different after all, Cicero takes the opposite stance: if even animals have these capacities, "Are we to say that humankind, who far surpasses the rest of the animals, has been granted nothing unique by nature?" (*et homini, qui ceteris animantibus plurimum praestat, praecipue a natura nihil datum esse dicemus?*).

Nature and the State

Hierarchy in Nature Corresponds to Hierarchy in Society

Humans are supposed to find our fullest expression *as humans* in the context of a city or society: according to Aristotle, anyone who is unfit for society is or too self-sufficient to need one is either a god or a beast (*Politics* 1.1253a; see also Guthrie 1957:102). In *De Legibus*, Cicero, speaking in his own voice, explains to Atticus and Quintus that a conversation about the ideal state is the most apt to reveal what human nature really is:

> Et recte quidem; nam sic habetote, nullo in genere disputandi potest magis patefieri, quid sit homini a natura tributum, quantam uim rerum optimarum mens humana contineat, cuius muneris colendi efficiendique causa nati et in lucem editi simus, quae sit

> coniunctio hominum, quae naturalis societas inter ipsos. His enim explicatis, fons legum et iuris inueniri potest (*De Legibus* 1.16).
>
> And rightly indeed: for you should understand that no other kind of discussion is better able to bring to light what gift was given by nature to humankind, how much power of the greatest kind the human mind contains, what office it was that we were born and raised into the light to oversee and perform, what the unity of humankind is, what natural community there is among us. For when these things are made clear, the source of laws and justice can be discovered.

Regarding this passage, Daryn Lehoux remarks that, "Here Cicero makes it abundantly clear that the starting point of any understanding of law and justice must begin with *nature*. The very origins, the fount of law and justice, are rooted in the society between people, a society that is itself 'by nature,' and the ability to reason this out is itself also given to people by nature" (2012:31). In addition to the physical strata that these different beings supposedly inhabit, this hierarchical notion of the universe is also built in part on the perceived *abilities* of these different groups—particularly their capacity for reason. According to Cicero, the power of reason to control appetite (and, by extension, to create and enforce laws) and to form language is responsible for the ability of humans to gather together into societies: "By the power of reason, nature likewise joins human with human in an association of speech and life" (*eademque natura vi rationis hominem conciliat homini et ad orationis et ad vitae societatem*, *De Officiis* 1.12).[41]

[41] Konstan finds these same two major features of human life—language and rule of law—to be central in Lucretius' theory of the development of debilitating fear in humans (2008:xiv). Reinhardt, on the other hand, emphasizes the shared experience that creates (and is created by) language, and notes that the restrictions on instinct in the Epicurean model is one feature that sets it apart from teleological accounts (2008:136). Sextus Empiricus reports that the Stoics say that internal speech, not uttered speech, is what sets humans apart from other animals (*Against the Professors* 8.275-6).

He reiterates his claim that only reasoning beings (i.e., humans) can form societies yet again at *De Officiis* 1.50.[42]

Defenders of the status quo cite hierarchical organization among the gods and between gods and humans in order to legitimize hierarchy within human society. Lehoux discusses how, in Cicero's constitution for an ideal state,

> [the] political and judicial organization of legislators, magistrates, judges, and officials of various sorts…gets its justification only through a prior acceptance of a foundational hierarchy that sets priests and diviners up as mediators between the human legislative body and the higher divine one (2012:60).

Lehoux focuses on the legal argument for divinely-ordained hierarchy in human society; I am less interested in the special class of priests and diviners and more in the generalized distinction between people who can use their reasoning faculties adequately, and those who supposedly cannot (whether within a society, or between Romans and non-Romans).[43]

This viewpoint maintains that hierarchy in politics and society is necessary and desirable in part because leaders are naturally better than the rest of the people, and the people have a natural desire to yield to their betters. Few men can hold and appreciate virtue; it is assumed that a system which allows these exceptional men to make decisions for the rest of the crowd is best for everyone involved. Scipio represents this view in Cicero's *De Re Publica*:

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[42] One possible example of Cicero's own views to the contrary, at least in the case of elephants: at *Epistulae ad familiares* 7.1.3, regarding the human and animal slaughter at games held by Pompey to celebrate the opening of his theater, Cicero has this to say: "The crowd and mob was quite awed by [the slaughter of elephants], but felt no pleasure. In truth, a kind of compassion actually followed this, and a belief that there exists a sort of fellowship [*societas*] between that type of beast and humankind." Regarding *De Officiis* 1.50, Newmyer remarks that "Cicero's use of such phrases as 'community and human society' (*communitatis et societatis humanae*), 'universal kinship of the human race' (*universi generis humani societate*) and 'bonding agent' (*vinculum*), all suggest that Cicero has Stoic kinship theory in mind" (2010: 84).

[43] For Cicero's representation of the Stoic belief that all humans are endowed with reason, but that not all will be able to use it, see Atkins 2013:174-6.

> certe in optimorum consiliis posita est civitatium salus, praesertim cum hoc natura tulerit, non solum ut summi virtute et animo praeesse inbecillioribus, sed ut hi etiam parere summis velint (1.51).
>
> Of course the health of the state lies in the counsel of the aristocracy, especially since nature has made it the case not only that these superior men stand above weaker ones in virtue and courage, but also that these [weaker people] desire to obey their betters.

In Scipio's estimation, it is not only the case that the elites in a society deserve to hold power because they are more virtuous and courageous than the common people, but also that the people who do not possess the same positive traits are happy to yield power to their 'natural betters.' Although Scipio acknowledges that each of the three main forms of government has its merits and defenders, he finds fault with democracy because it does not allow for proper and beneficial hierarchy according to nature and merit:

> …et cum omnia per populum geruntur quamvis iustum atque moderatum, tamen ipsa aequabilitas est iniqua, cum habet nullos gradus dignitatis (*De Re Publica* 1.43).
>
> …and when everything is carried out by the people [i.e., in a democracy], although it is just and moderate, nevertheless the equality itself is unfair, since it has no gradations of dignity.

The only way for a society to be fair, in Scipio's estimation, is for those who display superior virtue and courage to hold more power than the rest of the people in a hierarchical model, thereby organizing society according to "gradations of dignity" (*gradus dignitatis*).

The Stoic worldview, which Scipio represents here, includes a Universal Monarch or World Mind that directs everything on heaven and earth. Scipio uses the model of this divine structure to justify hierarchy among humans: citing Homer for support, Scipio claims that if one accepts the notion that the other gods respect Jupiter as their king, one ought not wonder that so

many humans have historically bowed down to their natural better in the form of a human monarch (*De Re Publica* 1.56). Thus, in imitation of Jupiter, certain men can elevate themselves above other humans and become closer to the gods by governing a state well.[44] Statesmanship, indeed, is next to godliness:

> neque enim est ulla res in qua propius ad deorum numen virtus accedat humana, quam civitatis aut condere novas aut conservare iam conditas (*De Re Publica* 1.12).
>
> For there is nothing in which human virtue can approach closer to the power of the gods, than by establishing new states or in preserving those already established.

Quoting Ennius, Cicero says in his own voice that those who govern cities stand above other men just as cities stand above villages:

> equidem quem ad modum 'urbes magnas atque inperiosas', ut appellat Ennius, viculis et castellis praeferendas puto, sic eos qui his urbibus consilio atque auctoritate praesunt, iis qui omnis negotii publici expertes sint, longe duco sapientia ipsa esse anteponendos (*De Re Publica* 1.3).
>
> In any case, in the same way that ‘great and imperious cities,’ as Ennius calls them, are preferred to villages and fortresses, so too, I think, those who preside over these cities by their counsel and authority, those who are expert in every kind of public business, ought to be given preference over other men on account of their very wisdom.

In the same dialogue Scipio explains that it is *wise* to understand forms of government and how they devolve into their corrupt forms, but it is *quasi-divine* to be able to steer these events (*De Re Publica* 1.45). By implication, those who do not have access to political power or choose not to engage in politics are implicitly denied the opportunity to become godlike.

[44] Penwill also discusses the “incentivizing purpose” of the *imago* of the statesman-as-god in Cicero (1994:73-4).

Treating People like Animals

According to this line of thought, humans who seem to be deficient in their reasoning capabilities are to some extent animalistic; they cannot be trusted to make the best decisions for themselves or for others. It is, therefore, not unjust to treat them like animals, i.e., however a reasoning human, or "wise man," sees fit. This idea is typically promoted as being in the best interest of everyone involved (see, e.g., Aristotle on 'natural slavery' at *Politics*, 1254b16–21).[45] Cicero's Scipio explains that someone who has learned to cultivate wisdom understands that, although others are called human beings, the only ones who actually *deserve* the name are those who have been cultivated by the appropriate activities of humanity, i.e., philosophical training and the application of reason (*cui persuasum sit appellari ceteros homines, esse solos eos qui essent politi propriis humanitatis artibus*, *De Re Publica* 1.28).

According to this view, morality and duty require that a person control his appetites by means of reason:

> Duplex est enim vis animorum atque natura; una pars in appetitu posita est, quae est ὁρμή Graece, quae hominem huc et illuc rapit, altera in ratione, quae docet et explanat, quid faciendum fugiendumque sit. Ita fit, ut ratio praesit, appetitus obtemperet. Omnis autem actio vacare debet temeritate et neglegentia nec vero agere quicquam, cuius non possit causam probabilem reddere; haec est enim fere discriptio officii (*De Officiis* 1.101).
>
> The energy and nature of the spirit is twofold: one part is situated in appetite (that is, ὁρμή, in Greek), which drags a person this way and that; the other in reason, which teaches and explains what ought be done and what ought to be avoided. Thus it happens that reason presides, and appetite obeys. Moreover every action should

[45] Williams explains how "The Greek world recognized the simple truth that slavery rested on coercion. Aristotle's attempt to justify the institution, in the literal sense of conferring justice on it rather than accepting that it was necessary, required him to deny this simple truth" (1993:117). Stoics like Seneca, on the other hand, "can let the social world be unjust" because they believed that the soul's embodiment—and therefore also the condition of slavery—was a temporary condition and that "one can get out of it" (1993:116).

> be free from temerity and carelessness; truly we should not do anything for which it is not possible to offer a probable cause; for this is the very definition of duty.

The language of domination and submission in this passage (e.g., *Ita fit, ut ratio praesit, appetitus obtemperet*) takes on an animalistic flavor in the passage following it, where appetite, as if a poorly trained horse, must be restrained (*retinentur*) from 'running ahead' (*praecurrant*), 'straying far off' (*longius evagantur*) and 'leaping out of bounds' (*exsultantes*). Walter Miller's Loeb translation captures Cicero's equine characterization of the appetite nicely:[46]

> Efficiendum autem est, ut appetitus rationi oboediant eamque neque praecurrant nec propter pigritiam aut ignaviam deserant sintque tranquilli atque omni animi perturbatione careant; ex quo elucebit omnis constantia omnisque moderatio. Nam qui appetitus longius evagantur et tamquam exsultantes sive cupiendo sive fugiendo non satis a ratione retinentur, ii sine dubio finem et modum transeunt; relinquunt enim et abiciunt oboedientiam nec rationi parent, cui sunt subiecti lege naturae (*De Officiis* 1.102).

> The appetites, moreover, must be made to **obey the reins of reason** and neither allowed to run ahead of it nor from listlessness or indolence to lag behind; but people should enjoy calm of soul and be free from every sort of passion. As a result strength of character and self-control will shine forth in all their lustre. For when appetites overstep their bounds and, **galloping away**, so to speak, whether in desire or aversion, are not well held in hand by reason, they clearly **overleap all bound** and measure; for they throw obedience off and leave it behind and refuse to **obey the reins of reason**, to which they are subject by Nature's laws (trans. Miller; emphasis mine).

Cicero, like many of his predecessors and contemporaries, frequently uses analogy and metaphor to indicate that the crowd in the city needs to be tamed and guided like an animal. Plato says that trying to ascertain the will and opinion of the public masses is like trying to read the desires of a

[46] The analogy of controlling the appetitive part of the soul to reining a horse (or pair of horses) goes back to Plato's *Phaedrus* (246a ff.). Dyck also finds a reference to undisciplined soldiers in words like *oboedire*, *ignavia*, and *deserere* (1996:263).

'great and powerful creature' under one's charge (θρέμματος μεγάλου καὶ ἰσχυροῦ, *Republic* 493a). Elsewhere he compares rulers to shepherds (*Laws* 905e-906a; *Statesman* 267d), an analogy that, of course, goes back to Homer (for many examples, see Haubold 2000:18-40; see also Xen. *Memorabilia* 1.2.30-37). Cicero's Scipio doubts that democracy can ever preserve equal rights among a population, because the people, if released from their 'reins' (*soluti ecfrenatique sint*), will always support demagoguery (*De Re Publica* 1.53).

At *De Officiis* 2.12-15 (several parts of which I discussed above at pages 4-6) Cicero explains somewhat euphemistically that treating certain groups of people like animals is just and necessary for the life to which 'we' (i.e., Cicero and his ilk) are accustomed. What he describes as mutual 'help' (*auxilia*) arising out of human communal life (*communis vita*) in fact is a hierarchical, exploitative endeavor that brings profit and comfort to a select few at the expense of those they own or employ (*De Officiis* 2.13). Manual labor by other, lower, humans makes inanimate and animate commodities beneficial and profitable to those who own not only the land or materials themselves but also, in many cases, own the people whose labor makes the commodities useful. Those who own herds of animals would not be able to profit from them if not for the men who actually handle them. Other men protect 'us' from dangerous animals. Without these men and their skills, Cicero tells us, life as we know it would not be possible (*Quid enumerem artium multitudinem, sine quibus vita omnino nulla esse potuisset?* 2.15).

According to this line of reasoning, if the elites in society did not exert hierarchical authority over non-human animals and over humans with less developed capacities for reason, there would be no human culture. These skills and their products are what make human life—for certain wise men—far better than the lives of non-human animals. This worldview defines humanity, on the level of the natural world, as the station above animality; on the societal level,

certain men can enjoy a finer grade of humanity by reducing others to a bestial status. In this conception of society, for some to be fully human and enjoy the accoutrements of civilized life, other human beings must be excluded from full citizenship in the human community.

In *De Officiis*, after a reminder that man alone seeks truth by inquiring and investigating (*hominis est propria veri inquisitio atque investigatio*), Cicero asserts that this thirst for knowledge makes a man, yearning for preeminence (*principatus*) in the political hierarchy, unwilling to yield to anyone who does not share his pursuits (1.13).[47] The *magnitudo animi* and contempt for *res humanae* that result from this frame of mind are positive qualities according to the traditional concept of the elite Roman man. Cicero's use of the adjective *humana* here is intriguing: whereas Cicero uses it elsewhere to mean 'urbane' or 'sophisticated' (i.e., human as opposed to non-human), here he seems to draw upon the etymological connection to *humus* ('earth') to designate lowly human matters as opposed to the lofty pursuits of the rational mind.[48]

To be human, in this worldview, is to be privileged above non-human animals; by extension, to be an upstanding and excellent human requires great mastery of those qualities that are unique to humanity. For Cicero, a person maintains *decorum,* an important traditional Roman social value, by following the aspects of his nature that set him apart from non-human animals:

> decorum id esse, quod consentaneum sit hominis excellentiae in eo, in quo natura eius a reliquis animantibus differat (*De Officiis* 1.96).

[47] There are other connections between Cicero's view of philosophy and political leadership: Dutsch points out, for example, that Cicero respected Ennius as someone who wrote about philosophy, but that his status as a foreigner and a poet "did not fit Cicero's glorified version of the history of Roman philosophy as something taught by example, not in writing, and practiced exclusively by the *principes* and the *optimi*" (2014:5).

[48] Similarly, Scipio relates that his grandfather, appearing to him in a dream, encouraged him to turn his attention from the human domain below him, gazing instead at the heavens and thinking little of those human things (*sentio…te sedem etiam nunc hominum ac domum contemplari; quae si tibi parva, ut est, ita videtur, haec caelestia semper spectato, illa humana contemnito!, De Re Publica* 6.20). For the meaning "urbane" or "sophisticated" see e.g. *De Div.* 1.1.2 and *Ad Quintum* 2.10.2.

> *Decorum* is that which harmonizes with human superiority in those respects in which his nature differs from that of the rest of the animals.

The use of language, as a function of reason, like *decorum*, also sets humans apart from non-human animals; by the same principle, using language eloquently sets certain humans above others:[49]

> Hoc enim uno praestamus vel maxime feris, quod conloquimur inter nos et quod exprimere dicendo sensa possumus. Quam ob rem quis hoc non iure miretur summeque in eo elaborandum esse arbitretur, ut, quo uno homines maxime bestiis praestent, in hoc hominibus ipsis antecellat? (*De Oratore* 1.8.32-3)
>
> For we stand above beasts in one way especially: we talk to one another and are able to express our ideas by speaking. Who, given this fact, would not rightly admire this ability and think it necessary to work his hardest in this respect, in order that he might distinguish himself from other human beings in the same way in which humans surpass beasts most especially?

When discussing the natural world generally, then, it seems that the *possession* of reason alone is enough to distinguish humans from non-human animals; zeroing in on the level of human society, the hierarchical status quo requires further means of differentiating between *applications* of reason. In one striking example, Cicero has Scipio explain that Plato identified human presence on a foreign shore by "symbols of science" (*ex doctrinae indiciis*), not by indications of agriculture (*videre enim se hominum vestigia; quae videlicet ille non ex agri consitura quam cernebat, sed ex doctrinae indiciis interpretabatur*, *De Re Publica* 1.29). Judging by the *Odyssey*, agricultural practices had been a useful indication of the level of civilization and social

[49] Lucretius undermines this elevation of humans over non-human animals by noting that they have similar means of communication and by arguing that human speech developed gradually over time. At *DRN* 5.1040ff. he argues that no single person developed language or assigned names to worldly objects, and at *DRN* 5.1060ff. he describes the vocalizations that various non-human animals (the mother mastiff, the stallion, and birds) use depending on whether they are experiencing fear, pain, joy, or interacting with their young. For more on Lucretius' theory of language development, see Reinhardt 2008.

customs that a local population had attained: Odysseus' standard method of assessing strange men he was about to meet on a foreign shore was to wonder whether they ate bread.[50] Odysseus could console himself with signs of agricultural labor because, king though he was, he still understood and engaged with humans as producers, not just thinkers. According to Scipio this is not enough for a man like Plato, who needs to see evidence of philosophical pursuits in order to feel at home with other humans.[51] By Scipio's logic, one could argue that Roman farm workers and other manual laborers are not fully human if they do not engage in philosophical pursuits, even if they apply reason in other areas of their lives.

This dehumanization justifies exploitation of 'lower' humans, just as it justifies exploitation of the non-human animals to which they are compared. According to several of Cicero's interlocutors, some people are 'people' in name only—they are essentially beasts in a human shape. Indeed an assertion of this type directly precedes the passage above in which Scipio cites Plato's (supposed) evaluation of *hominum vestigia*: that story illustrates his point that wisdom disdains everything earthly (*omnia humana*: again, that intriguing use of *humana*, as above), and only those who perform the right kind of human feats should be considered properly human (*De Re Publica* 1.28).

To summarize the logic of the preceding passages: reason controls appetite and therefore allows for moral behavior. Reasoning beings have a moral obligation *only* to members of their own communities. Only gods and humans have access to reason. Because non-human animals

[50] See, for example, Odysseus' question upon reaching the land of the Lotus-eaters (9.101) and his statement that the Cyclopes neither plant nor plow (9.121).

[51] Buchner 1984:111 (on *hominum vestigia*): Scipio ist der Meinung, daß Mensch in diesem positiven Sinne nur ist, wer die spezifischen Fähigkeiten des Menschen ausgebildet hat und durch sie geformt ist, die politi propriis humanitatis artibus. *humanitas* heißt Menschlichkeit im Sinne des Menschseins. Es könnte so scheinen, als ob hier *humanitas* dem griechischen ἀνθρωπισμός, Menschen im Sinne des Gegenteils des ἀπαίδευτος, des Ungeschulten, nahe käme -- und in der Tat gehört für Cicero Bildung zur Humanitas--, das Wort politus aber zeigt, daß es mehr auf die Wirkung auf den Menschen, seine Verfeinerung, ankommt als auf Kenntnisse.

lack reason, they cannot behave in a moral or just fashion and they cannot participate in the worldwide community of reasoning beings that includes gods and men. Humans who resemble animals in their supposedly insufficient reasoning capability, by extension, are also rightfully subject to the rule of those humans who do make proper use of reason.

Lucretius, Diodorus Siculus, and Varro

In the sections above, I outlined how Cicero's hierarchical worldview, which he presents at times in his own voice but also through other speakers such as Scipio and Balbus, informs and justifies a hierarchical organization for human society. In each of the three subsequent chapters of this dissertation I show how the conception of nature implicit or explicit in a particular work—Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura,* Diodorus Siculus' *Bibliotheca Historica*, and Varro's *De Re Rustica*—corresponds to a different view of politics and society. All four of these authors (including Cicero) offer conceptions of the gods and their role in human affairs, explore how humans relate to non-human animals, and give a sense of how humans (ought to) interact with their natural environment. Reason also plays a key part: whereas the hierarchical model sees reason as a point of separation between humans and the rest of the natural world, Lucretius, Diodorus Siculus, and Varro more often emphasize the integrity of the natural world (of which humans are just one part) and continuity between humans and other living creatures.

The gods are present in some form in each work, but they do not intervene in the lives of human beings the way that traditional Roman religion—particularly the version practiced by the Roman state—assumes.[52] Lucretius famously denies that the gods have any interest at all in

[52] Regarding the Roman assumption that religious actions affect military outcomes, for example, Davies notes that in Livy, "Roman piety consistently leads to success and impiety to failure. It is perfectly understandable that in a culture which by and large accepted that the gods played a very active role in the world of men, such juxtaposition

human affairs; he also challenges the idea that humans are entitled to use all other animal species as they see fit. Diodorus recasts the familiar gods and goddesses as human benefactors who won widespread worship for their good deeds. Varro invokes select agricultural deities to inspire his work, adopting a version of the pantheon that is more animistic than anthropomorphic. Whether the gods are rationalized as human agents, imagined in their more ancient roles as forces of nature, or removed from the picture completely, humans have more responsibility—over their own lives and in their interactions with others—when there is no overarching monarchical force in the universe.

The chapter on Lucretius will pick up many of the themes that I have addressed in this introduction. Lucretius offers the strongest counterpoint to the hierarchical worldview that Cicero represents in his works. In the chapters on Diodorus Siculus and Varro, I am especially interested in how these authors depict human interactions with the natural world, particularly in the agricultural realm. In the first pentad of the *Bibliotheca Historica*, Diodorus Siculus recounts tales of exemplary humans in the distant past who took great pains to make natural spaces safer and more productive for wide swaths of people. In these prescriptive tales, venerable individuals act in the best interest of their communities, whose support enables them to complete large public works projects and spread revolutionary agricultural knowledge. The relationship between these impressive individuals and their respective communities shares some features with a hierarchical model—these are exceptional figures who often occupy leadership positions in a society—but Diodorus emphasizes the power of the community to determine the fate of the

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should be sufficient to leave the reader in no doubt as to the sort of intervention that was to follow" (2004:22). Liebeschuetz explains how public divination did instill "the belief that the gods cared for what happened on earth, and that they might intervene with calamitous consequences to the community," just as Livy claimed in his account of Numa's reign (1979:8). Cicero has Cotta claim that the Roman state could never have been so successful if not for the divine favor that its people had obtained for it (*De Natura Deorum* 3.2). For civic religion in Rome more generally, see Scheid 2016 and Beard et al. 1998.

individual and particular leadership qualities, like equitability and moderation, that have more to do with service to the community than rule over it.

Varro's portrayal of the natural world and of human interactions with it is very different from the models I described in the sections above (see pages 21ff.) that assume humanity's task to be imposing order on the natural world. He does not mention a moment of creation or an initial state of chaos: he claims that there was never a time when fields did not exist (3.1.3; see below page 201) and that it is a "necessity of nature" that humans and herd animals have always existed (*et homines et pecudes cum semper fuisse sit necesse natura*, 2.1.3).[53] In Varro's version of events, there has been change over time, but not necessarily of a movement from chaos to order. Relationships among humans and between human and animal populations have changed, some physiological changes have occurred in animal populations (e.g. domesticated ones being descended from wild ones), and humans have made great technological strides. But this is a *human* kind of development—driven by human agency for human ends—not cosmic or divine, and this development over time does not follow a single path, either in the direction of progress or of decline. Varro emphasizes human *partnerships* with nature, rather than domination of it.

All three of these authors relate a version of early human history in which culture and society have developed gradually over time without the interference (or benevolence) of the gods. Thus they mirror the sentiment of Xenophanes of Colophon, Fr. 18 (Diels):

> οὔτοι ἀπ᾽ ἀρχῆς πάντα θεοὶ θνητοῖσ᾽ ὑπέδειξαν
> ἀλλὰ χρόνῳ ζητοῦντες ἐφευρίσκουσιν ἄμεινον.
>
> Indeed the gods did not reveal everything to mortals from the beginning:
> Rather, those searching discovered something better in time.

[53] Guthrie (1957:52) notes that this assumption eliminates the need to identify a first cause for life in the world, a problem that otherwise commits even the most rational cosmologist to a non-material and deistic conception of the universe's beginnings.

By highlighting the developments that individual human agents and human societies have been able to achieve without divine providence, these non-teleological accounts undermine the essentialist view of species differentiation that sees humans as exceptional recipients of divine favor.[54]

[54] For ancient theories of human progress with or without the aid of the gods, see Dodds 1973, Bury 1920, Blundell 1986, and Xanthakis-Karamanos 1981. For Xenophanes in particular on progress, see Tulin 1993.

Chapter 2: Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*

Introduction

The view of humanity and human society that became part of the dominant ideology under Augustus held that hierarchy is natural and desirable on every level: reason controls appetite within the human soul, the aristocrats in a city dominate the lower classes, and in the world as a whole humans occupy an intermediate level with gods above and non-human animals below. Adherents to the status quo used this belief system to justify exploitation and oppression of those beings on the 'lower rungs,' namely, non-human animals and non-elite humans. Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* offers an alternative worldview that disregards these hierarchical structures within the individual, the community, and the world.

I have divided this chapter into three main parts, following some introductory material on reading the *De Rerum Natura* as a political text. In the first, I explore Lucretius' portrayal of the gods. According to Lucretius, the gods are distant, perfectly blissful, and inattentive to human affairs. They do not respond to prayer or sacrifice. This section also briefly examines Lucretius' personification of Natura, his use of the figure of Venus for poetic and didactic ends, and his celebration of 'godlike' Epicurus. In the second section, I look at how Lucretius depicts humans interacting with the natural world, including his own forays into wild areas, the early stages of human life and the movement away from that 'natural' state in subsequent generations, and relationships between human and non-human animals. These first two sections demonstrate that Lucretius' view of the gods and of non-human animals disputes the notion that the universe is organized hierarchically on the basis of different species' ability to reason, with humans occupying a middle position between divinity and animality. In the final section, I further

investigate the role of reason and the natural order in the *DRN* and show how Lucretius challenges the organizational structure for human society that is based on hierarchy. Some of those who promoted hierarchy in society justified their position by appealing to the assumption that individual human beings are organized in a similar way, with the reasoning faculty controlling the physical body. Lucretius' theory of the soul undermines this claim. Before I address Lucretius' treatment of the gods, nature, and reason, it will be useful to consider how *De Rerum Natura* can and should be read as a political text.

Scholars now recognize that the *De Rerum Natura* is a political text, perhaps as much as it is a treatise on materialist philosophy. Daniel Solomon justifies this reading, saying, "I take Lucretius at his word that there is a crisis in Roman society that he intends to resolve with the message of Epicurus" (2004:267). Lucretius undertook his project with a view of his contemporary Romans as oppressed by religion and caught up in an anxious struggle for ever more power and wealth (e.g., 2.11-13).[55] Penwill compares Lucretius' representation of Epicurus' deeds to those of Julius Caesar and argues that Epicurus achieved "exactly what Caesar represented himself as doing in subduing the Helvetii: a wrong has been done and an avenging hero rises up to right that wrong" (2009:71). Penwill notes that Caesar's quest for world domination is interminable, but Epicurus has already completed his conquest: "everything, the entire universe, falls within the compass of the individual intellect" (2009:73). Thus Lucretius depicts his master as achieving what Julius Caesar—and the Roman state generally—could not. Penwill offers extensive additional connections between Lucretius' poem and specific Roman statesmen as well as recent political events. Suggesting that Lucretius' proem, a hymn to Venus Genetrix, could be seen as a jab at Pompey's addition of a tiny temple for Venus atop his

[55] See, e.g., Asmis 2008a:155 for Lucretius' condemnations of this lifestyle.

new theater, Penwill claims that Lucretius "is creatively subverting Pompey's fiction by replacing it with one of his own" (2009:81).

Additional significant contributions to our understanding of the political dimension of Lucretius' work include articles and monographs by Minyard (1985), Schiesaro (2007), Asmis (2008a), Fowler (2007), and Cabisius (1985). Minyard investigates the political context of *De Rerum Natura*, which he understands as "a quintessentially Late Republican document," against contemporary literary evidence—namely, that of Caesar, Catullus, and Cicero. Emphasizing this period's departure from *civitas Romana* and *mos maiorum* as the central organizing principles of Roman life, Minyard sees Lucretius' work as a direct byproduct of an historical moment in which Greek influence and Roman imperial expansion contributed to a crisis in Roman social identity (1985:6). Because Cicero was committed to preserving the old traditional Roman values and believed them to be strong enough to accommodate new thought, Minyard says, he used them as a measure for the validity of concepts coming from outside of Rome, such as those from Hellenistic philosophy: Cicero was willing to accept as 'true' those that were compatible with the *mos maiorum* and supported this value system, but he rejected as 'false' those that threatened the foundations of the established system in Rome (1985:29).

Lucretius' prescriptions for human life challenge the status quo in just the way that Cicero fears but, perhaps more importantly, his entire approach to society and philosophy *completely reverses* Cicero's way of operating. Rather than evaluate intellectual incursions by whether or not they fit the established system, Lucretius helps his reader to *remove* the unnatural artifices of Roman politics and society and thence to let go of unnecessary anxiety that arises from these social and political constructs. For Lucretius, the institutions and traditions of Rome will never provide relief from the anxiety they cause and they surely cannot be used as a measure

of what is 'true' or 'false.' One cannot judge truth based on a faulty standard. By reframing non-human animal life as admirable in some cases, by rejecting the capacity for reason as a defining characteristic of humanity, and by formulating a concept of divinity completely divorced from rule of any kind, I argue, Lucretius implicitly rejects hierarchy as the essential organizational principle for nature, the human soul, and human society.

Minyard also sees the poetic format of Lucretius' work as particularly threatening to the philosophical and political status quo: "Epicureanism, quite unexpectedly, now had a big Latin poem to its credit, one that took on the entire literary as well as constitutional heritage of Rome" (1985:76). Monica Gale also cites the importance of *De Rerum Natura*'s quasi-epic form to Lucretius' philosophical and moral program, but she does not pursue the text's political dimension (1994:127-8). Nevertheless, Gale's handling of Lucretius' mythological digressions and her investigation of the philosophical subtexts that lie under poetic devices, such as similes and repetition, support my reading of political motives where there might appear, on the surface, to be none. Gale notes that Lucretius "exploits the truth concealed in myth to strengthen his exposition of Epicurean philosophy, while rejecting its 'literal' meaning;" many of the same passages she cites also carry strong political implications (1994:4).

We can see one example of the richness of Lucretius' connections between political, religious, and philosophical concepts by comparing the sacrifice of Iphianassa (henceforth 'Iphigenia') at 1.80-101 and the mother cow bereft of her slaughtered calf at 2.352-370. Besides the obvious similarities in the situations Lucretius describes in these two passages, there are linguistic parallels: for example, he mirrors *hostia* ***concideret mactatu*** *maesta parentis* in 1.99 with *turicremas propter* ***mactatus concidit*** *aras* in 2.353. Agamemnon sacrificed his daughter because he applied rational thought and decided he had to commit this act in order to go to war.

It would be impossible for any other animal but a human to commit this crime: unlike humans, other animals do not try to placate gods and they do not kill each other on the massive scale that humans do. In the broad scope of history, human reason is responsible for technological advances that bring about death, destruction, and large-scale suffering for humans and non-humans alike. Within an individual, reason, if misapplied, can lead a father to murder his own child and turn away from the emotions that should naturally arise preceding and following the death of one's offspring.

Cicero, like Plato before him, values reason because it allows humans to contemplate the heavens, worship the gods, and contribute to a well-ordered state; according to this worldview, the sacrifice of Iphigenia—an attempt to appease Artemis—was a difficult decision but also a necessary evil committed for the sake of the greater good. Similarly, Cicero praises the Torquatus of old, who had his own son beheaded rather than fail in his duty, "for he placed the authority of the state and of his rank above nature herself and a father's love" (*cum ipsi naturae patrioque amori praetulerit ius maiestatis atque imperii*, *De Finibus* 1.23; transl. R. Woolf). The original Brutus, as Livy tells us, committed a similarly praiseworthy act when he allowed his sons to be put to death and thus ensured that the newly formed Roman Republic would not slip back into monarchy or oligarchy (*Ab Urbe Condita* 2.3-4). Cicero articulates this principle more generally during the 'Dream of Scipio' section of the *De Re Publica* when the elder Scipio encourages his grandson to be pious towards his parents but above all to his country (*iustitiam cole et pietatem, quae cum magna in parentibus et propinquis tum in patria maxima est*, 6.16).

From Lucretius' perspective, crimes like these demonstrate a misunderstanding of nature and the role of the gods in human affairs. In fact, it is this very same property of reason that Cicero values so highly—its ability to control the emotive, appetitive part of the soul—that

allows Agamemnon to commit so great a crime against nature and his own family. Agamemnon's action thus triply demonstrates the high risks that accompany reason as a human faculty, and the mother cow who bemoans her missing calf provides a perfect counterpoint on all three levels. Non-human animals do not engage in war, they do not sacrifice to the gods, and they do not use reason to subdue the emotions that guide natural, good behavior.

For Lucretius, there appear to be natural and unnatural cycles of birth and death: if one who reads the Iphigenia passage did not automatically think of Clytemnestra and the cycle of familial violence that will continue to haunt the House of Atreus and, by extension, the citizenry they rule (a short leap, given the Aeschylean feel to the passage), the emphasis on the mother cow's grief in the second passage would correct the oversight. Famously, Aeschylus halts the cycle of murder in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* only by appealing to the divine force of Athena as arbitrator of human affairs, with an overly anthropomorphized version of the gods as trial lawyers and judge.[56] Even if a Roman reader did not accept the Epicurean vision of the gods as completely indifferent to human affairs, few would consider that the gods would involve themselves with an intimacy and immediacy in any way approaching that of Athena in Orestes' trial. What possibility, then, remains for the resolution of internecine murder and the reciprocal violence that plagued the Roman state, if not an Epicurean cease-fire?

Cicero and his ilk advocate human reason as the solution to Rome's problems, in the form of outstanding individuals like Brutus or Torquatus who are willing to apply their reasoning faculty on behalf of the state, even if it means thrusting aside their natural parental emotions. Lucretius, too, sees reason as the solution, not as a conquering force over nature and familial

[56] See, e.g., the first chapter of Kennedy, R.F. 2009. *Athena's Justice: Athena, Athens and the Concept of Justice in Greek Tragedy*. Peter Lang.

love, but as a corrective to past *misuse* of reason and a means of reorienting humans towards a natural state of peace. Ironically, this is just the sort of peace Athena provides at the end of the *Eumenides* when she declares an end to violence on both sides and provides the Furies with an alternative means of receiving worship as spirits of nature, not vengeance. Lucretius clearly reads this tragedy as the allegory it is; by bringing to mind both Aeschylus *and* Epicurus in these passages, he encourages his contemporary Roman citizen to look past his immediate situation, to see the world as it really is, and to realize his own power to change it for the better.

The political undercurrent implicit in Lucretius' treatment of animals and his characterization of the gods as disinterested in human affairs subverts the hierarchical status quo without claiming outright to do so. Thus Lucretius can implement seemingly apolitical metaphors in the service of his political aims, simultaneously adhering to Epicurus' recommendation that members of the Garden abstain from politics, while also offering those embroiled in Roman society an alternative way of thinking about the place of humanity in the world and their own place in human society.

Part 1: The Gods

The Philosophical Background of the *De Rerum Natura*

James Warren identifies two key components in Lucretius' philosophical program: his fundamental adherence to Epicurean doctrine, and his task of clarifying and repackaging this doctrine for a Roman audience (2007:19). Warren insists that Lucretius does not try to *correct* Epicurus' theories through his own philosophical inquiry, but that the quintessentially Roman features he adds to the poem (such as the relationship between Venus and Mars in the proem) do

make the text more palatable for the contemporaries Lucretius hopes to reach (2007:19-20). The poor state of preservation of Epicurus' own texts inhibits the debate over the degree to which Lucretius should be considered a 'fundamentalist' in service of Epicurus' teachings, and what, if any, philosophical ideas from the poem could be attributed to theorists who appeared in the two-hundred-plus years between Epicurus' death and Lucretius' composition (2007:23). Further complications arise from the fact that Lucretius names only four of his philosophical predecessors besides Epicurus, all of them pre-Socratics: Democritus, Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Anaxagoras (2007:25). Hans Gottschalk finds at least one clear example in which Lucretius departs from his model, despite his preference for orthodoxy (1996:231). Whereas Epicurus says the soul is composed of only three elements, Lucretius has four: he appears to treat 'air' as something different from Epicurus' *pneuma*, a shift which Gottschalk attributes to an intermediary figure living in the span between Epicurus and Lucretius who presumably had an eye to medicine (1996:232-3). Gale (1994) elaborates on Lucretius' philosophical sources, focusing especially on the poetic tradition but also including in her discussion earlier treatments of myth by poets and philosophers including Hesiod, Dicaearchus, and Empedocles. Diskin Clay also credits Empedocles with certain features of Lucretius' worldview (1983:84).

While Bailey (1947) and Munro (1893) see extensive engagement with Stoic philosophy in the *De Rerum Natura*, scholars such as Furley (1966) and Sedley (1998) have rejected such claims. Even if Lucretius drew his formal doctrine almost entirely from Epicurus' works, however, it is difficult to see how he could have avoided engaging with Stoic ideas on some level, had he wanted to, given its popularity among the Roman elite of his own time. If Lucretius is going to convince his fellow citizens to follow the teachings of Epicurus and excise fear from their lives, it makes little sense that he would entirely avoid engaging with a major competing

theory. Indeed, A.A. Long reads the encomium to Epicurus at the beginning of Book 5 as a jab at the Stoics and argues that Lucretius "is advocating Epicureanism as the basis for a gamut of the Stoic virtues that resonated well at Rome—modesty, self-control especially in sexuality, hardiness, energetic behavior and frugality" (1997:136). Thus Lucretius presents Epicurus as attaining just the kind of wisdom or enlightenment that Stoics were hesitant to concede to their own sages. Elizabeth Asmis also has seen direct engagement with Stoic themes in the proem of the *DRN*: she argues that Lucretius frames Venus as an "allegorical rival" to the Stoics' portrayal of Zeus (1982:458).[57]

The Lives of the Gods

Whichever specific earlier philosophers or contemporary philosophical schools Lucretius is responding to with the *DRN*, it is clear that his Epicurean representation of the gods goes against the grain of traditional Roman religion. By the period in question, "it is possible to speak of a generalized deist standpoint which confronts and is confronted by Epicureanism" (Long 1977:64).[58] According to Lucretius, gods do exist but they are perfectly blissful and have no concern for the lives of humans or other terrestrial creatures.[59] Ray Belliotti humorously sums up this viewpoint: "The gods, fortuitously, are Epicureans!" (2009:100). Lucretius takes this stance on the nature of the gods within the first fifty lines of the *De Rerum Natura*:[60]

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[57] Campbell (2014) recently elaborated on how Lucretius "appropriated and 'turned'" Stoic sources, especially Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus.*

[58] Liebeschuetz echoes this statement when discussing Roman rationalism in the late Republic and the influence of Greek philosophical systems with which many of the nobles had recently become familiar: "Moreover if the systems (of which Stoicism was eventually to be the most important) had a place for the divine, they were monotheist or pantheist rather than polytheist" (1979:33).

[59] For Epicurus' thoughts on the blissful life of the gods, see *Letter to Menoeceus* 123-4. Cicero's Velleius, the representative of Epicureanism in *De Natura Deorum*, explains this belief at 1.43-9.

[60] *NB*: some commenters doubt that these lines belong in this spot, given that they are repeated at 2.646-651 and that there is an apparent disjunction with Lucretius' appeals to Venus in the preceding lines. I follow O'Hara (2007:57ff)

> omnis enim per se divum natura necessest
> immortali aevo summa cum pace fruatur
> semota ab nostris rebus seiunctaque longe;
> nam privata dolore omni, privata periclis,
> ipsa suis pollens opibus, nihil indiga nostri,
> nec bene promeritis capitur nec tangitur ira (1.44-49).
>
> For it is inherent in the nature of the gods
> that they enjoy an immortal life with the utmost peace,
> far removed and separate from our affairs,
> for they are free from all grief, free from danger,
> thriving in their own abilities, needing nothing from us,
> neither captivated by worthy conduct nor touched by anger.

Variations on this theme appear throughout the work. Near the beginning of Book 3, Lucretius describes the abode of the gods as untouched by the effects of bad weather: they inhabit *sedes quietae* unaffected by wind, rain, or snow (3.18-22). In this place, nature provides everything the gods need and nothing ever detracts from their peace of mind (*omnia suppeditat porro natura neque ulla / res animi pacem delibat tempore in ullo*, 3.23-24).[61] Elsewhere Lucretius questions what benefit such perfect beings, living as they do in this state of tranquility, could possibly derive from interacting with lesser creatures and accepting their gifts or listening to their prayers (see e.g. 5.165-69). He also notes the inconsistency of the actions ascribed to the gods that are supposedly meant to punish people for wicked deeds: if it is true that Jupiter hurls lightning bolts to punish the impious, why do they not always strike criminals, but also innocent people, and empty spaces in the desert, and even the gods' own shrines (6.387-422)?

It is completely natural, in Lucretius' estimation, for humans to react to the wonders of the world around them by imagining fictitious deities whom they then place in a hierarchy above

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in accepting them as part of the proem. For more on lines 2.646ff, see Gale 1994:30 and West 1969:112. Even if these lines do not belong in the proem, the ideas they contain appear throughout the rest of the work.

[61] It is well-noted that Lucretius imitates *Od*. 6.42-46 in these lines.

humans and other terrestrial creatures.[62] Even people who should know better—because they have already accepted that the gods are perfectly peaceful—fall back on the deceptive image of the gods as cruel, omnipotent tyrants when they contemplate their surroundings and are unable to find obvious explanations for natural phenomena (5.82-90).

This mistake is due to what Lucretius calls a 'poverty of reason' (*rationis egestas*, 5.1211) and it can be corrected by following Epicurus' teachings and carefully observing the physical processes of the natural world. Giving in to superstition and fear only perpetuates the false beliefs and causes more pain. This is a consistent central theme of the *De Rerum Natura*, but one passage illustrates Lucretius' thoughts on this subject particularly well:

> O genus infelix humanum, talia divis
> cum tribuit facta atque iras adiunxit acerbas!
> quantos tum gemitus ipsi sibi, quantaque nobis
> volnera, quas lacrimas peperere minoribus nostris!
> nec pietas ullast velatum saepe videri
> vertier ad lapidem atque omnis accedere ad aras
> nec procumbere humi prostratum et pandere palmas
> ante deum delubra nec aras sanguine multo
> spargere quadrupedum nec votis nectere vota,
> sed mage pacata posse omnia mente tueri.
> nam cum suspicimus magni caelestia mundi
> templa super stellisque micantibus aethera fixum,
> et venit in mentem solis lunaeque viarum,
> tunc aliis oppressa malis in pectora cura
> illa quoque expergefactum caput erigere infit,
> ne quae forte deum nobis inmensa potestas
> sit, vario motu quae candida sidera verset (5.1194-1210).
>
> O unfortunate humanity, to have attributed such deeds
> to the gods and to have adjoined bitter wrath to them as well!
> What great sorrows they spawned for themselves in that moment,
> what wounds for us, what tears for future generations!
> There is no piety in others often seeing you veiled
> and turning toward a stone, or in approaching every altar,

[62] See Gale 1994:130-31 for Lucretius showing "how easy and almost insensible is the transition from true to false belief about the gods."

> or in prostrating yourself on the ground with stretching out your palms
> before the shrines of the gods, or in sprinkling the altars with a quantity of blood
> from four-footed beasts, or in weaving vows with vows,
> but rather in being able to contemplate all things with a tranquil mind.
> For when we survey the celestial precincts of the great firmament,
> and the ether above punctuated by glittering stars,
> and contemplate the paths of the sun and the moon,
> then in our hearts, burdened with other cares,
> an additional concern begins to raise its head:
> a fear that there might perhaps be some immense divine power above us
> that turns the shining stars on their various courses.

In this passage, before describing the fear that arises in the human heart as a result of gazing upon the sky above us (1204-10), Lucretius mourns the sorry state of humanity that follows from false belief in the cruelty of the gods (1194-7), and, in a reversal of the typical Roman veneration of the deeds of their ancestors, laments the fact that these beliefs, once created, persist throughout subsequent generations (1197). He also challenges the traditional notion that piety consists in properly conducted ritual (1198-1202) and instead declares that *true* piety lies in being able to contemplate ourselves and our surroundings with a calm mind (*pacata…mente*, 1203). It is easy and natural to react to the world around us with awe and to seek explanations for the phenomena that confound us. Unfortunately, from Lucretius' point of view, the easiest explanation people find is the existence of controlling deities; this false belief must be remedied with Epicurus' materialist doctrine. The perfect passive participle (*pacata*) is appropriate here, given that it requires some effort to bring one's mind to this state of calm.

Lucretius introduces a similar notion about the meaning of piety near the beginning of Book 1 when he tries to assuage his reader's fear that, by reading the *De Rerum Natura*, they might embark on an impious journey:

> Illud in his rebus vereor, ne forte rearis
> impia te rationis inire elementa viamque

> indugredi sceleris. quod contra saepius illa
> religio peperit scelerosa atque impia facta. (1.80-3)
>
> Regarding these matters, I fear that you may perhaps suppose
> that you are approaching the first stages of an impious philosophy
> and setting out on a path of wickedness. But in fact more often
> religion itself has spawned wicked and impious deeds.

Here Lucretius reverses the traditional concepts of piety and impiety, painting religious ritual as impious and the exploration of ideas and knowledge that challenge tradition as truly pious. This is one area where Lucretius departs from the teachings of his master: he "attacks the terrors of *religio* with greater urgency and vehemence than Epicurus ever had" (Solomon 2004:260). Neither Lucretius nor Epicurus outright denied the existence of the gods; rather, they encouraged people to reimagine these beings as distant and uninvolved in human affairs—indeed denying them any control over humans or nature—in order to alleviate the anxieties that accompany belief in divine intervention. The actions and emotions that accompany religious worship are harmful; a very basic belief that gods exist need not be.

Individual 'Gods'?: Natura, Venus, and Epicurus

One of Lucretius' primary aims in the *DRN* is to demonstrate that the gods are an *intrinsic part* of nature; they do not rule over it (Penwill 1994:77). Lucretius uses particularly strong language to make this point at 2.1090ff, where he dismisses the traditional characterization of the gods as "haughty despots" (*dominis…superbis*, 1091)[63] and emphasizes that nature is in no way subject to such external control:

> Quae bene cognita si teneas, natura videtur
> libera continuo, dominis privata superbis,
> ipsa sua per se sponte omnia dis agere expers.

[63] For the Epicurean dictum of living *adespotos* (without a master), see *Letter to Menoeceus* 133 and Festugière 1956:ix.

> nam pro sancta deum tranquilla pectora pace
> quae placidum degunt aevom vitamque serenam… (2.1090-94)
>
> If you accept this knowledge well, you understand that nature
> is always unshackled, free from haughty despots,
> doing everything by herself spontaneously and with no input from
> the gods. For, taking into consideration the sacred minds of the
> gods in their peaceful calm who pass placid ages and a serene
> life…

As I discussed above (pages 54-5), Lucretius' gods experience no ill effects of the weather patterns that cause trouble for terrestrial creatures; in this passage (and especially the lines following, which I have not included here) Lucretius makes it clear they also have no control over these or other natural phenomena. Rather, Nature herself accomplishes everything independently and spontaneously (*libera,* 1091; *ipsa sua per se sponte,* 1092), and is immune to any divine influence (*dominis privata superbis,* 1091; *dis…expers*, 1092). The social and political implications of several of the key words in this passage encourage the reader to reconsider the traditional notion of the gods as rulers (*dominis,* 1091) of human beings and even Nature, which appears in this passage as a private citizen operating with no regard for the political system (assuming a double meaning for *privata,* 1091).[64] Just as the gods themselves appear to fulfill Epicurean doctrine, so too does Nature.

It might seem as if Lucretius is pushing aside the plural gods only to replace them with a single divine entity, Natura. If this were true, he would be aligning his conception of the universe more closely to those of Anaxagoras and the Stoics.[65] In fact, the lines directly following this

[64] For *privat(us)* as "private citizen," see e.g. Caesar, *Bellum Civile* 2.32; Livy 3.41, and Cicero *Phillipics* 11.10.25.
[65] See Lehoux 2012:56 for the debate over just how personal the universal gods of Anaxagoras, the Stoics, and others really were: "For Lloyd [1966:210f], what distinguishes the governing 'air' or the 'reason' of the philosophers performs from the governing that Zeus performs in contemporary poetic or mythological imagery is the impersonal nature of the physical principle among the philosophers. In fact, though, philosophers are far from universally agreed on this last point—Empedocles' Love and Strife, Anaxagoras' Mind, Heraclitus' Zeus, and Plato's Demiurge all share important characteristics with personal divinities that we should not understate. …Plato,

passage show that he dismisses the notion that *any* entity could exercise such power: Lucretius asks who could possibly possess the power necessary to hold the reins of the universe, to turn the heavens, to be everywhere at once, to gather clouds and launch thunderbolts from them (2.1095-104). A.A. Long rightly sees this kind of language as a nod to the Stoic belief in universal divine agency, but declares that, "What Lucretius showed—and it was his greatest scientific achievement—was that nature can be an intelligible causal system, as the Stoics proposed, without involving any mind or purpose" (1997:132). In Lucretius' worldview, there is no individual ruler or governing body in the universe; "nature" is his term for the totality of the system itself and for the collective tendency of atoms (and bodies made up of atoms) to behave according to certain principles.[66]

Lucretius sometimes personifies Nature—as I occasionally do in this dissertation, e.g. by using feminine pronouns—because his audience is used to such personification and it is thus an easier way to communicate with them. It is another example of the proverbial honey on the rim of the cup. Duncan Kennedy sees a parallel between Charles Darwin and Lucretius in that they both had to exercise caution in choosing their terminology for the processes of development in the natural world, lest they open their theories to appropriation by those who wished to ascribe a supernatural force to the universe (2007:381). Both Darwin and Lucretius challenged the prevalent anthropocentric view of the world, but, Kennedy notes, one could argue that it is impossible to describe the world in human language without the taint of anthropocentrism and

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too, struggles in the *Timaeus* with how literally we should understand his images of cosmic rulership, settling on a notion of 'likeness' or verisimilitude-to-the-truth (*eikos*), variously calling his account both a *logos* and a *mythos* [*Tim.* 29c]."

[66] For the latter part of the definition I provide, see also Hadot on Empedocles' use of *physis* as equivalent "to the natural process or the working of things; in general, the relation between cause and effect, or the analysis of causality" (2006:20). Empedocles apparently did not mean to refer to the whole of the universe with this term; Lucretius, I think, does refer to nature both in its 'global' sense as well as in the Empedoclean sense of a process of growth and change.

without implying that the universe has agency and a purpose (2007:382). By personifying Nature, Lucretius is able to express his theories in terms that are accessible to an audience of curious non-Epicureans, but he also risks undermining his own insistence that the world is indifferent to human existence and that the gods are indifferent to human behavior (2007:388-91). Scholars have noted that Lucretius diverges from Epicurus in his personification of nature (e.g., Long 1997:130). Clay points out that in the surviving work of Epicurus, "*physis* bears only the slightest traces of a personified Physis" (1983:87). The reason for the difference between the two philosophers may lie in the poetic form of Lucretius' work but also, I argue, in his need to appeal to the Stoics in his audience, who would be very familiar with the personification of a single entity in charge of the universe and could thus be more susceptible to his sleight of hand in exchanging his Natura for their Zeus. The two entities only appear similar on the surface, however; whereas the Stoic Zeus represents divine reason at work in the universe, his Natura has no such agency.

This occasional literary tactic of personification should not override Lucretius' many explicit statements throughout the text that there is no controlling entity, individual or collective, that rules or regulates the universe. In this belief Lucretius is of course following his master, Epicurus, who expressed a similar sentiment:

> καὶ μὴν ἐν τοῖς μετεώροις φορὰν καὶ τροπὴν καὶ ἔκλειψιν καὶ ἀνατολὴν καὶ δύσιν καὶ τὰ σύστοιχα τούτοις μήτε λειτουργοῦντος τινὸς νομίζειν δεῖ γενέσθαι καὶ διατάττοντος ἢ διατάξοντος καὶ ἅμα τὴν πᾶσαν… (*Letter to Herodotus* 76)
>
> With regards to the heavenly bodies—their motions, paths, eclipses, risings, settings, and things corresponding to these—we must not think that they are produced by some being whose job it is to regulate the order of the world…

Similarly, Lucretius explicitly states that understanding the principles of motion in nature frees us from assuming that the celestial bodies move of their own accord (i.e., with their own agency) or that there is any 'divine design' in the universe:

> praeterea solis cursus lunaeque meatus
> expediam qua vi flectat natura gubernans;
> ne forte haec inter caelum terramque reamur
> libera sponte sua cursus lustrare perennis
> morigera ad fruges augendas atque animantis,
> neve aliqua divum volvi ratione putemus. (5.76-81)
>
> I will show by what force piloting nature bends
> the courses of the sun and the movements of the moon,
> lest we perhaps think that these bodies freely and spontaneously
> transverse their perennial courses between the sky and the earth
> for the increase of crops and animals,
> or lest we conclude that they roll on according to some divine plan.

Nature, though personified by the participle *gubernans* (line 77), is not herself exercising any agency or carrying out a design. It may be that Lucretius is engaging with the Stoic representation of Zeus, whom Cleanthes describes as κυβερνῶν (*Hymn to Zeus* 1-5). Lucretius' Nature is self-controlling and all-encompassing; she does not govern entities outside of herself, but is rather more like a self-navigating ship. For Stoics, Zeus is identical with the physical world because he is the breath that animates it, but, unlike Lucretius' Natura, Zeus is especially identified with reason, providence, fate, and law (Asmis 1982:459). It is also worth noting that while Lucretius does occasionally personify Nature with vocabulary that denotes action or agency, he never depicts her as experiencing human moods.[67]

[67] For more on Lucretius' depiction of Nature and how it changes over the course of the *DRN*, see Clay 1983; who shows, for example, how the Roman reader of the *DRN* "is brought from the vividly apparent conception of *natura* as union, birth, and increase, the root sense of Greek *physis*, to a larger conception that seems to derive as much from pre-Socratic thought as from the atomism of Epicurus" (1983:85).

Lucretius depicts Nature not only as a regulative force, but as a creative power.[68] He also uses the name Venus for this aspect of nature. Clay explains how Venus "comes to be seen as only a part of a partial view of things and her empire only one phase in the full cycle of nature;" whereas Venus only creates, Nature also dissolves, and thus represents the full cycle of growth and decay (1983:94). Lucretius' address to Venus in the proem to *DRN* has provoked controversy among scholars because he appears to contradict himself, invoking a specific Olympian deity and asking for her assistance for the first forty-three lines only to deny that gods can exercise any such power in the forty-fourth.[69] Given the widespread availability of allegorical readings of myth in his time, I do not think that Lucretius' typical Roman reader would have been bothered by this transition.

Later in the poem, Lucretius instructs his reader to allow others to use the traditional names of the gods to represent aspects of the natural world—Ceres for grain, Neptune for the sea, Mother Earth—as long as they are truly free of the taint of superstition (2.655-60). Gale explores Lucretius' allowance of this kind of allegory and connects the practice back to Empedocles, who explained his metaphorical use of names of the gods, "making it quite clear that Hephaestus is another name for fire, Aphrodite for the creative, unifying cosmic force which he calls Love, and so on" (1994:70). Gale also notes that Lucretius, like Plato, acknowledges that myth can be a useful protreptic tool, even though it can also mislead people (1994:74). Lucretius differs from allegorists like the Stoics in that his use of names like 'Venus' serves an illustrative purpose only; the myths themselves do not teach anything (1994:133).

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[68] On this point see Clay (1983:88), who remarks that "an original for Lucretius' remarkable awareness of *physis*, or *natura*, as genesis is not to be found in Epicurus, although it is to be found in Greek generally and in one pre-Socratic philosopher in particular" (i.e., Empedocles).

[69] See O'Hara 2007:57-69 for a summary of the various ways that scholars have attempted to resolve this supposed inconsistency.

Several other scholars have analyzed Lucretius' poetic reasons for celebrating Venus early in the poem: Clay sees a gradual shift throughout the *DRN* from Venus to Natura and notes that "as the character of his philosophical enterprise gradually reveals itself, the grounds for assuming that the invisible and unknown wear the face of the visible and known fall away" (1983:93). Bonnie Catto, too, sees Lucretius as leading with the most attractive and pleasing image—Venus as the generative power of spring—as "the first dose of poetic honey" that draws the reader into the poem and prepares them to be more receptive to the fuller picture of *natura* to come (1989:100-4; see also Clay 1983:109). Comparing Lucretius' portrayal of Venus to the way that Stoics—particularly Chrysippus and Cleanthes—depict Zeus, Asmis presents another reading in which Venus "stands for pleasure and a world ordered by its own spontaneous impulses, as opposed to Stoic Zeus who stands for divine might and a world bound by an inexorable divine will" (1982:458). Both Cleanthes and Lucretius depict Zeus and Venus, respectively, as identical to the natural world, but these deities represent different ideas of the supreme good: for the Stoics (and Plato), Zeus stands for mind and reason, while Venus stands for Epicurean pleasure (1982:468-69). Whereas the Stoic Zeus uses force to exercise his will on humankind, Lucretius' Venus achieves her supremacy through charm and the allurements of pleasure (1982:463-65).

Whatever specific interpretation of Venus and Natura one prefers, I agree with those scholars who argue that Lucretius intended his reader to understand his use of these figures allegorically, and not as literal divinities (see e.g. Gale 1994:39). One key figure remains in this search for divine agency in the *DRN*: Epicurus. What does Lucretius mean when, describing Epicurus, he says "that man was a god—a god" (*deus ille fuit, deus*, 5.8)?

Lucretius urges his reader to compare Epicurus' accomplishments to those ancient, divine discoveries of others (*confer enim divina aliorum antiqua reperta*, 5.13). The first example he brings up for the sake of comparison is the contributions of Ceres and Liber: Ceres is said to have taught mortals how to grow grain, and Liber to have introduced wine (5.14-15). But, Lucretius says, whereas life could have gone on without these things, as we know from stories of other races of people who do not make use of these crops (5.16-17), it is not possible to live *well* without an unburdened heart, which is what Epicurus offers to humankind (5.18). Therefore, he concludes, Epicurus seems more deserving of the title of 'god' than Ceres or Liber (5.19-21).

Next, Lucretius extolls his predecessor's deeds in comparison to Hercules' mastery of wild animals. Despite Hercules' exalted dominance over certain monstrous creatures, wild beasts still swarm the planet, but humans are simply able to avoid them in most circumstances (5.40ff). Disturbing fears and pains, unlike the beasts of the forest, however, *do* reach humans wherever they live. Fortunately, humans can drive these 'monsters' from their souls not with weapons, but with Epicurus' words (*haec igitur qui cuncta subegerit ex animoque / expulerit dictis, non armis*, 5.49-50). Epicurus' feat is thus preferable to those of that other famed Greek hero; as Charles Saylor indicates, Heracles' *arête*, "like that of Sophocles' Ajax, emerges as that of one animal who can overpower others," whereas Epicurus conquers his 'foe' with intellect (1972:310).

On the one hand, Lucretius is likely engaging here with Stoic ethics of public service: Cicero, for example, challenges the Epicurean belief in pleasure as the highest good by appealing to the example set by Hercules, who, Cicero claims, performed his Labors not for his own benefit but as a service to the rest of humankind (*De Finibus* 2.118).[70] By depicting Epicurus'

[70] Cicero is speaking in his own voice. Cicero was not a Stoic, but he does use the Stoic idea of Hercules in this passage to counter Torquatus' claim that the highest end of philosophy is pleasure. For later Stoic treatments of

achievements as superior to those of Hercules, then, Lucretius uses the Stoics' own standards against them by showing that Epicurus offered greater benefactions than even Hercules (Packman 1976:206-12). Gale notes that Lucretius was operating at a time of renewed interest in Euhemerism and finds this fact particularly evident at the beginning of Book 5 (1994:77); Packman's analysis stands whether Lucretius considers his philosophical opponent here to be Stoics, Euhemerists, or both.

On the other hand, Gale sees Lucretius as "using a certain amount of sleight of hand" when he states in a seemingly straightforward manner that Epicurus was a god (*deus ille fuit, deus*, 5.8): Gale explains that Epicurus *was* (emphasis on the *fuit*) worthy to be called a god during his lifetime—he did not earn apotheosis at death—because he achieved *ataraxia* (1994:79). The idea that a life free from pain is the closest individual humans can get to the lives of the gods is of course central to Epicurus' teachings (see, e.g., *Letter to Menoeceus* 135 and *Vatican Sayings* 33). In the proem to the *DRN*, Lucretius praises Epicurus for bringing himself, and indeed humanity in general, closer to godliness by smashing through the gates of heaven and trampling religion: "Wherefore religion is in its turn cast down and trampled beneath our feet, his victory made us the equal of heaven" (*quare religio pedibus subiecta vicissim / obteritur, nos exaequat victoria caelo,* 1.78-9). But pushing back against *religio* is an act of defiance against a form of oppression, not an expression of dominance over animals (like Hercules) or other people (like Caesar—see above, page 47). One can gain a higher vantage point, as it were, through Epicurean philosophy (see, e.g., *DRN* 2.7-8), but this is not a hierarchical position, as there is no implied domination or control of others.

Hercules, including questions about the extent to which he actually did embody the Stoic ideals that earlier philosophers attributed to him, see Shelton 1978:69-70 (on Seneca) and Colish 1990:46f. (on Lactantius).

To conclude this section: in Lucretius' view, the gods do not mediate between humans and the natural world. The gods neither experience nor cause meteorological events. They do not endorse or condemn particular human actions with respect to the environment; the responsibility for dealing with the natural world, of which humans are an intrinsic part, lies only in the hands of human beings. In fact, according to this worldview, there is no divine agency whatsoever in the universe. Neither Venus nor Natura has this role, despite the fact that Lucretius uses some personifying language. Natura comes close to being a single deity that controls the world, but is in fact the world itself and the totality of the natural processes that carry on with no plan or purpose or external regulating force. Epicurus, though stronger and more effective than the so-called gods and heroes of myth, is not a 'god' in the traditional sense; rather, he achieved a godlike state in his lifetime by attaining peace. Epicurus was 'superior' to most other humans in that he achieved this state and used it to help other people; this kind of superiority does not imply a hierarchical organizational system, however, as there is no notion of control within the system nor of power over others who occupy lower strata. Epicurus and the other gods experience life in a way that is preferable to the way that most people live; this ideal way of life offers an aspirational example for those who need it. That is not hierarchy.

In the next section I will show how, according to the version of early human history that Lucretius presents, it has always been the case since the moment they first appeared on earth that humans have had to figure out how to deal with the world around them with no help or hindrance from the gods. I argue that Lucretius offers his own experiences in the outdoors—including wilderness spaces—as an example or an invitation for others to follow. Humans, like the gods, are a part of nature; we can learn important lessons about our relationship to the rest of nature by carefully observing the world around us. In this section I also show how Lucretius treats non-

human animals, like gods and humans, as just another part of a natural whole; in this way they are on a level with humans and gods and do not occupy a lower stratum in a hierarchical system.

Part 2: Human Interactions with Nature

Being in Nature

Some earlier scholars of Lucretius (beginning with De Lacy) interpreted his conception of the relationship between humans and nature as one of spectatorship; A.A. Long and other critics have since dispelled this notion, drawing attention instead to the complex relationships between humans and their natural environment to be found in the *DRN*. For Lucretius, "human nature is so much a part of general nature, nature as causal system, that we need to *internalize* nature's truths and integrate them with our mind-set in order to live well" (Long 1997:132). The Stoics, too, emphasized the necessity of living within the confines of natural law, but they diverged from the Epicureans on several important points. In the Stoic view, humans hold a privileged position within a system that is governed by divine intelligence. This intellect communicates with humans through signs in nature; humans can live well by learning to perceive, interpret, and obey these signs. According to this conception, humans are the only creatures on earth that are able to understand these signs through the application of reason; Stoics conclude, therefore, that the earth was created for the sake of humans. This kind of anthropocentric teleology gained traction in the centuries leading up to Lucretius' composition; for this reason he "expends considerable rhetorical energy on dismissing the idea that nature bestows providential care on humankind" (Holmes 2013:156).[71] For Lucretius, humans were

[71] For Epicurus on cosmology without teleology, see *Letter to Herodotus* 45, 73-4 and *Letter to Pythocles* 88.

initially created and have survived in the generations since by accident and ingenuity, not providence.

For Lucretius, humans are just another species of terrestrial beings living within the confines imposed on them by physical laws and by the limitations of their own mind and body. Long summarizes Lucretius' view on the reluctance of many people to accept their position within this natural order: "What is too *tristis* for a good many people is a *ratio vitae* which requires them to be self-conscious about living within the limits of human nature, and to drop any illusions that natural phenomena have an interest in benefiting or harming them" (1997:135).[72] In a famous passage from Book 5, Lucretius asks, if it were true that humans are exceptional and marked out by nature for special care, why are such large expanses of hospitable land occupied by wild beasts that can kill us, while another great portion of the earth is taken up by landscape that we cannot inhabit (5.195-205)? He goes on to point out that even the land that we are able to use would be taken over by nature if we did not continually work to maintain it for ourselves, and that, often when we are on the cusp of reaping the reward of our labor, natural disasters spring up and destroy the crops (5.206-17).

The natural world poses very many dangers to humans, but that does not mean we cannot enjoy being in natural spaces. Indeed, it appears from the examples he chooses to illustrate his physics and the level of detail he achieves in these descriptions that Lucretius had extensive first-hand experience being out in nature. Katherine Allen identified this feature of Lucretius' work in the nineteenth century:

[72] See also Allen 1893:16: "Nor is man more favored than the rest. He is only one among the many productions of the 'daedala tellus,' and he must struggle for existence with the rest. No divine power watches over his destiny, and provides for his needs."

> Moreover descriptions of Nature coming from a mind so stored with vivid impressions from constant experience, can hardly fail to have a freshness and spontaneity otherwise impossible. The frequency with which references to Nature occur throughout the poem, and the variety and accuracy of observation shown in these lines, bear witness to a knowledge of Nature gained from genuine experience (1893:21).

The "freshness" and "spontaneity" that Allen perceives in Lucretius' descriptions of natural spaces are of course subjective qualities; the fact that these descriptions are frequent, diverse, and accurate is inarguable, however, and does indeed suggest first-hand experiences and a deep personal connection to these spaces.

Most elite Romans of course would have ventured out from the city now and then to check on their country estates or spend some time in a house by the sea, but these were often highly crafted spaces, with elaborately planned gardens and other luxuries meant to make the area feel less wild. Lucretius could have carried out some of his observations of nature without straying far from a villa—for example, studying the movement and formation of clouds and rainbows (e.g. 5.286ff, 5.646ff, 6.476ff, 6.524ff), or watching sheep graze on a distant hillside (2.317ff). The bed of soft grass next to a pleasant stream under the shade of a tall tree, which Lucretius describes as an ideal spot for friendly Epicurean discourse (2.20ff; see also 5.1392), is of course quite similar to the spot that Socrates and his pupil select for their conversation in Plato's *Phaedrus*, and could be considered a philosophical trope.

Some other examples Lucretius draws from nature, however, suggest that he did wander into uncultivated and uninhabited spaces that few others of his station might have bothered to explore. The cumulative effect for the reader is an experience of leaving the page and taking a walk with Lucretius, or at least dipping in and out of natural spaces that he seems to have enjoyed; as W.Y. Sellar put it, "One great charm of the work is that it breathes of the open air

more than of the library" (1863:294). For example, Lucretius offers a vivid description of being in the woods when the sun rises and the birds fill the space with their song:

> primum aurora novo cum spargit lumine terras
> et variae volucres nemora avia pervolitantes
> aera per tenerum liquidis loca vocibus opplent,
> quam subito soleat sol ortus tempore tali
> convestire sua perfundens omnia luce,
> omnibus in promptu manifestumque esse videmus (2.144-49).
>
> First of all, when dawn sprinkles the earth with new light,
> and different kinds of birds, flitting through the pathless woods
> along gentle breezes, fill the place with flowing song,
> how suddenly the rising sun at this time
> envelops everything, spreading its light,
> is manifest and clear for all to see.

The sprinkled light, the flitting birds, the breezes, the songs drifting down to the listener—these details contribute to a full sensory experience that replicates standing in the woods and observing one's surroundings with an appropriate Epicurean stillness and calm. Several details help us imagine an even fuller picture of Lucretius as a lover of nature: the area is unexplored or at least unfrequented—these are "pathless woods" (*avia nemora,* 145)—and yet Lucretius has reached this apparently remote location even as the sun is still rising. Lucretius explored metaphorically pathless places, too: he frames his poetic project as a journey to meet the Muses in a place where no foot has tread (*avia Pieridum peragro loca nullius ante / trita solo,* 1.925-7). He describes another sunrise scene at 5.460ff when explaining how the lighter and heavier elements of the world originally separated out—he compares this process to the mist that 'we' often see (*saepe videmus*) rising from the earth as it warms in the sun's new heat.

When explaining how echoes work, Lucretius tells his reader that they will now understand why we hear our voice return to us when, lost in lonely places (*loca sola,* 4.573) among shady mountains, we call out to the friends who have strayed out of sight (4.573-76). He

claims to have heard his own voice tossed from hill to hill as many as six or seven times, and notes that these are the kinds of places that local people think to be inhabited by goat-footed satyrs, nymphs, and fauns (4.577-81). He again emphasizes how desolate these regions are when he suggests that these locals might tell such tales because they are afraid that otherwise people will think they inhabit lands so lonely that even the gods have deserted them (4.590-93).

Lucretius gives us no clue as to why he and his companions have so much experience wandering in places so far removed from civilization; in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, we may be left with the conclusion that he enjoyed hiking recreationally. Hunting excursions would be another possibility, but he never mentions searching for animals or uses analogies drawn from the sport.[73] Military troops were sometimes conducted through mountain passes, but it seems unlikely in that situation that one would find himself so separated from the group as to need to call out for help. Lucretius brings up such excursions again in Book 6 when he says that it is a fact that lofty places are windswept, and we can confirm this by our own senses when we climb high mountains (6.468-69). Allen points out that in the poetry of the Roman Republic as a whole, "mountains are almost always shown as rough, dreary and cold, the home of wild beasts" and that "Lucretius is the only exception to these statements. In him is seen, if not the modern passion for the mountains, at least an awakening sense of their peaceful calm and picturesqueness" (1899:206). In fact, Lucretius seems to have engaged in such activities often enough that they infiltrated his dreams: when discussing how images can deceive

[73] We might read a subtle condemnation of hunting at 5.1249, where Lucretius mentions people "killing wild animals and growing wealthy from their prey" (*feras interficere et ditescere praeda*); we know from many other passages that he condemned those who sought wealth. Epicurus discouraged his followers from eating fish and meat, since they are luxuries (*Letter to Menoeceus* 132; Porphyry *De Abst.* 1.48-54).

us, he says that while our bodies relax in slumber, in our dreams we imagine that we are traversing rivers, mountains, and plains on foot (4.455-59).[74]

Lucretius frequently uses analogies from his wilderness adventures to clarify Epicurean physical theory. As proof that objects may appear to be solid but are in fact porous, he notes that, in caverns, moisture seeps through the rocks and makes them weep (1.348-9). To illustrate the fact that there are bodies so small that we may or may not be able to detect them with our senses, he calls to mind the experience of being ensnared by, yet not feeling, the filmy threads of a spider's web laid across our path (3.381-84). He assumes his reader can relate to the experience of riding a horse across a river only to find it stuck halfway—he uses this experience as an example of how our eyes can be deceived by relative motion (4.420-25).

By using first person plural verbs in this passage (*despeximus*, 4.421; *traiecimus*, 4.424), as in many of the examples I list above, Lucretius draws his reader into the experiences he is describing, whether or not they have personally experienced something similar. He uses the same tactic at 5.1094, for example, where he says that "we see" (*videmus*) fire breaking out when branches rub together and cause friction (5.1094-97). That Lucretius is not using the 'royal we' can be seen from the passage about echoes resounding in the mountains: he clearly contrasts the experiences "we" (i.e., he and his reader) have had searching for lost companions (*quaerimus…ciemus*, 4.576) with his personal record (*vidi*, 4.577) for the number of times he has heard an echo resound. Similarly, at 5.608-9, Lucretius notes that "we sometimes see" (*interdum…videmus*) a single spark set an entire field of stubble alight; just a few lines prior to

[74] One imagines that those embroiled in the political turmoil of Rome at this time would have had quite different dreams.

this, he had used a more pointed "surely you see" (*nonne vides*) when discussing how a small spring of water can spread out and flood a field (5.602-3).

Lucretius appeals to his readers' full sensory experience—not only sight, but also smell, touch, sound, and taste—in these descriptions of natural spaces. For example, he justifies his claim that images constantly scatter off of objects by reminding his reader that odors perpetually flow from some objects, that cold radiates from rivers and heat from the sun, that voices float through the air, and that we often taste the salty brine of the sea when we walk near the shore (4.216-24). He also assumes that his reader has paid attention to animals—both wild and domestic—and their lifecycles. In another set of analogies designed to help his reader understand the Epicurean theory of vision, he compares the images that matter discharges into the air to the 'shirts' (*tunicas*) that cicadas abandon in the summer, to the membranes that newborn calves cast off, and to the skins that we often see left behind by snakes in the brambles (4.54-62). We can surmise from this passage that Lucretius not only wandered in the woods, but had also apparently witnessed calves being born, and assumed his reader had, too. He does not refer to life on a farm as often as he does the outdoors generally, but there are a few more examples that might even suggest he engaged in manual labor or at least had sympathy for those who did: he says that we see that cultivated earth is better than that which is uncultivated, and that the soil "rewards the labor of our hands" when we turn it over with the plow (1.208ff.).[75] Lucretius also takes care to mention the impact of the plague of Athens on the farmer and the herdsman (6.1252-3).

Lucretius employs an impressive scope of examples from the natural world, from tiny dust motes to magnificent mountain ranges. Italo Calvino sees Lucretius' attention to the smallest details of the visible world as part of his mission to "prevent the weight of matter from

[75] Additional agricultural examples can be found at 1.803ff and 5.666ff.

crushing us" and goes on to say that, "it is here that Lucretius is at his best as a poet: the little motes of dust swirling in the shaft of sunlight in a dark room (2.114-124); the minuscule shells, all similar but each one different, that waves gently cast up on the *bibular harena*, the 'imbibing sand' (2.374-376)" (1988:8-9). In Lucretius' estimation, it is natural to feel awe when looking at the world around us, including the regularity of the movements of the celestial bodies, the grand scales of space and time, and the terror of thunderbolts (5.1200-40).[76] It is the struggle to relate our own experiences to these almost unfathomable aspects of nature that makes us afraid of some divine presence or control. Confronted by the natural phenomena of the sort that Lucretius names in 5.1200-40, we ask ourselves questions like, did we do something to cause that thunderbolt? Does the universe have a lifecycle, like we do? We are not immortal or perfectly regular; how can other things be? Further, we are humbled when we see that nature (in the form of an earthquake) can destroy even our cities, the greatest expression of human ingenuity and labor.

Learning to Live in Nature: Early Humans and the Natural World

Humans can also learn from nature through imitation: in his explanation of the early stages of human civilization, Lucretius says that Nature herself introduced the model of sowing and grafting (i.e., when berries and acorns fall from trees); humans imitated this in their own cultivation practices (5.1361-66). Eventually, human experimentation led to the domestication of wild plant species and the retreat of forests as people carved out more and more space for the cultivation of gardens, vineyards, olive groves, and orchards (5.1367-78). In the course of this process humans also learned how to use fire, which comes about naturally from lightning and friction between tree branches (5.925-87; 1091-1101). An explanation of how humans first came

[76] See Conte 1994:20ff for the effects of the sublime in the *DRN*.

into contact with fire was warranted in this *Kulturgeschichte,* especially given the prominence of the Prometheus myth in antiquity. Lucretius anticipates his reader's silent question on the matter (*illud in his rebus tacitus ne forte requiras,* 5.1091), offers two possible solutions (lightning and friction) and closes by reiterating that either of these explanations is sufficient (*quorum utrumque dedisse potest mortalibus ignem*, 5.1101). From Lucretius' perspective, there is no need whatsoever to resort to the gods to explain such developments in early human history. Early people also figured out how to cook by using the sun as a model and observing its effects on earthly materials (5.1102-4). Metallurgy came about by accident, when a forest fire raged so hotly that it melted streams of silver, copper, gold, and lead; humans witnessed this event and were inspired to try to recreate its effects (5.1241-68). The cumulative result of all of these stages of imitation and innovation was that humans began to change their environment, gradually shaping it into the domesticated space that Lucretius and his contemporaries knew (5.1370-8). Humans developed these technologies (which enabled them to protect themselves and shape the natural world to their liking) on their own with no help from the gods.

The last decade of the twentieth century saw several worthwhile contributions to our understanding of Lucretius' *Kulturgeschichte*. Gale's 1994 volume, *Myth and Poetry in Lucretius*, situates the *De Rerum Natura* (specifically, 5.783-1457) within the poetic tradition of references to the Golden Age and progressive decline, of soft and hard primitivism, and to the heurematistic attribution for the development of various forms of technology (1994:157). According to Gale, Lucretius promotes a rationalistic context for evolutionary theory in that he refers to an early quasi-bestial state of human existence which gradually develops into its present, softer, state as a result of technological discoveries driven by necessity, chance, and human ingenuity (1994:158-9). The complexity of Lucretius' text and his use of sources defies

any clear-cut categorization, however: consistent with the overall objectives of her monograph, Gale finds undertones and latent references to Golden Age mythology (using Blundell's list of traditional Golden Age features) in Lucretius' *Kulturgeschichte* (1994:159-61). Keimpe Algra (1997) examines many of the same passages less in terms of Lucretius' poetic predecessors and sources for mythological imagery, and more in terms of the social mechanisms he presents to explain the formation of communal life among humans.[77]

According to Lucretius, the human species was born from the earth along with all other living creatures, some of which did not survive past the first generation (5.807-820). Gale sees references to "Empedoclean abortive creatures" in Lucretius' description of the first living being to rise from the earth (1994:162). Although Lucretius does not conceive of humans as evolving from another species, he acknowledges that humans have changed over time.[78] The first humans would have been stronger than those of the present age; otherwise they would not have survived the early, harsher conditions of life on earth (5.925-30). Humans have become weaker in the successive generations as a result of familial cohabitation (specifically, looking at the faces of their children) and through the comfort and security provided by technological advances such as the use of fire (5.1011-23; for the softening of humanity over time, see also Holmes 2013, especially 169ff).

Scholars have successfully put to bed the old debates that tried to place Lucretius in one of two categories—primitivist or progressivist—though these terms are still useful for contextualizing certain features of the *De Rerum Natura*.[79] At the risk of oversimplifying,

[77] For a detailed commentary and analysis of the passages in question from Book 5, Campbell's *Lucretius on Creation and Evolution* (2003) is another invaluable resource.
[78] For Lucretius' non-evolutionary theory of natural selection, see Kennedy 2007:392.
[79] See, e.g., Holmes 2013:158 for a brief explanation of this debate and its resolution.

primitivism is the tendency to praise ancient times and disparage one's contemporary era; progressivism does just the opposite. Accounts of a Golden Age and a subsequent Fall that led to the struggles of contemporary times belong in the primitivist category. Arthur Lovejoy and Charles Boas saw elements of both primitivism and progressivism in Lucretius, a move that David Konstan sees as denying Epicureanism "a systematic and coherent account of social history" (2008:81).[80] The most coherent account should, however, recognize features of both theories and reject oversimplification and the need for strict categories.

Gale finds that Lucretius uses elements of the primitivist tradition in a rhetorical manner in order to undermine the assumption of some progressivists that all change over time improves life; by situating himself within this tradition through imagery and allusions to earlier thinkers and poets, Lucretius gives himself a stake in the debate over the moralistic character of prehistoric humans compared to those of his own day (1994:161). Analyzing Lucretius' version of the early stages of human activity next to those Hesiod offers, Gale sees a rejection of Hesiod's rigid schematization and an adjustment away from the portrayal of moral decline in successive generations, and towards an understanding of the misuse of technological inventions as a moral issue (1994:172-4). Gale rejects a reading of Lucretius as ambivalent towards progress, noting that his account is didactic and certainly not disinterested (1994:174). Progress is an important issue for Lucretius, but one that is ultimately "subordinated to the fundamental aim of demonstrating the absence of divine intervention from the development of civilization…and of glorifying Epicurus' achievement" (1994:174-5).[81]

[80] Konstan also cites Asmis (1996), who "argues that Lucretius' account of evolution is essentially a history of ideas, some of which (like Epicureanism itself) succeed in promoting human welfare while others do not" for this view.
[81] For the emphasis on human achievements independent of the gods, see also Merlan 1950.

There is no fundamental difference in the moral capacity of prehistoric or modern man according to the *DRN,* and technological progress is morally indifferent except insofar as it can cause pain (or help alleviate it). According to Gale, this move allows Lucretius to claim that Epicurus' ideas would be helpful in any age, at any stage of development, regardless of what technology humans possess (1994:175). In the beginning of human social history as Lucretius presents it, resources were too scarce to allow for much accumulation of wealth. People were anxious about the immediate danger posed by wild beasts, but "neither the dread of punishment in the afterlife nor the unappeasable passion for wealth and power had yet come to dominate the minds of human beings" (Konstan 2008:xiv).[82] Nevertheless, unlike Hesiod and Dicaearchus (who, like Lucretius, tried to rationalize the myth of a Golden Age), Lucretius "stubbornly refuses to idealize" this early age, "even though certain elements of primitive society are seen as desirable" (Gale 1994:168). Gale summarizes this move, in which Lucretius notes drawbacks to early *and* modern life, as allowing him "to condemn some of the less desirable aspects of 'progress' without idealizing pretechnological society" (1994:167).

Thanks to technological advancements and social relationships, Lucretius' contemporaries should be able to live a happier, morally better life than that of their distant ancestors, but they fail to do so: "Modern man…is castigated because, although technological progress has given him the means to achieve greater physical security and comfort, he has instead allowed greed and the limitless desire for luxuries to lead him into further violence and suffering" (Gale 1994:175). Primitive man could be the victim of fortune but not of another man;

[82] For a brief summary (and refutation) of the scholarship that assumes Lucretius bought into the theory that threats from wild beasts were an impetus for the creation of human society, see Holmes 2013:176-77. Holmes notes that there is no direct line in Lucretius between external threats and development of communities, and there was a stage in the middle in which humans are softened by use of fire and domestic life.

thanks to the application of reason over time, humans now have to face anxieties over warfare, shipwrecks, and poisonings (Konstan 2008:80-81). At *DRN* 5.990ff, Lucretius admits that early humans sometimes faced a violent end in the jaws of a wild animal, but he decries the large-scale hardships humans have since brought upon themselves through developments in technology. Early humans were not led by the thousands to their death in a single day under military standards (5.999-1000) and the deadly sea did not lure these early men into its depths (1000-1006). People in this early age could die from starvation or from accidental poisoning, whereas in Lucretius' day, people keeled over from eating too much or from poison that was skillfully administered (5.1007-10). Non-human animals, of course, do not face the difficulties that arise from war, seafaring, overindulgence in food and drink, and murder by poison—unless humans subject them to these unfortunate products of reason.

Humans and Other Animals

For some philosophers and authors in antiquity, the Golden Age represents the last period in which humans lived in close contact and even friendship with gods and animals. This perspective typically assumes that there has been increasing separation and stratification of these groups ever since. In Book 5, Lucretius does depict early humans as living similarly to animals (*more ferarum,* 5.932) but this should not be confused with a *state of commune* with animals. Rather, as Lucretius tells it, humans and certain animal species grew closer over time as the result of mutual benefits, eventually reaching a kind of symbiotic relationship. Modern humans now enjoy contract relationships (and therefore a kind of community) with some species, and generally speaking we can avoid other species that pose danger to us.[83]

[83] See the section on the accomplishments of Hercules compared to those of Epicurus, page 65 above.

According to Lucretius, some non-human animals made it through the early, difficult stages of creation by their own cleverness, strength, or speed (5.855-59; 862-63), but others—including dogs, draft animals, and sheep—survived due to human care:

> at levisomna canum fido cum pectore corda
> et genus omne quod est veterino semine partum
> lanigeraeque simul pecudes et bucera saecla
> omnia sunt hominum tutelae tradita, Memmi.
> nam cupide fugere feras pacemque secuta
> sunt et larga suo sine pabula parta labore,
> quae damus utilitatis eorum praemia causa (5.864-70).
>
> But the light-sleeping minds of dogs with their faithful heart
> and the entire race which is born from the seed of draft animals
> and the wool-bearing flocks and the bovine generations:
> all of these have been entrusted to human protection, Memmius.
> For they have eagerly fled wild beasts and sought peace
> along with bountiful food derived by no labor of their own,
> which we give to them as a reward for their usefulness.

In addition to describing the early stages of human interactions with other animal species, this passage has great implications for the debate over whether or not humans owe anything to other animals in terms of justice and whether or not humans and other animals participate in the same community. Lucretius seems to have been more sympathetic towards animals than Epicurus had been (see, e.g. Newmyer 2010:30). Konstan quotes *Kuriai Doxai* 32 to show that Epicurus, like the Stoics, conceived of justice as a result of membership in a pact: "For those animals that were unable to form pacts not to harm one another or be harmed, there existed neither justness nor injustice, and so too for those nations [of human beings] that were unable or unwilling to make pacts not to harm or be harmed" (trans. Konstan 2008:91). In this passage from the *DRN*, however, Lucretius portrays animals and humans as entering into just the kind of pact that should imply the need for justice: dogs contribute to our lives by their watchfulness, sheep with their wool, and oxen by accepting the yoke; in return for these gifts, humans provide food and

shelter.[84] Lucretius grants the animals in this situation a certain degree of agency: they "eagerly fled" (*cupide fugere*, 868) the beasts that might harm them and "pursued" (*secuta sunt*, 868-9) the safety and secure meals that humans offered them (see also Sorabji 1993:162). Even outside of his account of the early stages of creation, Lucretius depicts the relationship between humans and domesticated animals as a kind of partnership, as when he mentions the collaborative efforts of farmers and oxen at 2.1161 (see also Gale 1991:425). This all stands in stark contrast to the position taken by the Stoics, who claimed that animals were created solely for humans to use them and that humans have no "bond of right" with animals because we do not belong to the same community (see page 29 of the introduction to this dissertation).

Lucretius dismantles the traditional claims of fair use of animals for purposes outside of these specific contracts. Because religion is unnecessary, sacrificing non-human animals is also unnecessary—and in fact, it can cause them grief.[85] Two passages in particular stand out: at 5.1201-2, Lucretius states that piety does not include soaking the altar with the blood of four-footed animals (see page 56, above), and at 2.352-66 he describes a mother cow searching in vain for her calf, not knowing that it has been sacrificed (see pages 49-51, above). As Charles Segal argues, "The slaughter of the calf affirms man's mastery over nature only to suggest that it is a false mastery" (1970:104-18). Lucretius' concern is not limited to domesticated animals: he describes how humans committed a grave error when they tried to use non-contract animals in

[84] For an archeologist's perspective on the necessity of trust in these contract relationships, see Oma 2010.
[85] Gale points out that Empedocles, too, was opposed to animal sacrifice, but on the grounds of his belief in metempsychosis (1994:67). Empedocles also claimed that, in the beginning, people worshipped Aphrodite as queen, not Zeus or Kronos or Poseidon as king, and offered her bloodless sacrifices (Guthrie 1957:73). Heraclitus pointed out the irony in people shedding blood in order to try to purify themselves of blood-guilt (*KRS* no. 421).

warfare (5.1308-49).[86] Human use of technology and weaponry (which they acquired through reason) makes violence between humans and non-humans a moral issue: before humans applied reason in their dealings with the natural world, the groups had been on even moral footing.[87]

Lucretius rejects the image of non-human animals as inferior creatures driven by appetite and ripe for use by reasoning human agents and shows that the reverse is often true: human and non-human animals share many qualities, and animals can even provide positive models for human behavior. Humans at their best can share qualities with animals: Lucretius tells his reader that once they have agreed that void exists, their sagacious mind will be able to follow the trail of truth as if hunting a wounded wild animal, and figure out the rest for themselves (1.402-9). Lucretius blurs the line between human and non-human by emphasizing what animal species share rather than what sets them apart. When explaining that individual members of a species may look different but still belong to the same group, for example, Lucretius lumps humans in with all the other animal species: he asks his reader to "consider too the human race, the silent swimming schools of scaly fish, the fatted herds, the wild beasts, and the various sorts of birds…" (*praeterea genus humanum mutaeque natantes / squamigerum pecudes et laeta armenta feraeque / et variae volucres*, 2.342-44).

Lucretius frequently presents animal behavior as analogous to human behavior. Both human and non-human animals exhibit a range of natural dispositions that result from their individual material compositions. For example, cows are midway between lions and deer in

[86] For the possibility of a real-world inspiration for Lucretius' "coherent but weird" account of animals in war, see Courtney 2006. See Saylor 1972:312 for Lucretius' elephant "redesigned by man, its body unnaturally 'turreted' for combat."

[87] See, e.g., Saylor, who describes how "with his technical advances man now becomes the animal's instructor to the detriment of both: each had always been the other's victim in fighting, but the conditions of this combat cast a moral significance on its killing" and goes on to discuss how military technology allows men to express animality in new ways (1972:313-14).

terms of how much fire and spirit they possess, and there are similar variations and gradations among people (3.300ff). Humans and other animals operate in the world by means of our senses, we have similar material compositions, and we have similar experiences with sexual attraction and with sickness and death (Gale 1991:415-17). We all exercise a degree of free will (2.256-7). Domesticated animals in particular are "cast in the role of self-conscious determiners of their own fate" (Glacken 1967:138). Lucretius depicts animals as having a "mind" numerous times, including a horse (thrice within a few lines: *mens* at 2.265, then *studium mentis*—"eagerness of its mind"—at 2.268, and *animi* at 2.270), and a deer (*mens*, 3.299), whose particular type of *mens* Lucretius contrasts with that of a lion and an ox. Lucretius also mentions that non-human animals dream about what they do during the day (4.990ff), which implies that they have an inner life and a temporal existence beyond the immediate moment. The ability of non-human animals to dream does not indicate a capacity for reason but, coupled with Lucretius' emphasis on the importance of the sensory world for humans, it does undermine the strict dichotomy between humans and non-humans according to the primacy of mind or body that many of Lucretius' predecessors and contemporaries sought to enforce.

Gale contrasts Lucretius' presentation of the similarities between humans and other animals with that of Vergil, who depicts humans and other animals as essentially the same—both groups struggle with the universal chaotic forces of sex and death—but who nevertheless seems to think that humans still need to strive to be better off than animals (1991:242-26). For Lucretius, by contrast, there is no such need for humans to elevate themselves above other animals. In fact, there is no meaningful criterion in the *De Rerum Natura* for elevating humans as a species above non-human animals, and plenty of evidence to suggest that non-human animals

excel in areas where humans flounder.[88] Humans are more susceptible to the elements than other animals.[89] Animals have a more immediate relation to the world around them because their instincts are not confused by fear of supernatural powers or by social expectations. There is no need for them to exercise reason because they do not experience irrational anxieties the way humans do—after all, for Lucretius, the primary function of reason is to help alleviate psychic pain. Comparing the mother cow whose calf has been sacrificed to Agamemnon committing his own daughter to death, Saylor notes that "if Agamemnon and the cow express two psychic states in reaction to the loss of offspring, the one fully civilized and motivated by *religio*, the other instinctive and driven by *desiderium*, it is clear that the animal, or instinctual, has the better of human nature" (1972:308). The mother cow only experiences grief in the first place because human beings inflicted it upon her, and she finds no consolation: "so deeply does she feel the loss of something that she knows as her very own" (*usque adeo quiddam proprium notumque requirit*, 2.366; transl. M.F. Smith).

As I have demonstrated in this section, humans have a complicated relationship with nature as a result of their capacity for reason, especially given the long history, even by Lucretius' time, of developments in society and technology that have changed the way people interact with the world around them. These developments are the product of reason, not divine intervention, and the outcome in terms of quality of life is mixed. Some animal species have also changed over time as a result of their relationships with human beings, to the mutual benefit of

[88] Lucretius is not alone in this: Newmyer 2010:41 points out that Plutarch, too, "argued that the pleasures in which animals indulge, which are free of the excesses of human behavior, may serve as lessons to human beings in modest and praiseworthy conduct." See also Saylor 1972: 306 for positive and negative aspects of animal nature that are detectable in humans according to Greek and Roman literature more generally (negative attributes: base, appetitive natures, e.g. Circe's pigs; positive: "a good, innocent nature at odds with, often the hapless victim of, a more sophisticated but less noble nature in man," e.g. Silvia's stag in *Aeneid* 7).

[89] See Holmes 2013 on the 'negative exceptionalism' of humans in the *DRN*.

both. Lucretius does not clearly grant rational thought to non-human animals, though he does refer to some species possessing a 'mind' that directs their action. Human reason is a dubious gift and does not place humans on a level above other animal species.

In the previous two sections of this chapter I demonstrated how Lucretius presents a worldview that is at odds with a hierarchical conception of the universe; this next section will show how this worldview challenges the notion that the same hierarchical structure exists *by nature* in human society and, relatedly, within the individual (that is, in the relationship between body and soul). In this final section, I will focus on human society and the political implications of taking hierarchy out of the equation. Epicurean philosophy, as Lucretius represents it, fundamentally challenged traditional Roman social and political values and assumptions about what it means to be human. One purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the implications of these political philosophies within the context of the late Republic and the early Empire. Theories of human versus non-human cognitive capabilities, presumptions of who belongs in a community and who does not, and beliefs surrounding the role of the gods in human affairs have tangible effects on the lives of human and non-human animals alike. The dominant Roman view at the end of the Republic justifies exploitation of lower classes and of non-human animals; the Epicurean philosophy of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* undermines or outright dismisses the claims that underpin this oppressive thought and action.

Part 3: Challenges to Hierarchy in Human Society

Reason and Hierarchy

Lucretian Epicureanism undermines the assumption that hierarchy is natural and desirable at every level of human existence: the place of humans within the natural order of the

universe, the organization of humans into societies, and the relation between the human body and soul. In the largest level of existence—that of the universe as a whole—gods were assumed to be superior to humans, and humans superior to all other living creatures. This is not a disinterested superiority, but one that contains within it a capacity or even responsibility to dominate the creatures below and to use them for one's own ends (see pages 21-6 of the introductory chapter).

In the Stoic view, these three levels are intertwined and are used to legitimize one another: the structure of society reproduces the structure of the soul and of the universe, with reason (the decision-making authority) conducting and controlling appetite (the plebs, slaves, and women). Social cohesion is maintained by hierarchical authority and law, which are grounded in the divine order of the universe and carried out through the application of reason. According to the Stoics, reason is central to human existence and defines us as humans. It unites us with the gods and separates us from the animals. It allows us to contemplate our surroundings and understand providential signs in nature. It enables group cohesion and allows society to form. It allows some people to rule others and to do so justly (see page 7 and note 7 of the introductory chapter).

Lucretius and the Stoics agree on some basic points—that reason is a useful tool, for example, and that humans should pay attention to nature—but their respective views of natural order and the place of humans in it are fundamentally distinct and have vastly different implications for how society should be organized and for the proper role of human leadership. The Stoic doctrine of the world community as articulated by Cicero includes all humans and gods by virtue of their capacity for reason; not all humans will actually be able to exercise this capacity, however, and some can make much better use of it than others. Asmis explains how

Stoics granted *membership*, but not necessarily *citizenship*, in the cosmic state to all humans: full citizenship requires not only reason, but wisdom (2008b:17).

For Lucretius, on the other hand, one should use reason primarily to alleviate pain, not to subjugate others to one's authority.[90] Lucretian Epicureanism also denies the Stoic notion of a world community that includes those with the ability to reason (i.e., gods and humans) but excludes all other living creatures. According to Lucretius' model, humans and gods certainly do not belong to the same community, at least not to the exclusion of any other entities: the gods have nothing whatsoever to do with humans beyond inhabiting the same universe. The world according to the *DRN* is a quasi-household of *all* created things: "Lucretius reminds us of this common home and parentage: all living things 'are sprung from celestial seed, we all have the same father, from whom the nourishing earth, the mother, receiving liquid drops of moisture'" (Asmis 2008a:151, regarding *DRN* 2.991-4).[91] We all return to the same earth, our common parent and our common tomb (*omniparens eadem rerum commune sepulcrum*, 5.259). I have shown above (pages 76-80) how Lucretius refutes the anthropocentric teleology expounded by the Stoics and emphatically declares that the world was not created for humans; if it had been, there would not now be so many elements hostile to them and it would not be so difficult to make food grow (5.200ff).

The earlier sections of this chapter, in which I explored Lucretius' conception of the gods and of non-human animals, demonstrate how Lucretius refutes this hierarchical conception of the universe and the place of humanity within it both explicitly and implicitly. By erasing any

[90] Lucretius describes, for example, how fear of death walks among even the most powerful men, and that reason is the only thing that can defeat it (2.48-54). Reason shines light and dispels the darkness that enshrouds our minds (2.59-61).

[91] For a similar notion in Pythagoreanism, see Hughes: "Since all living beings, including humans, have a common origin and natural ties, and are formed of the same components—including the soul—they are all related and should be treated with respect" (2014:53).

'natural' boundary between human and non-human animals and by locating the gods far outside of human affairs, Lucretius undermines the hierarchical conception of humanity as essentially superior to animality and as striving towards divinity by means of immortal glory. Thus Lucretius renders moot the whole debate about how and to what extent humans differ from animals, and how, by extension, some humans (the ones who resemble gods) can rightfully exercise power over others (the ones who resemble animals). People like Epicurus who resemble gods by virtue of the serenity they have achieved reach this state in part by abdicating any role in politics and by abstaining from the quest for money and power that causes pain and anxiety for so many others.

Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* subverts the traditional Roman paradigm of society and politics not only by promulgating the Epicurean dictum that one should avoid political life if possible and instead pursue personal pleasure, but, more importantly and radically, by removing hierarchy as the central organizing principle for human life. Without recommending a specific alternative organizational model for society or a particular political constitution, the *De Rerum Natura* nevertheless challenges this hierarchical scheme. Lucretius' nonhierarchical and nonteleological view of humanity—in the individual sphere, in society, and in the world—has significant implications for social and political life, whether or not Lucretius intended this to be the case. The worldview of Lucretian Epicureanism challenges the very foundations of Roman politics not through direct polemics, but by its most basic philosophical tenets and atomic theory.

An explicit, detailed critique of political institutions and different kinds of rule would be out of place in a work like the *DRN* which advocates special attention to the individual and the natural world. Nevertheless, Lucretius does criticize the desire to climb a social and political ladder in Book 5 when he says that "it is much better to serve in peace than to desire to control

things with authority and to hold kingdoms" (*ut satius multo iam sit parere quietum / quam regere imperio res velle et regna tenere*, 5.1127-28) and when, after describing kings who shrink from the lightning bolt and captains who fail to save their ships despite their prayers, he concludes that "some hidden force crushes human ambitions" and tramples on the symbols of political authority (5.1233-35).

Lucretius opens Book 2 by remarking how enjoyable it is to look at those who fight for power and to know that you yourself are above it all:

> sed nihil dulcius est, bene quam munita tenere
> edita doctrina sapientum templa serena,
> despicere unde queas alios passimque videre
> errare atque viam palantis quaerere vitae,
> certare ingenio, contendere nobilitate,
> noctes atque dies niti praestante labore
> ad summas emergere opes rerumque potiri. (2.7-13)
>
> But nothing is sweeter than to hold high places,
> serene precincts fortified by the teachings of the wise,
> from which you are able to look down on others and see
> them everywhere wandering, straggling, and seeking the path of life,
> striving with intellect, straining with nobility,
> exerting themselves through nights and days with outstanding effort
> to raise themselves up to the highest wealth and take control of the world.

Asmis summarizes this passage nicely: "The wrong way of life…is to keep struggling, with all the powers of one's intellect and family connections, to climb to the summit of wealth and power" (2008a:155). Lucretius imagines himself and his fellow followers of Epicurus occupying a protected space from which they are able to observe those who fight with each other over meaningless things. He does position himself 'above' these mistaken folks—he says nothing is sweeter than to look down on them (*nihil dulcius est…despicere*, 2.7-10)—but, like Epicurus smashing the gates of *religio* and raising his followers to be equal to the heavens (see above page 66), Lucretius is describing a philosophical 'high ground' and certainly not any kind of

hierarchical position of power. Struggling to raise oneself above others in terms of power, intellect, wealth, or nobility is just the kind of wrong-headedness that he decries in this passage.

The Natural Order

According to Stoic natural law theory, the universe is rationally organized. Gisela Striker summarizes the relationship between the Stoic view of order in the universe and the idea of a good life:

> A good human life, being the life of a rational creature, will have to be organized in accordance with the perfect order of the universe. Knowledge of the laws of nature will make one capable of organizing one's life so as to exhibit the orderliness that will make it a good life. Since happiness consists precisely in leading a good life, the Stoics could then even define the good for man as living in agreement with nature (1987:91).

This view of a rationally organized universe goes back to Plato and Aristotle, who "had inferred divine causation and inherent purposiveness in the world or goal-oriented processes from the evidence of such regularities" (Long 1977:63). Appreciating the natural order, then, requires acknowledgment of divine cause and by extension, religion.

For Cicero, indeed, observing nature and appreciating the beauty of the cosmos leads men to cultivate *religio*, which he sees as distinct from superstition:

> Nam et maiorum instituta tueri sacris caerimoniisque retinendis sapientis est, et esse praestantem aliquam aeternamque naturam, et eam suspiciendam admirandamque hominum generi pulchritudo mundi ordoque rerum caelestium cogit confiteri. Quam ob rem, ut religio propaganda etiam est quae est iuncta cum cognitione naturae, sic superstitionis stirpes omnes eligendae (*De Divinatione* 2.148-9).
>
> It is the responsibility of the wise to protect the institutions of our ancestors by maintaining sacred rites and ceremonies. For the beauty of the world and the order of the celestial phenomena

> compel us to admit that there is some outstanding and eternal
> nature that ought to be observed and admired by the human race.

Cicero makes clear in this passage that the political and moral authority of the wise man in a society rests on his understanding of nature, which he has gained from careful observation and contemplation (see Lehoux 2012:39). The duties that humans owe to the gods—and, relatedly, the ideal governing of the state—flow from knowledge of the beauty and order of nature: "The trained and moderated eye, then, sees in the world around us the foundations of a particular political philosophy" (Lehoux 2012:45)

For Lucretius, too, nature, when properly observed—and understood at the level of atoms—provides the only model humans need in order to live a good life, but his understanding of the role of religion in this matter is very different from the view that Cicero presents. Lucretius agrees that experiencing awe at the wonders of nature often leads to religious feelings, but he worries that these feelings cause people harm (e.g. 5.1194-1210). Rather than ascribe the wonders of nature to any divine cause, Lucretius says, we should contemplate the natural world more carefully in order to overcome the initial impulse to ascribe divine causation to it (see, e.g., 5.80-90). Only after we have driven these fears out of our minds can we live a good life.[92]

Gian Biagio Conte examines Lucretius' invocation of the sublime as a didactic tool that "exalts the reader and makes him capable of spiritual greatness" and remarks that, in the *DRN*, "The sublime summons man before the immensity of the cosmos so that he can become conscious of the grandeur to which destiny has assigned him" (Conte 1994:19). But the "spiritual greatness" and "grandeur of destiny," to use Conte's phrasing, towards which Lucretius hopes to

[92] See 1.931 for Lucretius' goal of untangling the mind from the knots of religion: *religionum animum nodis exsolvere pergo*. Nature demands nothing except that we get rid of pain in our bodies and souls and enjoy the happiness that follows (2.16-19). If you do not work to correct the false belief that the gods experience wrath, the idea of the gods will torment you and make it so that you cannot visit a shrine with a calm heart (6.68-79).

lead his reader look very different from what may seem like equivalent goals in the Stoic or Academic framework. For Lucretius, this greatness or grandeur is not a *hierarchical* achievement (i.e., the goal is not to exert authority over others by means of the wisdom gained from contemplating the universe, nor to elevate oneself above beings with diminished capacities for reason) but a *personal* one.

Lucretius, like Cicero, does advocate for humans to use reason to recognize their place in the natural order, but it is an order maintained by natural treaties and limits on various spheres of influence, not hierarchy. The existence of human society is not determined by providence or natural law, according to Lucretius; like the contract relationship between humans and sheep, dogs, and horses, human society depends on mutual agreement rather than compulsion by nature or the will of the gods. Nichols summarizes Lucretius' position on these matters:

> Within this mechanistic, unteleological universe, man is a naturally individual being. He is not by nature a political animal…Man does not have natural inclinations that can find fulfillment only in political life as such; rather, political society rests on a compact, a convention, that aims at essentially individual or private goods (1976:21).[93]

Lucretius' denial that society is the natural (in the sense of 'inevitable') arrangement for humans does not mean that he saw the world as naturally anarchistic; all aggregates—including living, physical bodies as well as political bodies—arise from a particular arrangement of their individual components.

Asmis explores in detail the role of *foedera naturai*, or 'treaties of nature,' as a key concept in Lucretian doctrine (2008a). Connecting Lucretius' use of the term *foedus* with the

[93] See also Belliotti (2009:102): "Epicurus viewed political associations as a series of agreements flowing from the human need for mutual protection. Justice was not founded on natural law, but on the conventions, exigencies, and expediencies of individuals embedded in communities."

Roman practice of settling political treaties—reciprocal agreements, not tyrannical commands—with neighboring states, Asmis concludes that these Lucretian limits on spheres of influence in nature do not *constrain*; rather, they *enable* humans to seek a happy life by making clear what powers are available and appropriate to different species and entities in the universe (2008a:142).[94] While treaties of this type require the *respect* of both parties, Stoic 'laws,' by contrast, require *obedience* (2008a:143-6).[95]

A number of scholars in recent decades have examined the complicated ways in which Lucretius uses metaphor to elucidate his social and atomic theories and to relate these, however obliquely, to the contemporary political situation. Noting that metaphors do not work in one direction only, Gail Cabisius addresses the rise and fall of human societies as Lucretius presents them in books 5 (where Lucretius addresses the origins of human social customs) and 6 (the plague at Athens) in conjunction with his theory of physics: human and atomic aggregations behave in much the same way throughout their lifecycles (1985:116-120). Examining Lucretius' application of political terminology (including *concilium*, *fines*, and *tumultus*) to the movements and arrangements of atomic particles, Cabisius notes the text's recurring emphasis on change and variety within systems regulated by social order and boundaries (1985:111-2). The order of atoms, like the social and political order of a state or community, will change its arrangement from time to time (*ordine mutate*), but the discrete units remain the same. *DRN* 2.899-901, for example, depicts the reorganization of a collapsed society through the metaphor of worms being

[94] The foundation of this idea, that Lucretius used '*foedera'* to mean both the concrete bonds between atoms and the abstract notion of law, was suggested by A.A. Long (1977:81) in a study of chance and causation in the *DRN*.
[95] Festugière, too, notes that for Stoics, "to follow one's own nature as a man and to follow the Nature of the Whole is the same thing" because both contain and are governed by Logos, and that "Virtue resides in this act of submission" (1956:x). Chrysippus supposedly explained the need for obedience or submission to nature with the analogy of a dog tied to a cart: it can choose to follow the cart and walk alongside it or it can resist the cart's movement and be dragged, but either way it will go where the cart goes (Long and Sedley 62a).

spontaneously generated from a rotten log (Cabisius 1985:111-2). A.A. Long links *DRN* 2.1105-1149 to Epicurus' *Ep. Pyth*. 89-90 and notes that in both texts the world itself and individual living creatures follow a similar pattern: birth is followed by an intermediate period of relative stability and eventual decay (1977:79).

Like all other aggregates, including individual humans and the world as a whole, every society will eventually dissolve (2.570-80; 2.875-900). This includes Rome, as Alessandro Schiesaro says: for Lucretius, this world we inhabit is just one of many that exist contemporaneously, and any preeminent city, lacking the beneficent eye of any divine agent (as all things do), will lose its place at the head of the table eventually:

> A belief in the contemporaneous existence of multiple worlds destroys any illusion about the uniqueness, let alone the centrality, of our own, just as in a random world floating in a random universe Rome's preeminence must by definition by transient: neither its destiny nor that of the world is in the providential hands of a divine agent (2007:42).

Nevertheless, aggregates tend to remain intact unless a sufficient force confronts them (*DRN* 1.244-7; Solomon 2004:272). Any stability that does occur in a body results from the observance of boundaries and treaties, not from hierarchical laws and domination (see especially Asmis 2008a:148). Atoms, like humans, act with agreement—not aimlessness or divine will—to form a *concilium*. The bonds that resist this onslaught, on the societal level, are compassion for the weak—which, notably, non-human animals in the *De Rerum Natura* also possess—and the harmony that arises after many successive possible combinations.[96]

[96] For the harmonious movements that arise out of many successive *concilia*, see *DRN* 2.1058-63, 5.187-94 and Cabisius 1985:117.

Dominating 'Lower Nature'

Stoic virtue—drawing on a Platonic model—requires a person to subjugate his own 'lower nature' (i.e., the appetitive or impulsive part of the soul) by applying intellectual effort.[97] Cicero summarizes the social and moral faculties that follow from reason: as a characteristic of humankind that elevates humans above beasts (*qua antecellimus bestiis*), reason allows humans to act with honor, propriety, and duty (*a qua omne honestum decorumque trahitur et ex qua ratio inveniendi officii exquiritur*, *De Officiis* 1.107). Cicero makes a connection between domination within the human soul and governance of the human city at *De Re Publica* 1.60, where Scipio explains that *ratio* (or *consilium*) is the best part of the soul (*animi pars optima*) and should 'rule' the passions within a person like a king putting down a rebellion. The alternative, Laelius agrees, is the worst thing imaginable.

For Lucretius, on the other hand, the relationship between mind (or soul) and body is not one of hierarchy and control, but rather of interdependence: both have a material nature and one cannot be said to exist without the other (3.160ff; 3.330ff; 4.420ff). For one thing, Lucretius objects to the notion that the soul is immortal while the body is not, since that would mean that souls have to live in a corporeal cage (3.680ff). Concomitant with this belief is the rejection of the Stoic and Platonic idea that, in order to live well, one must use one part of the soul (the part thought to be farther removed from the demands of the body) to exercise control over another part (the part more intimately connected with bodily needs).

[97] For later Stoic representations of the reasoning faculty as the 'command center,' as it were, of the human body, see Aetius 4.21.1-4 and Sextus Empiricus' *Against the Professors* 7.234. Galen cites Chrysippus as saying that a soul is either noble or base according to how its commanding part relates to the other divisions of the soul (*On Hippocrates' and Plato's Doctrines* 5.2.49).

In Lucretius' model, contemplation of the natural world through reason enables people to reach closer to enlightenment, to the point where, "the remaining *vestigia* of our natural dispositions, which reason is unable to expel, are so slight that nothing prevents us from leading a life worthy of the gods" (*usque adeo naturarum vestigia linqui / parvola, quae nequeat ratio depellere nobis, / ut nihil inpediat dignam dis degere vitam,* 3.320-22). By *naturae* (translated here as "natural dispositions"), Lucretius does not mean our nature as human beings generally—i.e., he is not discussing the appetitive part of the soul, as Stoics and Academics would have it—but rather the individual proclivities that find expression when we are not at ease. In the lines preceding this passage he relates humans to animals in this respect: just as a lion is predisposed to growl ferociously and a deer to quiver in times of stress, one person might be prone to fits of rage while another shrinks in fear (3.299-313). His is not saying that certain humans are more similar to animals by nature and therefore more in need of control than others, but drawing a comparison between humans and other animals generally: different humans, like different animal species, tend to express anxiety in different ways.

According to Lucretius, it is actually quite easy to live a good and happy life if one knows how to embrace simple pleasures and disregard the complications posed by unnecessary things like superstitious fear of the gods, greed, and political involvement. Noting that "Epicurean tranquility…appears as a state of relaxed, rather passive calm, in contrast to the active vigilance that seems to be built into, say, the Stoic and Platonic ideals," Trapp summarizes this major difference between Epicureanism and these other philosophical schools:

> Above all, unlike the Stoic, the Peripatetic or the Platonist, the Epicurean was not engaged in a struggle to mould and shape his character, against the resistance and seductions of intellectual error or a lower nature; his task was instead more like the clearing away of obstacles and accretions so as to allow free play to the nature

> with which he had been born, and which had no need of any further development (2007:41).

Epicureans like Lucretius did not feel a need to reject or transcend or dominate the basic human (or indeed, animal) condition. One does need to learn to categorize pleasures and pursue them prudently, "but none of this involves the kind of fundamental change in human nature, or altered sense of goals, that is so prominent in Stoicism" (Trapp 2007:48).

Indeed, for Epicureans, deep reasoning is not necessary for a pleasant life or the pursuit of truth. Torquatus, the representative of Epicureanism in Cicero's *De Finibus*, reminds his interlocutors that Epicurus said that truth is perceived by the senses and that humans do not need to exercise sophisticated reasoning to live well (1.30). Even unreasoning beings like young children and wild animals know how to pursue pleasure and avoid pain because nature—and their senses—guide them to do so (see e.g. *De Finibus* 1.71). These statements are consistent with Lucretius' representation of the role of the senses (1.419-46; 2.937-8; 4.478-521). Epicurus taught that the good life consists of simple pleasures: the tranquility that comes with avoiding competition, the company of friends, consuming food and drink only in moderation; none of these requires the pursuit of esoteric knowledge or deep intellectualism (see, e.g., Belliotti 2009:99).

According to the Stoics, humans are by nature social creatures, and so those who have cultivated wisdom in themselves will inevitably associate with—and risk contamination by—others who are morally and rationally imperfect because they have not done this kind of work (Trapp 2007:45). Although we have very little information about Lucretius' own social circle or

social practices,[98] we do know that Epicureans in general differed from contemporaneous philosophical schools in their beliefs about the potential negative influence of associating with 'lower' humans. It is worth noting here that Epicureans, unlike Stoics and most other philosophical schools in antiquity, welcomed women into their circle. This was true even for women accused of engaging in prostitution: Cicero invokes the female Epicurean philosopher Leontium (he calls her a *meretricula*) as an example of the licentiousness of Epicurus' Garden (*tantum Epicuri hortus habuit licentiae, De Finibus* 1.93). André-Jean Festugière gives a sense of the impact of Epicureans' willingness to embrace the contributions of women in their school: "these young women would find in the Garden a company where they would be treated as equals, where their dignity as human beings would be conceded. This would be for them an entirely new experience" (1956:29). The Epicurean ideal of withdrawal from public life played a part in their acceptance of women; it would make little sense for the Academy, for example, to do the same, given their emphasis on philosophy as a means of preparing students to engage in the political life of the city (Festugière 1956:27). We know hardly anything about Lucretius' life or social circle beyond what little we can glean from his own work, and we do not know what relationships he had with women or other subalterns in Roman society. Regardless of how Lucretius carried out the principles of Epicureanism in his own life, he presents them to his fellow Romans faithfully, and there is nothing in his version of Epicureanism to prevent people from associating with those segments of society that were considered to be inferior.

[98] Acknowledging that he risks the pitfalls of a biographical reading of the text but wishing to dispute previous scholars who had let their imaginations run a bit too far into the Garden, Diskin Clay notes that there is no good evidence that Lucretius himself was actually part of an Epicurean *familia* (1983:169).

Conclusion

At times, Lucretius uses metaphorical language to undermine the assumptions his contemporary Romans held about society and politics. In other cases, he simply does not engage with the traditional hierarchical model, but offers in its stead one that is organized by completely different rules. In this way he models Epicurean withdrawal from politics through his poetry: like a *familia* of Epicureans discussing their philosophy in a Garden separate from the hustle and bustle of urban politicking—and thus offering a model of a different and better way of life—Lucretius' refusal to engage explicitly with his contemporary thinkers on the matter of the state offers an example for others to follow and presents an implicit critique of the system he appears to ignore.

Lucretius characterizes reason, like virtue, as a tool that humans can use to seek a pleasant life through the alleviation of pain, rather than a defining characteristic of what it means to be human or a means of dominating others who lack the same capacity for rational thought. If an individual already has a pleasant life—like a non-human animal without human interference—then it would not need reason to make its life better. For Lucretius, the ability to reason is both a blessing and a curse: an individual human can find peace in life by contemplating the natural order of things, but, misapplied, reason can make life *more* painful and violent for large swaths of people all at once. The earliest humans did not have the creature comforts that subsequent generations invented, but they also did not suffer from the same anxieties Lucretius saw in his contemporaries (Shelton 1996:48). From reason comes the development of warfare and humans marching against each other by the thousands, from reason

comes the miserable death of sailors in shipwrecks, and from reason comes poisoning by intention, where before it was only the product of ignorance (see page 79-80, above).

In his philosophical dialogue *De Finibus*, Cicero has his Epicurean interlocutor, Torquatus, frame the debate around the pursuit of pleasure as the ultimate good, an argument which Cicero then attacks through a series of rhetorical moves in his own voice (1.30). He thus avoids engaging with what I consider to be the most challenging aspect of *De Rerum Natura* to the status quo of Rome: a worldview that is not organized around hierarchy. While Cicero's interlocutors debate the fine points and shortcomings of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, and while the political situation in Rome wavers between rule by the few (aristocrats) or rule by the many (aristocrats), Lucretius creates a text that disregards the concept of "rule" as an organizing principle for everything in the universe from atomic particles to living creatures to the world as a whole.

Chapter 3: Diodorus Siculus' *Bibliotheca Historica*

Introduction

Amin Elhassan, a commentator for ESPN, once summarized the appeal of professional basketball player Stephen Curry by calling to mind Greek mythology:

> I think fans gravitate towards him because he doesn't have this unreachable 'Mt. Olympus' style of dominance. He's not big and athletic and strong, he doesn't jump out of the gym, he is, for all intents and purposes, a normal-sized guy in a land of giants, and yet he finds a way to dominate with his skill and with his mind.[99]

Elhassan's point is that, in contrast to physically massive and domineering players like LeBron James—whose physicality allow them to occupy space in a way that one could categorize as an "unreachable 'Mt. Olympus' style of dominance"—fans find Curry relatable and inspirational because his success does not stem from apparently superhuman physical traits. Similarly, as I argue in this chapter, Diodorus Siculus uses his *Bibliotheca Historica* to reimagine the traditional Greco-Roman pantheon of gods in a way that makes them more accessible and relatable to his audience, with the goal of inspiring 'godlike' behavior from otherwise normal human beings.

Diodorus provides his audience with a multitude of positive exempla drawn from mythology and history (or 'myth-history').[100] In his Euhemeran conception of the world, the beings we call 'gods' were once human mortals who invented or accomplished great things for the benefit of other humans in their own communities and abroad.[101] After death, these figures

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[99] NPR's *All Things Considered* (aired on May 26, 2015): "As The NBA Conference Finals Wind Down, LeBron James Remains Dominant."

[100] Or "Mythistory," a word Sulimani uses in the title of her book on Diodorus (2011).

[101] For more on first discoverers, see Zhmud 2006; for Hellenistic monarchs as euergetists, see Erskine 1994:71-6. According to Eusebius of Caesarea, "Euhemerus was to recognize two types of gods: a) eternal and indestructible gods…such as the sun, moon, stars, and wind and b) earthly gods, meaning people who achieved immortal fame and glory, such as Heracles, Dionysus and Aristaeus" (Winiarczyk 2013:27).

were given immortal honors by the people whom they had served, and over time they have come to be known as gods. Because of their humble (human) beginnings, these figures offer a more attainable goal for other mortals who wish to emulate their good traits and contribute similarly to a better quality of life for humans everywhere. This is a far cry from the Homeric and Hesiodic gods who, like members of any aristocratic family, are born into power and only need to try to hold onto it.

Diodorus' conception of the world and the place of humans in it is non-teleological and shows few signs of divine intervention. In a way, by portraying the gods as human beings, Diodorus is doing the very opposite of what Lucretius did. Lucretius, following Epicurus, locates the gods far outside of human affairs; they are totally unrelatable yet still aspirational in their perfect serenity. Diodorus, following Euhemerus and others, says that the gods were actually human beings who accomplished impressive feats and earned immortal worship. In both cases, however different their approaches, the result is the same: there are no supernatural, superhuman entities that control human affairs. This leaves humans with more responsibility over their own lives and in their interactions with the natural world. Kenneth Sacks points out that, of Aristotle's four types of forces at work in the world (human agency, divine intellect, nature, and chance), "human agency is clearly the most active in the *Bibliotheke*" (1990:36). By combining Euhemerist rational theology with a universalist perspective, Diodorus offers a worldview that prioritizes human agency and decision-making as the only way life has improved—and will continue to do so—for humankind.

I offer far more introductory material in this chapter for Diodorus than I do in other chapters for Lucretius or Varro. I do this in part because fewer people are familiar with Diodorus' work, but also because his work has been maligned—unfairly, I think—by many of

those scholars who do discuss it, and because a work of such complexity—a universal history that employs rational theology written by a Greek-speaker living under Roman rule—benefits from substantial contextualization. In this introduction I offer some background on Diodorus as a Sicilian historian living under Roman rule, followed by a summary of the criticism that the *Bibliotheca* has faced from modern scholars. I conclude the introduction with a brief exploration of the tradition of rationalizing myths in which Diodorus participates.

Part 1 of this chapter deals with Diodorus' treatment of the gods. First I show how Diodorus presents the act of granting immortal honors to human euergetists (i.e., divinity in the Euhemerist view) as a near-universal human construct that, in individual cases, reflects the cultural norms of different places and periods in history. I then examine how Diodorus conceives of human communities on various scales and how he prioritizes the performance of benefactions that yield the greatest good for the greatest number of people (i.e., euergetism on a universal scale). At the end of Part 1, I focus in particular on Diodorus' telling of early life on Crete as one self-contained example of multiple generations of euergetists who each build on earlier achievements in order to offer the greatest possible benefit to humankind. This quasi-Theogony offers an alternative version of the origins of society (and many forms of human technology) in which familiar characters like the Titans, Zeus, Artemis, and Hephaestus are cast as human beings who choose to apply their intellect and creativity to finding ways to improve life for people everywhere.

In Part 2 of this chapter I examine how Diodorus presents human interactions with the natural world in his universal history. I narrow in on a few individuals who receive special attention from Diodorus for the impressive feats that they perform on behalf of humanity. First I treat Heracles as a case study of an individual who increases arable lands by clearing away

dangerous humans and non-human animals and by installing public works projects having to do with water management. Then I examine Diodorus' treatment of Dionysus and Demeter not as gods who 'created' their respective foodstuffs as a gift for humankind, but rather as humans who discovered how to grow, process, and store these crops and subsequently shared this knowledge with other humans.

In Part 3, I look briefly at political systems in the *Bibliotheca* and address the question of whether Diodorus advocates one kind of political arrangement over others. The sum of these parts is an argument that Diodorus highlights particular human actions—specifically related to dealing with the natural world—in the first pentad of the *Bibliotheca* in order to encourage his readers to act justly and kindly towards one another. These five books have to do with a period of human history in which people were first figuring out how to deal with one another, how to protect themselves from dangers present in the natural world, and how to make life better through agricultural production. Diodorus presents some kinds of human behavior as universally and timelessly good: despite the fact that these events occurred in the distant past and in far-flung regions of the world, Diodorus uses them as part of a program that prescribes certain behavior among people living in his own time.

Like Lucretius, Diodorus offers a worldview that prioritizes individual human action and disregards the traditional notion of divine intervention or rule. Whereas Lucretius offers a physical theory that replaces the hierarchical conception of the universe with one in which humans are just one of an infinite number of atomic conglomerations with no special position relative to gods or animals, Diodorus takes an ecological view of human history that decentralizes Rome and emphasizes human interactions on the level of relatively small

communities in which individuals do their best to get along with one another and carve out a decent standard of living.

Diodorus and Rome

Diodorus Siculus was born ca. 90 BCE in Agyrium, a small community near the center of Sicily, which itself lies near the center of the Mediterranean world. From what we can tell, he dedicated the last three decades of his life (ca. 60-30 BCE) to composing a universal history, the *Bibliotheca Historica*.[102] This massive work originally spanned forty books (of which we have 1-5, 11-20, and substantial fragments of some others) and covered the history of the known world, encompassing peoples from the British Isles to India, from the distant reaches of the mythological past to the events of Diodorus' own day.[103] Universal histories had been attempted by others before Diodorus, but never on this scale (Green 2010:5).

When Sacks points out that the *Bibliotheca* is the only large-scale history that survives from the late Republic, he adds the phrase "by either a Greek or a Roman" (1990:5). As a Sicilian living under Roman rule and writing in Greek, Diodorus could be classified as both 'a Roman' and 'a Greek'—or as neither of these. He claims to have gained familiarity with Latin by interacting with Romans who had come to Sicily (1.4.4), and he apparently journeyed to the city of Rome in order to take advantage of their extensive records, having spent time in Egypt years earlier for the same reason (1.4.2-3). Diodorus offers a valuable perspective on late

[102] We do not have much information about Diodorus outside of what he provides in his own work. Rawson conjectures that he was not poor and probably did not have direct political or military experience: "Diodorus Siculus, who dedicates his work to no friend or patron and who does not write like a professional teacher of rhetoric or grammar, was probably a man of independent means, though without the political and military experience that Polybius and so many others had thought vital to the historian" (1985:92).

[103] There is a gap, however: Sacks notes that Diodorus "eventually decided to avoid treating events that occurred between 60 and 46 BC, instead offering oblique judgments in narrating earlier periods" (1990:7). The latest event Diodorus mentions, as Oldfather points out, is a reference to the city of Tauromenium in Sicily (16.7.1) that may relate to Octavian's activities there in 36 BCE or soon thereafter (1933:ix). See Sulimani for an argument that Diodorus lived until at least 27 BCE (2011:177).

republican Rome because, as a Sicilian who dwelled for a time in Rome, he was a firsthand witness to the political institutions and cultural practices of Rome but he did not, from what we can tell, aspire to *be* Roman.

Elizabeth Rawson conjectures that Diodorus may have taken up historical writing in the first place partly because he came from a place with such a rich historiographical tradition "but which now had no independent history of its own" (1985:36). Diodorus' account of the history of the island before large-scale invasions by Greeks and Carthaginians (5.2.1-5.8.2), including the characteristics of various indigenous populations, is in many cases the only source we have for this information. Throughout the *Bibliotheca*, whenever Diodorus mentions the land or history of Sicily, the admiration he displays for the island indicates much greater care and loyalty than he displays for Greece, Egypt, the Italian peninsula, or any other geographic region.[104] Having been fought over by Romans, Carthaginians, Greeks, and local tyrants for centuries, Sicily came under definitive Roman rule during Diodorus' lifetime. As Sacks notes, Diodorus' homeland "suffered especially" during the tumultuous era "that brought an end to the Republic and turned Italy and the provinces alike into battlefields" (1990:6).

C.H. Oldfather characterizes Diodorus as an admirer of Roman expansionist policies, the success of which (particularly under Pompey) enabled those with Stoic leanings to see their theory of a world community—the cosmopolis—finally come to fruition:[105]

> Under the dominion of Rome the Stoic idea of a cosmopolis was on the way to becoming an actuality. All mankind was coming to

[104] For example, he boasts that Sicily is the richest Mediterranean island and has the oldest myths (5.2.1). He also claims that it was the first place to be visited by Demeter and Persephone, i.e., the first place where grain was domesticated, and cites Homer (*Odyssey* 9.109) as an authority on the island's fertility and early production of crops (5.2.4-5). Diodorus describes the incredibly beautiful meadow where Persephone was captured, near his hometown in the heart of Sicily, as the *omphalos* of the island (5.3.2).

[105] Note Vogt's objection that, for early Stoics at least, the cosmopolis was not an idealized or theoretical construct, but a reality that *did* exist and did not need to be brought about by any political regime (2008:4).

> form a "common" civilization, a "common" society, and Diodorus could speak of a "common life" in the sense that the whole Mediterranean world was now interested in the same things and what benefited one nation was of common value to all. […] The limitations of the old city state, whereby a man was a stranger in any city but the one of his origin, were gone forever (1933:xii).

Oldfather is not alone in viewing Diodorus as a promoter of Roman hegemony and Stoic philosophy, but I see no compelling reason to put him in either of these categories.[106] Diodorus does acknowledge impressive feats of individual Romans and remarks on the extent of Roman rule in his time, but he also voices clear objections to aspects of Roman expansion and rule (and indeed to *any* overly exploitative political regime). He does occasionally employ Stoic terminology, but, on the whole, his moral pronouncements and his accommodation of widely differing religious views are far too eclectic to qualify him as an adherent of any particular philosophical school.

Sacks explores the complicated ways in which Diodorus deals with Roman hegemony in his *Bibliotheca*, ultimately offering this assessment: "Although Diodorus is at times ambivalent or maddeningly contradictory, the evidence shows that he is overall moderately critical of Rome" (1990:117). In service of this conclusion, Sacks notes that the *interest* Diodorus displays in Roman rule does not translate to *affection* of the kind that can be detected in other Greek writers. There was a long-standing tradition in Greek historiography of praising Rome, but Diodorus passes over opportunities to celebrate Rome's imperial achievements (1990:119-120).[107] Perhaps

[106] Sacks cites Manganaro, de Romilly, and Sartori for additional examples of this view, and B. Forte and Momigliano as exceptions (1990:120, fn14).

[107] Sacks finds it useful to compare Diodorus to Polybius and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, since the latter two "begin their studies by listing the great empires of history and conclude that the most successful was the Roman;" Diodorus does no such thing (1990:120). Sacks examines one case, 37.2.1, where Diodorus "does describe the Roman Empire as the most brilliant and greatest in memory" but notes that Diodorus is probably adapting Posidonius, and follows this description with a passage that contrasts early Romans and their decadent descendants in Diodorus' time (1990:121).

Oldfather and others who characterize Diodorus as breathing a sigh of relief now that Rome has taken control of the Mediterranean basin have in mind other Greek-speaking individuals, like Polybius, Posidonius, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Strabo, who lived under Roman rule and actually do seem to celebrate Rome's program of expansion as an improvement to the world. Even those Greek writers who do praise Rome directly were not unambiguous in their feelings towards Rome's hegemony: Sacks notes that Polybius and Posidonius admired Rome's military achievements but, "observing that Rome reacted brutally against threats to its hegemony, they also raised questions about contemporary Roman practices" (1990:122).

In the introduction to his *Histories*, Polybius contextualizes his work—and indeed the thrust of world history as a whole—as products of Roman rule, and in particular Rome's program of expansion. He begins his narrative of history with the events of 220-216 BCE, the dates after which "history has been an organic whole, and the affairs of Italy and Libya have been interlinked with those of Greece and Asia, all leading up to one end."[108] In Polybius' estimation, a cohesive, systematic account of the periods before Rome's initial defeat of the Carthaginians would not be possible, since "no unity of initiative, results, or locality" held together the events of the world (διὰ τὸ καὶ κατὰ τὰς ἐπιβολάς, ἔτι δὲ καὶ τὰς συντελείας αὐτῶν ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ κατὰ τοὺς τόπους ἀπέχειν ἕκαστα τῶν πεπραγμένων, 1.3.3). With Rome having conquered nearly the entire inhabited world, Fortune has brought history to its natural

[108] ἀπὸ δὲ τούτων τῶν καιρῶν οἷον εἰ σωματοειδῆ συμβαίνει γίνεσθαι τὴν ἱστορίαν, συμπλέκεσθαί τε τὰς Ἰταλικὰς καὶ Λιβυκὰς πράξεις ταῖς τε κατὰ τὴν Ἀσίαν καὶ ταῖς Ἑλληνικαῖς καὶ πρὸς ἕν γίνεσθαι τέλος τὴν ἀναφορὰν ἁπάντων (1.3.4). Polybius translations throughout are those of W.R. Paton. See also *Histories* 1.4.1: "Fortune has guided almost all the affairs of the world in one direction and has forced them to incline towards one and the same end."

conclusion: a unified whole. Polybius aims to edify his reader by explaining to them the particular mechanisms that Romans used to bring success to their expansionist mission.[109]

Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who was born in Diodorus' lifetime but lived long enough to see Rome's annexation of Egypt and other expansionist moves under Augustus that Diodorus likely did not witness, appraises Rome's military accomplishments in a favorable light and expands Polybius' assessment of the extent of Roman rule (*Roman Antiquities*, 1.3.3). Diodorus' account, by contrast, denies the completeness of Roman rule and the total preeminence of the city of Rome. Twice he says that some still consider Alexandria the top city in the world in terms of elegance, riches, and population, and he extends his historical narrative (particularly in the first pentad of the *Bibliotheca*) to places and peoples far outside of Roman influence.[110] Another remark of Dionysius of Halicarnassus deserves examination for the sake of comparison: he claims that in his time, Rome "no longer had as rival any nation either barbarian or Greek […] and there is no nation…that disputes her universal dominion or protests against being ruled by her" (*Roman Antiquities* 1.3.5). Needless to say, whenever we see statements that assume the happy compliance of people under the new rule of an invading force, we should approach such statements with a heavy dose of skepticism. We might ask whether political unity under the hegemony of Rome (to the extent that it did exist) provided real benefits to the people who had been living autonomously before Roman rule.

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[109] See, for example: "For who is so worthless or indolent as not to wish to know by what means and under what system of polity the Romans in less than fifty-three years have succeeded in subjecting nearly the whole inhabited world to their sole government — a thing unique in history?" (1.1.5) "But the Romans [unlike the Macedonians] have subjected to their rule not portions, but nearly the whole of the world and possess an empire which is not only immeasurably greater than any which preceded it, but need not fear rivalry in the future." (1.2.7) "In the course of this work it will become more clearly intelligible by what steps this power was acquired" (1.2.8)

[110] For instance, to a set of remote islands in the Atlantic Ocean (sometimes identified with the Canaries), to Euhemerus' Panchaea (which, if real, would lie off the coast of modern Yemen), and to India.

As a Sicilian in the first century BCE, Diodorus had witnessed firsthand the human suffering and abuse of natural resources that Roman rule brought to its provinces. Sicily had been occupied by Romans in some fashion for nearly two centuries by the time Diodorus was composing his history, and he hardly represents this as a peaceful or happy period for the island's inhabitants. Sicily had seen three major slave rebellions in the last century, each of which devastated the countryside that Diodorus so cherished and resulted in innumerable deaths, not to mention unsightly and unsettling acts like public crucifixions for those who had participated.[111] Romans were not the only ones to wreak havoc on Diodorus' homeland—Carthaginians, Greeks, and local Sicilian tyrants had all done damage of their own—but unlike previous attempts to take a particular city or coast of the island, Rome succeeded in conquering Sicily in its entirety.

The atrocities committed by Verres, the governor whom Cicero characterizes as a "disaster" (*calamitas*), reveal how vulnerable the provinces were to abuses of power at the hands of Roman officials (*In Verr*. 2.1.17).[112] As the prosecutor in the case against Verres, Cicero of course had an incentive to portray the former governor in the worst possible light, but this is not the only place where Cicero's sympathetic assessment of Sicily's plight under Roman rule confirms the image we get from Diodorus of an island rich in land and culture but vulnerable to attack from the outside.[113] In a separate work, Cicero celebrates the level of sophistication and civilization attained by Syracuse in the past, while lamenting that the tomb of Archimedes had

[111] Had Spartacus and his allies succeeded in crossing over from Rhegium, there would have been a fourth such rebellion in this time period. See Shaw 2001 for details of all three slave wars.
[112] Born ca. 90 BCE, Diodorus would have been a young man during Verres' administration (73-71 BCE).
[113] See 37.2.13 for Diodorus' claim that Roman officials in the time of Sulla had their eye on Sicily's resources. For the importance of Sicily to Rome in times of grain shortage, see Sulimani, who cites, for example, the incident when Caesar sent warships to guard Sicily and Sardinia while sending merchant ships in pursuit of Pompey in Greece (2011:225).

been forgotten by Syracusians of his own time (*Tusc. Disp*. 5.64-6). The blame for this neglect need not rest of the shoulders of the Sicilians alone; as Rawson notes, Syracuse "had never recovered from the great Roman sack of the late third century, when Archimedes' celestial globes, and possibly books, were, like works of art, carried to Rome" (1985:36). Green notes that Octavian, having taken control of Sicily in 36 BCE, "subjected the island to worse indignities than even Verres had inflicted, including not only a 1,600-talent indemnity but also mass confiscations of property and relocation of inhabitants" (2010:3).

The hardships faced by Sicilians in this period pale in comparison to Roman exploitation of other peoples about whom Diodorus also reports in the *Bibliotheca*. In a particularly gripping passage on the Iberian silver mines, he tells how the bodies of the enslaved people wear out from the continual labor of digging day and night with no rest and frequent beatings, resulting in very great loss of life (5.38.1). Even those who are able to survive "by the strength of their bodies and the perseverance of their souls" (ταῖς δυνάμεσι τῶν σωμάτων καὶ ταῖς τῶν ψυχῶν καρτερίαις) would prefer to die than to continue living under these conditions (5.38.1). Romans did not establish these mines—they took them over after defeating the Carthaginians—but they did intensify the operations and the concomitant exploitation of enslaved mine workers. Diodorus characterizes the difference in Carthaginian and Roman greed as follows:

> δεινοὶ γάρ, ὡς ἔοικεν, ὑπῆρξαν οἱ Φοίνικες ἐκ παλαιῶν χρόνων εἰς τὸ κέρδος εὑρεῖν, οἱ δ᾽ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας εἰς τὸ μηδὲν μηδενὶ τῶν ἄλλων καταλιπεῖν (5.38.3).
>
> For it appears that from ancient times the Phoenicians were clever in discovering things to their own gain, and the Italians equally clever in leaving nothing for anyone else.

It is worth noting that indigenous Iberians had their own methods of extracting silver from these deposits before the arrival of Carthaginians: they "harvested" the silver from the surface,[114] the labor was voluntary, and the workers retained all of the profits from their work.

Further, Diodorus challenges the image of the happily conquered peoples bowing at Rome's feet when he highlights long-standing resistance to Roman rule. He notes that the mountain dwellers of Sardinia, in fulfillment of a prophecy, have managed to fend off Roman invaders, maintaining their freedom and autonomy to his own day (5.15.3). Similarly, the Celtiberians, a mixture of two courageous peoples living on fertile land, "advanced far in fame and were subdued by the Romans with difficulty and only after they had faced them in battle over a long period" (5.33.1).

The historical *exempla* Diodorus provides of people conducting themselves admirably come, in many cases, from the edges of the Roman world.[115] He tells us that it is clear that the gods love the Ethiopians for their piety, since "they have never experienced the rule of an invader from abroad; for from all time they have enjoyed a state of freedom and of peace with one another, and although many and powerful rulers have made war upon them, not one of these has succeeded in his undertaking" (3.2.4). In Gaul, Druid priests can prevent a war by stepping between the battle lines; thus, Diodorus tells us, "passion yields to wisdom, and Ares stands in awe of the Muses" (ὁ θυμὸς εἴκει τῇ σοφίᾳ καὶ ὁ Ἄρης αἰδεῖται τὰς Μούσας, 5.31.5). The inhabitants of the British Isles conduct themselves in a way that is "simple and far removed from the shrewdness and vice which characterize the men of our day" (5.21.6). People in India have

[114] Similarly, Diodorus reports that there are Gauls who collect gold from stream beds (5.27.1-4).
[115] For ancient theories of the world conceived as having a center and edges, see especially Romm 1992.

many peculiar customs, reports Diodorus, but the one most worthy of admiration (θαυμασιώτατον) is that which bans slavery:

> νενομοθέτηται γὰρ παρ᾽ αὐτοῖς δοῦλον μὲν μηδένα εἶναι τὸ παράπαν, ἐλευθέρους δ᾽ ὑπάρχοντας τὴν ἰσότητα τιμᾶν ἐν πᾶσι. τοὺς γὰρ μαθόντας μήθ᾽ ὑπερέχειν μήθ᾽ ὑποπίπτειν ἄλλοις κράτιστον ἕξειν βίον πρὸς ἁπάσας τὰς περιστάσεις: εὔηθες γὰρ εἶναι νόμους μὲν ἐπ᾽ ἴσης τιθέναι πᾶσι, τὰς δ᾽ οὐσίας ἀνωμάλους κατασκευάζειν (2.39.5).
>
> For the law has ordained that under no circumstances shall anyone among them be a slave, but that all shall be free and respect the principle of equality in all persons. For those, they think, who have learned neither to domineer over others nor to subject themselves to others will enjoy a manner of life best suited to all circumstances; since it is silly to make laws on the basis of equality for all persons, and yet to establish inequalities in social intercourse.

Communities in the far-flung reaches of the world (from a point of view that orients the world around Sicily) thus were fully capable of governing themselves, designing laws and social structures, and communing with the gods in order to live well in their own communities. Groups of people had long been capable of achieving peace and improving their quality of life through concessions and compromise with neighboring powers.

According to Diodorus, near-universal peace existed for a period of time, thanks to treaties and voluntary concessions among groups that had previously been in conflict, well before Rome's influence had spread. Diodorus reports that, in the same year (442 BCE) that the Romans established the Twelve Tables in response to civil discord (στάσις) that had prevented them from conducting government business effectively, "the greater number of the nations of the inhabited world were quiet, practically all of them being at peace" (τούτων δὲ πραττομένων τὰ πλεῖστα τῶν κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐθνῶν ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ ὑπῆρχε, πάντων σχεδὸν εἰρήνην ἀγόντων,

12.26.1-2). The Athenians and the Spartans had their thirty-year truce, and the Persians had reached treaties with both groups independently (12.26.2). The Carthaginians occupying Sicily had come to a peaceful agreement with Gelon and the Greek cities on Sicily had conceded, of their own will, to Syracuse (12.26.3). The peoples of Italy, Gaul, Iberia, "and almost all the rest of the inhabited world" were quiet: "a single peace prevailed, and festive gatherings, sacrificial festivals of the gods, and everything else which accompanies a life of felicity prevailed among all mankind" (διόπερ πολεμικὴ μὲν καὶ ἀξία μνήμης πρᾶξις οὐδεμία συνετελέσθη κατὰ τούτους τοὺς χρόνους, εἰρήνη δὲ μία συνετελέσθη, καὶ πανηγύρεις καὶ ἀγῶνες καὶ θεῶν θυσίαι καὶ τἆλλα τὰ πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν ἀνήκοντα παρὰ πᾶσιν ἐπεπόλαζεν, 12.26.4).

If the known world is all one community, it existed long before the Romans conquered the Mediterranean shore: the first five books of the *Bibliotheca* show just how connected the world was in the distant past and that widespread peace was possible at a time when the hills of Rome were still pasture land for sheep and goats. The *Bibliotheca* is not a *Republic*, but Diodorus' survey of communities across the inhabited world in the first pentad achieves similar goals, in that it offers paradigms of behavior for individuals and communities. Instead of presenting a single model of an idealized state, he presents interconnected communities responding to real-world challenges and a set of inspirational figures from the past that people can use for guidance in the present and future. Administration on a global scale is not a viable solution to the problems faced by humanity. Governance by a single or centralized entity (Olympian gods, the Roman state) is unnecessary and harmful to many members of this community, as past events recorded by Diodorus demonstrate. Ingenuity and generosity on the part of individuals, on the other hand, can go a long way towards solving social problems. By beginning the narrative of his universal history with events that occurred centuries before Rome

posed a threat to anyone but their immediate neighbors on the Italian peninsula, Diodorus offers ample evidence for a before-and-after comparison of societies that would later (by his own time) come under the rule of Rome. It is entirely possible for Diodorus to be impressed by specific characteristics of the Roman way of doing things—like their record-keeping, which provided him much fodder for research when he was staying in Rome—and to acknowledge the difficulty of Rome's military feats without celebrating its program of expansion.

The *Bibliotheca Historica*: Form, Reception, and Historical Context

The *Bibliotheca Historica* has not been treated kindly by the majority of modern scholars; Peter Green and Kenneth Sacks are notable exceptions to this trend.[116] In the preface to his commentary on *BH* 11-12.37.1, Green tells how he found himself appreciating Diodorus in the face of what he describes as the "violent, contemptuous, and often seemingly near-hysterical academic chorus of dismissal" directed at the Sicilian historian (2006:ix). Green follows Sacks in this regard; the latter's *Diodorus Siculus and the First Century* (1990) remains one of the few sustained efforts to rehabilitate Diodorus' image published thus far. Countering the tradition of *Quellenforschung,* whose proponents have had harsh words for Diodorus, Sacks concludes that the *Bibliotheca* "was not composed by rote, nor is it an arbitrary collection of thoughts derived from whatever source Diodorus happened to be following at that moment" and that Diodorus was "largely, perhaps entirely, responsible" for certain features of the work, including the proems, organizational markers, speeches, and polemics against earlier authors (1990:5).[117]

[116] Peter Green summarizes: "A tradition developed in the nineteenth century of treating [Diodorus] as a mental defective: when he said what critics wanted to hear, that was due to his mindlessly copying a good source; when he did not, that was the result of his own stupidity" (2010:vii).

[117] See also Burton, who notes that "Scarcely ever is [Diodorus] credited with any originality. As a result, much time and effort has been spent in attempting to attribute to their original authors the various sections of Diodorus' history" (1972:1). Burton argues that Diodorus did compose the introduction to the entire work, and did so artfully:

Rawson acknowledges the importance of the *Bibliotheca* as the period's only surviving work by a Sicilian author (1985:36) and the only surviving large-scale historiographical work of the period (217), but she also doubts Diodorus' ability to examine 'truth' in history critically and refers to him with adjectives like "innocent" and "simple" (226). More recently, scholars have begun to take Diodorus' achievements more seriously, giving a nod to the impressive scope of the work and highlighting Diodorus' success—however imperfect—in organizing complex information from multiple sources. Yun Lee Too, for example, devotes a chapter of *The Idea of the Library in the Ancient World* to "Diodorus Siculus and Literary Cosmopolitanism" (2010), and Katherine Clarke includes a section on Diodorus' universal chronology in *Making Time for the Past: Local History and the Polis* (2008). Still, most of the scholarship currently available—what little there is to begin with—focuses on the later books of the *Bibliotheca Historica*. My work, on the other hand, is concerned primarily with the first five books, where Diodorus relates the myth-history of all the lands surrounding the Mediterranean in the time preceding the Trojan War.

The *Bibliotheca* can be frustratingly (or tantalizingly) difficult to follow, with its multiple conflicting versions of the same events and its frequent near-redundancies. The organizational structure of the first five books poses many challenges to a careful reader.[118] Lacking the chronological records he used to research and arrange his history of later periods, Diodorus organizes the first pentad according to geographic region: the first book covers the myths and history of Egypt; the second covers Mesopotamia, India, and Arabia; the third addresses

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"Diodorus' general introduction to his history, a eulogy of this form of lit, reaches a degree of eloquence unsurpassed by any other author, and far superior to the rest of his work" (1972:35).

[118] For details of the careful arrangement of the text, see Chapter 3 ("Working Methods: Emphasis on Organization and Orderly Discussions") of Sulimani (2011:109-162).

Ethiopia, the coasts of the Arabian Gulf, and Libya; and the fourth takes up Greece. Diodorus states that book 5 will relate the history of the islands found across the known world but, in addition to islands in the Mediterranean, the Atlantic Ocean, the North Sea, the Baltics, and perhaps, it has been argued, locations as far as Madagascar or Sri Lanka, he includes in this book lengthy passages on the myth-history of continental regions including the Italian peninsula, Iberia, and Germania.

Diodorus was an heir to the tradition of Hellenistic literature that valued a broad scope and a well-travelled, multidimensional outlook on the world. He occasionally refers to the entire inhabited world as a single community using language familiar to any Stoic: in his introduction to the *Bibliotheca*, for example, he says that if an historian wishes to produce the most useful kind of history, it would be one that recorded "the affairs of the entire world…as though they were the affairs of some single city" (εἰ γάρ τις τὰς εἰς μνήμην παραδεδομένας τοῦ σύμπαντος κόσμου πράξεις, ὥσπερ τινὸς μιᾶς πόλεως, 1.3.6).[119] His interest in history is truly universal, stretching as far in time and space as his sources allowed, and some of the difficulty in reading the first pentad arises from his insistence on showing how interconnected the peoples, events, and mythologies of the Mediterranean really were. He refuses to limit himself to just one version of events, preferring to view the whole of humanity as one great community comprising countless individual perspectives. Despite the Stoic overtones of this interest in a world community, Diodorus is never straightforward about this philosophical standing and he gives no clear indication that he identified with any particular philosophical school over another.

[119] Burton notes the likely influence of Posidonius on statements like these in Diodorus' introduction and adds that, "Certainly Diodorus refers both to the Stoic Divine Providence and to the Stoic doctrine of the universal kinship of mankind as a justification for writing universal histories" (1972:36).

Rawson addresses this lack of consistency when she writes that Diodorus "is not really the true, if imperfectly realized, Stoic historian that some have tried to make him" and notes that he "is also eclectic enough to quote Epicurus on the perturbed life of the unjust" (1985:223).[120] Rawson sees this eclectic viewpoint, like the complicated structure Diodorus uses to communicate it, as a shortcoming of the work.[121] Indeed, the term "eclectic" typically has carried a disparaging tone when applied to philosophical thought. John Dillon and A.A. Long, in the introduction to their collection of essays on Eclecticism, summarize this generally disdainful attitude toward the philosophy of the period in which Diodorus composed his work (i.e., between the end of the Hellenistic Period in the first century BCE and the introduction of Neoplatonism in the third century CE):

> [according to critics,] it was no longer possible to be a 'pure-blooded' follower of any of the traditional schools. This supposed merging of philosophical identities has been accounted for by another well-publicized opinion of this period: its decline of intellectual vigor and its loss of creativity (1988:1-2).

Just as Dillon and Long defend eclecticism generally from the charges of incompetence and dull thinking that scholars like Eduard Zeller have cast on it (1988:2), one should not be too harsh in comparing Diodorus to thinkers like Plato and Aristotle, nor to historians like Thucydides. Diodorus' aim was not to present a single consistent version of historical events or an argument for a particular philosophical school, but to show the diversity of mythological and historical accounts told by people around the world and to demonstrate the interconnectedness of peoples and events.

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[120] Rawson elaborates: "A vague reference to the Stoic Fate crops up once, but on the whole he is content with an imprecise notion of Tyche, Fortune, sometimes seen as just and sometimes as capricious, while it is clearly praise to say of Philip II of Macedon that he owed his success not to Fortune but his own qualities. Nor can he keep up the idea of the brotherhood of man; indeed he is fond of describing barbarians as beastlike" (1986:223).

[121] An example: "Though he was much concerned with the form of his work, it is notoriously unsatisfactory" (1985: 224).

Though Rawson finds fault with Diodorus' method of communication and organizational skills, she recognizes that Diodorus' choice in covering such a massive topic—Universal History—allows him to draw from the greatest possible body of moral *exempla*:

> Though Diodorus claims to provide vicarious experience for soldiers and statesmen, lawgivers and inventors, in fact his lessons, unlike those of the practical soldier and public man Polybius, are almost entirely moral. In particular he is penetrated with the idea of History's power to immortalize good and bad deeds as *exempla*, and repeatedly stops to moralize over distinguished men, attacking arrogance and praising pity and clemency. The real advantage of Universal History is that it involves the largest number of edifying situations (1985:224).

Indeed, Diodorus offers his reader much more in terms of moral lessons than practical advice. He shows how individuals like Heracles, Demeter, and Dionysus can have a great impact on the world by travelling far and wide and sharing their discoveries with others. The element of travel in these narratives allows Diodorus to revisit these figures in multiple books, connecting far-flung locales like India and Iberia through the wanderers who stopped there to plant some grain, bring down a notorious beast, or found a city.

Diodorus is aware of the challenges inherent in a work that covers such a broad geographic and temporal scope, and he anticipates the criticism that will follow. He says that is it difficult to compose narratives about ancient mythologies in particular because the events occurred so long ago, the reader wants proof that the historian cannot supply, and because of the volume and intricacy (ποικιλία) of the genealogies of the heroes, demi-gods, and men; the biggest challenge, however, is that the sources disagree with one another (4.1.1). Total consistency was certainly not one of his priorities, and he is upfront about the challenges inherent in organizing and relating events that occurred before the invention of writing, particularly those that traditionally involve details he considers to be fantastic (1.9.2). Noting the difficulty that

historians face when gathering dates and descriptions of events from such scattered sources as those that preceded him, he displays a reader-centered approach: a primary purpose of building a work of this magnitude is to help readers access and understand a great mass of information with minimal effort on their part (1.3.5). Piecing together information from multiple sources makes it "difficult to wrap one's mind around" (δυσπερίληπτος) dates and events and to remember them later; he offers the *Bibliotheca* as a tool to help his readers with this problem (1.3.4). For Diodorus, the benefits of such a work to its readers outweigh the hardships that its author must undergo (1.1.2).

Diodorus is concerned about how his reader will use the *Bibliotheca* and about what it can achieve for society or humanity as a whole. He laments that the writers with the best reputations for historical writing have backed away from the challenge of investigating prehistory and have focused instead on the relatively easy narratives of recent world events (4.1.2). Diodorus represents himself as a brave adventurer into the past, willing to shoulder the burden in order to provide the people with valuable lessons (4.1.4). In the introduction to Book 1, he claims to be the first to take on such a massive project, encompassing the narrative of human history from prehistoric times to his own day in a single narrative (1.3.3).

One should not be surprised or dismayed by the inconsistencies in these accounts of the past, since one of the central purposes of the work—particularly the first pentad—is to reveal the different versions of myth and history held by different peoples at different times. Diodorus notes, for example, that many different peoples, both Greek and barbarian, claim priority for themselves as autochthonous beings who were the first to make important discoveries and who

therefore deserve the earliest place in the historical record (1.9.3).[122] Diodorus declines to participate in this debate, choosing instead to record the events of early human history *as each group reports them*, thereby preemptively addressing concerns about the conflicting accounts in the books that will follow (1.9.4). He returns to the issue of conflicting narratives in Book 4 when he gives multiple versions of the outcome of the clash between Heracles and Phineus, ultimately declaring that ancient myths frequently do not offer a single, consistent story, and we should not be bothered when we find that details of stories related by poets and historians do not concur with one another (4.44.5-6). Diodorus recognizes that people who write about these historical events have their own motivations for telling one version or another or for creating their own version: in the case of Medea, Diodorus says, it is the tragic poets' desire for the marvelous that yields so many conflicting tales (4.56.1).

The challenges in relating fantastic information to a skeptical contemporary audience, Diodorus says, are especially acute when it comes to discussing a figure like Heracles and his seemingly impossible achievements: how can one convey the magnitude of these achievements and do justice to a figure so great that he attained immortality?

> οὐκ ἀγνοῶ δ' ὅτι πολλὰ δύσχρηστα συμβαίνει τοῖς ἱστοροῦσι τὰς παλαιὰς μυθολογίας, καὶ μάλιστα τὰς περὶ Ἡρακλέους. τῷ μὲν γὰρ μεγέθει τῶν κατεργασθέντων ὁμολογουμένως οὗτος παραδέδοται πάντας τοὺς ἐξ αἰῶνος ὑπερᾶραι τῇ μνήμῃ παραδοθέντας: δυσέφικτον οὖν ἐστι τὸ κατὰ τὴν ἀξίαν ἕκαστον τῶν πραχθέντων ἀπαγγεῖλαι καὶ τὸν λόγον ἐξισῶσαι τοῖς τηλικούτοις ἔργοις, οἷς διὰ τὸ μέγεθος ἔπαθλον ἦν ἡ ἀθανασία (4.8.1).
>
> I am not unaware of the fact that many difficulties await those who investigate ancient myths, and this is especially true when it comes to Heracles. For on the one hand there is general agreement that on account of the magnitude of his labors he has excelled beyond all

[122] Blundell explains that autochthony myths are typically considered "charter myths" because "such myths reflect an attempt to provide a pseudo-historical justification for an existing state of affairs" (1986:7-8).

> men known to memory from the beginning of time; but then it is a difficult task to relate the merit of each of his deeds and to make a record that is equal to such great labors, the magnitude of which granted him immortality as a prize.

The magnificence of Heracles' deeds, coupled with the fact that they supposedly occurred in the distant past, forces the author into a tight position of balancing adequate praise of a remarkable figure against the limits of the audience's willingness to accept fantastic details (4.8.2). The issue is complicated by the fact that, as Diodorus acknowledges, some readers will inevitably compare the ancient stories to their own lived experiences and consequently declare that such mythical deeds are outside of the realm of human possibility (4.8.3).

Diodorus expects his audience to approach his work with a critical eye and to evaluate whether the information he provides is realistic based on what they themselves have observed in the world. Writing on Pausanias, Paul Veyne refers to this way of evaluating apparently marvelous events of the past according to what one observes in one's own life as the "doctrine of present things" (1988:13-4). Rather than discourage this kind of skeptical stance, which Diodorus himself applies when analyzing mythological tales, he reminds his audience that they are accustomed to suspend their disbelief in certain circumstances, such as when observing a theater performance:

> καθόλου μὲν γὰρ ἐν ταῖς μυθολογουμέναις ἱστορίαις οὐκ ἐκ παντὸς τρόπου πικρῶς τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐξεταστέον. καὶ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς θεάτροις, πεπεισμένοι μήτε Κενταύρους διφυεῖς ἐξ ἑτερογενῶν σωμάτων ὑπάρξαι μήτε Γηρυόνην τρισώματον, ὅμως προσδεχόμεθα τὰς τοιαύτας μυθολογίας, καὶ ταῖς ἐπισημασίαις συναύξομεν τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ τιμήν (4.8.4).
>
> In general concerning the history of mythology, one certainly should not scrutinize the truth too minutely. For in the theaters, though we are persuaded that Centaurs composed of two different bodies do not exist, and nor do triple-bodied Geryones, all the

> same we receive mythological stories of this kind favorably, and with our acclaim we increase the honor of the god.

We all know that centaurs and other mythical creatures do not exist in the real world, Diodorus is saying, but that does not mean that we cannot enjoy and learn from representations of these creatures. In addition to honoring the gods through the public performance of these fantastic tales, people who retell these myths offer a valuable service to society, since the stories help craft good citizens.[123] In his programmatic introduction to the entire *Bibliotheca,* Diodorus uses the myths surrounding Hades as an example of the benefits to society that mythological tales, even if fictitious, can provide:

> ἡγητέον γὰρ εἶναι ταύτην φύλακα μὲν τῆς τῶν ἀξιολόγων ἀρετῆς, μάρτυρα δὲ τῆς τῶν φαύλων κακίας, εὐεργέτιν δὲ τοῦ κοινοῦ γένους τῶν ἀνθρώπων. εἰ γὰρ ἡ τῶν ἐν ᾅδου μυθολογία τὴν ὑπόθεσιν πεπλασμένην ἔχουσα πολλὰ συμβάλλεται τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πρὸς εὐσέβειαν καὶ δικαιοσύνην, πόσῳ μᾶλλον ὑποληπτέον τὴν προφῆτιν τῆς ἀληθείας ἱστορίαν, τῆς ὅλης φιλοσοφίας οἱονεὶ μητρόπολιν οὖσαν, ἐπισκευάσαι δύνασθαι τὰ ἤθη μᾶλλον πρὸς καλοκἀγαθίαν; (1.2.2).
>
> For one must consider this [i.e., history] to be the guardian of the remarkable deeds of the virtuous, a witness to the low matters of the wicked, and the benefactor of the common race of humankind. For if the myths about Hades, despite being based on fiction, foster piety and justice among humans, by how much more it must be assumed that history, that prophetess of truth, as if the mother-city of the whole of philosophy, is capable of preparing the characters of people for noble conduct!

In this passage Diodorus reiterates the value that history—and by extension, historical writers—offer to humanity: history is a 'guardian' (φύλακα) of virtuous deeds, a 'witness' (μάρτυρα) of wicked ones, and thus a 'benefactor of the common race of humankind' (εὐεργέτιν δὲ τοῦ κοινοῦ

[123] Burton explains that the view of history as guide for behavior was common from Thucydides on, but further adds that the idea of history as a means of edifying the reader "reaches its peak with Diodorus" (1972:35).

γένους τῶν ἀνθρώπων); this last phrase will become important later in this chapter. He compares history to a prophetess (προφῆτιν) and claims it oversees all philosophy as if a *metropolis*.

Elsewhere in the proem to Book 1, Diodorus justifies his undertaking by positioning himself as a member of the historical tradition, which offers an afterlife, of a sort, to those who have done remarkable things. The most important job of the historian in society, for Diodorus, is to inform readers of human capabilities and past achievements in order to inspire them to emulate great people who have gone before them (1.1.4-5; 1.2.1). The reader thus gains an education without having to endure hardships himself:

> τοῖς τὰς κοινὰς ἱστορίας πραγματευσαμένοις μεγάλας χάριτας ἀπονέμειν δίκαιον πάντας ἀνθρώπους, ὅτι τοῖς ἰδίοις πόνοις ὠφελῆσαι τὸν κοινὸν βίον ἐφιλοτιμήθησαν: ἀκίνδυνον γὰρ διδασκαλίαν τοῦ συμφέροντος εἰσηγησάμενοι καλλίστην ἐμπειρίαν διὰ τῆς πραγματείας ταύτης περιποιοῦσι τοῖς ἀναγινώσκουσιν (1.1.1).
>
> It is right that all people should have much gratitude for those who have composed universal histories, since by their own labors they have aspired to improve human social life: for by offering an education, free from danger, in what is useful, they provide a most excellent experience by means of a written treatise.

In this passage Diodorus identifies the central goal and the greatest benefit of historical writing: it improves human social life (ὠφελῆσαι τὸν κοινὸν βίον) by providing people with an education (διδασκαλίαν). By Diodorus' account, an individual human can achieve a certain kind of immortality by accomplishing great and memorable deeds, as long as history records these events and relates them to future audiences. The frame of time and nature is infinite, and those who do not leave a legacy worthy of being repeated by historians simply vanish after death:

> πάντες γὰρ ἄνθρωποι διὰ τὴν τῆς φύσεως ἀσθένειαν βιοῦσι μὲν ἀκαριαῖόν τι μέρος τοῦ παντὸς αἰῶνος, τετελευτήκασι δὲ πάντα τὸν ὕστερον χρόνον, καὶ τοῖς μὲν ἐν τῷ ζῆν μηδὲν ἀξιόλογον πράξασιν ἅμα ταῖς τῶν σωμάτων τελευταῖς συναποθνήσκει καὶ τὰ

> ἄλλα πάντα τὰ κατὰ τὸν βίον, τοῖς δὲ δι᾽ ἀρετὴν περιποιησαμένοις δόξαν αἱ πράξεις ἅπαντα τὸν αἰῶνα μνημονεύονται, διαβοώμεναι τῷ θειοτάτῳ τῆς ἱστορίας στόματι. (1.2.3)
>
> For all humans, because of the fragility of our nature, are alive for only a brief portion of the whole span of time, and are dead throughout all subsequent time. As for those who have accomplished nothing remarkable in life, everything having to do with them perishes along with their body, but for those who have achieved fame on account of their greatness, their deeds are remembered for all time, proclaimed by history's most divine mouth.

Although Diodorus of course recognizes the role of human recorders like himself, history almost takes on a life of its own in this passage: it is as if the "most divine mouth of history" (τῷ θειοτάτῳ τῆς ἱστορίας στόματι) grants a bit of its own divinity to humans who accomplish something worthy of being remembered. Diodorus positions himself as a writer of universal history in a similar light to these heroes in that he claims similar motivations for performing his task: he reports that he initially became interested in the pursuit of history because he saw the acclaim that previous historians had earned for their work, but he thought that he could improve on their methods by prioritizing general human welfare to a greater degree (1.3.1).

Diodorus hopes these tales will have practical application in the real world: not everyone can be as great a hero as Heracles was, but everyone can, presumably, emulate his positive traits and therefore contribute to the welfare of humanity. Theseus, admirable in his own right, followed just such a path when he emulated Heracles' achievements and undertook a mission to destroy wicked men disrupting travel along the coast of the Saronic Gulf (4.59.1). Diodorus sees his readers as potential future benefactors of humankind, able to learn about the great deeds of people in the past and emulate them, just as Theseus made himself imitable by imitating Heracles' feats. Historians like Diodorus play a crucial role in this cycle of inspiration when they

portray great figures of the past in a favorable, but accessible, way. One key tactic that Diodorus uses to make these figures and stories accessible and imitable is rationalization.

Rationalization of Myths

Diodorus frequently offers rationalizations of the more fantastic elements of myth, suggesting ways that one could interpret events that might otherwise seem implausible or impossible to a critical, rational mind.[124] He leaves the final evaluation of truth or likelihood to the individual reader, however, as when he reports multiple explanations for the so-called Golden Apples of the Hesperides and the 'dragon' who guarded them: perhaps the 'apples' were in fact beautiful sheep, with the adjective 'golden' applied in the same sense as when it is used in the phrase 'Golden Aphrodite' to indicate loveliness, not a certain hue (4.26.2). Then again, Diodorus reports, some say that the sheep *did* have a peculiar golden color and that the shepherd who watched over them was named Dracon (4.26.3). Having presented these possibilities, Diodorus closes the matter with the statement that "each man may interpret such matters in accordance with his own inclinations" (ἀλλὰ περὶ μὲν τούτων ἐξέσται διαλαμβάνειν ὡς ἂν ἕκαστος ἑαυτὸν πείθῃ, 4.26.3).[125] Among the myriad rationalizations Diodorus offers throughout the *Bibliotheca*, the most important for the purposes of this project will be the etiologies of the gods as mortal humans who gain immortality, of a sort, through their good deeds and the recognition they earn from the people they have served.

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[124] Broadie urges caution when labelling ancient philosophical thought regarding the gods as "theology"—philosophers exploring physical theories, for example, sometimes refer to abstract ideas or forces (like Anaximander's Infinite and Diogenes of Apollonia's Intelligent Air) as "divinities" because that is the terminology available to them as dictated by their culture (1999:205-6).

[125] Herodotus, too, gives alternative versions of myth and leaves the final interpretation up to the reader. See, e.g., 2.145-6, where, after offering conflicting accounts of Pan and Dionysus by the Egyptians and Greeks, he says that "one may stand by whichever of the two stories he finds to be the most credible" (τούτων ὦν ἀμφοτέρων πάρεστι χρᾶσθαι τοῖσί τις πείσεται λεγομένοισι μᾶλλον).

Within a few hundred years of the time when the Homeric epics were committed to their written form, Greek philosophers debated the accuracy and utility of the poems' anthropomorphic representations of the gods. Theagenes of Rhegium suggested that the names of Homeric gods represented elemental forces of nature (hot, cold, wet, dry) or human faculties (e.g. Athena as wisdom), while early Stoics further developed allegorical and etymological interpretations (Vernant 1981:212). Xenophanes denied that divinities would engage in adultery, theft, and other scandalous—and decidedly human—behavior (fr. B 11, B 12).[126] He had observed foreign peoples who depicted their gods in their own image, which led him to question the traditional (i.e., Homeric and Hesiodic) portrayal of the gods as not only human in appearance and behavior, but specifically Greek; he famously said that horses and other animals, had they the ability to do so, would depict gods that looked like them (fr. B 14).[127]

Subsequent generations of philosophers critiqued and built on these rationalistic theories in what Eliade would later describe as "the long process of erosion by which the Homeric myths and Gods were finally emptied of their original meaning" (1975:12). In *De Natura Deorum*, Cicero has Velleius, representing the Epicurean viewpoint, criticize the way that poets depict the gods—as if they are filled with anger and lust, interfere in wars and commit adultery with humans—as ridiculous and harmful (*De Natura Deorum* 1.42). Cotta, Cicero's representative of the Academic school, credits painters and sculptors with putting a particular image of the gods into people's minds—he says that Romans from childhood on think of the gods as having a particular appearance and carrying certain accoutrements because they have always seen them

[126] According to Aristotle, Xenophanes also criticized idea that the gods had births or deaths, labelling the belief 'impious' (*Rhetoric* 2.1399b). In another fragment Xenophanes draws a distinction between the knowledge that humans have gained through divine revelation versus human discovery (fr. 18 D.-K).

[127] Dodds cites Xenophanes' travel experiences as the source of his belief that religious beliefs are relative to the believer (1973:4-5).

depicted that way, but that Egyptians, Syrians, and other do not have the same mental images (1.81). He goes on to say that Juno looks different when she is depicted in Argos compared to Rome, and that Jupiter on the Capitol does not look the same as Jupiter Ammon in Africa (1.82).

The idea that the gods were pure fictions created by certain men who wanted to frighten others into submitting to law and order was also available to Diodorus and his Hellenistic predecessors, and not only from Plato's famous passage on the 'noble lie' (*Republic* 3.414b ff.).[128] A fragment from the fifth-century drama *Sisyphus* proposes that one especially clever man invented the gods as a sort of Santa Claus for adults—they watch over human events at all times and can spot wickedness even when it is hidden from other people—in order to encourage good thoughts and behavior among his fellow citizens (DK 88 B25). Cicero's Cotta, too, mentions that some claim that belief in the gods was completely invented by sages in order to compel those who lack reason to feel religious awe and a sense of duty; Cotta says people who assert such things undermine all religion (*De Natura Deorum* 1.118).

The fourth-century paradoxographer Palaephatos also claimed that the fantastic stories that people tell about gods and monsters can be explained by rational means. Most often, he claims that people in the past were mistakenly credited with supernatural powers or impossible forms when the truth is that they were simply the first to invent some particular bit of technology. Centaurs, for example, were fabricated by the collective imagination when people who had not yet learned to tame horses witnessed others riding around on horseback: poets then

[128] Plato also discussed the role that *mythologia* can—and should—play in swaying the masses through rhetoric (*Statesman* 304d).

took up these misconceptions from the public imagination and created fictitious stories around them, which others mistake for truth (*Peri Apiston* 1).[129]

Diodorus borrows rationalizing strategies from each of these lines of philosophical thought. Writing about five hundred years after Xenophanes, he shares the philosopher's concern that irrational conceptions of the gods could influence human aspirations and social behavior in harmful ways. Sarah Broadie explains that it was not Xenophanes' aim to present a unified theory of physics, "but, as a matter of moral and civic leadership, to wean his public from whatever was degrading and irrational in traditional notions of the gods" (1999:212). I argue that Diodorus' aim is very similar, though perhaps more optimistic. Whereas Xenophanes suggests a singular omnipresent divine force with no anthropomorphic form as the alternative to the shameful depictions of divinity he found in Homer and Hesiod, Diodorus moves in the opposite direction and claims that those beings we commonly refer to as "gods" were simply humans who achieved extraordinary things.[130]

This latter conception of the gods is most commonly known from the work of Euhemerus of Messene (most likely, like Diodorus, a Sicilian).[131] We have confirmation of Euhemerus' wide readership and lasting influence in the works of his critics.[132] In Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*, Cotta characterizes Euhemerus and those with similar beliefs—including Ennius, who translated Euhemerus—as "neglectful" or "devoid" (*expertes*) of all religious worship (1.119).[133] Plutarch

[129] For an excellent survey of heurematography in Greek literature and philosophy from the perspective of the history of science, see Zhmud 2006:23-54.
[130] An example of Xenophanes' quasi-monotheism can be found in fr. B 26.
[131] I am convinced by Winiarczyk's arguments in favor of the Messene of Sicily rather than the Peloponnese (2002:5-6).
[132] Festugière claims that "the work of Euhemerus was one of the most widely read books of the third and second centuries" (1956:11).
[133] See also *De Natura Deorum* 3.50, where Cotta acknowledges that those communities that raise their heroes to the status of gods through their worship do so in order to inspire others to be courageous on behalf of the state.

likewise encouraged his audience to cease from "giving a splendid license to the deceitful utterances of Euhemerus of Messene, who of himself drew up copies of an incredible and non-existent mythology, and spread atheism over the whole inhabited earth."[134] Vitruvius, for one, seems more amenable to Euhemerism: he expresses wonder at the fact that the great authors who have conferred wondrous benefits on humanity—he names Pythagoras, Democritus, Plato, and Aristotle—are not appreciated by the public the same way athletes are, and argues that they deserve not only palms and crowns, but also triumphs and even to be "consecrated among the abodes of the gods" (*inter deorum sedes eos dedicandos*) since they continue to make others better citizens through the work they left behind (*De Architectura* 9.1-3).

Euhemerus' work had a significant influence on the *Bibliotheca's* myth-history and on Diodorus' conception of the gods. Some scholars see Diodorus as little more than a vessel for Euhemerus' original thoughts and, accordingly, study the *Bibliotheca* only in an effort to salvage snippets of Euhemerus from the stain of Diodorus' alleged incompetence. Recent examples of this approach include Franco de Angelis' and Benjamin Garstad's 2006 article, "Euhemerus in Context," and the 2002 and 2013 monographs by Marek Winiarczyk. It is not until Book 6 of the *Bibliotheca*, however, in a fragment found in Eusebius, that Diodorus actually credits Euhemerus as a source for his rational theology.[135] Diodorus appears to have based at least some of the earlier 'Euhemeran' material not on Euhemerus' *Sacred History* itself, but on the same source

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Diodorus, on the other hand, is more concerned with figures who discover something useful for humankind generally, as I show in this chapter, rather than confronting danger on behalf of a state. Elsewhere in the *De Natura Deorum*, Cicero has Velleius, the representative of Epicureanism in the dialogue, credit Persaeus as the originator of the belief that those who are called gods were actually human beings who accomplished something useful for people and earned immortal honors as a result. Velleius concludes by asking what could be more stupid than worshiping individuals who were already dead, so that your praise consists of nothing but lamentation (1.38). Cicero made a similar point about the deification of Julius Caesar in his first *Philippic* (§13).

[134] *Isis and Osiris* 23.360a, translation by Babbitt 1936.

[135] Complicating matters further is the fact that the only bits we have of Euhemerus' work come to us summarized by Diodorus or from Lactantius through Ennius' Latin translation (see Winiarczyk 2013:13).

that Euhemerus used when composing his work (Cole 1967:154). Although *Quellenforschung* can be a fruitful line of inquiry, I am less concerned with where Diodorus found a particular piece of information than I am with the fact that he made a conscious choice to include some theories and exclude others.

Part 1: The Gods

Worshiping Humans as Gods

Diodorus attempts to relate myths as the various peoples of the Mediterranean tell them, not to present a unified theory of the gods and their essential nature. In the *Bibliotheca*, the worship of humans as gods occurs among many different peoples in far-flung regions of the world. Indians claim that they can point to the birthplace of Dionysus in their land and that it was there that he later received immortal honors (3.63.4-5; 4.1.7). Some Ethiopians worship mortals (including Isis, Pan, Heracles, and Zeus) whom they honor for the benefactions they have bestowed on mankind (3.9.1-2). The Egyptians gave Osiris the 'gift of immortality' (i.e., worship as a god) for similar reasons (1.20.5), and in other cases of course worship their 'kings' as gods (1.13.1). The Greeks, according to Diodorus, have granted divine honors to some people (and heroic sacrifices to others) on account of the good deeds they have performed (ὧν διὰ τὰς κοινὰς εὐεργεσίας οἱ μεταγενέστεροι τοὺς μὲν ἰσοθέοις, τοὺς δ' ἡρωικαῖς θυσίαις (4.1.4). Most recently, in Diodorus' time, the Romans had begun to worship Julius Caesar as a god (see e.g. 5.21 and 5.25).

By situating this belief in many different cultures at different geographical locations and points in history, Diodorus gives the impression that it is a natural outgrowth of the way that

humans interact with their natural environment and the way that individuals and communities interact with each other. It is not a religious or philosophical belief to be adopted or rejected so much as a fact of life: for as far back as human memory (i.e., history) can reach, there have been individuals who went above and beyond the normal demands of life and community, dedicating much of their energy to finding ways to make life better for others. Those who benefit from these gifts are naturally and rightfully grateful and consequently reward their benefactors with praise, reverence, and in some cases, worship as divinities. This is the conception of the gods that Diodorus offers most consistently in the *Bibliotheca*, but his presentation of this philosophy is necessarily complicated by the nature of the work, since a fundamental goal of the project as a universal history is to show the diversity of beliefs and opinions held by people around the world across a long span of history.

The fact that many of the people who were eventually worshipped as gods traveled far and wide at some point in their lives adds another complicating feature to the tales that proliferate among different peoples of the world. Diodorus says that we should not be surprised that various cities and regions claim a special relationship with Dionysus, for example, given that he traveled widely and left behind evidence of his benefactions in many different places (3.66.3). One outcome of travel is that some individuals are worshipped by different peoples under different names: the Egyptian Osiris, for example, is known by some Greek mythographers as Dionysus and by others as Sirius (1.11.3).

In other cases, multiple individuals with the same name have been conflated over time, with the result that they are mistakenly referred to as the same person. The figure of Dionysus described by the Greeks, for example, may be the conflation of as many as three individuals: one who taught humanity how to make wine, another who led an army throughout the world, and

another who introduced Bacchic revelries and other initiatory rites (3.63.2). Yet another version claims that Dionysus was not an actual person but an anthropomorphic representation of the vine and its fruits; in this conception, Dionysus' parents are Zeus (as rain) and Demeter (as earth) (3.62.2-7). Diodorus offers these variations as an explanation for the fact that Dionysus is depicted differently at different times by different people: he sometimes appears with a beard, for example, because the most ancient euergetist named Dionysus came from India, where men cultivate long beards (4.5.2; 3.63.3).

Diodorus offers several possibilities for Heracles' origins and parentage, too, including the theory that one man named Heracles, born from Zeus and an unnamed mother, received immortal honors for his impressive deeds, while another Heracles, born many years later by Alcmenê, emulated the life of this original Heracles and, as a result of confusion among later people, received credit for deeds he had not himself achieved (5.76.1-2). Diodorus concludes the matter by affirming the greater antiquity of the original Heracles and Egypt's claim to primacy in such matters, using as evidence the fact that the original Heracles carried a primitive weapon (a club) and dressed in animal skins (5.76.2). This re-separation of the conflated figure of Heracles into several individuals who lived at different points in human history helps Diodorus resolve inconsistencies in the record of history and prehistory: as Thomas Cole notes, a hero with such primitive weapons and garments whose primary occupation is slaying wild beasts would have been completely outdated in the era of urbanization and agriculture to which the son of Alcmenê belonged (1967:45). Whereas Diodorus views these conflicting versions of figures like Dionysus and Heracles as stories with essential truth that only need to be sorted out by a good historian, Cicero, on the other hand, disparages these multiplicities as holdovers from the long tradition of

Greek storytelling and worries that they will taint Roman ritual with disrepute if allowed to persist in their own tradition (*De Natura Deorum* 3.60).

Even for those ancient polytheists who believed that the gods were everlasting, immortal entities who had never lived as human beings, certain gods were thought to be closer to the mortal sphere and more immediately accessible to humans. Heracles, by all accounts, did begin life as a mortal and only ascended to Olympus as a result of his labors.[136] Eric Csapo recognizes this aspect of Heracles and emphasizes the hero's appeal to all social classes: the excellence he inherited from Zeus and his association with athletic competitions make him a paradigm of aristocratic ideals, but his special relationship to labor and the condition of servitude to which he must return after his missteps align him with members of the lower classes (2005:304-15). Heracles held a special double status in the ancient world as a result of his apotheosis: he was worshipped both as a mortal hero and as an immortal god. Pindar, for example, refers to Heracles as ἥρως θεὸς (*Nem.* 3.22), and Herodotus praises those who worshipped the hero both as a mortal man and as an immortal god (*Hist*. 2.44.5). Giulia Sissa and Marcel Detienne describe a ritual for Heracles at Sicyon—as recorded by Pausanias—that reflects this dual nature (2000:163-4). Worshippers at this festival combined elements of the rites they would perform for a god with those they would perform for a mortal hero: having burnt the thighs of the sacrificial victims for Heracles as they would for any Olympian, they would divide the remaining meat, consuming half (as they would during a ritual for a god) and destroying the other half (as they would during worship of a hero). A spatial division of worship for the two halves of Heracles'

[136] Heracles' apotheosis goes back to the *Odyssey* (11.601-604). Diodorus describes the event at 4.38.5 (see below, pages 156-7).

identity occurred at Thasos, where he was worshipped as a god on the agora and as a hero near the city's gates (2000:164).

Dionysus, on the other hand, seems in the popular imagination to have possessed an element of divinity as soon as he was born from Zeus' thigh, but to have spent the majority of his time not on Olympus with the other gods but on earth among mortals. Using the standard hierarchical framework most commonly applied to these ideas, Richard Seaford states that Dionysus is able to "bridge the gaps between the three spheres of the world—nature, humanity, and divinity" and notes that his power to inspire community and a sense of wholeness among human beings led them to imagine him as "more present" than other gods (2006:5). Seaford cites, for examples, Euripides' portrayal of Dionysus in the *Bacchae* (2006:44) and Ovid's application of the comparative adjective *praesentior* to the god at *Metamorphoses* 3.658 (2006:39). He also connects Dionysus' ability to appear directly to people with his tendency to travel: "The ease with which Dionysos makes epiphanies goes with his constant and ubiquitous mobility" (2006:43). Thus Heracles and Dionysus, even in their traditional, non-rationalized, conceptions, could act as a point of connection between mortal humans and the rest of the immortal gods.

Heracles and Dionysus capture Diodorus' special interest: he returns to them again and again in his myth-history, perhaps partly due to this general sense of accessibility but also because their wanderings implicate them in events and locales around the known world. Nevertheless, he also represents mythological figures who are typically less "present"—such as Demeter, Hephaestus, Prometheus, and even Zeus—as having equally human personal histories and recurring positive interactions with human communities that result in their being worshipped as gods. This will be a major theme in Part 2 of this chapter.

Diodorus found the practice of worshiping humans as gods to be widespread but, like Xenophanes, he recognized that different groups construct their own version of the universe and the gods based on their own cultural norms. It is no surprise that people as diverse as Egyptians and Gauls will differ in how they conceive of the universe and the gods; even neighboring groups of people, such as the Ethiopians whom Diodorus describes in Book 3, can disagree about the nature of the gods, with some worshiping celestial bodies and mortal euergetists as deities, and others having no belief in gods whatsoever:

> περὶ δὲ θεῶν οἱ μὲν ἀνώτερον Μερόης οἰκοῦντες ἐννοίας ἔχουσι διττάς. ὑπολαμβάνουσι γὰρ τοὺς μὲν αὐτῶν αἰώνιον ἔχειν καὶ ἄφθαρτον τὴν φύσιν, οἷον ἥλιον καὶ σελήνην καὶ τὸν σύμπαντα κόσμον, τοὺς δὲ νομίζουσι θνητῆς φύσεως κεκοινωνηκέναι καὶ δι᾽ ἀρετὴν καὶ κοινὴν εἰς ἀνθρώπους εὐεργεσίαν τετευχέναι τιμῶν ἀθανάτων: τήν τε γὰρ Ἶσιν καὶ τὸν Πᾶνα, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις Ἡρακλέα καὶ Δία σέβονται, μάλιστα νομίζοντες ὑπὸ τούτων εὐηργετῆσθαι τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος. ὀλίγοι δὲ τῶν Αἰθιόπων καθόλου θεοὺς οὐ νομίζουσιν εἶναι: διὸ καὶ τὸν ἥλιον ὡς πολεμιώτατον ὄντα κατὰ τὰς ἀνατολὰς βλασφημήσαντες φεύγουσι πρὸς τοὺς ἑλώδεις τῶν τόπων (3.9.1-2).
>
> The Ethiopians who dwell above Meroë are of two minds concerning the gods. Some of them, they believe, have an eternal and incorruptible nature—of this kind are the sun, the moon, and the universe as a whole—but they think that others, having a share in mortal nature, have obtained immortal honors because of their virtue and the common benefactions they have given humanity. They revere Isis and Pan, for instance, and also Heracles and Zeus, considering the human race to have benefited especially by their deeds. But a few of the Ethiopians do not believe that there are any gods at all; for this reason they consider the sun to be very hostile, and at its rising they curse it and flee towards the marshy parts of their land.

Thus religious belief is as variable as any other cultural practice: these same groups of Ethiopians perform very different burial rites, for example, with some disposing of the dead in a river, some in their homes, and some in clay coffins (3.9.3).

Euergetism on a Universal Scale

Diodorus frequently mentions how the people who benefit from the gifts and discoveries of these euergetists show their appreciation. He tells us that Egyptian priests claim that Hermes was the first to discover the branches of art and learning and that subsequent people who improved on these discoveries and provided their people with the greatest benefactions were rewarded with kingship (τοῖς πλεῖστα καὶ μέγιστα τὸ πλῆθος εὐεργετοῦσιν, 1.43.6).[137] In the next sentence, he leaves open two possibilities: either these priests report the truth about their reason for basing succession on euergetism rather than heredity, or Egyptians make this claim in order to encourage current rulers to continue to provide these benefactions (προκαλουμένων τῶν ἀνθρώπων τοὺς ἐφ' ἑαυτῶν βασιλεῖς ἐπὶ τὴν κοινὴν εὐεργεσίαν, 1.43.6).

As in this most recent quotation, Diodorus uses words with the *-koin-* stem (meaning "common, general, public, shared") to refer to collective concern, collective action, and collective outcome (i.e., harm or good) on different scales of human experience. While he applies these terms most frequently in situations involving a community on the scale of a tribe, a city, or a culturally-connected region, the term also appears with reference to a scale as small as two individuals and as large as the whole of humanity across the known world.[138] In the pages that follow I focus on instances of *-koin-* in the *Bibliotheca* that indicate beneficent gestures between an individual and a larger community, however that community may be construed. As is

[137] Hermes' own benefactions for the common good, specifically when aiding negotiations between warring parties, earn him the title 'Hermes Koinos': "he is called 'Hermes Koinos' because the benefit is common (koinê) to both the sides when they exchange peace for war" (ὅθεν δὴ καὶ κοινὸν Ἑρμῆν ὠνομάσθαι, διὰ τὸ τὴν ὠφέλειαν ἀμφοτέροις εἶναι κοινὴν τοῖς ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ τὴν εἰρήνην μεταλαμβάνουσι, 5.75.1).

[138] Diodorus applies the term to individuals acting in concert only rarely. Isis and Osiris, for example, as sun and moon each contribute certain physical elements of their own to the generation and nourishment of life on earth, but "both together" furnish the air (κοινῇ δ' ἀμφοτέρους ἀέρος, 1.11.5). In another example of individuals contributing to a common labor, Diodorus also describes Athena, Artemis, and Persephone as maidens on Sicily working together to weave a robe for their father, Zeus (κατασκευάζειν κοινῇ τῷ πατρὶ Διὶ τὸν πέπλον, 5.3.4).

the case for this chapter generally, I will focus on instances in the first pentad of the *Bibliotheca*, which Diodorus dedicates to the myth-history of various regions around the Mediterranean; the wide geographic and temporal lens of this pentad offers abundant opportunities for Diodorus to portray and reflect on how communities dealt with each other in the ages of colonization and migration that preceded the Trojan War.

Farmers in India, according to Diodorus' sources, are treated as inviolable euergetists because the food they produce benefits everyone:

> ἀμφότεροι γὰρ οἱ πολεμοῦντες ἀλλήλους μὲν ἀποκτείνουσιν ἐν ταῖς μάχαις, τοὺς δὲ περὶ τὴν γεωργίαν ὄντας ἐῶσιν ἀβλαβεῖς, ὡς κοινοὺς ὄντας ἁπάντων εὐεργέτας, τάς τε χώρας τῶν ἀντιπολεμούντων οὔτ᾽ ἐμπυρίζουσιν οὔτε δενδροτομοῦσιν (2.36.7).
>
> Warring parties on both sides kill one another in battle, but they leave unharmed those who are engaged in farming (since they are the common benefactors of all) and they do not burn the croplands of their opponents nor cut down their trees.

Intent on making this point clear, Diodorus reiterates his claim twice more in the passages that follow: farmers are a protected class because they "provide great services to the common good of the Indians" (τῷ δὲ κοινῷ τῶν Ἰνδῶν μεγάλας παρέχονται χρείας, 2.40.2). Further, the caste of farmers is exempt from military duty and other public services so that they are free to devote all their time to agricultural labor (οὗτοι δὲ πολέμων καὶ τῆς ἄλλης λειτουργίας ἀφειμένοι περὶ τὰς γεωργίας ἀσχολοῦνται), but their lack of preparedness for hostile situations poses no threat to them, since no enemy who came upon a farmer in a field would think of doing harm to these "public benefactors" (οὐδεὶς ἂν πολέμιος περιτυχὼν γεωργῷ κατὰ τὴν χώραν ἀδικήσειεν ἄν, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς κοινοὺς εὐεργέτας ἡγούμενοι πάσης ἀδικίας ἀπέχονται, 2.40.4). Thus, one need not be a king or a statesman of any kind to provide benefactions and earn the appreciation of the

community as a whole. Even non-human entities can make this kind of positive contribution to a community: Diodorus applies similar terms to a lake in Egypt that is praised by the local people for the benefactions it provides, though Moeris, the king who excavated it, also deserves credit (τὴν δὲ χρείαν τὴν ἐκ ταύτης καὶ κοινωφελίαν τοῖς τὴν Αἴγυπτον οἰκοῦσιν, ἔτι δὲ τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως ἐπίνοιαν, 1.51.7). Similar terms also appear in a passage in which Diodorus explains why Egyptians worship certain animals, "each of which provides assistance to the communal life of humankind" (ἣν ἕκαστον αὐτῶν προσφέρεται πρὸς τὴν ὠφέλειαν τοῦ κοινοῦ βίου καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, 1.87.2).

Diodorus uses the adjective *koinos* in some cases to designate a social or political institution shared by people across a region: Heracles establishes the Olympian games as a "common festival" (πανήγυριν κοινήν, 4.53.4) for all Greeks, and a line of rulers (culminating in Darius) greatly benefitted the people of Egypt by creating a "common legislation" (κοινὴν νομοθεσίαν) that endured until the Macedonian conquests (1.95.6). In addition to social and legal institutions, the adjective can apply to aspects of inner life experienced collectively: Diodorus tells us that all Egyptians experienced "collective sorrow" (κοινὸν πένθος, 1.72.2) whenever they lost a king;[139] he also refers to the Egyptians' "general fear" of the Romans (ὁ κοινὸς ἀπὸ τῆς Ῥώμης φόβος, 1.83.8) and a "common ignorance" (κοινῆς ἀγνοίας, 5.57.5) of writing that possessed the Greeks before the time of Cadmus.[140]

[139] Oldfather's translation of this passage captures the collectivity of this emotion nicely: "For when any king died all the inhabitants of Egypt united in mourning for him."

[140] Some other uses: "Prior to razing the city of Thebes in 335 BCE, Alexander invited the Thebans to 'join in the peace which was common to all the Greeks" (17.9.5, via Richter). *ton koinon* as "public" (as opposed to private): 16.89.1-3 "[Philip] showed a kindly face to all in private and in public, and he represented to the cities that he wished to discuss with them matters of common advantage" (φιλοφρονούμενος δὲ πρὸς ἅπαντας καὶ ἰδίᾳ καὶ κοινῇ ταῖς πόλεσιν ἀπεφαίνετο βούλεσθαι διαλεχθῆναι περὶ τῶν συμφερόντων).

Diodorus also uses words with the *-koin-* stem to denote the wellbeing of a community. In passages of this type, Diodorus frequently highlights individuals or social groups that provide a benefaction—through their labor, intellect, or courage—to a community, insuring the safety and success of the general population. Throughout Book 5, for example, Diodorus uses the adverbial form *koinē* to describe the activities of previously disparate peoples who had decided to work together for a common goal. This includes the waves of settlers and their notable communistic endeavors on the Liparian islands off the northern coast of Sicily at 5.7.6, 5.9.4, and 5.9.5, the Celtiberians (following the intermarriage of Celts and Iberians) at 5.33.1, various immigrants of Syme at 5.53.4, and the cohabitation of Carians and Cretans at 5.84.4.

Some of these examples concern statesmen who oversee public affairs, as when Diodorus explains that one of the castes in Indian society includes the chancellors who make decisions concerning the commonwealth (συνεδρεῦον τοῖς ὑπὲρ τῶν κοινῶν βουλευομένοις), and the other administrators of public business (οἳ διοικηταὶ τῶν κοινῶν, 2.41.4). Diodorus names individual statesmen who have been honored by their people for this type of work: the Pharoah Mneves (Menes) was considered the "most public-spirited"[141] (κοινότατον, 1.94.1) of lawgivers, and Macareus of Lesbos wrote a law that greatly contributed to the public good of his community (πολλὰ τῶν κοινῇ συμφερόντων, 5.82.4). Osiris, too, used his position as king to bestow many benefactions on his community (πολλὰ πρᾶξαι πρὸς εὐεργεσίαν τοῦ κοινοῦ βίου, 1.13.5). The close proximity of the terms *ton koinon bion* (literally, "the common life") and *euergesia* ("good deed") in this passage is a common feature of passages of this type.

Thus far, I have limited my examples of euergetism and contributions to the common good in Diodorus' *Bibliotheca* to communities of a relatively small scale. Diodorus, however,

[141] The translation is Oldfather's.

does apply much of the same terminology when discussing the whole of humanity and the potential for individuals and small groups to have a significant, lasting impact on a community of this grand scale. Several times he uses the terms of community cohesion, familiar from examples above, to describe knowledge and customs that are common to nearly all of humanity across the known world: he claims that historians as a class are a relatively recent addition to human society (τῷ κοινῷ βίῳ, 1.9.2) and that the British Isles and other far-flung regions of the world were only recently incorporated into "humanity's common knowledge" (τὴν κοινὴν ἀνθρώπων ἐπίγνωσιν, 3.38.2). Similarly, he characterizes the Egyptian practice of allowing marriage between brother and sister as "beyond the common custom of humankind" (παρὰ τὸ κοινὸν ἔθος τῶν ἀνθρώπων, 1.27.1).

Statesmen, farmers, and other euergetists in the examples above can provide a service for their community and thereby earn the appreciation of the people in their city or region, but individuals in the *Bibliotheca* can also strive to provide an even greater benefaction by improving life for humanity as a whole. Those who succeed in an endeavor of this kind earn reverence not only from local inhabitants who directly benefit from their euergetism, but from humans across the inhabited world.[142] In Diodorus' Euhemeran conception of humanity and divinity, these figures are not only revered by those who benefit from their discoveries and good deeds, but worshipped as gods.

[142] Bovine agricultural labor is also universally beneficial to humanity; for this reason cattle are worshipped as gods in at least one region of the world: "and worship of [the sacred bulls] as gods were introduced generally among all the Egyptians, since these animals had, more than any others, rendered aid to those who discovered the fruit of the grain, in connection with both the sowing of the seed and with every agricultural labour from which mankind profits" (transl. Oldfather) (καὶ τούτους σέβεσθαι καθάπερ θεοὺς κοινῇ καταδειχθῆναι πᾶσιν Αἰγυπτίοις: ταῦτα γὰρ τὰ ζῷα τοῖς εὑροῦσι τὸν τοῦ σίτου καρπὸν συνεργῆσαι μάλιστα πρός τε τὸν σπόρον καὶ τὰς κοινὰς ἁπάντων ἐκ τῆς γεωργίας ὠφελείας, 1.21.10-11).

Euergetists who have provided a benefaction to human social life (*ton koinon bion*) on this scale include Hephaestus, who harnessed fire and inspired worship by the world's craftsmen (5.74.3), Osiris, who visited the entire world to spread his gift of cultivated fruit (1.20.3), and Hermes, whose contribution of a common language (τήν κοινὴν διάλεκτον, 1.16.1) was just one accomplishment of a man with "remarkable genius for producing things capable of improving human social life" (ρηγημένον πρὸς ἐπίνοιαν τῶν δυναμένων ὠφελῆσαιτὸν κοινὸν βίον, 1.15.9). There are many more examples of benevolent acts like these throughout the first pentad of the *Bibliotheca*, with Diodorus characterizing Heracles, Prometheus, Dionysus, Demeter, and many others as human mortals who choose to share their knowledge and power with people across the known world and who gain immortal honors as a result.[143]

Diodorus admires the ability to look outside of oneself and act in someone else's best interest, even if it conflicts with one's own desires. It is worthy of admiration, Diodorus tells us, that Heracles killed the centaur who was attempting to rape Alcyone, the sister of his tormentor, Eurystheus: instead of letting his personal hatred for the king determine his actions, he "feels pity for the one suffering violence and resolves to uphold reasonableness" (ἐφ᾽ ᾧ συνέβη θαυμασθῆναι τὸν Ἡρακλέα διαφερόντως: τὸν μὲν γὰρ ἐχθρὸν κατ᾽ ἰδίαν ἐμίσησε, τὴν δ᾽ ὑβριζομένην ἐλεῶν ἐπιεικείᾳ διαφέρειν ὑπελάμβανεν, 4.12.7). Heracles again acts with clemency and moderation when he convinces the sons of Phineus not to torture their treacherous stepmother to death; as a result of following Heracles' advice, these men gain a good reputation

[143] In the introduction to Book 4 of the *Bibliotheca*, Diodorus offers three reasons that a hero or a demi-god might be revered by the Greeks: (1) achieving something noteworthy in a time of war; (2) in peacetime, discovering something useful for the social life of man; and (3) establishing laws (καὶ καθόλου τῶν κατὰ πόλεμον ἀξιόλογόν τι κατειργασμένων, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τῶν ἐν εἰρήνῃ τι χρήσιμον πρὸς τὸν κοινὸν βίον εὑρόντων ἢ νομοθετησάντων, 4.1.5). His first example of such a figure is Dionysus, whose great benefactions, Diodorus says, have helped humankind since ancient times (ποιησόμεθα δὲ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀπὸ Διονύσου διὰ τὸ καὶ παλαιὸν εἶναι σφόδρα τοῦτον καὶ μεγίστας εὐεργεσίας κατατεθεῖσθαι τῷ γένει τῶν ἀνθρώπων, 4.1.6). I will return to Diodorus' treatment of Dionysus throughout this chapter.

among their own people (4.44.3-4). Heracles performs the labors put before him by Eurystheus, but his greater mission in life seems to be punishing the wicked and protecting the weak. He helps Zeus defeat the oppressive Giants (4.15.1) and his primary task as a slave of Omphale, in Diodorus' version, is to rid her land of the robbers and murderers who had been terrorizing her people (4.31.6-8). This includes a man named Syleus who captured passersby and forced them to work in his vineyards: Heracles beat him to death with his own hoe (5.31.7). The way that Heracles makes this villain's punishment fit his crime recalls his eighth labor, during the course of which he feeds the wicked Diomedes to his own mares (4.15.3).

As a euergetist, Heracles is necessarily generous. He reminds the people of his generosity of spirit and upholds it as a virtue for all to emulate when, upon founding the Olympic Games, he announces that winners will receive a crown in lieu of any monetary reward, since he himself did not expect any financial compensation for the benefactions he provided to humankind (4.14.1-2). Generosity of spirit is not necessarily the same as altruism, however: Heracles and other euergetists in the *Bibliotheca* do foresee the immortal glory they will receive as a result of their good deeds, and this knowledge can factor into their decision to perform certain feats. There is a quasi-economic arrangement by which individuals offer great benefactions and the people return the favor by conferring immortal honors:

> καλὸν δ᾽, οἶμαι, τοῖς εὖ φρονοῦσι θνητῶν πόνων
> ἀντικαταλλάξασθαι τὴν ἀθάνατον εὐφημίαν. Ἡρακλῆς μὲν γὰρ
> ὁμολογεῖται πάντα τὸν γενόμενον αὐτῷ κατ᾽ ἀνθρώπους χρόνον
> ὑπομεῖναι μεγάλους καὶ συνεχεῖς πόνους καὶ κινδύνους ἑκουσίως,
> ἵνα τὸ γένος τῶν ἀνθρώπων εὐεργετήσας τύχῃ τῆς ἀθανασίας: τῶν
> δὲ ἄλλων ἀγαθῶν ἀνδρῶν οἱ μὲν ἡρωικῶν, οἱ δὲ ἰσοθέων τιμῶν
> ἔτυχον, πάντες δὲ μεγάλων ἐπαίνων ἠξιώθησαν, τὰς ἀρετὰς αὐτῶν
> τῆς ἱστορίας ἀπαθανατιζούσης (1.2.4).
>
> It is good, in my opinion, for those thinking prudently to exchange
> mortal labors for immortal fame. For Heracles, it is agreed, during

> the entire time he spent among mortals, voluntarily undertook labors and dangers that were great and unremitting, in order that, having conferred benefactions upon the human race, he would gain immortality. This is the case also for other good men—some of whom have gained heroic honors, and others honors like those of the gods—but all have been deemed worthy of great commendations, since history immortalizes their good deeds.

Diodorus explicitly endorses this arrangement and those who seek to enter into it (καλὸν δ', οἶμαι). He also highlights the fact that Heracles voluntarily (ἑκουσίως) took on labors that he knew would help others; there is no mention in this passage of the Labors that he was compelled to complete by Hera and Eurystheus. Diodorus concludes this passage by broadening the scope of the conversation to include many anonymous people who have performed similar benefactions and have earned heroic or divine honors as a result.

One can see this kind of reciprocal exchange in the *Bibliotheca* not only between a euergetist and the common people who benefit from his or her good deeds, but between one euergetist and another. Atlas, for example, grateful to Heracles for rescuing his daughters from pirates, not only helped the hero with his Labor, but also shared his own knowledge of astrology:

> περιττότερον γὰρ αὐτὸν τὰ κατὰ τὴν ἀστρολογίαν ἐκπεπονηκότα καὶ τὴν τῶν ἄστρων σφαῖραν φιλοτέχνως εὑρόντα ἔχειν ὑπόληψιν ὡς τὸν κόσμον ὅλον ἐπὶ τῶν ὤμων φοροῦντα. παραπλησίως δὲ καὶ τοῦ Ἡρακλέους ἐξενέγκαντος εἰς τοὺς Ἕλληνας τὸν σφαιρικὸν λόγον, δόξης μεγάλης τυχεῖν, ὡς διαδεδεγμένον τὸν Ἀτλαντικὸν κόσμον, αἰνιττομένων τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὸ γεγονός (4.27.4-5).
>
> For [Atlas] had worked out the science of astrology to an extraordinary degree and had ingeniously discovered the spherical nature of the stars, with the result that he is said to bear the entire cosmos on his shoulders. Accordingly, once Heracles had brought the doctrine of the sphere to the Greeks, he gained a great reputation: in the riddling speech that people use for this matter, 'the cosmos of Atlas' were 'handed over' to him.

This Euhemeran explanation for the story of Atlas holding up the firmament, and how Heracles temporarily alleviated his burden, has the added benefit of allowing Diodorus to explore reciprocal euergetism among those worshipped as gods, and to show how the beneficial discoveries and knowledge of one person who is fixed in one place (Atlas and his understanding of astrology), transferred to another who tends to travel (Heracles), can thereby spread among people generally.

Thus one euergetist can multiply his accomplishments (and the fame that attends them) by supporting another euergetist, who also benefits from this process by gaining wide recognition among the people. The performance of good deeds (particularly helping other euergetists) is not just a matter of *quid pro quo*, however: Diodorus claims that Heracles rescued Prometheus from his mountaintop torture because he had been such a great benefactor for mankind:[144]

> Ζεὺς δέ, Προμηθέως παραδόντος τὸ πῦρ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, δεσμοῖς κατελάβετο καὶ παρέστησεν ἀετὸν τὸν ἐσθίοντα τὸ ἧπαρ αὐτοῦ. Ἡρακλῆς δ᾽ ὁρῶν τῆς τιμωρίας αὐτὸν τυγχάνοντα διὰ τὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων εὐεργεσίαν, τὸν μὲν ἀετὸν κατετόξευσε, τὸν δὲ Δία πείσας λῆξαι τῆς ὀργῆς ἔσωσε τὸν κοινὸν εὐεργέτην (4.15.2).
>
> Zeus, after Prometheus had given fire to humankind, put him in chains and set an eagle at his side to eat his liver. But Heracles, seeing him receiving this punishment on account of his benefaction for humanity, killed the eagle and, having persuaded Zeus to abate his anger, rescued the one who had been a benefactor of all.

There is no apparent personal benefit that Heracles receives in return for setting Prometheus free; the only reason that Diodorus gives is that Prometheus had done something good for all of humanity. Just as Heracles saved Prometheus out of appreciation for the benefactions he had

[144] Diodorus only mentions the gift of fire in this passage as Prometheus' benefaction for mankind; in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, the titan also lists writing, medicine, astronomy, and agriculture, among others (447-506). Pausanias (5.11.6) and Ps.-Apollodorus (2.5.11) mention that Heracles killed Zeus' eagle, but they do not give a reason why.

provided to humanity, Diodorus tells us in another passage that Zeus honored Dionysus and Heracles with the title 'Olympian' not only because he was their father, "but also because they had the same purpose in life: providing great benefactions to the life of human beings" (οὐ μόνον ὅτι πατρὸς ἦσαν Διός, ἀλλὰ διότι καὶ τὴν προαίρεσιν ὁμοίαν ἔσχον, εὐεργετήσαντες μεγάλα τὸν βίον τῶν ἀνθρώπων, 4.15.1).[145]

By participating in the tradition of rationalizing myths and, specifically, by adopting a Euhemerist viewpoint wherein the gods are actually human beings who accomplished impressive feats and made generous benefactions for humankind generally, Diodorus makes these figures more easily accessible to his audience as aspirational role models. It is impossible to imitate Zeus in his role as Bringer of Thunder, but one could hope to imitate the contributions he made to human social life as a mortal man. Diodorus universalizes—and thereby normalizes—the practice of worshiping particularly impressive and helpful people as gods.

The Euergetists of Crete

In Book 5, where the geographical focus of myth-history turns to the islands of the Mediterranean, Diodorus gives an extended account of Crete's history of euergetist activity.[146] As is often the case throughout the first pentad of the *Bibliotheca* when Diodorus shifts to a new

[145] Like Heracles, Dionysus/Osiris and Demeter/Isis extended their positive influence by assisting other euergetists in their efforts to improve human social life. They rule together in Egypt as husband and wife, giving special honor in their court to those who discover useful arts or processes (προτιμᾶσθαι δὲ παρὰ τῷ Ὀσίριδι καὶ τῇ Ἴσιδι τοὺς τὰς τέχνας ἀνευρίσκοντας ἢ μεθοδεύοντάς τι τῶν χρησίμων, 1.15.4). Just as Heracles rescued Prometheus from torture because of his benefactions for humankind, Dionysus/Osiris gave a prominent position in his administration to Hermes, making him a trusted counsellor and priestly scribe on account of his remarkable ingenuity for discovering or inventing things that improved life for humankind (ὠφελῆσαι τὸν κοινὸν βίον), including a common language, the alphabet, how to honor the gods with offerings, and musical harmony (1.15.9-1.16.2). Leaving the city to go on campaign, Osiris puts his wife, Isis, in charge of the kingdom and places Hermes at her side (1.17.3).

[146] Crete receives occasional mention throughout the early books of the *Bibliotheca*. At 3.71.2 Ammon flees to the island after losing a battle against Cronus and the other Titans, and at 3.73.7 Dionysus, Athena, and others now considered to be gods come to his aid. In the course of travelling around to perform his labors, Heracles supposedly rid Crete of all its bears, wolves, serpents, and similar threatening beasts as a display of gratitude for the honors its inhabitants had given him (4.17.3). Rhadamanthos and Minos are mentioned as law-givers on Crete at 4.60.3.

geographical location, he presents the myth-history of Crete as if he is simply reporting their version of events:

> τῶν γὰρ θεῶν φασι τοὺς πλείστους ἐκ τῆς Κρήτης ὁρμηθέντας ἐπιέναι πολλὰ μέρη τῆς οἰκουμένης, εὐεργετοῦντας τὰ γένη τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ μεταδιδόντας ἑκάστοις τῆς ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων εὑρημάτων ὠφελείας (5.77.4).
>
> For they say that the majority of the gods, having originated on Crete, went off to many other regions of the inhabited world, conferring benefactions to the races of people and distributing among them the advantages of their own discoveries.

In the version of events that the inhabitants of Crete report, the pantheon of gods familiar to Greeks and others across the Mediterranean came from Crete, where they had developed all of the major human achievements in science, technology, and civilization over the course of successive generations. From Crete they traveled around the known world, sharing these inventions with others. Diodorus traces these developments from the Idaean Dactyli (who discovered the uses of fire and metallic ores, 5.64.5-6) through the Curetes (the first to domesticate sheep and other herd animals) and the Titans (e.g. Hyperion, who observed the movements of the celestial bodies), to the siblings and children of Zeus (5.64-73). In this extended exploration of rational theology, Diodorus conceives of these figures as humans, not divinities, who earn veneration from their contemporaries and from later generations through their benevolent works, rather than by any inherent status as superior life-forms. Not all of these figures appear in the pantheon familiar from Greek and Roman stories: local figures like Cres, the island's first king, are also credited with making great discoveries that contributed to the improvement of the social life of humans (5.64.1).

Early in the island's history, the Curetes made some of the biggest strides towards creating human society. Since no one had yet discovered how to build houses, these people lived

in mountainous regions of the island, where they found shelter in thick woods and caves (5.65.1). They were the first to gather sheep into flocks and to domesticate other types of animals that people fatten for food, they produced honey, and they introduced the art of hunting with a bow and with dogs (5.65.2-3). Like many others in the generations of inhabitants of Crete that would follow them, the Curetes also receive credit for improving social relations between people: Diodorus relates that they taught people to live harmoniously with one another and that they were the founders of concord and disciplined behavior (καὶ τῆς πρὸς ἀλλήλους κοινῆς ὁμιλίας καὶ συμβιώσεως, ἔτι δ᾽ ὁμονοίας καί τινος εὐταξίας ἀρχηγοὺς γενέσθαι, 5.65.3). This last sentiment is not explained in any greater detail, but follows seamlessly as another item on their list of accomplishments. There is an implicit connection to their other achievements, however, that Diodorus apparently did not feel the need to elaborate: the domestication of animals like sheep and bees provides a more consistent food source than can be attained by simple hunting and gathering, but it requires the collaboration of multiple people. Both hunting with a bow and using dogs to chase down animals allow hunters to take down more and larger game than would have been possible without these tools, but more people are required for transporting and processing the meat after a successful hunt of this kind. Thus, by inventing these superior methods of food production, the Curetes automatically promoted social cooperation among the people who made use of their discoveries.

Living contemporaneously with the Curetes, each of the Titans received honors and everlasting fame as a result of the benefactions they provided to humanity by discovering useful things (ὧν ἕκαστόν τινων εὑρετὴν γενέσθαι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, καὶ διὰ τὴν εἰς ἅπαντας εὐεργεσίαν τυχεῖν τιμῶν καὶ μνήμης ἀενάου, 5.66.3). Some even believe, Diodorus goes on to say, that these figures were the first to take up residence on Mt. Olympus after their deaths (5.67.5). In this

version of events, the generation of Titans consisted of six brothers and five sisters, born either from Uranus and Ge or from the Curetes and a certain Titaea (5.66.2). Their contributions while living as human residents of Crete mirror their domains in popular mythology, with Hyperion, for example, being credited as being the first understand the movement of the sun, the moon, and the stars as the result of his careful observations (5.67.1). Diodorus also highlights the deeds of two Titanesses, Mnemosyne and Themis. According to the Cretans, it was Mnemosyne who discovered the power of reason and assigned names to all the objects in normal daily life so that humans could express themselves and converse with one another; for this reason she is associated with the power of memory (5.67.3). Themis, on the other hand, was the first to introduce practices such as divination and sacrifice by which people could relate to the gods, and to teach people how to obey laws and live peacefully (5.67.4). The Cretan version of Cronus, far from the bloodthirsty and power-hungry oaf who, in other versions, castrated his own father in order to gain power and swallowed his own children in order to keep it, acquires kingship not by violence but by ordinary rules of succession: he is the eldest of the Titans (5.66.4).[147] Diodorus relates that Cronus encouraged all of his subjects to exchange their harsh daily lives for a gentle way of living, and that he subsequently travelled in many regions of the inhabited world to spread his message of justice and simplicity of soul (5.66.4).[148] In the next generation comes Prometheus, and a correction of popular mythology's claim that he stole fire from the gods in order to give it to humans. The truth, Diodorus says, is that he discovered the materials that can produce fire, and how to kindle it (5.67.2).

[147] For different versions of the the Cronus myth in Hesiod, Apollodorus, Plato, and others, see Versnel 1993.
[148] The "simplicity of soul" has an Epicurean ring to it; see, e.g., Festugière, who explains that Epicureans "ascertain that the desires which are natural and necessary are very few and need only the simplest things to satisfy them" (1956:x).

Of those born to Cronus and Rhea, Hestia discovered how to build houses, Poseidon was the first to tame horses and to build ships, and Hades established funerary customs and taught people how to honor the dead (5.69.1-5). The Olympians all retain some version of their traditional roles as seen in Homer and Hesiod, but the particulars have been adjusted to emphasize the benevolence of the inventors, their willingness to share their discoveries with outside communities, and the ways in which their inventions contributed to a more just way of life for humans across the inhabited world. Demeter discovers how to grow, harvest, and cook grains; according to Diodorus' sources on Crete as elsewhere, she also introduced the laws that enable men to treat one another justly (5.68.3).[149]

As one would expect, Zeus receives a more richly elaborated story than those of his siblings. Just as, in this Cretan version of events, Cronus had risen to power not through violence but by virtue of being the eldest child, Diodorus offers a friendlier version for the succession of Zeus: after acknowledging that there is no agreement on the topic, Diodorus relates that some say that Zeus took over for his father after the latter had died. In this version, "he did not overcome his father by violent means, but in the customary and lawful manner, since he was judged to be worthy of the honor" (καί τινες μέν φασιν αὐτὸν μετὰ τὴν ἐξ ἀνθρώπων τοῦ Κρόνου μετάστασιν εἰς θεοὺς διαδέξασθαι τὴν βασιλείαν, οὐ βίᾳ κατισχύσαντα τὸν πατέρα, νομίμως δὲ καὶ δικαίως ἀξιωθέντα ταύτης τῆς τιμῆς, 5.70.1). Diodorus goes on to offer a more familiar version of events, with Rhea putting Zeus under the protection of the Curetes in order to protect him from Cronus. There is no mention of cannibalism on the part of Cronus, however; Diodorus' interest in this section has more to do with the geographical features of the island that relate to different aspects of Zeus' time with the Curetes than with a struggle for power between father and son. In Book 3

[149] For more on Demeter and justice see below, page 167ff.

Diodorus had given a slightly different set of options for how Zeus rose to power: some say that Cronus willingly handed power to his son, while others state that the people hated Cronus' rule and chose Zeus to supplant him as king (3.61.4).

Once in power on Crete, Zeus displays every virtue in a high degree, and, among his many contributions to humanity, he is the first to teach people to refrain from violence against one another, to establish rules governing unjust behavior, and to encourage people to settle their problem by appealing to their peers in court (5.71.1). He then travelled around almost the entire world promoting equality and democracy (5.71.2). On this journey he punished the Giants and others who used the force of their bodies to enslave their neighbors and oppose the people whose great benefactions had led others to consider them gods (5.71.5). In gratitude for these deeds, Diodorus relates, all people declared that Zeus should have everlasting kingship, and assigned him a home on Mt. Olympus (5.71.6). Thus even in the case of Zeus, power and longevity are not inborn qualities of an inherently superior being, but honors bestowed by the people.[150]

To continue the genealogy of the euergetists on Crete: Zeus' children took on their own spheres of influence in human activities, with Artemis, for example, discovering how to heal young children and identifying which foods are suitable for babies (5.73.5). Athena was responsible for domesticating the olive from its wild form, for teaching people how to weave clothes, for developing carpentry, and for inventing pipes for playing music (5.73.7-8). Hephaestus, as one would expect, was the first to figure out how to work metals, a discovery that continued to earn him the reverence of later smiths who preserved his memory and granted him immortal honors in return for the benefaction he bestowed on human social life (εἰς μνήμην καὶ

[150] See also 3.61.5, where Diodorus says that Zeus was declared a god and "enthroned in heaven" because of the good deeds he bestowed on other humans.

τιμὴν ἀθάνατον τιθέμενοι τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς τῷ κοινῷ βίῳ δεδομένην εὐεργεσίαν, 5.74.3). Hermes introduced the practice of sending embassies to negotiate peace; for this reason he was given the name Hermes Koinos, because his benefaction is common to both sides when people try to find a peaceful solution in wartime (5.75.1). Diodorus gives hints of the benefactions continuing past this generation when, for example, he describes the contributions of Asclepius, the son of Apollo and Coronis who learned healing practices from his father but went on to develop them further into the art of surgery and the preparation of medicine from roots (5.74.6).

Crete is not the only island that claimed to have hosted successive generations of human beings who each improved on the discoveries of the last generation and as a result gained immortal worship as gods. Diodorus offers an alternative version which he claims comes from the Atlantians but does not differ greatly from that of the Greeks (3.56.1). Like the inhabitants of Crete, the Atlantians claim that the gods were born on their island (3.56.2). Uranus, as their first king, was credited with gathering people from their scattered dwellings into a walled city, where he taught people to refrain from their previous bestial way of life in part by turning to the cultivation and storage of crops (3.56.3). Uranus was also the first to observe and record the movements of the celestial bodies and to introduce a yearly calendar based on the patterns he saw (3.56.4). The people, being unable to track the moon, sun, and stars as Uranus had and thereby unable to predict their movements, and thinking that someone who was capable of such a feat must be a god, rewarded the man with immortal honors, transferred his name to the heavens, and declared him king of the universe (3.56.5). One of Uranus' wives, a woman by the name of Titaea, provided abundant benefactions to the people and was subsequently deified upon her death and given the new name Ge (3.57.2). Several of their children and grandchildren were also deified, including Helius and Selene (3.57.8).

The stories Diodorus relates from Crete and the Atlantians show a multitude of examples of human beings who, according to these people and to Diodorus, are worthy of being worshiped as gods because they performed benefactions for humankind. The majority of these praiseworthy deeds have to do with making life in nature safer and more productive for people, as well as improving social life. As is apparent in the generations of god-like humans living on Crete, there are many kinds of deeds in the *Bibliotheca* for which a person could be rewarded with immortal honors.

Part 2: Human Interactions with Nature

Euergetists and the Natural World

Many euergetists in the *Bibliotheca* are renowned because they were the first to systematically study a feature of nature and figure out how humans can make better use of it. King Aeolus is known as the 'Keeper of the Winds' because he learned, through careful observation, how to predict local weather patterns; by sharing this knowledge with sea-farers, he made sailing possible (5.7.7). Others gained their knowledge not by experimentation but through connection with the divine: Aristaeus was the first to teach people how to curdle milk, make bee hives, and domesticate the olive tree from its wild form, having learned these skills from the Nymphs; in gratitude for these gifts and the advantages they offer to human life, people give Aristaeus honors equal to those they give to gods (4.81.2-3).

According to Hesiod it was the Titan Prometheus who shared divine fire with humankind (*WD* 50-52). Diodorus offers an alternative account in which Hephaestus, a human king, earned

renown among his people for refusing to be afraid of a naturally-occurring forest fire and indeed for *stoking* the flames and demonstrating how people can make use of fire for their own benefit:

> ἔνιοι δὲ τῶν ἱερέων φασὶ πρῶτον Ἥφαιστον βασιλεῦσαι, πυρὸς εὑρετὴν γενόμενον καὶ διὰ τὴν εὐχρηστίαν ταύτην τυχόντα τῆς ἡγεμονίας: γενομένου γὰρ ἐν τοῖς ὄρεσι κεραυνοβόλου δένδρου καὶ τῆς πλησίον ὕλης καομένης προσελθόντα τὸν Ἥφαιστον κατὰ τὴν χειμέριον ὥραν ἡσθῆναι διαφερόντως ἐπὶ τῇ θερμασίᾳ, λήγοντος δὲ τοῦ πυρὸς ἀεὶ τῆς ὕλης ἐπιβάλλειν, καὶ τούτῳ τῷ τρόπῳ διατηροῦντα τὸ πῦρ προκαλεῖσθαι τοὺς ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους πρὸς τὴν ἐξ αὐτοῦ γινομένην εὐχρηστίαν (1.13.3).
>
> But some of the priests say that their first king was Hephaestus, who first discovered fire and became ruler because of this good service. For once, when a tree on the mountains was struck by lightning and the woods nearby caught fire, Hephaestus approached the blaze, since it was wintertime, and was glad for the heat. As the fire abated he tossed fuel into it and, maintaining it in this manner, he invited the other people to enjoy the good service arising from it.

In the previous chapter, I examined Lucretius' explanation for how humans first began to use fire: in his account, unspecified people early in human history observed fires that had begun naturally as the result of lightning or friction among tree branches, and from these observations learned to use fire for their own purposes (pages 75-6, above; *DRN* 5.925-87 and 1091-1101). Like Lucretius, Diodorus removes any notion of divine intervention from this important event and makes it an entirely human endeavor. Unlike Lucretius, however, Diodorus names a specific human, Hephaestus, whose bravery allowed others to overcome their fear of naturally-occurring forest fires and learn to make use of this important element. Both authors thus shift the credit for crucial developments in history from the intervention of a divine entity to a purely human achievement; while Lucretius diffuses this credit among people in the past generally, Diodorus keeps the focus on an individual human who, in his account, later earned worship as a divinity for his good deed.

In his comparison of passages from Diodorus, Lucretius, Vitruvius, and others who describe early stages of human society, Cole cites this passage from Diodorus as an example of the important *social* context that these authors assume is necessary for the growth of technology: Hephaestus, like the anonymous inventors in other authors' versions, gathers his fellow humans around him so they can witness his new discovery and learn to use it for themselves (1967:34-5). Cole draws an important contrast between accounts from Diodorus, Lucretius, and Vitruvius on one side with Posidonius on another: for Posidonius, "these first inventors appear as a special class of philosophers [*sapientes*] who guide mankind in its progress towards civilization," while individual inventors in accounts by Diodorus and others do not form a closed corporation or special class, since "the inventor of one day would be the passive observer of the next" (1967:35). As with Diodorus' general tendency to offer depictions of the gods as humans, this particular move makes it even easier for his audience to take these figures as paradigms for the everyman.

Case Study 1: Heracles

In Diodorus' version of events, Heracles was a mortal man (or several men who lived at different times; see pages 134-5, above) who earned immortal honors from many different peoples as a show of gratitude for the role he played in making the land inhabitable, through wildlife management and through public works projects involving the control of water. Diodorus credits the Athenians as being the first to grant Heracles the kind of sacrifices they typically offered to gods, thereby setting up their worship of the divinity as a model (παράδειγμα) to be followed not only by all Greeks, but by all people everywhere (4.39.1). Yet as remarkable as

Heracles' apotheosis was, his deeds as a living, mortal man were what captured the interest of mythographers like Diodorus and made him worthy of admiration by the people generally:

> καὶ γὰρ ἄτοπον Ἡρακλέα μὲν ἔτι κατ᾽ ἀνθρώπους ὄντα τοῖς ἰδίοις πόνοις ἐξημερῶσαι τὴν οἰκουμένην, τοὺς δ᾽ ἀνθρώπους ἐπιλαθομένους τῆς κοινῆς εὐεργεσίας συκοφαντεῖν τὸν ἐπὶ τοῖς καλλίστοις ἔργοις ἔπαινον, καὶ τοὺς μὲν προγόνους διὰ τὴν ὑπερβολὴν τῆς ἀρετῆς ὁμολογουμένην αὐτῷ συγχωρῆσαι τὴν ἀθανασίαν, ἡμᾶς δὲ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν μηδὲ τὴν πατροπαράδοτον εὐσέβειαν διαφυλάττειν (4.8.5).
>
> Given that Heracles (when he was still among mortals) civilized the known world with his own labors, it would be nonsensical for people to forget the common benefactions he bestowed on them and to criticize the praise he receives for these most glorious deeds. It would be strange, too, given that our ancestors unanimously agreed to grant him immortality on account of his high degree of excellence, for us not to maintain the reverence for the god that has been handed down to us.

Note that in this passage, as often in the *Bibliotheca*, Diodorus characterizes Heracles' ascension to divine status not as a literal apotheosis, but as the result of the people's decision to grant Heracles immortality (ἀθανασία) in gratitude for the benefactions he bestowed. Diodorus similarly credits humanity with giving Heracles his divine status at 5.76.1:

> αὐτὸ δὲ μόνον ὅτι ῥώμῃ σώματος πολὺ τῶν ἁπάντων διενεγκὼν ἐπῆλθε τὴν οἰκουμένην, κολάζων μὲν τοὺς ἀδίκους, ἀναιρῶν δὲ τὰ τὴν χώραν ἀοίκητον ποιοῦντα θηρία: πᾶσι δ᾽ ἀνθρώποις τὴν ἐλευθερίαν περιποιήσας ἀήττητος μὲν ἐγένετο καὶ ἄτρωτος, διὰ δὲ τὰς εὐεργεσίας ἀθανάτου τιμῆς ἔτυχε παρ᾽ ἀνθρώποις (5.76.1).
>
> [The tradition has not given us the name of his mother] but states only that, prevailing over all others in his bodily strength, he visited the inhabited earth, punishing the unjust and removing the wild beasts that were making the land uninhabitable. He won freedom for all people while remaining unbeaten and unwounded, and on account of his benefactions he received immortal honor at the hands of humankind.

Heracles' great achievements were acknowledged by his own father and by people far and wide, but Diodorus is careful to note that the hero could not have accomplished all that he did without the help of others, including unnamed hordes of ordinary human supporters. In Diodorus' rationalist version of events, Heracles' early deeds won him fame and attracted a crowd of followers who wanted to help with future endeavors, thereby allowing him to travel the world and accomplish greater and greater feats, on the basis of which he earned immortal glory (4.53.6-7). It would not be possible for a single individual to achieve these things on his own, Diodorus asserts, and the poets' desire to provide marvelous tales is the only reason that the traditional version gives all the credit to Heracles (4.53.7).

Diodorus also tends to emphasize qualities of the mind—not just muscle—that enabled Heracles to complete his labors. Having defeated the Nemean Lion by brute force (4.11.3-4), Heracles completes each subsequent labor through a combination of brains, brawn, and a little help from his friends. He defeats the Lernaean Hydra with cleverness and a helpful companion (4.11.5-6). Heracles has to time his attack on the Erymanthian Boar perfectly and keep his strength in check in order to bring it back to Eurystheus alive (4.12.1-2). Regarding Heracles' fourth labor, capturing the Ceryneian Hind, Diodorus notes that "he won his prize without force or danger, but through the sharpness of his mind" (πλὴν ἄνευ βίας καὶ κινδύνων διὰ τῆς κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν ἀγχινοίας τὸν ἆθλον τοῦτον κατειργάσατο, 4.13.1). Heracles defeats the Stymphalian Birds, similarly, "by art and ingenuity" (τέχνη καὶ ἐπινοίᾳ, 4.13.2), and Diodorus again admires the ingenuity (ἐπίνοια) Heracles must have possessed in order to clean out the Stables of Augeas without being tainted by the filth and without reducing himself to a position unworthy of his future immortal glory (4.13.3).

Using forms of the verb ἐξημεροῦν, Diodorus frequently credits Heracles with "civilizing" or "taming" a particular part of the world.[151] On his way to Iberia to complete his tenth Labor, Heracles clears Crete of wild beasts, partly in gratitude for honors paid to him by the island's inhabitants and partly because Zeus had been born and raised there (4.17.3). Next he reaches Libya, where he kills Antaeus (a man who murdered passersby after challenging them to a wrestling match), rids the land of the wild beasts that made life difficult for humans, and thus allows for cultivation to occur:

> ἀκολούθως δὲ τούτοις τὴν μὲν Λιβύην πλήθουσαν ἀγρίων ζῴων, πολλὰ τῶν κατὰ τὴν ἔρημον χώραν χειρωσάμενος, ἐξημέρωσεν, ὥστε καὶ γεωργίαις καὶ ταῖς ἄλλαις φυτείαις ταῖς τοὺς καρποὺς παρασκευαζούσαις πληρωθῆναι πολλὴν μὲν ἀμπελόφυτον χώραν, πολλὴν δ᾽ ἐλαιοφόρον: καθόλου δὲ τὴν Λιβύην διὰ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν κατὰ τὴν χώραν θηρίων ἀοίκητον πρότερον οὖσαν ἐξημερώσας ἐποίησε μηδεμιᾶς χώρας εὐδαιμονίᾳ λείπεσθαι (4.17.4).
>
> Following these deeds he pacified Libya, which was full of wild animals, many of which he conquered in the unclaimed lands, so that much land was filled with tillage and other plantings of the kind that bear crops, with much land for vineyards and much for olive groves. Having pacified Libya, which had, generally speaking, been previously uninhabitable on account of the abundance of wild beasts throughout the land, he made it inferior to no country in terms of its prosperity.

Heracles contributes to human life by making previously wild spaces safer and, by extension, more productive. He performs a similar task in India, where he clears both the land and the sea of dangerous creatures (2.39.2).

[151] We might find help in defining Diodorus' use of the term by comparing examples that do not involve divinities. In India, Diodorus says, herdsmen live in tents and spend some of their nomadic lives hunting birds and wild beasts; through this work and their passion for it, they help bring India under cultivation (ἐξημεροῦσι, 2.40.6). Despite this labor, there are still many different types of beasts and birds that consume the farmers' seed (2.40.6). The people on the southern tip of Britain (modern Cornwall) have become 'civilized' (ἐξημερωμένοι) and welcoming to strangers (φιλόξενοί) as a result of interacting with foreign merchants (5.22.1).

Heracles is selective in how he treats the 'barbarians' he meets in these locales: he puts criminals, murderers, and overbearing rulers in the same category as beasts: by disposing of them, he provides a benefaction for humankind. Not all foreign people are wicked and deserving of this treatment, however. By clearing the land of the dangerous, harmful elements, he makes the place safer for those who wish to live peaceful agricultural lives, producing their own goods instead of robbing from others.

> ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τοὺς παρανομοῦντας ἀνθρώπους ἢ δυνάστας ὑπερηφάνους ἀποκτείνας τὰς πόλεις ἐποίησεν εὐδαίμονας. μυθολογοῦσι δ᾽ αὐτὸν διὰ τοῦτο μισῆσαι καὶ πολεμῆσαι τὸ γένος τῶν ἀγρίων θηρίων καὶ παρανόμων ἀνδρῶν, ὅτι παιδὶ μὲν ὄντι νηπίῳ συνέβη τοὺς ὄφεις ἐπιβούλους αὐτῷ γενέσθαι, ἀνδρωθέντι δὲ πεσεῖν ὑπ᾽ ἐξουσίαν ὑπερηφάνου καὶ ἀδίκου μονάρχου τοῦ τοὺς ἄθλους προστάττοντος (4.17.5).
>
> And he likewise slayed people who violated the laws or ruled arrogantly and made the cities prosperous. According to the myths he hated the race of wild beasts and lawless men and fought against them because serpents had attacked him when he was still an infant, and when he grew to manhood he fell under the authority of an arrogant and unjust monarch who assigned him these labors.

He performs a similar deed in the Alps, ridding the mountain passes of the bandits who would attack passing travelers (4.19.4). These actions are not reserved for faraway peoples: Heracles' services are needed even on the Italian peninsula, where he slays Giants and makes the land near Vesuvius available for cultivation (τὴν χώραν ἐξημερῶσαι, 4.21.6). In the introduction to Book 4, Diodorus applies this term, ἐξημεροῦν, on a much broader scale, saying that it would be strange for people not to revere Heracles, since he "brought the whole inhabited world under cultivation by his own labors" (ἔτι κατ᾽ ἀνθρώπους ὄντα τοῖς ἰδίοις πόνοις ἐξημερῶσαι τὴν οἰκουμένην, 4.8.5).

Burkert's assessment of Heracles as a 'Master of Animals' (among many other figures in comparative mythology who receive this title) is just one way to understand why the hero is credited with 'civilizing' or 'taming' the world.[152] Burkert's assertion that Heracles "civilizes the earth by destruction" does not do justice to the full picture of the hero that Diodorus offers (1982:97). Diodorus' Heracles does destroy dangerous creatures and individual humans in order to facilitate human occupation and agricultural operations, but he also completes large 'public works' projects at a variety of locations around Greece and the Mediterranean, typically involving some kind of water management strategy.

Heracles' connection to water has long been recognized, with scholars such as Jan Schoo going so far as to find watery meanings behind nearly all of his Labors. The watery significance of the name of the Lernaian Hydra was acknowledged by the Greeks, but Schoo goes further in interpreting the story as being about "water that is reacting against man's actions, against his works": the 'heads' (or rivulets) of the Hydra become more dangerous when humans try to control them (1969:15). In this interpretation, Heracles' battle against the Hydra reflects early efforts to dam flowing streams, which, if not properly contained, will sprout multiple new waterways in other places. In Schoo's words, "What monster grows new heads, if the existing heads are cut off? On earth there is only one such being: flowing water!" (1969:15). Schoo interprets the detail about burying the head of the Hydra under a rock to mean "that some digging took place and that stones were used" and conjectures that the firebrand wielded by Iolaus might refer to fire-hardened wood: "such poles must have been driven in the ground at places where the water threatened to overflow its banks" (1969:15). Following Curtius, whose

[152] Note that this is the side of Heracles that Lucretius does not value: unlike Epicurus, who gave people the tools to banish fear from their minds, all Heracles did was slay some beasts (*DRN* 5.40ff).

dedication to proving that there is truth behind the myths surrounding Heracles led him to travel to several of the sites of his Labors in order to look for evidence of canals, dikes, and other water management structures, Schoo also concludes that, for example, the Erymanthian Boar and the Ceryneian Hind should be understood as rivers that Heracles redirected and made safe for the local people (1969:18-9). In Schoo's interpretation, Heracles eliminated the threat of malaria-carrying mosquitos (the "Stymphalian Birds") by draining the marsh and directing the water into a system of underground caves (1969:26).[153] Proponents of this line of interpretation could find support in a statement Diodorus makes about the myth of the Calydonian (or Cretan) Bull: he first states that Heracles helped the Calydonians by diverting a river and thereby recovering a large tract of fertile land which could be irrigated by the stream in its new course (4.35.3). He concludes by saying that certain poets have subsequently mythologized this deed (διὸ καὶ τῶν ποιητῶν τινας μυθοποιῆσαι τὸ πραχθέν) by changing the river into a bull (4.35.4).

Moving beyond the Labors—whether one wishes to classify them as beast combat or water management—it will be instructive to isolate some of the many examples in the *Bibliotheca* of Heracles altering the natural environment in major ways. In gratitude to the Thessalians, Heracles created the fertile plains of Thessaly by channeling water out of the marshes that had occupied the landscape (4.18.6). In Boeotia he dammed a stream, flooding the people out and ruining the whole region, because the Minyans who lived there had enslaved Heracles' beloved Thebans (4.18.7). Diodorus also credits Heracles with filling the outlet that had once connected Lake Avernus to the sea and constructing a road along it (4.22.2), and with

[153] Schoo ultimately concludes that "Heracles was not a single person. He must have represented a group of men, a community of men working at the same task, performing the same labors" (1969:34). Schoo is attracted to the idea that there were groups of skilled people (fighters, sailors, laborers like stonecutters, masons, and dam-builders) going around and performing this work, since "one of the most striking features [of the Heracles myths] is his constant roaming from one place to another and the often repeated claim that the hero did not receive his due reward and ran into trouble with the rulers" (1969:35).

building a large lake in gratitude to the Syracuseans (4.24.3).[154] As often in the *Bibliotheca*, Diodorus is ambivalent when it comes to the specifics of the Pillars of Heracles, which the hero set up to commemorate his own great feats (4.18.4). Either Heracles gained renown for this impressive structure when he narrowed the passage in order to prevent giant sea-monsters from entering the Mediterranean from the ocean, or he cut a pass through an isthmus that originally joined the two continents (4.18.5). In either case he provided a benefaction to the people while celebrating his own achievements.

Diodorus offers one version of events that places Heracles in Egypt at a time when Osiris was king and Prometheus was a local governor: the Nile had broken from its banks and had caused so much destruction in Prometheus' district that he was on the point of committing suicide (1.19.1). With Osiris away on military campaign, Heracles steps in to save the day, stopping the flood by turning the river back into its former course (1.19.2). The flooding river had earned the nickname 'Aëtus' on account of its celerity and violence; for this reason the story arose that Heracles had rescued Prometheus from 'an eagle' that was devouring his liver (i.e., vexing him to the point of causing him to contemplate suicide).[155]

In addition to Greece, Egypt, and the Straits of Gibraltar, Heracles also completed major public works projects involving water in India. For example, of the many impressive cities he founded there, he fortified Palibothra, the largest and most famous, with ditches that were filled with water from the river (2.39.3). Taken together, these many examples of water management projects that Heracles carried out in order to help local people offer a more well-rounded image

[154] Sulimani argues that Diodorus' description of Heracles' improvements in the area of Lake Avernus are modelled on Agrippa's recent endeavors in the same region (2011:178).
[155] Osiris has a water-management task of his own once he returns, building dikes to control the flood in future years (1.19.5).

of the hero as not merely a marauding goon with a club, but something like a public engineer. Whether damming a stream, diverting a river, or digging ditches, this Heracles performs these feats not because he has been ordered to, but because he wishes to help make life better for local people.[156] We may not automatically associate Heracles with agriculture, but both of the major kinds of benefactions that Diodorus represents him performing for people around the world—clearing lands of dangerous wild animals and managing the flow or retention of water—enable people to cultivate the soil and produce food. In the next case study I examine the two primary deities that we do associate with agricultural production: Demeter and Dionysus.

Case Study 2: Demeter, Dionysus, and the Dissemination of Justice

It was customary in antiquity to pair Demeter and Dionysus (or Liber and Ceres) as givers of grain and grapes (or bread and wine). I will treat them both together as one case study in the importance of agricultural innovation and distribution of agricultural knowledge in the first pentad of the *Bibliotheca*. The agricultural role of these two figures in the *Bibliotheca* goes beyond discovering these two crops as edible foodstuffs: they developed the entire chain of agricultural production, from sowing seeds to harvesting the crops, but also processing and preserving the final products. Diodorus credits Demeter with discerning grain from the other wild plants, gathering it, figuring out how to prepare and preserve it, and teaching humankind how to sow the seeds (5.68.1). In addition to discovering how to make wine and sharing the process with other humans, Dionysus devised methods for storing other fruits so that people

[156] In one instance Heracles does use a water management project to *harm* local people (the Minyans in Boeotia; see 4.18.7 and page 162, above) but this is also an instance of helping people, i.e., the Thebans who had been enslaved by the Minyans.

could continue to eat them over a long period past their date of harvest (5.75.4).[157] These are not supernatural beings who created a new plant as a gift for humans; in both cases the discovery is one of a human agent who observed their natural surroundings and figured out how to domesticate a wild plant, deciding afterwards to share their discovery for the good of the rest of humankind.

Diodorus names these two figures as a primary example of deities who receive worship from mortals on account of their discoveries of good things:

> καθόλου δὲ μυθολογοῦσι τῶν θεῶν μεγίστης ἀποδοχῆς τυγχάνειν παρ᾽ ἀνθρώποις τοὺς ταῖς εὐεργεσίαις ὑπερβαλομένους κατὰ τὴν εὕρεσιν τῶν ἀγαθῶν Διόνυσόν τε καὶ Δήμητραν, τὸν μὲν τοῦ προσηνεστάτου ποτοῦ γενόμενον εὑρετήν, τὴν δὲ τῆς ξηρᾶς τροφῆς τὴν κρατίστην παραδοῦσαν τῷ γένει τῶν ἀνθρώπων (4.3.5).
>
> Generally speaking, myths relate that the gods who receive the greatest appreciation among humans are those who excelled in their benefactions by discovering good things: Dionysus and Demeter (the former being the discoverer of the most pleasant drink, the latter because she endowed the human race with the mightiest of dry foods).

Taken on its own, there is nothing out of the ordinary about this passage. Demeter and Dionysus are gods (τῶν θεῶν) who bestowed something new and good on humankind (εὑρετήν; παραδοῦσαν). What is missing from this isolated passage, however, is the fuller picture that develops when one takes into account the many different representations of these figures that Diodorus provides throughout the *Bibliotheca*. Like the generations of people who lived on Crete and eventually earned immortal worship for their good deeds (see pages 147ff., above), Diodorus characterizes Demeter and Dionysus as human beings who have been—and continue to be—

[157] See also 3.63.3. Sulimani connects Diodorus' interest in food storage and preservation to a trend in Hellenistic and Roman literature, citing similar passages in the works of Cato, Vitruvius, and Varro (2011: 236-241).

immortalized by the people whose lives they improved. Diodorus does occasionally characterize Dionysus (in this instance, under the name Osiris)[158] as sharing these gifts with humanity with the explicit purpose of gaining immortality in return:

> ὑπολαμβάνειν γὰρ αὐτὸν ὅτι παύσας τῆς ἀγριότητος τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ διαίτης ἡμέρου μεταλαβεῖν ποιήσας τιμῶν ἀθανάτων τεύξεται διὰ τὸ μέγεθος τῆς εὐεργεσίας. ὅπερ δὴ καὶ γενέσθαι: οὐ μόνον γὰρ τοὺς κατ᾽ ἐκείνους τοὺς χρόνους τυχόντας τῆς δωρεᾶς ταύτης, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντας τοὺς μετὰ ταῦτα ἐπιγενομένους διὰ τὴν ἐν ταῖς εὑρεθείσαις τροφαῖς χάριτα τοὺς εἰσηγησαμένους ὡς ἐπιφανεστάτους θεοὺς τετιμηκέναι (1.17.2).
>
> For he understood that, if he made people cease from their savagery and change to a gentle way of life, he would receive immortal honors on account of the magnitude of this benefaction. And indeed this very thing happened: for not only did those who were contemporary with him receive this gift, but also everyone thereafter, because they enjoyed the foods that had been discovered, have honored those who introduced them as the most splendid gods.

Diodorus makes a similar statement at 3.70.8: Dionysus wanted to share his discoveries with the entire human race because he hoped that they would reward his great benefaction with immortal honors. In general, however, as I will show in the following pages, Diodorus depicts Demeter and Dionysus as receiving immortal worship after the fact: people appreciate their generous gifts, and for this reason decide to give them immortal honors after death.

According to the *Bibliotheca*, Dionysus discovered grapes and their cultivation, but also the process of crushing the clusters of fruit and storing its juice in order to make wine (3.70.8). Diodorus tells us that Dionysus earned the name Lenaeus because he was the first to figure out how to crush grapes in wine-vats (*lenoi*), but that he also was the first to figure out how to give

[158] At several points Diodorus asserts that Osiris is equivalent to Dionysus and Isis to Demeter. At 1.13.5, for example, he states that the name Osiris is translated as Dionysus and that Isis resembles Demeter more closely than any of the other goddesses. At 4.1.6 he says that the Egyptians claim that their 'Osiris' is called 'Dionysus' by the Greeks and at 5.69.1 he reports their claim that Demeter and Isis are the same. For this reason, I include passages on Osiris and Isis in this section.

proper care to figs and other fruit that grows on trees (3.63.3-4; 3.70.8). We are not supposed to imagine an immortal god hiking up his tunic in order to stomp grapes; rather, this is the work of a mortal man who cared for plants and people, wanting to make the best of both. After his death he received immortal honors in gratitude for his inventions and because he had allowed all people to share in them (3.63.4). Dionysus' intent was to make life easier for people, partly by the enjoyment that comes from drinking wine, but perhaps even more importantly, in Diodorus' version of events, by inventing agricultural tools and processes that made the work of growing, processing, and preserving food less burdensome for the common people (3.64.1). According to Diodorus, some even credit Dionysus with inventing the plow and being the first to yoke oxen together for the purpose of sowing seeds (3.64.2; 4.4.1).

Describing Dionysus' accomplishments in India, Diodorus strings together his fruit-related contributions with others that, at first glance, have little to do with agriculture: Dionysus shared with the Indians his knowledge of wine production and food storage "and all the other things that are useful in life" (καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν εἰς τὸν βίον χρησίμων) but he also founded cities by gathering people in regions that could support them, instructed them how to honor divinity (τὸ θεῖον), and introduced laws and courts (2.38.5). These good works, Diodorus says, resulted in the people regarding him as a god and granting him immortal honors (καθόλου δὲ πολλῶν καὶ καλῶν ἔργων εἰσηγητὴν γενόμενον θεὸν νομισθῆναι καὶ τυχεῖν ἀθανάτων τιμῶν, 2.38.5).

Although law and justice may not be among the first domains that we typically associate with Dionysus and Demeter, Diodorus repeatedly links these figures to these characteristics of

human social life.[159] In the *Bibliotheca*, agricultural developments contributed to human social life in many ways beyond those which Euripides acknowledged in the *Bacchae* when he has Tiresias say that Dionysus' gifts make life bearable for people from all walks of life, i.e., because drinking wine makes people feel better about their troubles (274-283). Diodorus credits Osiris/Dionysus, for example, with being the first to convince humans to cease from cannibalism: in this version of events, Isis/Demeter had discovered the wild forms of wheat and barley, but it was Osiris/Dionysus who figured out how to cultivate them (1.14.1). Everyone adopted the change willingly, both because they enjoyed the new food more and because they recognized the social advantages in refraining from eating one another (1.14.1).

Diodorus says that Sicilians are grateful to Demeter not only for the gift of grain but also for teaching them the justice that must accompany its management and distribution in a societal context (5.2-5). After a brief digression on the grain-related rituals that people still perform to honor Isis as thanks for her discovery of grain, Diodorus notes that people also credit her with establishing the laws that people now use to relate to each other justly, concluding that this is the reason that early Greeks gave the epithet Thesmophoros to Demeter, "since she was the first to lay down laws" (ὡς τῶν νόμων πρῶτον ὑπὸ ταύτης τεθειμένων, 1.14.4). He returns to this link between Demeter's gift of grain and her establishment of law and order near the beginning of Book 5:

> οὐκ ἄξιον δὲ παραλιπεῖν τῆς θεοῦ ταύτης τὴν ὑπερβολὴν τῆς εἰς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους εὐεργεσίας: χωρὶς γὰρ τῆς εὑρέσεως τοῦ σίτου τήν τε κατεργασίαν αὐτοῦ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐδίδαξε καὶ νόμους εἰσηγήσατο καθ᾽ οὓς δικαιοπραγεῖν εἰθίσθησαν, δι᾽ ἣν αἰτίαν

[159] For Hesiod, as Vernant puts it, farming is "a form of religious experience that is strict and preoccupied with justice" (1983:250). Diodorus, on the other hand, emphasizes the practical, not religious, role of these deities' agricultural innovations in human life and society. The connection between agriculture and justice remains but it is a human kind of justice, not the divine justice of Zeus.

> φασὶν αὐτὴν θεσμοφόρον ἐπονομασθῆναι. τούτων δὲ τῶν εὑρημάτων οὐκ ἄν τις ἑτέραν εὐεργεσίαν εὕροι μείζονα: καὶ γὰρ τὸ ζῆν καὶ τὸ καλῶς ζῆν περιέχουσι (5.5.2-3).
>
> But it would not be right to neglect to mention the superiority of the benefaction that this goddess [i.e., Demeter] gave to humanity: for in addition to being the discoverer of grain and the one who taught people how to cultivate it, she also introduced the laws by which they became accustomed to act justly, on account of which they say she received the title Thesmophoros. One could find no greater benefaction than these discoveries, for they encompass both living and living honorably.

Deeper in Book 5, Diodorus once again returns to the idea that Demeter was the first to introduce laws to humankind, going on to say that because of the magnificent blessings she bestowed on humankind, people far and wide—both Greeks and also "almost all the barbarians who have partaken of her food"—honor her with great feasts and festivals (5.68.3).

In one version Diodorus offers for the spread of agriculture, Demeter passed the knowledge of growing grain to Triptolemus, instructing him to share the gift with people everywhere and to teach them everything they would need to know to sow their own crops (5.68.2). This version exists alongside the story that Demeter herself travelled the world, rewarding those who received her well with the gift of grain (5.4.3). Diodorus relates that many peoples, having received their portion of the gift from the Athenians (who had themselves behaved "most humanely," φιλανθρωπότατα, in their reception of the goddess), shared the blessing in turn with their own neighbors, and "in this way caused the entire inhabited world to flourish with it" (5.4.4). Thus a benefaction spread on the one hand by the travels of the inventor herself, on the other by her emissary (Triptolemus), but perhaps most interestingly, by an ancient sort of "pay it forward" system by which the benefaction radiated out from a central location through the generosity of all the peoples involved. Thus Demeter inspired goodwill among

different groups of people by her own generous act; this is another way in which she contributed to the first foundations of justice.

According to Diodorus, the worship of Dionysus and Demeter is nearly universal.[160] There was debate among different peoples who claim that their land was the first to receive Demeter's gifts, with the Egyptians, Athenians, and Sicilians each having their own reasons to assert primacy (5.69.1-3). Diodorus, unsurprisingly, endorses his own homeland's claim to this honor, saying that it would be strange if any place but the most fertile (i.e., Sicily) was the first to bring forth crops of grain (5.2.4). He gives as supporting evidence the fact that of all the gods, Demeter and Persephone are accorded the greatest honors among the island's inhabitants (5.2.5). The festival for Persephone performed by Sicilians, for example, is done "with such strict observance and passionate energy as one would expect coming from people who are displaying gratitude for having been chosen before all others as the recipients of the greatest possible gift" (5.4.6).

Diodorus notes that reverence for Dionysus, too, is nearly universal, despite the differences in particular beliefs or ritual practices that one may observe among different peoples.[161] Even those who are unable to grow grapes due to the limitations of their land can still enjoy alcoholic beverages made from barley:

> διὸ καὶ πάντας τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐν ταῖς πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους θεοὺς τιμαῖς οὐχ ὁμοίαν ἔχοντας προαίρεσιν ἀλλήλοις σχεδὸν ἐπὶ μόνου τοῦ Διονύσου συμφωνουμένην ἀποδεικνύειν μαρτυρίαν τῆς

[160] In addition to their association with agricultural practices and products, Diodorus says at 1.11.1 that Osiris and Isis are also connected in the Egyptian religion with the sun and the moon, respectively; this is one sense in which their universal worship is not directly related to the products of agriculture (although the sun and the moon have a role in cycles of growing and the production of crops, I concentrate on human influences rather than celestial ones).

[161] One exception Diodorus gives for those who enjoy the gifts of Demeter and Dionysus: some of the Ligurians live on herd animals and whatever they can gather of wild plants, because their land is "untrodden by the most kindly of gods, Demeter and Dionysus" (τὴν χώραν ἔχοντες ἄβατον τοῖς προσφιλεστάτοις τῶν θεῶν Δήμητρι καὶ Διονύσῳ, 5.39.4).

> ἀθανασίας: οὐδένα γὰρ οὔθ᾽ Ἑλλήνων οὔτε βαρβάρων ἄμοιρον εἶναι τῆς τούτου δωρεᾶς καὶ χάριτος, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ἀπηγριωμένην ἔχοντας χώραν ἢ πρὸς φυτείαν ἀμπέλου παντελῶς ἀπηλλοτριωμένην μαθεῖν τὸ κατασκευαζόμενον ἐκ τῶν κριθῶν πόμα βραχὺ λειπόμενον τῆς περὶ τὸν οἶνον εὐωδίας (3.73.6).
>
> For this reason it happens that not all people agree with one another about the honors they pay towards other gods, but in the case of Dionysus alone they are in almost complete agreement in bearing witness to his immortality. For there is no one, either Greek or barbarian, who is without a share in the gift and the blessing [of Dionysus]: even those whose land has become wild or is altogether unfit for growing the vine have learned from him how to prepare a drink from barley that is barely inferior to wine in its aroma.

Diodorus claims that Dionysus invented beer again at 4.2.5 and credits Osiris (i.e., Dionysus) with its creation at 1.20.4.[162] Iris Sulimani notes that Diodorus is the only ancient source who attributes the invention of beer from barley to Dionysus/Osiris (2011:243).[163] It is worth noting that, by crediting Dionysus with the invention of beer, which was considered by Greeks and Romans to be a beverage of foreigners and the lower classes, Diodorus emphasizes the god's efforts to benefit all people around the world and in every social stratum.[164] This is consistent with Dionysus' association with public entertainment, most notably theatrical festivals. Diodorus adds an interesting detail about Dionysus' role in this sphere of public life when he not only credits him with the invention of the theater as a public space, but also claims that he absolved anyone who had developed musical skills from otherwise compulsory contributions to the state, a practice that apparently continued in later generations in the form of musical guilds (4.5.4).

[162] At 5.26.2, he cites the Gauls as an example of people who consume *zythos* because their cold climate does not allow grapes or olives to grow.
[163] Sulimani gives close-but-no-cigar examples from Tibullus, Plutarch, Strabo, and Augustine.
[164] For beer as a lower-class beverage, see Sulimani 2011:245.

Dionysus/Osiris spread his agricultural gifts in a very different manner than Demeter: in Book 1 Diodorus describes how he gathered an army with which he travelled the world and shared knowledge of growing grapes, wheat, and barley:

> τὸν δὲ Ὄσιριν λέγουσιν, ὥσπερ εὐεργετικὸν ὄντα καὶ φιλόδοξον, στρατόπεδον μέγα συστήσασθαι, διανοούμενον ἐπελθεῖν ἅπασαν τὴν οἰκουμένην καὶ διδάξαι τὸ γένος τῶν ἀνθρώπων τήν τε τῆς ἀμπέλου φυτείαν καὶ τὸν σπόρον τοῦ τε πυρίνου καὶ κριθίνου καρποῦ (1.17.1).
>
> They say that Osiris, since he was beneficent and cared about his reputation, gathered a great army, with the intention of visiting the entire inhabited world and teaching the human race both how to grow the vine and how to sow wheat and barley.

The image of Dionysus/Osiris marching around the world backed by his own army might surprise some, though Diodorus does clarify that he was not warlike and he did not engage in battles, since he did not need to: people everywhere gladly welcomed his arrival and were grateful for the gifts he brought (1.18.5). He brought along men who had expertise in a particular area of agriculture: Maron for the vine and Triptolemus for the sowing and harvesting of grain (1.18.2). He also brought his brother Apollo, who was said to have discovered the laurel while Dionysus/Osiris himself had discovered ivy, both of which plants were valued for their ability to remain perennially green (1.17.4-5). As Sulimani notes, it appears to have been Diodorus' own idea to attribute the distribution of wheat and ivy throughout the world to Dionysus/Osiris, and none of Diodorus' predecessors portray Dionysus or Osiris as setting out to travel the world with the specific intent of spreading cultivation of the grapevine (2011:231).[165] Indeed this portrayal of Dionysus as spreading several agricultural products, not just the grapevine, and teaching

[165] Sulimani does note some close cases, such as Tibullus 1.7, where Osiris collected fruit from unknown trees and taught men to cultivate the vine (he does not mention an expedition, however), and Apollodorus, who says that Dionysus discovered the vine, but then attributes his journey to the madness caused by Hera (2011:236). In fact, according to Sulimani, Plutarch, at *Mor*. 356a-b, is the only other ancient author to refer to Osiris distributing plants (2011:237).

people how to care for the plants and how to process the fruits goes against Seaford's claim that the association of Dionysus with nature "is not so much with the agricultural or the pastoral, with cereal crops or herds of animals, as with those elements of nature that are dangerous: wild animals, and the fruit of the vine" (2006:25).

The spread of agricultural knowledge was not the only thing Dionysus accomplished on his journey around the world: like Demeter, he also taught people how to keep peace among themselves. In Libya he helped resolve conflict between nations and cities, and he "replaced civil strife and wars with harmony and widespread peace" in the region (ἀντὶ τῶν στάσεων καὶ τῶν πολέμων ὁμόνοιαν καὶ πολλὴν εἰρήνην κατασκευάζειν, 3.64.7). His positive reputation as a result of these benefactions and the good will with which he treated everyone meant that he was welcomed with open arms whenever he arrived at a new locale (3.65.1). Like Heracles, Dionysus won voluntary compliance from the locals wherever he went because they witnessed the good he was doing, not only in the agricultural knowledge he shared with them, but in the kindness and respect he showed towards all but the impious and wicked. He demonstrated that the purpose of his campaign was to punish the impious and to share his benefactions with the entire human race, and the Libyans, for example, responded to his admirable cause by giving supplies to his followers and in some cases joining the campaign themselves (3.72.4).

Part 3: Politics in the *Bibliotheca*

The kinds of benefactions that Diodorus depicts most often as earning immortal honors involved helping people deal with the natural world and with each other. These benefactors are not just giving awesome gifts, but inspiring people to behave justly, in part by being a positive role model and displaying just behavior for people to emulate, and in part by sharing knowledge

or technology with people that helps them get along socially. People on Crete make improvements in housing and food acquisition, Heracles gets rid of dangerous individuals so that the common people can have access to land, and Demeter and Dionysus share their advancements in agriculture in order to promote law and justice. The ways in which people manage food resources has a lot to do with how they manage their laws and society generally; Diodorus seems to have been aware of these connections, and he offers many possible or partial solutions for social ills that could or did work in different circumstances.

Given the wealth of information Diodorus supplies about modes of social and political organization in regions across the known world and the ethical thrust of the sections composed in Diodorus' own voice, one can read the *Bibliotheca Historica* as a work of political philosophy.[166] It is crucial to note, however, that this work is, on the whole, far more descriptive than prescriptive. Diodorus does not advocate one particular social or political arrangement over another; he acknowledges that different solutions will work for different social problems at different times in human history. He tends to evaluate the *actions* of states and institutions (or the individuals who act on their behalf) and the quality of life of community members more than the particular *form* of government.

In his introduction to the Loeb edition of the *Bibliotheca Historica*, C.H. Oldfather sets up an antithesis between those who advocate for systems in which the people play a major role and those who want select individuals to hold sway: he claims that Diodorus "thinks very little of democracy (1.74.7; 13.95.1), the natural counterpart of such a conviction being a great

[166] Burton notes that Book 1, for example, has typically been read as "consisting mainly of a philosophical discussion of an ideal state, with its roots in Greek rather than in Egyptian thought" (1972:2).

admiration for the strong man in history" (1933:xxi).[167] Diodorus does not present a necessary antithesis between democracy and the influence of strong men (and women) in social and political systems. He depicts the greatest 'strong man' of all, Zeus, as being praiseworthy exactly because he travels around spreading equality and democracy (τὴν δ' ἰσότητα καὶ τὴν δημοκρατίαν) among the peoples of the world (5.71.2). Despite his praise of individuals like Zeus, Diodorus does not prefer rule by a strong man; in fact he is consistent in his condemnation of individual rulers who abuse their power. Diodorus shows how negative character traits in an individual ruler—particularly πλεονεξία, a term Diodorus uses nearly fifty times—can lead to destruction for an entire people (Sacks 1990:21-2). Schlomo Berger clarifies what Diodorus means when he uses the term *democracy*—not the Athenian model that might come to our mind, but "the antithesis of tyranny":

> Democracy to [Diodorus] is basically the antithesis of tyranny. It is the reintroduction of liberty (ἐλευθερία), the formation of a civic regime, a *republic*. But it is not necessarily a regime in which all the citizens share the same rights, a democracy in the classical Athenian model (1989:304).

Berger explains how Diodorus' conception of democracy was heavily influenced by his upbringing on Sicily, which was famous for its tyrants but also had several democratic regimes at various times—for example in Syracuse—and argues that we should not expect it to conform to the version of democracy that we know from Athens (1989:304-8).

[167] It is important to note that, however Diodorus conceived of democracy, he does not actually criticize democracy as a political arrangement, despite what Oldfather claims. The two examples that Oldfather cites for Diodorus' general condemnation of democracy in fact only prove that the author found fault with the way that democratic decision-making tends to operate in certain circumstances. At 1.74.7, Diodorus complains that very many people in democratic cities take advantage of the opportunity to make money while disrupting government functions, and at 13.95.1 he states that the multitude in Syracuse swung too hastily in their opinions when they helped bring Dionysius to power. Diodorus says it is the wont of the masses to swing to the wrong decision; this might say more about the human tendency to swing from one extreme to the other than it does about the inherent failures of democracy. Neither of these examples is a condemnation of democracy as a system, but a specific shortcoming that can arise within democracies. He certainly does not portray rule by a strong man as a faultless and incorruptible option.

Diodorus offers many examples in which there is a great deal of interplay between the concepts of democracy and rule by an individual or small group of people. In many cases Diodorus shows good leaders who prioritize the wellbeing of the people in their communities (and also, ideally, in the world as a whole); the people often wield considerable influence in deciding who attains and keeps positions of power, even if this influence is not formalized in a democratic decision-making process. Rather than extol one political arrangement at the expense of another, Diodorus presents a much more nuanced picture of societies in and around the Mediterranean whose laws and traditions are highly dependent on local geography and climate, the availability of natural resources and the people's knowledge of how to use them, historic patterns of human migration, the customs of neighboring peoples and the presence or absence of imperial forces, and, in some cases, divine will.[168]

The specific qualities that people consider to be the mark of a good leader (i.e., the qualities one must have in order to be recognized by the people as their leader) can differ from place to place or even within a particular region. Regarding the Ethiopians, Diodorus explains this in a way that gives agency to the people (3.9.4):

- some of the Ethiopians "put kingship into the hands" (τὰς δὲ βασιλείας ἐγχειρίζουσιν) of the sort of person who has already been fortunate (in appearance)
- others "bestow/transfer leadership" (παραδιδόασι τὴν ἀρχήν) to the best keeper of cattle because they believe that he will also apply this kind of care to his subjects
- others "portion out/assign the honor" (τὸ τίμιον ἀπονέμουσιν) to the wealthiest men because they will be able to use their funds to help (ἐπικουρεῖν) the common people

[168] One key theme that I see in Diodorus' treatment of these myriad different communities is that flexibility in a political and economic system—including flexibility in dealing with neighbors and new immigrants—greatly contributes to the survival of a society. This bears out in the historical record: as Emily Mackil argues, internal political flexibility and economic diversification helped Greek communities to rebound from stress or even catastrophic change. On the macro level, according to Mackil, the social resilience of Greek poleis "was a product of relations with other communities which served as a kind of buffer against risk" (2004:493).

- others choose (αἱροῦνται) the ones who are the most courageous because they consider (κρίνοντες) those who possess the skills of warfare to be the most worthy of chief rank (τῶν πρωτείων)

Given the care that Diodorus took to avoid repetition in explaining these four scenarios (especially in his choice of verbs and the nouns he uses to designate "rule" or "leadership"), it is significant that he nevertheless retains the construction that the *people* choose their leaders, and have logical reasons for valuing one leadership quality over the others. He could have easily phrased these possibilities as "some people *are ruled by* the most ___" or "some *rulers won their position* by being the most ____" but he chooses instead to frame these non-democratic systems as nevertheless ultimately relying on the decisions (not just consent) of the masses. Even if there is no formalized process in these communities by which the people choose their leader, Diodorus recognizes that defining characteristics of a culture, generally speaking, come from the bottom.

Diodorus credits the Egyptians with being particularly good at displaying gratitude for the benefactions that their rulers supply; they do this in part, it seems, from a pragmatic standpoint, since "it is clear that all men are eager to confer benefits on those who will treasure their favors the most" (δῆλον γὰρ εἶναι διότι πάντες πρὸς εὐεργεσίαν ὁρμήσουσι τούτων μάλιστα παρ᾽ οἷς ἄν ὁρῶσι κάλλιστα θησαυρισθησομένας τὰς χάριτας, 1.90.2). Diodorus goes on to say, however, that these Egyptians also suspect that these rulers, whom they worship as gods even while they are living, might have some touch of divine nature or connection to divine providence that enables them get to the position where they are able to provide such great benefactions (1.90.3). So we see in the *Bibliotheca* that the masses can support and appreciate their rulers—even to the point of worshiping them as gods—because they are grateful for their just and fair decisions and well as their public benefactions, and that there may not be a firm line between

pragmatism and religious or superstitious belief: the Egyptians at least, by Diodorus' estimation, seem to hold both views simultaneously.

Despite the existence of local differences and cultural constructs, Diodorus does return repeatedly to certain qualities that seem to transcend time, place, and culture in their praiseworthiness. As Oldfather puts it, Diodorus "emphasizes the qualities of the spirit, such as meekness, gentleness, kindness, very much in the manner of Herodotus" (xxi). Sacks echoes the sentiment, emphasizing Diodorus' concern for civic virtues like reasonableness, fairness, and equity. Throughout the *Bibliotheca*, Diodorus supplements his accounts of the mythology, geography, ethnography, and political history of these diverse regions with his own ethical concerns. Sacks summarizes the multiple aims of the work and Diodorus' original contribution to its overarching moral thrust when he notes that,

> while paraphrasing factual narrative, Diodorus freely invents asides on politics, philosophy, and historiography. Broadly moralistic, the central feature of the *Bibliotheke* is its call to peoples and nations to act clemently and with moderation (1990:6).

In addition to identifying Diodorus' motivating concern regarding clemency and moderation, Sacks situates Diodorus' aims within the traditions of Hellenistic literature and notes that writers of this period frequently justified their undertaking, as Diodorus does, by avowing their concern for the benefit (ἡ ὠφέλεια) and utility (τὸ χρήσιμον) it will offer to their readers (1990:23). Diodorus' aim in this regard is explicitly moral, and he provides abundant *exempla* in figures from the historical and mythological past that his readers should emulate if they wish to live morally. Sacks identifies two important terms related to moderate behavior, ἐπιείκεια and φιλανθρωπία, which together appear about three hundred times in the *Bibliotheca*, as "hallmark[s] of Diodoran thought generally" (1990:43).

Oldfather's assessment of Diodorus' political preferences does not do justice to the breadth of the work and the vast number of societal practices, political arrangements, and uses or abuses of power that Diodorus variously praises and criticizes. As a Sicilian, especially one who studied and wrote on the history of the island, Diodorus would have been familiar with a number of models for governance and the advantages and disadvantages each offered to the local citizenry. Despotism is dangerous, but an individual can rule well if he has sufficient concern for the wellbeing of his people. The masses can make poor decisions, especially when swept up in dire circumstances, but equality and democracy are praiseworthy characteristics in a state, and leaders who promote them tend to win the voluntary compliance of their people. Military forces can bring destruction or liberation to local populations.

Chapter 4: Varro's *De Re Rustica*

Introduction

Like many of his contemporaries, Marcus Terentius Varro had complicated and shifting relationships with the political power players in Rome during the middle decades of the first century BCE. Following the defeat at Pharsalus, where Varro supported Pompey, he returned to Rome and was pardoned by Caesar. After Caesar's death Varro was antagonized by Antony; things seem to have settled down for him once Octavian officially came to power (Taylor 1934:228).

Some scholars have suggested that Varro's work served political purposes for those in power. Lily Ross Taylor, for example, suggests that Varro may have composed the *De Re Rustica* in support of Octavian's agrarian policy (1934:229) and Arnaldo Momigliano, noting that Varro dedicated the *Antiquitates Divinae* to Caesar, links that work with Caesar's intense interest in reorganizing Roman religion (1984:200). Momigliano stops short of characterizing Varro as a true propagandist, however, and concludes that "if anything emerges from what Varro did and wrote it is the need to separate one's religious and philosophic opinions from the role one is expected to play in one's own society" (1984:200).

It should come as no surprise that someone who survived this tumultuous time and continued to publish work after work in the midst of such upheaval would have learned to obfuscate any overt political message; as Carin Green puts it, Varro "did not survive to his ninetieth year without learning the art of the subtext, whose subversive commentary could circumvent even a clever dictator or princeps" (1997:436). It is a great challenge to ferret out what, if any, political undertones Varro intended his work to convey. Scholars have found irony

in Varro's work, particularly the *De Re Rustica*, and have used it as one point of entry to his moral or political leanings.[169] While I certainly do not dispute the presence of irony in the text, I assume that Varro is essentially sincere in his stated goal of helping people improve their agricultural operations.[170] I do not mean that I take *De Re Rustica* to be an actual handbook written for the people to whom Varro addressed the introductions, although I would not rule that out as one of its possible purposes. Rather, I see one essential feature of the work to be Varro's sincere appreciation of the development of agricultural practices and his encouragement of further evolution of science and society. Varro's prescriptions for dealing with nature are just one way in which he is "telling the citizens how to live," to use T.P. Wiseman's phrasing (2009:151).

The *De Re Rustica* includes a general introduction to the work as a whole, dedicated to Varro's wife, 'Fundania,' followed by three books that focus on 1) producing and storing crops, 2) managing one's herds, and 3) raising smaller animals, such as birds and bees, for pleasure and profit. Each book takes the form of a philosophical dialogue set in a different time and place with a different set of speakers. Varro participates in each of these conversations but it is unclear whether we should take the statements made by Varro-the-interlocutor as indicative of the true beliefs of Varro-the-author.[171]

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[169] For a reading of the *De Re Rustica* as a text which "simultaneously cultivates and critiques its own intellectual project" with both sincerity and irony, see Nelsestuen 2015:28. Kronenberg, on the other hand, argues that Varro the *RR* is "destructive of conventional politics, morality, and learning, and there is no Socratic figure in it to represent an alternative search for truth and meaning" (2009:13). My reading is fundamentally different than Kronenberg's in that I assume that Varro seeks to give his reader tools for his or her own intellectual and agricultural projects.

[170] Skydsgaard registers several complaints about supposedly necessary information that is lacking from the *De Re Rustica*, including a full treatment of olives in Varro's calendar (1968:55) and a more developed explanation of the type of work that happens in the nursery for young trees (56).

[171] See McAlhany 2003:8-15 for cautions against the biographical fallacy when studying Varro.

Throughout the work Varro expresses interest in the dynamic development of ideas, practices, and technology that humans can use to interact with the natural world in more productive ways. Varro's interest in the progress of history and the transmission of knowledge is quite varied; even within a work whose ostensible purpose is to teach about agricultural practices, he is able to incorporate comments on the development of the literary tradition, etymology, and religion, among other fields.[172] He concludes his catalog of important Greek agricultural writers with a sequence of authors who abridged Mago of Carthage's text, closing the section with the assertion that he himself is the latest in the line (1.1.10-1).[173] Although *De Re Rustica* generally eschews religion, Varro's first words to his friends in Book 1 are to ask them whether they have come for the same religious festival that used to attract their fathers and grandfathers, thus situating their presence at the temple within a historical progression of Romans engaging in the same activity over time (1.2.1).[174] His frequent etymological explanations with an emphasis on the change in the form or usage of a particular word over time have been a cause of frustration or confusion for many, but I find them perfectly at home in a work in which evolution within a continuity of tradition is a central theme.[175]

Varro is also interested in how his peers will continue to develop agricultural practices, including their use of land and their treatment of animals. The *De Re Rustica* is a useful text for

[172] This chapter attempts, in part, to address McAlhany's concerns that scholars too often attempt to force Varro's contributions into distinct categories. As McAlhany puts it, "Partly born of necessity, studies of Varro have systematized his work, and following both Boissier and Dahlmann, his work and his personality have been split into categories which Varro himself may never have accepted—Varro the Grammarian, Theologian, Poet, Historian, and/or Antiquarian—and thus whatever continuity may have existed between his various endeavors becomes obscured" (2003:10). Indeed, my analytic framework attempts, in part, to bring this continuity between Varro's various fields of study out of obscurity.

[173] For a detailed reading of how Varro positions himself in this list of predecessors, see Nelsestuen 2015:35-43.

[174] They did not come for the festival, but to dine with the sacristan.

[175] Skydsgaard , for example, complains that Varro's etymology is arbitrary and haphazard and "gets out of hand" sometimes (1968:61). See McAlhany: "there is good reason to see a connection between Varro's work on language and his investigations into the past" (2003:11).

investigating the limits that humans impose on themselves and each other in their exploitation of the natural world. As Roman citizens with access to the land, labor, and financial means necessary to conduct large-scale agricultural operations, Varro and his fellow elites could, and sometimes did, effect great change on the world around them. The particular practices that these men and women employ in their manipulation of natural materials (including soil, plants, and animals but also entire landscapes) and their goals in doing so (i.e., what they hope to achieve through this exploitation) can be kept in check by socio-cultural and philosophical constraints. A sense of moderation prevails over these endeavors, with those reaching too far towards pleasure or profit receiving censure from their peers.[176]

Viewing *De Re Rustica* as a whole, one sees that Varro advocates a middle way between the early humans who did not know how to plow and recent ones who are able to move mountains. Reading the text in this holistic way, I disagree with Kronenberg's characterization of *De Re Rustica* as "destructive of conventional politics, morality, and learning," a piece of satire that "debunk[s] the myth of the virtuous farmer" by showing the hypocrisy of the interlocutors decrying luxury while extolling material profits (2009:13, 73-5).[177] I argue that Varro's farmer can indeed be virtuous, or at least strive to be so, as long as he acts with moderation and to the mutual benefit of his own holdings and the natural setting he occupies. This rural kind of virtue, by Varro's account, is an admirable alternative to the glory that one gains from conspicuous

[176] Given that an emphasis on moderation, in particular, is a feature of the traditional Roman value system, it might be tempting to leap from that observation to the conclusion that Varro either espouses all traditional Roman values, or, as Kronenberg claims, tries to reveal the hypocrisy of those who do. See Kronenberg 2009:25 for the claim that Varro, along with Xenophon and Virgil, seeks to show the "inconsistencies and tensions in the moral values of their cultures." Taking a cue from Varro himself, I believe we should pursue a more moderate course and avoid such a leap in either direction. It is entirely possible, after all, to share certain ideals with a particular belief system without buying into it wholesale, and conversely to critique certain aspects of a system without seeking to undermine the entire system itself.

[177] See Nelsestuen 2015 for a reading of the *DRR* as satire that resists Kronenberg's binary mode.

political service or from climbing the social ranks. Contributing to public life and running an estate are not mutually exclusive endeavors, of course, and Varro does not explicitly advocate for a withdrawal into the country. Varro takes for granted that the audience of the *De Re Rustica* split their time between fulfilling civic duties in Rome and managing affairs on estates outside of the city.[178] He is addressing people who do both, and he offers guidance on how to improve one's agricultural endeavors, apparently as one part of a diverse portfolio of business interests and of ways to contribute to Roman culture and politics.

For Varro, agriculture is not just a money-making venture or an opportunity to create pleasant surroundings: as an *ars*, a *scientia*, and a *ratio*, agriculture is a craft that one can practice, a body of knowledge one can acquire through experience and the consultation of experts, and a way of understanding essential truths about the world. Early in Book 1, Agrasius requests clarification regarding the classification of agriculture as a human pursuit: is the *scientia* of agriculture an *ars*, or something else (1.3.1)? Immediately after being identified as the most outstanding member of the group in terms of age, honor, and knowledge (*scientia*), and therefore the most qualified to speak on the subject, Scrofa answers with a strong affirmative: agriculture is not only an art, but one that is indispensable and noble (*non modo est ars, sed etiam necessaria ac magna*, 1.3.1). It is also a science, Scrofa says, to know which crops ought to be planted in each field and what else must be done in order that the land may consistently yield the greatest

[178] Nelsestuen contrasts Varro's choice of "intervening spaces" as settings for the *De Re Rustica* with those in Cicero's dialogues: "Thus, unlike Cicero's works, which are nominally divorced from public life and ensconced so deeply in the space and time of private *otium*, the dialogues of the *RR* are circumstantially and spatially located in intervening spaces: the meetings are neither planned nor completely random, the occasions between *otium* and *negotium*, and the locations entwined in private and public life. In these respects, the *RR*'s dialogues offer a marked contrast to the scenery of staged Ciceronian *otium*" (2015:18).

produce.[179] In the introduction to Book 2, Varro clarifies that the farmer and the shepherd possess different kinds of *ratio* and *scientia* (2.intro.5). In dividing up the conversational tasks ahead of them, Varro says that he will handle the *origo* and the *dignitas* of animal husbandry but will leave the *ars* to Scrofa (2.1.1).[180]

One purpose of Grant Nelsestuen's *Varro the Agronomist* is to show how Varro uses the *De Re Rustica* "to articulate, historicize, and rationalize *res rusticae* as a new, abstract, and 'scientific' field by means of the dialogue form as well as a whole host of other analytical and verbal strategies" (2015:33). Nelsestuen is concerned with Varro's production of the text as an effort to frame farming "as a sociocultural concept and intellectual field," i.e., to shape the discourse around farming and to legitimize the study of agriculture as a form of philosophy (2015:34-5; 72). In this chapter, on the other hand, I explore how and why Varro encourages his audience to engage with nature and human history through the medium of agriculture. The distinction between Nelsestuen's work and my own may be subtle—we agree that one of Varro's aims is to legitimize and elevate agriculture—but it comes down to a focus on theory versus practice. Nelsestuen shows that Varro uses the *De Re Rustica* to stake a claim to an intellectual field and to help shape the discourse moving forward; I offer a complementary argument that Varro also hopes his readers will not just sit around talking about agriculture and hashing out philosophical precepts, but will participate in operation of the estates in some real way, conducting experiments with their land and animals and contributing to the broad sweep of

[179] The word I translate here as 'consistently' (*perpetuo*) could mean that Scrofa wants to maximize the yield from season to season or from year to year, but it could take on a different meaning if we consider the scale of time that Varro covers in the *RR*: he could also indicate a concern for these fields in the more distant future, even once they pass out of the current farmer's hands.

[180] Similarly, at 3.16.3 Appius will describe the *ars* and *ingenium* of bees but will hand the topic over to Merula when it comes time to explain beekeeping (melitturgy).

human progress through their discoveries. After all, Varro's interlocutors mention that Theophrastus' works do not satisfy their needs because they are "not suited to those who wish to cultivate the land, as much as those who wish to join the philosophers' schools" (*non tam idonei iis qui agrum colere volunt, quam qui scholas philosophorum*, 1.5.2).[181]

Of course, as estate owners with teams of slaves to carry out the dirtiest labor on their behalf, Varro and his friends do not actually need to get their hands dirty. Varro's social and economic position allows him to theorize about agriculture and the place of humans in the natural world while others carry out the hardest and most dangerous work. This is a fundamental difference between Varro's conception of farming and that which we see in, for example, Hesiod's *Works and Days*. Unlike Hesiod, who by his own account had to work the land in order to feed himself, Varro and his fellow elites in the Roman Republic did not engage in agricultural pursuits for their own subsistence. Their financial resources from inheritance and non-agricultural business endeavors offered them the opportunity to abstain from dealing with the natural world directly, if they chose.[182] There was a social compulsion, however, encouraging Roman elites not only to own land near Rome, but to involve themselves to some degree in its management: Philip Thibodeau has shown that was a matter of decorum for an estate owner to know enough about farming in order to maintain superiority (or, at least, the appearance of it)

[181] Stolo, the speaker here, is careful to add that this does not mean that these texts do not contain something both profitable and relevant (1.5.2). The interlocutors also repeatedly criticize Cato and Saserna's one-size-fits-all method of advising the appropriate equipment for a particular farm; see 1.18.1ff. and 1.19.1ff. for complaints that these authors do not help their readers adapt the number of slaves or oxen, for example, that are required for different types of land. The point in both cases is that the owner needs to assess the local situation and other factors, like what the previous owners did and what the neighbors are doing, before experimenting on their own to find the best solution, tailored to the particular demands of their plot (1.19.2-3).

[182] Rosenstein argues persuasively that agricultural endeavors typically did not provide the kind of financial gain that would have been necessary to support Roman aristocrats' lavish lifestyles, and that "prestige more than profit is likely to have been the end in view, the accumulation of symbolic rather than economic capital" (2008:24). See also Heitland, who says of Varro and Cato that "profit, not sentiment or fancy, was their common and truly Roman aim" (1970:179).

over his *vilicus* (2011:42). Nevertheless, these elites could remain in the city and hold land as an investment, if they chose; there were many absentee land-owners whose staff conducted all of the day-to-day operations of their estates.[183] In *De Agri Cultura,* Cato seems to take for granted that his addressees live in Rome and only infrequently visit their estates; he suggests that one should build a comfortable *villa urbana* on the grounds so that he will feel compelled to visit more often (4.1).

One's financial situation can have other effects on how one views agriculture and other interactions with the world outside of the city. Unlike Hesiod, Varro does not romanticize early human history as a Golden Age, which is characterized in part by the fact that humans did not need to exercise energy in order to attain food, because he is already free from the most unpleasant kinds of labor. The bulk of Varro's experience with nature is largely (or almost entirely) mitigated through others' labor, but he nevertheless choses to engage with nature through agriculture as a scientific pursuit. Varro and his interlocutors are able to choose which aspects of agricultural labor they will study in detail and what, if any, kinds of labor they will perform themselves, and which areas they will entrust to their *vilici* and the rest of their workforce. These aristocratic men and women[184] possessed the economic means to create great distance between themselves and nature, to be owners and consumers but not producers in any direct sense. Varro and his interlocutors choose instead to engage with nature through careful management of their agricultural holdings.

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[183] See Thibodeau 2011:20-2 for the prevalence of absentee ownership and the labor system that made it possible. He notes that Varro's diverse holdings (at least ten estates are attested) would have required that he be absent from most of them most of the time (22).

[184] I include women here because Varro dedicates the entire work to his wife, 'Fundania,' and his stated reason for composing the work is to provide her with the knowledge she needs to run the new farm she has purchased (1.1.1). Scrofa also mentions his wife's agricultural choices at 1.15.1 (she planted pines around her Sabine farms).

In the sections that follow, I examine Varro's portrayal of human interactions with the natural world both as a product of a long trajectory of history and as an ongoing endeavor to improve existing practices and develop new ones—within reason. One central feature of this process is that it is entirely motivated by human need and ingenuity: the gods have no place in the historical development of agriculture and only a passing, abstracted role in Varro's telling of the day-to-day operations of an estate. Varro invokes twelve agricultural deities near the beginning of the *De Re Rustica*, but hardly mentions the gods throughout the rest of the work. This is quite a contrast to the agricultural works of Hesiod and Cato: unlike Varro, these authors frequently enjoin their readers to honor the gods and offer sacrifices for the health of their crops, animals, and household. Cato includes specific prescriptions for the time and place of these rituals as well as the words to be recited and the victims to be offered. The fact that Varro did not think them relevant to discussions of agricultural practices shows that he did not share the same concerns about divine intervention in the affairs of human beings and in natural processes as did his agronomical predecessors. Fragments of Varro's other works offer a fuller picture of his conceptions of the gods and the social functions of religious ritual. I will explore the role of the gods—or lack thereof—in greater detail in the first part of this chapter following this introduction.

In the second part of this chapter, I show how the *De Re Rustica* is concerned with land use ethics and the development of agricultural practices over time. Varro encourages his reader to adapt their operations to the particular demands of the land and climate around them, while also finding ways to innovate on previous discoveries. Estate owners can go too far when they drastically alter the natural landscape or create wholly artificial micro-environments in order to more easily exploit animal resources. There are moral and financial incentives, from Varro's

perspective, to provide a decent quality of life to the humans and animals that participate in one's agricultural operations.

Varro and his interlocutors are concerned with imposing order on the natural world insofar as it contributes to the pleasure and profit of their estate. This approach to land management is balanced by a consistent emphasis on the necessity of observing the natural world and adapting one's behavior to external conditions outside of human control. In the final part of this chapter I examine the recurring theme of integration of agricultural practices.

Part 1: The Gods

Varro's interest in religion has typically been read as primarily historical: Lehoux, for example, contrasts Varro's interest in how contemporary Romans might preserve ancient religious knowledge with Cicero's concern for how wise men of his own time might learn to live in accordance with natural law (2012:39).[185] The emphasis on Varro's historical approach may be colored by the fact that the explicit goal of our main source of Varro's perspective on such matters—the *Antiquitates Divinae*, preserved as fragments in Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*—is to teach Romans about their religious history.[186] Augustine represents Varro as unable to speak openly about his true beliefs regarding religion, hemmed in as he was by the demands of

[185] See also Liebeschuetz, who characterizes Varro as "the outstanding exponent of Neo-Academic support for the worship of the old Roman gods" (1979:36).

[186] Augustine reports that Varro said he was afraid that the gods will cease to exist as a result of the people's negligence (*dicat se timere ne pereant [dei] non incursu hostili sed civium neglegentia*, *De Civitate Dei* 4.2). Liebeschuetz takes his interpretation of this statement too far, however, when he assumes that Varro means that he wants to preserve *everything* about traditional Roman religion, including the worship of every minor spirit that might be relevant to a given situation: "Varro sought to establish the divinity responsible for every conceivable activity in order to make it once more possible to call on the correct specialist in every situation" (1979:37). I do not believe that Varro's efforts to preserve the names of these deities and make this knowledge available for his audience means that he actually wanted people to *worship* them in their daily lives. As I show below (pages 192-3), he had ample opportunity to encourage religious ritual in the *De Re Rustica*, but he does not do so.

tradition and the willingness of the common people to accept some versions of the gods over others:

> cum ad deos colendos multis locis velut religiosus hortetur, nonne ita confitetur non se illa iudicio suo sequi quae civitatem Romanam instituisse commemorat ut, si eam citivatem novam constitueret, ex naturae potius formula deos nominaque eorum se fuisse dedicaturum non dubitet confiteri? Sed iam quoniam in vetere populo esset, acceptam ab antiquis nominum et cognominum historiam tenere, ut tradita est, debere se dicit, et ad eum finem illa scribere ac perscrutari ut potius eos magis colere quam despicere vulgus velit. Quibus verbis homo acutissimus satis indicat non se aperire omnia…(*De Civitate Dei* 4.31).
>
> Although he urges the people to care for the gods in many places as if himself a religious adherent, does he not also admit that it is not by his own judgment that he follows the customs that have been established by the Roman state? He does not hesitate to admit that if he were to set up his own city, the gods and their names would be dictated instead by the principles of nature. But as it is, since he lives among an established populace, he says that he ought to hold on to the history of names and surnames accepted by the ancients, as it was handed down, and to this end he wishes to write and research these things so the common people will care for rather than despise them. From these words this exceedingly sharp man demonstrates well enough that he does not reveal his own leanings in all matters…

Regarding this passage, John Scheid comments that "for Varro, who was deeply philosophical, speculation regarding the principles of the natural order and regarding the gods could have no effect on an ancestral institution, even if it displeased him" (2016:50). Peter Van Nuffelen has recently demonstrated that Varro's interest in such matters, historical as it may be, is not a case of preserving tradition for the sake of tradition. Varro investigates the history of Roman religion not (or not only) out of a conservative impulse to provide some stability in a period of great political and societal change, but because he believed that the rituals and myths of the past contained some essential and eternal truth about the workings of the world (2010:162-3).

Momigliano provides an example of the perspective that Van Nuffelen works to correct when he claims that Varro had some discomfort with the fact that religious worship and representations of the gods varied so much from place to place and changed over time, but that Varro ultimately had to conclude that,

> if the Romans had decided in their wisdom to represent their gods in human form, there was nothing left but to comply. The message which the *Antiquitates Divinae* intended to convey was that state religion had to be taken as it was found. What mattered was to preserve it. …Civic religion was ultimately not a matter of truth but of civic cohesion: the Romans owed their empire to their own piety (1984:203).

Varro certainly recognized the role that religion can play in a functioning society and, in particular, its centrality in the organization of the Roman political system. After all, Varro devoted most of the *Antiquitates Divinae* to urban matters like the role of pontiffs and augurs, cult buildings, festivals, and so forth, leaving only three out of sixteen sections for discussion of the gods as such.

Cicero expresses gratitude to Varro for his work investigating Rome's past and notes how important it was for orienting Roman identity in their own era: he says "we were meandering and wandering around like visitors in our own city and your books led us back home, as it were, so we could understand something about who and where we were" (*Acad. post.* 1.3). Momigliano saw Varro's work, particularly the *Antiquitates Divinae*, as highly influential on Cicero's religious thought and goes so far as to conclude that Cicero developed a profound skepticism regarding the existence of the gods and the practice of divination as a result of reading Varro's work (1984:204-5). Whereas Momigliano assumes that Varro was supporting Caesar's religious program and sees Cicero reacting against that effort, however, I think it is wise to treat both authors as skeptical of the traditional modes of belief and worship, at least by this point in their

lives. The role (or lack thereof) of the gods in the *De Re Rustica* supports this reading of Varro's religious program.

In the *De Re Rustica,* Varro hardly ever mentions the gods when one might expect them to appear. This stands in stark contrast to the tradition begun by Hesiod, for whom, as Stephanie Nelson puts it, "advice on how to be a successful farmer is also, necessarily, advice on honoring and obeying the gods" (1998:108). The gods remain an important presence in agricultural texts after Hesiod: when Xenophon lists the reasons one should farm, for example, he includes the production of goods with which to propitiate the gods (*Oec*. 5.2-3). This does not seem to be a concern for Varro or his interlocutors: they do mention that certain agricultural products are dedicated to certain deities—they note the fact that pigs are sacrificed to Ceres (2.4.9; 3.1.5) and figs to Rumina (2.11.5)—but they never *encourage* these practices, explain *how* the rituals should be conducted, or recommend that estate owners raise certain animals or grow certain crops for use in rituals.[187]

Cato the Elder—whose *De Agricultura* is the only extant Roman agronomical work that precedes Varro's—does incorporate worship of the gods as a necessary component of farming. Cato assumes that religious worship is a feature of daily activities on the farm, as when he says that the master, upon arriving at the farmstead and *paying respects to the household gods*, should go on to inspect the entire estate (2.1). Among the myriad tasks Cato assigns to the *vilicus*, he is to make sure that the holy feast days are observed (5.1).

[187] Kronenberg notes that throughout the work "religion seems to be introduced more for the sake of intellectual curiosity than serious reverence, and even the opening hymn to the agricultural gods reads more like an anthropological commentary on the creation of religion than an actual religious invocation" (2009:96-7). Momigliano mentions Varro's rare quality of combining deep knowledge of respect for tradition (which he certainly possessed towards Roman religious institutions and rituals) with an ability to play with these elements in his own work: "It was highly unusual to find a man who knew so much about the traditions of Rome and had such genuine respect for them, and yet was a recognizable freethinker with a taste for satire and wit" (1984:204).

Even more strikingly, Cato offers specific prescriptions for the timing of certain religious rituals, what offerings should be made and in what order, and even the particular words one should recite to each deity. To ensure the health of one's cows, Cato says, one should make an offering to Mars Silvanus in the forest during the daytime, dedicating specified amounts of grain, meat, and wine for each head of cattle; a slave or a freeman may perform this offering but no women may be present (83). This ritual is timed according to seasonal markers (the blooming of the pear tree) and farm operations: the spring plowing should begin as soon as the feast has been offered (50.2, 131).[188] Jupiter Dapalis receives his own offerings as part of this ritual, and Cato cautions the reader to adhere to religious protocols when performing it, lest he should contaminate the offering (*Iovi caste profanato sua contagione*, 132.1-2). After this ritual, one may plant garlic, millet, and similar crops. Before harvesting certain crops, Cato says, one should sacrifice a sow to Ceres; this ritual involves first giving prayers, incense, and wine to Janus, Jupiter, and Juno (134). Cato gives specific formulae to recite when making these religious offerings, most commonly involving a request for the deities to be gracious and merciful to the farmer's family and household.

Varro, on the other hand, does not mention observance of the household gods or of feast days on the farm. Aside from sporadic mentions throughout the *De Re Rustica,* the only place the gods appear in Varro's text is in an invocation in the proem to Book 1.[189] There Varro portrays select deities with particular agricultural functions more as abstract forces of nature than as

[188] Varro also mentions the pear tree's blooming as a marker for particular farm activity (closing off the meadows from grazing) but there is no intervening or corresponding religious ritual (1.37.5).

[189] The scattered minor references include the names 'Lympha' and 'Neptune' to represent fresh and salt water, respectively, at 3.17.2, the assertion that Roman ancestors called the earth 'Ceres' and 'mother' and thought that people who tended it were the sole remaining descendants of Saturn (and led a pious and useful life) at 3.1.5, and the references to the actions of Jupiter and Neptune as evidence of the *dignitas* or *maiestas* of certain animals in mythology (see below). Appius also says that honey, since it is very sweet, is acceptable to gods and men (3.16.5).

anthropomorphized figures with any real agency or decision-making power of their own. He begins by presenting Jupiter and Tellus as a pair, representing sky and earth and, allegorically, the father and mother of living things on earth (1.1.5). The term "father" here denotes the aerial or watery feature of nature that, when paired with earth, produces life; Varro is speaking of Jupiter more as an abstract force of insemination and fertility than as the paternal figure of myth who makes decisions about life for humans below.

We can better understand Varro's presentation of Jupiter and Tellus in the *De Re Rustica* by examining his thoughts on these entities in his other works. In *De Lingua Latina*, Varro states that the first gods were Sky and Earth (*principes dei Caelum et Terra*)—known in Egypt as Serapis and Isis and in Latium as Saturn and Ops (5.57).[190] He goes on to specify that these are male and female entities (*mas et femina*, 5.58) and to describe them as equivalent to *anima* and *corpus*, since the earth, like the body, is damp and cool, while the mind is associated with the warmth and fire of the sun (5.59). By mixing these two elements, nature produces life (*per hos natura frigori miscet calorem*, 5.60). Citing Ennius and Pacuvius for support, Varro further elaborates on Caelum as the fertilizing male force in nature and Terra as the receptive female body (5.60).[191] Both elements—fire and water—are essential for procreation, both in the larger sense of nature producing new life in springtime and in the specific case of human conception, where Venus functions as the "binding force" (*vinctionis vis*) between the male seed and the female womb (5.61). Varro collapses several female deities into one aspect of nature when he

[190] See also *De Lingua Latina* 5.58 for the Great Gods of Samothrace not as Castor and Pollux, but as *terra* and *caelum* (Van Nuffelen 2010:177).

[191] On a related note, see Guthrie 1957:49 for the idea that female animals could be impregnated by the wind, which is related to Anaximenes' soul-as-air (and air-as-god). Varro mentions that there is an incredible story from Spain that mares there can be impregnated by the wind (2.1.19).

explains that Ops *is* Terra Mater and also Ceres (5.64) and that Caelum and Terra are the same as Jupiter and Juno (*idem hi dei Caelum et Terra Iupiter et Iuno*, 5.65).

Could Varro have named Jupiter and Juno in his invocation at the beginning of *De Re Rustica*, instead of Jupiter and Tellus? Varro did sometimes use the name 'Juno' as analogous to 'Tellus': as Augustine says (regarding the Samothracian Mysteries), "Varro wishes it to be understood that Jupiter is the heaven, Juno the earth, and Minerva the Forms" (*De Civ. D.* 7.28 = Varro *ARD* frag. 206; see Van Nuffelen 2010:171). I suggest that the inclusion of Juno in the proem to *De Re Rustica* would have made it seem too much like a royal affair—Varro would appear to invoke the King and Queen of gods and men instead of Father and Mother of the natural world.[192] Indeed Varro explains the traditional regal associations of Jupiter and Juno in *De Lingua Latina* when he states that Jupiter/Caelum is called *pater* and *rex* because all things come from him and are 'under him' (*quod hinc omnes et sub hoc*, 5.65), while Juno/Terra/Tellus is called *regina* because "all earthly things are hers" (*quod huius omnia terrestria*, 5.67). An invocation of deities with royal associations would be out of place in the *De Re Rustica*, given how Varro prioritizes direct interactions between humans and the natural world with no real interference or assistance from the gods. It would also contradict Varro's stated claim that he will *not* invoke "those gods of the city" (*neque tamen eos urbanos*, 1.1.4).

A reference to *caelum ac terra* soon after the proem strengthens my reading: these two features of nature are said to be under the *potestas* of nature (1.4.4). Thus *natura* is the overarching, all-encompassing entity; 'Jupiter' is just one name (of many) for a particular feature of nature, just like the other *duces agricolarum* Varro lists in the proem. Varro was obligated to

[192] See also Fr. 2 of Varro's *Curio de Cultu Deorum*, where Jupiter is the world (which both emits and receives all seeds); Tellus is identified as mother of the gods at August. *De Civ. D.* 7.24 = Varro *ARD* frag. 267 (Van Nuffelen 2010:179).

invoke *some* deities in order to start the work off on the right foot; it seems that he wanted to be sure his reader did not project the traditional Olympian dozen onto his endeavor. The remaining 'gods' that Varro invokes in the proem are Sun & Moon (their *tempora* are observed for planting and harvesting), Ceres & Liber (they provide food and drink), Robigus & Flora (i.e., Blight and Blossom), Minerva & Venus (for the olive grove and garden, respectively), and Lympha & Bonus Eventus (1.1.5-7). All of this is evidence that Varro is taking these names very loosely and treating the 'gods' as allegorical representations of attributes of nature, not as real, individual entities with separate wills.

In the *De Re Rustica,* Varro does not seem to be burdened with explaining away the gods—he simply presents a particular version of them tailored for this specific context without justifying it extensively—because he recognized that different kinds of theology are appropriate for different situations and serve different purposes. Varro famously articulated three different kinds of theology: the *genus physicum* (i.e., natural theology, the realm of philosophers), the *genus mythicum* (i.e. mythical theology, which is proper to the poets), and *genus civile* (i.e. civic theology, the responsibility of legislators) (Augustine *De civ. D.* 2.1).[193] Varro's invocation of the twelve agricultural deities in the proem of the *De Re Rustica* does not belong to just one of these categories: it has a share in all three. The invocation is an example of philosophical theology in the sense of representing forces of nature, it is poetic in the sense of setting the generic mood for a literary work, and it is civic in the sense of maintaining order in society by acknowledging traditional deities in some capacity. None of these functions implies *belief* on Varro's part nor any hope for fulfillment.

[193] Boyancé shows that this tripartite division was not Varro's original idea, but a Stoic one going back at least to Panaetius (1972:254). On the tripartite division in Varro generally, see also Momigliano 1984:202, Pépin 1956, and Liebeschuetz 1979:36-7.

Varro's disregard for the role that authors of agricultural texts traditionally granted to the gods is all the more striking when one compares the *De Re Rustica* to Vergil's *Georgics*, which continues the Hesiodic tradition of crediting (or blaming) Zeus/Jupiter for making life difficult for human beings. Nelson contrasts the particular reason for this action in these two authors (Hesiod and Vergil) as follows:

> Hesiod's Zeus gave human beings hardship because he was angry at Prometheus. Vergil's Jupiter made life hard because he saw that the ease of the Golden Age would lead to sloth, and that hardship, by sharpening our wits, would in the end prove better for us (1.121-24). Jupiter made farming difficult in order to awaken human intelligence (1998:111).

Kronenberg notes that "the divinities are presented as having a tangible effect on the farmer's life" throughout Book 1 of the *Georgics* (2009:134). Vergil's representation of the gods and their role in human life is by no means uncomplicated, but the fact remains that they do play a major part. Varro, by contrast to Hesiod, Cato, and Vergil, gives Jupiter and the other gods basically no role whatsoever in human interactions with the natural world, neither in the development of agriculture in the early stages of human history nor in his farmers' continuing endeavors to work the land and produce crops. Rather than react against and reimagine Hesiod's conception, as Vergil does, Varro eschews the tradition almost entirely. With so many agricultural deities in the Roman pantheon and with so many of the Olympians having agricultural roles, why do the gods lack any kind of intermediary role in the *De Re Rustica*, helping humans get what they want out of nature, or, conversely, frustrating their efforts? By virtually eliminating the gods from the

conversation, Varro leaves human beings alone as the agents of their own success or demise as they grapple with the conditions that *natura* offers them.[194]

Part 2: Human Interactions with Nature

Varro's Historical View of Agriculture

Varro demonstrates a special interest not in the static past but in the dynamic development of agricultural innovations throughout human history. He is at least as interested in the historical trajectory of agriculture in the past and future as he is in current 'best practices.' Throughout the three books of the *RR*, Varro's character frequently cedes the speaking position to other interlocutors when the topic at hand is some specific form of agricultural knowledge, but he keeps the history lessons for himself. For example, at the beginning of Book 2 Varro says that he will address the *origo* and the *dignitas* of animal husbandry, but he will leave the *ars* to Scrofa (2.1.2). Thus Varro and his interlocutors complement each other's strengths: while Varro is the expert on historical matters, others may have better expertise when it comes to particular agricultural practices. These men all have something to contribute to the conversation; their collective efforts combine to form the treatise.

Varro takes at least one opportunity in each book of the *De Re Rustica* to give his audience a history lesson on the evolution of an aspect of human life in relation to nature and

[194] Varro also acknowledges in the *De Re Rustica* that myths are human constructs: Appius says that, just as people have assigned Helicon and Olympus to the Muses, nature has assigned the blossoming and untilled mountains to the bees (*ut his dis Helicona atque Olympon adtribuerunt homines, sic his floridos et incultos natura adtribuit montes*, 3.16.7). The crucial point here is that Appius did not say, "bees are associated with the Muses because both groups live on mountaintops," but rather framed the bees' dwelling as the product of nature, and the Muses' dwelling as the product of human imagination. The Muses do not live on Helicon and Olympus because that is their natural home, but because humans assigned those places to them as part of their mythology.

agriculture.[195] In Book 1, for example, when claiming that agriculture is subordinate to pastoralism because it came later, he cites Dicaearchus,

> …qui Graeciae vita qualis fuerit ab initio nobis ita ostendit, ut superioribus temporibus fuisse doceat, cum homines pastoriciam vitam agerent neque scirent etiam arare terram aut serere arbores aut putare; ab iis inferiore gradu aetatis susceptam agri culturam. Quocirca ea succinit pastorali, quod est inferior…(1.2.16)

> …who teaches us what sort of life the Greeks had, starting at the beginning. He explains how it was in the earlier times, when humans led a pastoral life and did not even know how to plow the earth or plant trees or to prune; and that agriculture was taken up by them at a later stage in time. [Agriculture] therefore plays second fiddle to pastoralism…

Thus Varro introduces the theme of the historical development of human interactions with nature very early in the work as a whole, highlighting Dicaearchus' theory that the earliest humans engaged in pastoralism before the invention of agriculture proper. In Book 2, Varro returns to the topic of the stages in which humans developed agricultural practices over a long period of time. He explains that it is a necessity of nature that animals and humans have always existed and, again citing Dicaearchus, specifies that human life has evolved by stages to the current one (*gradatim descendisse ad hanc aetatem*).[196] He continues by detailing how the human diet changed over time and people adopted new and different lifestyles:

> ...et summum gradum fuisse naturalem, cum viverent homines ex his rebus, quae inviolata ultro ferret terra, ex hac vita in secundam

[195] My purpose in this immediate section is to demonstrate that Varro was interested in the development over time of agricultural practices and other important changes to the way that humans have lived on earth and interacted with their natural environment. For more detailed analyses of the passages that follow, in which Varro draws on Dicaearchus' stage theory, see Della Corte 1976, Noe 1977, and Saunders 2001. For ancient theories of early human history generally and notions of progress, see also Blundell 1986, Brown 1998, Cole 1967, Edelstein 1967, and Guthrie 1957.

[196] The Latin is as follows: *Igitur, inquam, et homines et pecudes cum semper fuisse sit necesse natura…* It is possible to take *natura* as "by their nature" which is the sense in which Varro uses *natura* in reference to sheep in the part of the passage that I replaced with ellipses: *maxime enim hae natura quietae et aptissimae ad vitam hominum.* This interpretation does not significantly affect my analysis.

> descendisse pastoriciam, e feris atque agrestibus ut arboribus ac virgultis decarpendo glandem, arbutum, mora, poma colligerent ad usum, sic ex animalibus cum propter eandem utilitatem, quae possent, silvestria deprenderent ac concluderent et mansuescerent. …Tertio denique gradu a vita pastoriali ad agri culturam descenderunt, in qua ex duobus gradibus superioribus retinuerunt multa, et quo descenderant, ibi processerunt longe, dum ad nos perveniret (2.1.3-5).
>
> …and [as Dicaearchus writes,] that the earliest stage was the natural one, when humans lived off of these things which the earth, unharmed, bore willingly. From this life they descended into the pastoral one, in which they plucked acorns, arbutus berries, mulberries, and other fruits from wild and rustic trees and thickets, and from the animals (on account of their usefulness) they caught and closed up and tamed whichever wild ones they could. …Finally in the third stage they descended from the pastoral life to agriculture, in which they retained many things from the previous two stages, and after they had descended to that stage, there they proceeded for a long time, until they reached ours.[197]

Thus Varro considers the age in which he and his contemporaries live to be the fourth in the series, following earlier stages of 1) a "natural" life characterized by localized consumption of whatever the earth offered, 2) a "pastoral" period characterized by people gathering fruits and nuts and also domesticating certain animal species, likely conducted along with nomadic wandering, and 3) the development of agriculture. It is noteworthy that Varro does not conceive of people leaving behind one stage in order to move on to the next; rather, he specifies that people in the agricultural period also retained many aspects of the two earlier stages (*ex duobus gradibus superioribus retinuerunt multa*, 2.1.5). The current stage in which Varro and his

[197] Porphyry gives a similar account, saying that Dicaearchus described the earliest people of Greece as naturally good and living the best kind of life, finding what they needed for nourishment among the gifts of the earth and not needing to kill animals for food. Dicaearchus, like Hesiod, set this time in the reign of Kronos/Saturn (*De Abst*. 4.2ff.)

contemporaries live is characterized by the combination of *all* of the practices developed at earlier times.[198]

Varro completes this timeline and elaborates on the fourth stage in Book 3, where he explains what happened after humans had lived by means of agriculture and pastoralism for "an immeasurable number of years" (*immani numero annorum*):

> Quod tempus si referas ad illud principium, quo agri coli sunt coepti atque in casis et tuguriis habitabant nec murus et porta quid esset sciebant, immani numero annorum urbanos agricolae praestant. Nec mirum, quod divina natura dedit agros, ars humana aedificavit urbes, cum artes omnes dicantur in Graecia intra mille annorum repertae, agri numquam non fuerint in terris qui coli possint (3.1.3).
>
> If you compare that time period [i.e. the 2,100 years that Thebes has existed] to that first one in which the fields began to be cultivated and people were living in huts and cottages and did not know what a wall or a gate was, farmers predate urban people by an immeasurable number of years. Nor is it a marvel, because divine nature gave us the fields, and human art built the cities; since all arts are said to have been discovered in Greece within a thousand years, but there were never not fields on the earth which were able to be cultivated.

Varro here presents his modern age of science and urban life as a recent development within the broader scope of human history: only in relatively recent history, by Varro's account, have humans applied *ars* to the types of construction that one finds in and around cities—i.e., walls and gates—thus protecting (and distancing) themselves from the natural world upon which they relied in the earlier stages. Varro does not explicitly emphasize this final point—that human ingenuity can create distance between humans and nature—but his choice of a wall and a gate

[198] In a forthcoming article titled "Varro, Dicaearchus, and the History of Roman *res rusticae*," Nelsestuen argues that the fourth stage of human existence is the *vita urbana* that Varro and his contemporaries experience; this is a life that is different from the previous stages because of the introduction of *pastio villatica* (i.e., the subject of Book 3 of the *De Re Rustica*).

(*murus et porta*) as pieces of technology that were unfamiliar to people in the earliest stage of human life demonstrates his attention to the increasing ability of people to close themselves off from one another and from the world outside their habitations.

Varro's interest in early human history and the evolution of human interactions with their natural environment is certainly not limited to the *De Re Rustica.* In *De Lingua Latina,* Varro describes the development of different foodstuffs in the distant past: when people were no longer satisfied with the foods that nature offered of her own accord without the need for fire—things like tree fruits—they started cooking things that they could not easily consume in their raw form, like hard root vegetables (*dein posteaquam desierunt esse contenti his quae suapte natura ferebat sine igne, in quo erant poma, quae minus cruda esse poterant decoquebant in olla,* 5.108). Next, people began eating domesticated animals according to a certain progression: Varro tells us that 'nature teaches' (*natura docet*) that people first cooked meat by roasting, then by boiling, and third by stewing it in its own juices (5.109). Romans of Varro's own day continued to acquire and process food by all of these methods; thus, the history of human interactions with the natural world in terms of diet is a process of *accumulation* and an expansion of available resources, not of transitioning from one way of life to a wholly new one.

A Human-Nature Partnership

In the *De Re Rustica,* humans must heed the dictates of nature, but can use knowledge (obtained from experts and from their own experimentation) and diligent care to mitigate the conditions of their local environment. In this section I examine Varro's treatment of nature's agency and of human agency in relation to the natural world, i.e., how humans work with nature's gifts to shape the world around them in the process of practicing agriculture and animal

husbandry. There is a wide range of possibilities in how humans can exercise their will on what nature offers as a baseline, but Varro's model ultimately encourages partnership with nature more than domination of it. As I showed in the previous section, Varro's conception of human history assumes an ongoing process of innovation, but we do not completely leave the 'natural' state of things in the past. Varro and his interlocutors tend to criticize those who go too far in separating themselves off from nature or in making changes to nature that are too drastic. The recurring themes of moderation and integration with nature contribute to a picture of humanity within the natural world that is quasi-ecological.[199]

Whereas Kronenberg sees Scrofa's farming techniques as containing an "implied optimism towards mankind's ability to impose order on the chaotic external world," an optimism which turns out to be shortsighted, given the "serious limitations on the ability of the agricultural art to control the natural world" that arise in Book 1, I disagree with this framing of Varro's (or Scrofa's) project as being centered on "control" or an effort to "impose order" in the first place (2009:90). Kronenberg implies that Varro's inclusion of "Good Outcome" in his invocation to agricultural deities (1.1.7; see page 196, above) is an example of his supposedly destructive tendencies: she brings up the appearance of Good Outcome in the middle of a paragraph where she begins by claiming that "the world of chance decisively gains the upper hand" in Book 1, and concludes that,

> *Ratio* is not enough to ensure control over the haphazard world of nature. However, *religio* does not necessarily fill the void left by

[199] Perhaps Varro was influenced by Theophrastus' representation of plant communities: as Hughes explains, Theophrastus "did not consider plants only as individuals, but investigated the effects that they exercise on one another when growing in groups, thus taking a step towards the concept of the ecosystem….He also described how plants compete or cooperate with, and parasitize, one another, and their interactions with animals. He was particularly interested in the process of cultivation and human effects on plants in general, including extinctions and the impact of removing vegetation on climate. More than half of Theophrastus's botanical writings deal with ecological observations" (2014:61).

> ratio, and the gods never helpfully intervene in the course of the dialogue; rather, it simply becomes clear why there is a human *need* for the divine (2009:91).

Kronenberg seems to be saying that Varro included Bonus Eventus in the invocation at least in part to foreshadow his supposedly unsatisfying portrayal of human interactions with the natural environment, in which, in Kronenberg's view, humans struggle and fail to impose order on nature, and in which the gods are apparently present but nevertheless do not bother to intervene. My reading, on the other hand, assumes that Varro portrays human interactions with nature from the beginning more as a partnership than a master-slave dynamic; there is no need, in my reading, for gods to interfere in this arrangement, which humans have been managing fairly well since early in their history.[200]

At several points in the *De Re Rustica*, Varro and his interlocutors pair nature's gifts with the products of human knowledge and labor. When explaining how one should evaluate the quality of a piece of land, Scrofa clarifies that soil has two *formae*: one given by nature, and one imposed on the land by those who cultivate it (*una quam natura dat, altera quam sationes imponunt*, 1.6.1). In the first place, Scrofa goes on to say, soil can be 'born' (*natus*) either well or badly; in the second, the farmer can do either a good or a bad job at planting it. This goes to a larger point Scrofa had made in a preceding passage when he cautioned his friends that the climate and soil (*caelum ac terra*) of a place are in nature's power, not ours (*non est in nostra potestate, sed in naturae*), but that we can lessen the risk of death and destruction through *scientia* and *diligentia* (1.4.4). In both of these examples, humans must deal with the conditions

[200] Additionally, the "gods" as Varro portrays them in the invocation are not the kind of anthropomorphized deities that go around interfering with or aiding human endeavors in the first place; they are simply different aspects of nature.

that nature offers them, but they can take steps to make a plot of land more amenable to their needs.[201]

By Varro's time, human ingenuity and industry had yielded myriad new varieties of plants and animals domesticated from wild antecedents. Echoing Scrofa's explanation of the two *formae* of soil, Stolo describes two types of seeds: those that nature gave, and those that farmers had subsequently developed from these original seeds through experimentation (*primigenia semina dedit natura, reliqua invenit experientia coloni*, 1.40.2). The first kind sprouted (*nata*) without the intervention of a farmer, while the second, having been collected from these original seeds, came about only after the invention of sowing (*prima quae sine colono, priusquam sata, nata; secunda quae ex iis colecta neque, priusquam sata, nata*, 1.40.2).[202] Cossinius recognizes a similar process of domestication in the sphere of animals when he notes that the sheep and goats that he and his contemporaries own are descended from wild versions of these animals, which can still be seen in certain locales (2.3.3). Like the accumulation of different ways of life that Varro explained in his telling of the early stages of human life, in these examples we see that the 'natural' or wild version of plants and animals were not *replaced* by human invention; the original version and the newer one coexist as part of the world that humans inhabit. Humans have *contributed* something to nature by amending soils and by domesticating new types of

[201] Herodotus and those following the Hippocratic School similarly sought rational (rather than divine) explanations for health and disease, and so considered the nature of the winds, sunlight, and swamps, and the positioning of houses relative to these natural features (Glacken 1967:8). Varro follows in this tradition of using human design to align one's operations with the beneficial aspects of nature and to mitigate any potential harm. One result is the reduced role of the gods in matters of sickness and health: scientific understanding and scientific solutions make the gods less relevant in these circumstances.

[202] Both of these fall under the category of "those which nature gave" (as opposed to practices like transplanting root slips and grafting) (1.39.3). Stolo discusses seed selection—setting aside the largest and best grains for the following year's planting—again at 1.52.1.

plants and animals; there is no need to characterize these practices as efforts to *control* nature or impose order on it.

Shortly after saying that nature awarded first prize in beauty to the peacock over all other birds (*natura formae…dedit palmam*, 3.6.2), Merula notes that Q. Hortensius is credited with being the first to serve the animal at dinner (3.6.6). Merula does not present this development in the same explicit formulation as we have seen in the examples above of Scrofa and Stolo discussing the domestication of plants and animals from their wild counterparts, though the basic notion that humans innovate on what nature offers is still present. Nature is responsible for creating the peacock's beauty, but human experimentation (within certain economic parameters for specific social ends) led to its use as an edible foodstuff. Unlike the examples above, however, this is an innovation in consumption, not production, and is included not as part of the history of humans domesticating animals in Book 2, but in Book 3 along with the development of lavish food-related habits among elite Romans in recent decades. Whereas in the examples above humans contributed to their natural environment by creating new versions of wild plants or animals, the innovator in this example merely took something that Nature offered and found a new use for it, with the goal of making a profit.[203] This deed of Hortensius does not win the admiration of the interlocutors: Merula mentions that the innovation garnered praise not from the virtuous, but from those who value luxury (3.6.6).

Wild animals and plants and soils are still present in the human world, and there is no clear agenda or stated goal in the *De Re Rustica* of changing that fact, i.e., of converting as many natural spaces and animals as possible into human-designed ones. The inclusion of statements of

[203] Peacocks were not 'domesticated' in the true sense; Carin Green notes that they were included in the *Digest* (1.2ff) in the legal category of wild animals that belong to a person only as long as he can keep them in his possession (1997:437).

what 'nature gave' and what humans subsequently do with those gifts has more to do with recognizing the dual agency at play in the world, and the historical role that humans have played in shaping the world around them.[204] This is true for the current 'best practices' in agriculture that Varro's interlocutors offer throughout the *De Re Rustica*, as well as for the historical periods he addresses in the prefaces to each book. In the preface to Book 3, after reiterating his earlier claim that pastoralism predated agriculture, Varro reports the belief that all human arts were developed by the Greeks only within the last millennium, but that there was never a time without tillable fields (3.1.4). The fields had been sitting, available for eventual human intervention, since the beginning of time; only in relatively recent history had humans learned how to use them to their advantage. Varro explicitly combines what nature offers and what humans subsequently achieve when he says that divine nature produced the fields, while human technology (*ars*) built cities (*divina natura dedit agros, ars humana aedificavit urbes*, 3.1.4). The environment that Varro and his interlocutors inhabit includes both types of space: cities and fields; thus human invention and experimentation coexist with nature's gifts.

Imitation and Experimentation

The examples of human interactions with nature that I describe in the section above are more descriptive than prescriptive. In this section I examine the implications of one particular passage where Varro advocates for a particular approach to human use of nature. In Book 1 of *De Re Rustica*, Varro advocates the use of *imitatio et experientia* in conjunction with each other for the purpose of acquiring and developing knowledge about effective agricultural practices.

[204] The most common construction Varro and his interlocutors use to express this agency is the phrase *natura dedit*, but nature appears as the subject of other verbs and as the agent of specific actions, such as when Stolo says that there are two factors that influence root growth: "nature thrusts" (*natura proicit*) one kind of wood farther than another; and one kind of soil gives way more easily than another (1.45.3).

The specific context is advice for calculating how many slaves and other pieces of "equipment" one should acquire for a particular plot of land (1.18.1ff.). Varro and his interlocutors agree that there are faults with both Cato's and Saserna's methods of calculation (1.18.1-6). Instead of applying a simple mathematical formula to the problem, Scrofa suggests a three-part method: observe how large and of what sort neighboring farms are, take note of how many people they retain in order to tend it, and then add or subtract based on the different characteristics of your land compared to theirs (1.18.7). He goes on to generalize the application of this methodology and to put it within an historical context:

> Bivium nobis enim ad culturam dedit natura, experientiam et imitationem. Antiquissimi agricolae temptando pleraque constituterunt, liberi eorum magnam partem imitando. Nos utrumque facere debemus, et imitari alios et aliter ut faciamus experientia temptare quaedam, sequentes non aleam, sed rationem aliquam: ut si altius repastinaverimus aut minus quam alii…(1.18.7-8)
>
> For nature has given to us two paths to *cultura*: experimentation and imitation. The most ancient farmers established very many things by trying [something new]; their children the great portion of these by imitating. We ought to do both: both to imitate others and to try certain things in another way by experimentation, following not chance but some system: so if we re-plow a field deeper or less deep than others do…

In this particular passage, Scrofa applies the terms *imitatio et experientia* to the complementary acts of copying someone or something else—that is, reproducing something that has proven to be successful—while also inventing something new. It also has to do with making use of previous models or authorities while also trusting one's own firsthand experience and expertise. It is not enough to pick up a manual like the ones that Cato and Saserna provide and follow their advice to the letter; one must also pay attention to their immediate surroundings and try new things. The earliest people did not have models like Cato and Saserna to follow; their only option was to

experiment. The generations that followed, by Scrofa's account, apparently did not do enough to innovate on the inventions of their ancestors. Scrofa encourages his audience not too lose sight of either of these methods of engaging with the natural world and with each other, but to make use of both of the "paths" that nature has given (*bivium nobis enim ad culturam dedit natura*, 1.18.7).

The conjunction of these terms, *imitatio et experientia*, refers to positioning oneself within a past tradition while also looking to the future. This pair of terms appropriately describes much of Varro's entire project with the *De Re Rustica* and provides a concise way of summarizing how he views humans interacting with nature—and with each other—on many levels. As I will show in the pages that follow, they provide a useful lens for considering the rest of the *De Re Rustica* and Varro's prescriptions for human interactions with nature through the medium of agriculture.

The creation and publication of *De Re Rustica* is itself an example of integrating *imitatio* and *experientia* within the agronomical tradition, with Varro positioning himself in the historical progress of the field.[205] He draws on previous authors and includes advice from his friends, but he also experiments with a new format for agricultural writing: a didactic treatise with satirical elements presented through quasi-philosophical dialogue framed as an epistle to his wife. Indeed, the dialogue format of *De Re Rustica* makes it an exercise in this very process of acquiring knowledge through speaking with experts, and Varro claims to have gained his own knowledge of agriculture as a result of *imitatio* and *experientia*, though he does not use these exact terms in this part of the work. In the introduction to Book 1, which he addresses to his wife, Fundania, he states that his knowledge comes from three sources: that which he has learned himself on his

[205] See McAlhany 4-8 for a discussion of the extent of Varro's originality in form and content over a variety of works, including comment on *imitatio* and *interpretatio*.

own farms (i.e., through *experientia*), that which he has read (i.e., a kind of *imitatio*), and that which he has heard from experts (another form of *imitatio*) (1.1.11).[206] In the introduction to Book 1 he says he will "attempt" (*experiar*) to explain how to manage a farm effectively, and expresses his intention that the work will survive after his death and will continue to be of service to his loved ones when he himself cannot be (1.1.2). Between that stated intention and the reference to the Sibyl that closely follows it,[207] it is fair to say that Varro positions himself in the literary and agricultural traditions as a recipient of past knowledge with an eye to the future (1.1.2-3). This attitude towards the literary tradition mirrors his attitude toward agricultural endeavors. Hughes argues that the body of knowledge possessed by subsistence farmers, unlike many areas of ancient knowledge and theory, could be successful in environmental conservation. Through a process of trial and error, farmers had developed practices that "often reflected successful adaptations to the ecosystems in which they had to live or perish. They took fairly good care of the land as long as their lives were not disrupted by war, which was unfortunately often" (2014:66). This is exactly the body of knowledge that, I argue, Varro wants to preserve and to which he hopes to contribute.

The movement through the three books of the *De Re Rustica*—from raising crops in Book 1 to tending herds in Book 2 to building artificial environments for 'specialty' animals in Book 3—roughly follows a movement from imitation of nature to experimentation on it. The application of *imitatio* and *experientia* in the area of human knowledge, however, remains

[206]*Ea erunt ex radicibus trinis, et quae ipse meis fundis colendo animadverti, et quae legi, et quae a peritis audii.* The pun "from three sources/roots" is significant in that his knowledge comes, ultimately, like all human knowledge, from nature.

[207] Varro puts himself on a level with the Sibyl: her prophecies continue to help people she never knew; therefore he cannot let it be the case that he does not offer help, after his own death, to people who are dear to him in life (1.1.3). If Varro is the Sibyl in this analogy, his friends and kin are the *quindecimviri*; perhaps not incidentally, Varro's reference to the Sibylline Oracles thus invokes a political religious ritual. For more on this kind of public divination, see Liebeschuetz 1979:7-8.

roughly the same, with individuals being encouraged to study the knowledge and experience of those who came before them and to try their own innovations in order to yield a better crop, or breed a better sheep, or design a better aviary. In this section, I will briefly address how these terms apply to agricultural practices in the three books of *De Re Rustica*; I will return to a broader application of these concepts in this chapter's conclusion.

There is a sizeable shift over the course of the *De Re Rustica* in terms of the balance between adjusting one's own behavior to the dictates of nature as opposed to changing nature to meets one's own desires. In the first book, Varro and his interlocutors frequently return to the idea that a successful farmer must observe the natural conditions of his plot of land and adjust his practices to the particular demands of the soil he has at his disposal, the plants he wished to grow, and the season in which he does his work.[208] Farmers can reduce the likelihood of disaster and can improve growing conditions and yield better crops, but they must do so in accordance with natural factors outside of his control. The shepherds in Book 2 must also pay heed to the demands of nature, but they can exercise a bit more control over their immediate environment: they build shelters to house their flocks, and they alter the animals themselves through selective breeding. In Book 3, however, Varro shifts his focus to landowners who either drastically change the landscape or create new artificial environments cordoned off from the rest of the natural world.

[208] Varro echoes Hesiod's *Works and Days* in this respect; Hesiod's successful farmer, following the signs that nature provides, begins to plow when he sees the crane fly overhead (*WD* 450-2). Since farming, for Hesiod, is a cyclical struggle to eke out a living through careful observation and hard labor, these signs dictate not only specific actions a farmer should take, but also his emotional state: the same crane-sign "gnaws at the heart of a man lacking oxen" (κραδίην δ' ἔδακ' ἀνδρὸς ἀβούτεω, *WD* 152). As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Varro and his interlocutors seem rather more secure in their resources than the type of man Hesiod was addressing; accordingly, for Varro, observing nature and figuring out how to adapt to it in the most productive way is more of an intellectual pursuit than a key to survival.

The farmers Varro and his interlocutors describe in Book 1 can enhance nature's productivity by draining fields, amending soil, and grafting plants, but they must do so according to the dictates of nature: in the proper season, in alignment with the winds, in accordance with a particular plant's 'preferences,' and so forth. A good farmer must adapt his behavior to the seasonal changes, which he can figure out by observing the moon, the sun, and certain plants. Celestial bodies provide crucial information for the farmer: when listing the most important agricultural deities, Varro invokes Sol and Luna, "whose courses are observed when each crop is sown and harvested," second only to Jupiter and Tellus (1.1.5). Scrofa includes understanding the proper season for each operation as one of the four chief divisions of agricultural knowledge (1.5.3).[209] Scrofa advises that, in addition to conforming one's activities to the periods of time marked by movement of the constellations, "the lunar days (i.e. phases of the moon) must also be observed" (*dies lunares quoque observandi*, 1.36.1). A good farmer not only uses heavenly bodies to mark time, however, but also signs from the earth, as when Stolo states that the time for closing off meadows from grazing animals is usually observed by noting when the pear tree blooms (*item praeparatio siquae fit in pratis, id est ut defendantur a pastione, quod fere observant a piro florente*, 1.37.5). A farmer can also identify a shift in seasons by examining the leaves of the olive, the silver poplar, and the willow, since they turn over after the summer solstice (1.46.1). A farmer can gain invaluable information by observing the environment of his estate and the plants and animals that inhabit it, including those untouched by human ingenuity. Wild plants, for example, teach us that plants put on more growth underground during the cold

[209] White (1973:489) notes that, "Calendar material, in the form of directions for the performance of particular tasks in conformity with recurrent celestial or terrestrial phenomena, is found in all the surviving agricultural writers." See also White 1973:491 for the availability of the revised Julian calendar in Varro's time: Varro does mention it, but does not take advantage of it the way later authors (e.g. Columella and Palladius) do. His system corresponds to the Julian calendar only at the start of the four divisions. White is persuaded by Skydsgaard that Varro represents a transitional phase between old and new calendar systems (seasonal divisions and the Julian calendar).

months than they do above ground (*itaque ita esse docent silvestria, ad quae sator non accessit*, 1.45.3).

A successful farmer must also adapt his practices to the requirements of the particular piece of land he inhabits: before casting seed, Scrofa says, you must acquaint yourself with the place in terms of Ennius' four elements: *aqua, terra, anima,* and *sol* (1.4.1). A later discussion on viticulture cautions the reader on the different growing conditions in different regions and the need to adapt one's practices accordingly; one should raise vines higher in wetter soils, for example (1.8.7). One must also choose draught animals based on the type of soil one possesses and the topography of one's land (1.20.4-5).

The image that Varro presents of agriculture in Book 1 is one of adaptation to the natural world and effective management of it, not simply exploiting nature as a resource lying at the farmer's disposal. Where we do see *experientia* in Book 1 with regards to the relationship between humans and nature, the emphasis is on reciprocity and improvement of the natural landscape. Farmers can improve on nature by draining fields, amending soil, and grafting plants, for example, but they must do it according to the dictates of nature: at the proper time, in alignment with the winds (to avoid plague), and so forth. In Book 1, farmers make adjustments to the landscape, such as planting trees in quincunxes, for the purpose of helping it to be more productive (and attractive) and to prevent degradation. Scrofa credits innovations like the quincunx with enabling recent generations to produce more and better food than their ancestors had on the same amount of land (1.7.2).

Agriculture, in Varro's view, requires an element of reciprocity; one-sided exploitation of the land does not qualify as agriculture. Varro draws a distinction between those animals that give back to the land (such as oxen, by plowing) and those that only take from it (such as

domestic cattle, raised for their meat), claiming that the former category can be included within the definition of *agri cultura*, but not the latter (1.2.20). His friends disagree and point out that grazing animals produce manure, which is certainly helpful to the land, meaning that they too conform to Varro's principle of reciprocity. For similar reasons, practices such as mining do not count as *agri cultura* within the definition the interlocutors settle upon, because in mining one does not put anything back into the earth, but only extracts material from it. Varro sums up his definition of *agri cultura* thus:

> Non enim, siquid propter agrum aut etiam in agro profectus domino, agri culturae acceptum referre debet, sed id modo quod ex satione terra sit natum ad fruendum (1.2.23).
>
> For one ought not to refer to something as included in agriculture just because it was accomplished by the master on account of a field or even in a field, but only that which has been born, as a result of sowing, from the land for the sake of production.

The principle of reciprocity between humans and nature is very clear here: Varro is willing to include only those pursuits that require that humans both contribute something to the land and gain something in return. It is not enough, Varro says, for something to be carried out on land by a 'master' (*domino*); he has to have put something of his own into the land first (*ex satione*) before taking from it.

Book 2 continues this trend of farmers (or shepherds, as the case may be) adapting to nature, but here *experientia* plays a larger role in the interactions between man and nature. We see increasing attempts to manipulate and alter the natural world, such as in the explanations of how to tame animals, the need to build stables to house them, and in the process of selective breeding. Varro claims experience with herd animals as the owner of large herds of cattle, plus sheep in Apulia and horses near Reate (2.Intro.6). Nevertheless, Varro cedes the main speaking

role to an even greater expert, Scrofa (2.1.2; see also 2.1.11). Comparing his own knowledge to that of Scrofa, Varro says that he should not be assumed to be the expert just because he owns several large herds: after all, not everyone who owns a cithara should be considered a cithara-player (2.1.3). This humble admission demonstrates Varro's concern that his contemporaries should be aware of their lack of knowledge in matters of animal husbandry and work to correct it, a task which he models in the rest of Book 2 by listening to the very detailed advice that Scrofa and the other experts offer.

Scrofa, Varro, and the other experts in Book 2 offer a wealth of quite specific advice regarding buying, tending, and breeding various kinds of herd animals. Like the agricultural practices described in Book 1, which required that the farmer adapt his choices and behaviors to the dictates of nature but also allowed for some degree of experimentation, the advice in Book 2 encourages herd owners to observe their subject carefully, pay heed to the demands of particular animals and landscapes, and make incremental changes that will benefit the herd and the owner. Human experimentation on herd animals in the preceding generations has yielded a variety of breeds that may be available for purchase; Scrofa highlights the question of best breeds as one of the four topics with which one should be familiar in order to put together a sound herd (2.1.14).[210] Scrofa explains that tending animals properly requires four additional areas of knowledge: where to graze the animals, how and when to breed them, what their nutritional needs are, and how to keep them healthy (2.1.16). Throughout his longer introduction of these four topics in the sections that follow, Scrofa emphasizes the need to match particular animals with particular environments and to conduct certain operations in the appropriate season or at

[210] The other three topics in this subsection are: the best age at which to acquire a particular type of animal, the proper characteristics of each that may affect their profitability, and the legal formulae that may come into play when purchasing the animals (2.1.13-15).

specific intervals (2.1.16-23). All of these operations require careful observation of the animals themselves, the land on which they are kept, the food that is given to them, and the general climactic and seasonal conditions in which these operations occur.[211]

Book 3 shows a remarkable contrast to Books 1 and 2 in terms of the roles that *imitatio* and *experientia* play in farming and land management. By Book 3, the focus has shifted from predominantly *imitatio* to predominantly *experientia*, with descriptions of landowners who either fundamentally change the landscape or create new artificial environments that seek to replace the role of nature in human life.

As he is wont to do, Varro (this time with Merula as speaker) gives his reader a historical progression of the practice of keeping smaller animals near the home (*pastio villatica*, 3.3.5). In the first place, people brought animals from the wild into human spaces (specifically, chickens into the villa's barnyard). Next, they enclosed a part of a natural space in order to make animals more accessible (e.g. rabbits for hunting). Thirdly, people began creating new environments for animals in imitation of the natural spaces where they would normally live (namely, freshwater ponds to hold fish caught in streams). The fact that one must procure the services of three types of craftsmen—fowlers, hunters, and fishermen—in order to acquire these animals in the first place emphasizes that these are wild animals being extracted from their normal habitats (3.3.4).[212] Some animals, however, adapted *themselves* to human spaces before humans began building new, artificial environments dedicated to them: bees from the beginning have made their homes under the eaves of the villa; now there are a number of options for building hives to

[211] As in Book 1, unhealthy conditions and resulting diseases can be mitigated by various treatments (2.1.23).
[212] Merula mentions that one can acquire dormice, snails, and chickens without the services of specialized hunters. For the legal category of wild animals, see Green 1997:436-40.

house bees (from woven materials, bark, or clay, 3.3.5). A little later, Merula says that one who has wild pigeons in his turrets should try to imitate those structures as best as possible (3.7.8).

In each case, people relocate animals from the wild and give them a new environment that addresses their basic needs for food and comfort, while making them accessible for human use. The style of each kind of artificial animal home has changed over time, Merula says, with each type (aviaries, game warrens, and fishponds) having gone through two stages: an ancient stage characterized by frugality, and a modern one characterized by luxury (3.3.6). Merula laments the excessive growth and overreach of his contemporaries' building projects, complaining that "in the same luxurious manner as we have extended our warrens, our generation has thrust fish ponds into the sea and collected whole schools of deep sea fish in them" (3.3.10).[213] Nelsestuen addresses the 'misproduction' and excess of Hortensius' and Lucullus' operations and explains why they earn the disapproval of the interlocutors, concluding that, "there would seem to be an *ethics* of production somehow operative in *De Re Rustica*" and that "it is not simply a matter of obtaining the greatest possible profit and pleasure, for there is a sense of proportion that moderates—mostly implicitly, sometimes explicitly—the proprietor's operations and actions" (2015:192, 195). Noting that Merula, Varro, and Lucullus fail to meet this goal of moderation in their *pastio villatica*, Nelsestuen finds one positive exemplum in the bee-keeping operation of the Veianii brothers (2015:204-7).

[213] For the luxurious hare warrens, see 3.3.8 for people enclosing whole acres so they can keep boars and deer and 3.13.2 for the forest game preserve of Q. Hortensius, which allegedly covered 50 iugera. Axius rhetorically asks if anyone who builds one salt-water fishpond does not go on to build a whole row of them (3.17.3). For more criticism of encroaching on the sea with one's fishponds, see also Horace *Odes* 2.15.3. Scrofa, too, criticizes the villas of people like Metellus and Lucullus "which they have built to the great damage of our state" (*villis pessimo public aedificatis,* 1.13.7); for several possible interpretations of this line, see Nelsestuen 2015:196, with footnote 58.

After a lengthy discussion of the excesses of Hortensius' fishponds, Axius mentions to Varro that Lucius Lucullus supposedly cut through a mountain in order to allow his fishponds to be refreshed by the tides.

> Contra ad Neopolim L. Lucullum, posteaquam perfodisset montem ac maritumum flumen immisisset in piscinas, qui reciproce fluerent ipsae, Neptuno non cedere de piscatu. Factum esse enim ut amicos pisces suos videatur propter aestus eduxisse in loca frigidiora, ut Apuli solent pecuarii facere, qui per calles in montes Sabinos pecus ducunt (3.17.9).
>
> On the other hand [Hortensius used to say that] Lucius Lucullus, after he had channeled through a mountain near Naples and had allowed the sea current into his fishponds, and they flowed by themselves back and forth, he did not yield to Neptune concerning fishing. For it was done with the result that he seemed to have led his fish-friends, on account of the heat, into cooler places, just as Apulian shepherds, who lead their flock through the hills into the Sabine mountains, are accustomed to do.

Lucullus' actions not only reshaped the landscape itself much more drastically than any action on the part of landowners in Books 1 or 2, they also allow him to operate with complete disregard to the natural order of things. Instead of observing nature and adapting his own behavior to it, he succeeds in taming nature and having it work for him. The statement, "he did not yield to Neptune" makes this very clear. "Neptune" here does not refer to the anthropomorphized deity, but is a metonym for the sea itself and the challenges it presents to humans who venture onto it. Lucullus has not only altered the landscape by cutting through the mountain; by engineering a way to acquire fresh fish without confronting the dangers of the sea, he has fundamentally changed the relationship between himself and nature.

This passage, followed by a little more detail about Lucullus' building project, concludes the dialogue of the entire work. This may appear to be an incongruous conclusion to a work on agriculture, but in fact Varro uses the passage to wrap up several themes that he introduced

earlier in the work. In Book 1 the interlocutors seemed to agree that little could be done to address unwholesomeness or pestilence except to adapt to it, for example by situating buildings and windows so that they face certain directions and can be cleansed by the wind (1.4.4-5). Book 2 contains similar prescriptions: the sheepfold, for example, should be positioned facing east rather than south (2.2.7). Here in Book 3, Lucullus rids his fishponds of pestilence by taking advantage of the tides, like the cleansing winds in Book 1, but in order to do so he must first fundamentally change the shape of the natural environment around him.

By comparing Lucullus to a shepherd, Varro recalls the shepherds of Book 2, who engaged with nature through a combination of *imitatio* and *experientia*. Here Lucullus, by contrast, engages with nature through *experientia* to such a degree that *imitatio* is almost entirely absent. Lucullus' fishponds are similar to the stables of Book 2 in that both provide housing for animals, but stables are only intended to be temporary housing, not a permanent and entirely self-contained environment. Those who build stables do not seek to replicate or replace nature, but to provide a temporary refuge from it.[214] Lucullus' fishponds (and also Merula's and Varro's aviaries), by contrast, are an attempt to circumvent the challenges posed by the natural world, to manipulate it into something that allows the landowner to remove himself from *imitatio*, i.e., from having to learn to adapt his behavior to nature through observation.

Cutting through a mountain to refresh one's fishponds is one extreme way to circumvent nature; another is to build an elaborate artificial environment to house formerly wild creatures. There are gradations within this kind of project, from simply walling off part of a forest to use as a hunting ground to creating an entire pseudo-natural space from scratch. The scholarly debate

[214] Thus, in terms of the extent to which humans manipulate nature by creating artificial structures, stables represent a middle ground between the setting of Book 1 (fields, mostly) and the setting of Book 3 (aviaries, bee hives, fishponds, etc.).

over the aviaries of Varro and Merula and what they represent has tended, since Green 1997, to focus on allegorical meanings of the spaces and the owners' treatment of the animals they contain. I agree that they can function as socio-political metaphors, but I am particularly interested in the aviaries, along with the rest of Book 3's built environments, as physical spaces that their owners use to replicate or replace nature and to change the relationship between humans and other animals.

The theme of observing nature that was so prevalent in Book 1 reemerges in Book 3 but looks very different. Rather than studying the natural environment of one's estate out of necessity in order to figure out when to plant and harvest or where to position one's homestead, the men in Book 3 create their own environments that they can control down to every detail. Instead of observing nature, they observe the microcosms they have created in imitation of nature. Varro's aviary includes a mechanism that replicates aspects of the sky (the morning and evening stars) under a dome so that anyone sitting there can tell the time without going outside: in effect, Varro has created his own personal sky (3.5.17). A compass in the aviary indicates which way the wind is blowing, eliminating the need to actually feel the wind on one's skin. According to the principles of Roman augury, humans should be able to look to the movement of birds for valuable information. Carin Green noted that the birds in Varro's aviary lose this essential part of their nature: "in captivity their movements signify nothing, and they, like humans must look to machines to know which way the wind is blowing: and they look out at the wood, and the wall beyond, and the woven net of gut that keeps them in" (1997:443). Literary critic N. Katherine Hayles discusses the phenomenon of humans creating and then gazing upon artificial environments in an essay titled "Simulated Nature and Natural Simulations: Rethinking the Relation between the Beholder and the World":

> When 'nature' becomes an object for *visual* consumption, to be approached by the connoisseur's eye sweeping over an expanse of landscape, there is a good chance it has already left the realm of firsthand experience and entered the category of constructed experience that we can appropriately call simulation (1996:411).

Varro and his friends build these miniature simulated versions of nature and then gaze upon their work.[215] Owning land that provides a pleasant visual setting has been lauded throughout the *De Re Rustica* as one of the twin goals of agriculture, but the artificial spectacles in Book 3 belong to a different category than the orderly rows of trees and the majestic-looking cattle of the first two books.[216]

Part 3: Hierarchy and Dualism

Varro does not challenge hierarchy in society the way Lucretius does, nor does he challenge Roman imperialism like Diodorus Siculus. He does recast the gods and animals and their relationships with humans. He also challenges a dualist notion of nature versus culture, city versus country. His worldview accommodates hierarchy within human society. He does not elevate animals to the same level as humans, but he does display an appreciation for herd animals in particular and their role in human life and society. They have monetary value but also *dignitas* and *maiestas*.

[215] I think Norwood's interpretation of Annie Dillard's portrayal of domesticated nature in *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* is also applicable to these microcosms that Varro and his interlocutors describe: "Our tame world, our controlled, created garden is only a momentarily calm surface; if we look closely, everything opens back to nature. Even that which we create is but a mirror of nature and as such provides apt reflections of natural processes" (1996:342).

[216] Nelsestuen (2015:194) gives several examples from Book 3: "In the case of boars, [Appius'] discussion almost completely eschews any technical content, focusing instead on the pleasure that these profitable animals (3.2.11; cf. 3.3.8) contribute to the delectation of spectacle (3.13.1–3). On the Tusculan estate of Varro (formerly, of M. Pupius Piso), the boars (and roes) of the *leporarium* would customarily gather at the sound of a horn for feeding and, thus, offer up a delightful spectacle to the viewer (3.13.1; cf. 3.3.8)."

The *Dignitas* and *Maiestas* of Animals

Varro's special interest in nature and animals was recognized by Katharine Allen in her 1899 analysis of nature imagery in Roman poetry. Noting that "the animal world is most conspicuous" in the satires of both Varro and Lucilius, Allen goes on to compare the two authors' approaches to animals in their work:

> As in Lucilius, too, many references to animals (as well as to other forms of nature), are made jestingly; unlike Lucilius, however, Varro seems to take a real interest in them, and to feel a certain human sympathy with them. This is especially noticeable in the case of wild animals and birds.…Though the character of his works would seem least adapted to encourage the expression of any deep feeling for nature, it is not too much to assert for Varro a considerable interest in many of her manifestations (1899:142).

One can find this sympathy for nature and the animals that inhabit it not only in Varro's satires (Allen's interest, since she is looking at poetry), but also in Varro's prose works.

In *De Lingua Latina*, the organizational scheme Varro uses for giving etymologies of names lumps humans in with other terrestrial animals. At 5.57 he says that, having covered the names of places, he will move on to immortal and mortal things. After concluding the subsequent sections on the names of the gods, he explains that he will organize his thoughts on mortal creatures according to the three places where they live: starting at the top and moving downwards, he will first cover those animals that inhabit the air, then the water, then the land (5.75). When he arrives at the section for land creatures, having addressed those that fly or swim, he clarifies that he will speak first of terms that apply to human beings, then to domesticated animals, and finally to those in the wild (5.80). Thus Varro positions humans firmly in the realm of animals—specifically, terrestrial animals—when he could just as easily have separated them

out: one might have expected him to cover first gods, then humans, then the rest of the animal kingdom.

Certain instances in the *De Re Rustica* where Varro blurs the boundary between human and animal—the gathering of "bird men" at the beginning of Book 3 stands out—have been read as "treating people like animals," always, as far as I have seen, with the implication that this is a bad thing.[217] I do not think we should be so quick to assume that each time Varro or his interlocutors equate humans to animals that they are necessarily 'lowering' these humans to an animal status. Not only does Varro include humans as a type of terrestrial animal in *De Lingua Latina*, he also advocates for his audience to have some role in the acquisition and management of their herds in the *De Re Rustica*, and he goes to great lengths to convince his reader that domesticated animals involved in the operations of the farm have *dignitas* and *maiestas*.

Book 2 of the *De Re Rustica* encourages the reader to include animal husbandry as part of his or her agricultural project, but also communicates that it is not enough simply to own herds of animals in faraway places and never see them. The kinds of information Varro relays to his audience (largely through other interlocutors) would prepare his readers to select the best animals for his herd, to perform the correct legal steps in their purchase, to breed them at the appropriate age and in the appropriate season, and, of course, to provide them food and shelter and otherwise care for their health (see page 223-4, above). Varro surely did not expect the majority of his readers to personally muck out the animals' stalls or to drive them towards better pasturage, but he does give them the tools necessary to be able to oversee workers who would perform these tasks, and he seems to expect a certain level of engagement with the animals and the people tending them that reflects a closer relationship than simply owning herds that one

[217] See for example Green 1997, Kronenberg 2009:108 and 112-6, and Nelsestuen 2015:160.

never sees in person.[218] Why else would Book 2 contain so much specific information about the appropriate length of a sheep's legs and tail (2.2.4), or the shagginess of the their belly (2.2.3), or the ideal softness and color of a billy goat's hair (2.3.2), or how prominent a cow's knees should be (2.5.8)?

Varro appeals to the *dignitas* of animal husbandry to justify this relationship and to curtail any fear that one may lose social status by associating with farm animals. After describing the origins of animal husbandry and the connection between wild animals and their domesticated counterparts, Varro launches into a rather lengthy description of the *dignitas* associated with these animals. He gives far-ranging reasons that they should be held in high esteem, but one underlying similarity in all the reasons he gives is the antiquity of the belief that these animals are important and valuable, implying that if ancient people appreciated these animals and those who work with them, then so should we. He begins with the statement that, "among ancient people, the shepherd was considered the most illustrious" (*de antiquis illustrissimus quisque pastor erat*), an assertion he supports by listing honorifics from early Greek poetry that translate to variations of "rich in flocks" (*polyarnas… polymelos…polybutas*, 2.1.6).[219] Varro then rationalizes several myths involving so-called golden sheep (or fleeces) by claiming that they earned that name on account of their exceptional costliness.[220]

Varro's argument so far has to do with the expense of keeping large herds of animals and the honor of possessing particularly fine specimens, implying that *dignitas* is associated with wealth and rarity, but the examples that follow break from this pattern. If ancient people did not

[218] This close attention and appreciate by no means changes the fact that these animals *are* property, as the legal formulae necessary for purchase show (see 2.1.15 for Scrofa's introduction to this subtopic and scattered references to specific animal types throughout the rest of the book).
[219] For a similar sentiment, see also *De Lingua Latina* 5.92 and 5.95.
[220] He includes the Apples of the Hesperides in this list (2.1.6).

hold these animals in high esteem (*magnae dignitatis*), Varro goes on to say, astronomers would not have named the signs of the zodiac after them, much less given these signs priority in their enumeration above the signs of Apollo and Hercules (2.1.7). The position of herd animals in the night sky appears again at 2.3.8 (where goats are described as being "outside the circle of the twelve signs") and 1.2.17, where Agrius appeals to homestead laws (*leges colonicae*) and astronomy to support inclusion of goats in the discussion of agriculture. They are in the laws and in the sky: they have a place in human and superhuman spheres.[221]

In the next section describing the *dignitas* of animal husbandry at the beginning of Book 2, Varro lists geographic features and place-names—including the Aegean Sea, the Bosphorus, and even Italy—that were named after herd animals (2.1.8). He then moves on to describe the role of animals and shepherds in the founding and preservation of Rome: Romulus and Remus were raised by a shepherd and founded the city on the occasion of a shepherd's festival, fines are still assessed in oxen and sheep, and the oldest Roman money featured images of cattle (2.1.9). Varro brings this discussion of Rome up to his present day, noting that the *pomerium* is marked by a cow, priests still use a *suovetaurilia* to purify the city, and that many illustrious families still carry names that reveal their past associations with swine, sheep, horses, asses, and other farm animals (2.1.10).[222] Scrofa picks up this theme of the past and present recognition of the importance of these animals in public life when he reminds his listeners of Aeneas' sow and notes that they could still see bronze statues of the animal in public places and that priests even

[221] Goats can be quite destructive, of course, and are accordingly excluded from certain areas, including the Athenian acropolis (lest they injure Minerva's olive) (1.2.19-20)

[222] See Green (2012:35-6) for more on Romans with animal names in the works of Varro and others: "The fact that these names are often cognomina indicates that the use of animal names or epithets was part of the living public discourse about Romans by Romans." Nelsestuen adds that "whatever the actual origin of the cognomen may be, the aetiology Scrofa does produce nonetheless testifies to the potential of barnyard terminology to honor and to commemorate political and martial activity and, in so doing, to metaphorize it" (2015:150).

still exhibited the body of a sow, preserved in brine, that they claim to be the original portent (2.4.18). These wide-ranging examples show how many areas of human life are touched by animal husbandry, and how people of very different walks of life—not only the richest men with the largest flocks, but also astronomers, priests, and anyone who uses money or discusses the many places named after animals—appreciate the importance of domesticated animals in human life.

In these passages Varro shows how far domesticated animals influence human life and language by 'zooming in' from the grandest scope of the human experience—the contemplation of the celestial sphere through astrology—to the very real practical affairs of Romans of his own day, including present company, like Scrofa, whose family names derive from animal sources (2.1.10). The conversation ranges from animals represented in the mytho-literary past to those appearing in the heavens to the lands and seas named after animals to Italy itself and finally to Rome in the past and present. These examples cumulatively communicate that it has always been the case that humans put great value on domesticated animals, as far as we can tell from the remnants of early language (e.g. animal terms that live on in proper names and other words), and it is still the case in the daily life of Varro's fellow Romans, whether they interact with actual animals or carry the name of a bird or they see a statue of a sow in the heart of Rome.

In addition to discussing the *dignitas* of domesticated animals generally, Varro and his interlocutors apply the word when discussing attributes of specific types of animals and their role on an estate: namely, dogs (1.21.1), cows (2.5.10), and asses (2.6.3). Varro and his interlocutors elaborate further on the positive attributes of canine and bovine companions. One remarkable characteristic of dogs is the "steadfast companionship" (*consuetudo firmior*) they can form with their shepherds (2.9.5). This bond is so strong, Atticus says, that it is better to purchase dogs and

shepherds together: otherwise one might end up like Publius Aufidius Pontianus, whose newly purchased team of herding dogs travelled three hundred miles to reunite with their former keepers, of their own volition and driven by desire for their people (*e desiderio hominum…sua sponte*, 2.9.6). He also recommends purchasing dogs from the same family, since this bond causes them to protect each other better (2.9.6). When Vaccius is about to speak on bovine matters, Varro interrupts and encourages him to exercise caution in how he speaks about cows, which "ought to be held in the highest opinion among herd animals" (*nam bos in pecuaria maxima debet esse auctoritate*, 2.5.3). Varro then appropriates terms of human social interactions and religious practice when he describes the cow as the *socius hominum in rustico opere et Cereris minister* and says that for this reason ancient people made killing one punishable by death (2.5.3). Vaccius responds that he is well aware of the 'majesty of cows' (*maiestatem boum*) and adds as further support for their importance in human culture a list of words that contain the *bu-* or *bo-* stem (2.5.4). He also mentions several myths in which bulls played a key part (2.5.5). In Book 3 the interlocutors praise the talent and skill that nature has given to bees (*plurimum natura ingeni atque artis tribuit* and *incredibilis artis naturalis*, 3.16.3). Bees are described, like humans, as social animals; they have a "fellowship in toil and building" (*societas operis et aedificiorum*) they make use of *ratio atque ars*, and humans learn from them how to do work, to build, and to store food (3.16.4).

"We Should Do Both": A Challenge to Dualism

To reiterate that passage from Book 1 that I have argued offers a deeper understanding of the *De Re Rustica* as a whole, Varro says that the earliest people accomplished much by experimentation (*temptando*), and their descendants mostly by imitation (*imitando*, 1.18.7). We

should use both methods, he says, applying them in a systematic way (*nos utrumque facere debemus, et imitari alios et aliter ut faciamus experientia temptare quaedam, sequentes non aleam, sed rationem aliquam*, 1.18.8). Varro gives a specific example of this practice of learning about the past, observing present conditions, and looking to the future in a passage just following, where he says that, when dealing with a recently purchased piece of land, one should take into consideration what previous owners did, look at what the neighbors currently do, and then experiment on one's own to find the best plan moving forward (1.19.2).

In this passage Varro depicts *imitatio* and *experientia* as the two *viae*, or paths, that nature has given to humans for their pursuit of *cultura*, i.e., the development and productive management of a particular aspect of human life (*bivium nobis enim ad culturam dedit natura, experientiam et imitationem*, 1.18.6-8). An alternative but complementary explanation would understand *bivium* not as "two paths," but as the first definition listed in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*: "A place where two ways meet": *imitatio* and *experientia* are each viable paths that one could take to achieve *cultura*, but Varro steers us towards the intersection of the two as the ideal.

Varro leaves the paths to *cultura* completely open-ended, thereby allowing the reader to embrace *imitatio et experientia* and find a system that will work for his or her individual needs. Varro communicates this idea by keeping key parts of the passage vague: the reader should carry out this advice "following not chance, but some system" (*sequentes non aleam, sed rationem aliquam*), imitating "some things" (*imitari alios*) and doing "certain things otherwise" (*aliter...quaedam*). This intentional vagueness encourages the farmer to employ *imitatio et experientia* in a variety of agricultural contexts, whether acquiring slaves or plowing or grafting, but also allows the reader to apply the advice more broadly to additional spheres of human

activity beyond the agricultural practices themselves. Whatever the specific pursuit, one should not act haphazardly but by applying reason (*ratio*, translated just above as 'system'). The contrasting idea of "chance" (*alea*) also appears elsewhere in *De Re Rustica* as something to be avoided and indeed overcome by *scientia* (1.4.4).

Human progress in Varro's model involves looking backwards as well as forwards, and requires an integration of best practices from the past with incremental steps forward. If pastoralism represents the earliest human endeavor in relation to nature (after simply living off of its offerings in the manner of hunter-gatherer societies), and tending the fields the next stage, the *pastio villatica* of Book 3 represents his own generation's contribution to the historical progression of humans interacting with nature and deriving their livelihoods from it. His advice for the future of successful agriculture relies on the integration of all of these practices: he does not encourage his reader to abandon the older ways, but to find a balance between the different kinds of agriculture and to find ways to improve in each. Farmers should take care not to overreach in their innovations, however.

Varro echoes this sentiment in the introduction to Book 2 when he says that while growing crops and tending herds are very different pursuits (they require different *ratio ac scientia*), one who owns a farm ought to do both, for there is a *societas…magna* between these two pursuits (*qui habet praedium, habere utramque debet disciplinam, et agri culturae et pectoris pascendi, et etiam villaticae pastionis,* 2.Intro.5.). He returns to the integration of growing crops and tending herds near the beginning of Book 3, where he reiterates the historical progression by describing an early division of labor that occurred due to increasing wealth and decreasing poverty among those who worked the land and tended animals. In the early days, people who descended from the original shepherds both sowed and pastured on the same land

because their poverty compelled them to do so. When the flocks got bigger they made a distinction, calling some people *agricolae* and others *pastores* (3.1.7). Varro urges his audience to return to the earlier practice of integrating these two operations, not because he wants them to return to the same impoverished lifestyle of these early people, but because the practices of growing crops and tending herds are complementary, and his age is one that can afford to do both.

This sense of moderation and integration of different but complementary pursuits appears in other major themes of the work: farmers should pursue *both* profit and pleasure (see, e.g., 1.4.1-2; 1.7.2), and engage with *both* the country and the city (at least, its markets). So, Varro tells us, there are two ways of life for human beings, the rustic and the urban; the rustic is much older and in some ways more admirable, but even those venerable ancestors who spent most of their time in the country still visited the city on a regular basis in order to conduct their business (3.1.1). Varro goes on to say that 'our' ancestors tried to draw people back into the country because farmers help the city in times of peace and war (3.1.4).

Working with the Natural Order

Varro does not view human history as a process of steady decline, nor of constant improvement. Glacken notes that Varro was "far less dogmatic about his theory than many of his later imitators, for he accused the Romans themselves…of deserting the countryside for the cities, of importing grain and wine from abroad, of reversing the historical process by reverting from an agricultural to a pastoral life" (1967:141). In his nuanced understanding of the trajectory of human history, Varro admires certain aspects of the past and praises certain recent innovations; he does not adhere to an all-encompassing model of progress or decline. Traditional

practices are admirable and worthy of imitation only when they contribute towards the goal of making land more productive and enabling people to interact with their natural environment in a healthy way. Varro encourages his reader to select the best from what nature has to offer and from what human ancestors have discovered and, like a young ox yoked to one that has already been trained, to learn by imitation (1.20.2). He also encourages his reader to discover new and better ways of interacting with the natural world. For Varro, as for Lucretius, progress is possible, but not a given, and is not without complications.

Examining agricultural innovations in human history, Marijke van der Veen observed the crucial role of small, incremental changes made by agriculturalists who experiment in their daily work:

> These types of improvement, usually referred to as 'routine innovations', 'sub-inventions' or 'micro-inventions', concern changes or modifications to tools and practices which skilled practitioners—with their intimate understanding of landscape and resource—can be expected to make, and which, today, certainly would not be subject to patent law. Small and incremental as they may be, they are significant nevertheless: they highlight how non-codified knowledge is acquired through direct exposure to and participation in the work process, passed from practitioner to apprentice, from farmer to son. Here we see technical skills embodied in the human agent (2010:7).

This is exactly the kind of innovation Varro encourages his reader to make. Unlike Diodorus,[223] who emphasizes the ability of remarkable individuals in the distant past to effect mass change in the field of agriculture, Varro views himself and his reader as agents of incremental change within a broad scope of human history. In his explanations of the history of human interactions

[223] It is telling that van der Veen's primary example of the opposite of this series of incremental changes, i.e., of powerful individuals who were able to gather the resources necessary to introduce a major shift in agricultural technology or practice—specifically, the tyrant Dionysius I of Syracuse—comes from Diodorus (2010:5)

with nature, he never mentions Ceres, Minerva, or the other gods as agents of discovery and change.

Lacking any earlier human models to follow, the first generations of farmers had no choice but to live by *experientia*: they figured out how to plow, or sow, or save the best seeds by experimenting over time (1.18.7). Their children, Varro tells us, did most of their work by imitating the generation before them. Varro's assertion at 1.18.8 that "we should do both" indicates his concern for the future. He does not advocate a return to the days when people lived either by *imitatio* or *experientia*; he asks his reader to combine the best of both methods in order to further develop productive and sustainable *cultura*. Human progress in this worldview is a process of *accumulation* of knowledge and practices, not leaving one stage behind in order to move on to the next.

Whatever other reasons Varro may have had for engaging with nature through agriculture and composing three volumes of work encouraging others to do the same, he appears to have viewed the practice as an opportunity to participate in something much bigger than the political squabbles taking place in Rome. His insistence on tracing the origins of agriculture to the distant past shows that he viewed what he and his friends were doing as part of an historical trajectory. To farm in Italy is to resurrect the admirable practices of the Roman *maiores*, but Varro views agriculture on a much larger temporal and geographical scale beyond his ancestors on the Italian peninsula. There have always been people and herd animals and fields, and humans have always had to negotiate with the environments they inhabit and with the other living creatures that share those spaces. The particular way of life for humans looks very different over the course of time, but the essential task of dealing with the natural environment is a timeless endeavor. By learning

about best practices in agriculture and innovating with one's own ideas, Varro and his audience members participate in the grand sweep of human history and contribute to future progress.

I do not see any indication in the *De Re Rustica* that Varro advocated agriculture as a way for humans to help bring order to the cosmos. For as much pleasure and utility as he finds in patterned arrangements of trees and in his meticulously planned aviary, he does not push his readers to spread this kind of agriculture to previously uncultivated lands. Order is an important principle for planning one's homestead, but in these passages Varro and his interlocutors are discussing land that has already been cultivated by Italian farmers for generations. There is no discussion of taking over previously uncultivated land in foreign territories in order to bring it under cultivation and therefore contribute to a more ordered cosmos. The concern for order that they display has more to do with their own profit and pleasure (and the pleasure of any guests they might entertain on their estates) and with the immediate productivity of a particular piece of land than with any cosmic scale of nature.

Epilogue

The structures of power in late Republican Rome relied on the labor of a large enslaved class, strict social stratification among its citizens, and ever-expanding operations for extracting resources from the natural environment. Structures of this sort are more easily maintained when participants at all levels believe that the system arose not from human agency, but from human nature, and indeed from the entire natural order. Much of the Roman art and literature we have conforms to a conception of the universe that assumes that all activity, human or otherwise, is subject to the will of superior beings and that humans generally lack control over their own lives, not only by law or by circumstance but by nature. Because other animals (as well as some animalistic humans) have even *less* agency due to their lack of rational thought, those humans who are more 'godlike' thanks to their superior reasoning capabilities are entitled to use these creatures and other non-reasoning features of the natural world as they see fit. As I have shown in the chapters above, however, this was not the only worldview available to Romans in the late Republican period.

The four main authors I have addressed above (including Cicero in the introduction) produced their works within a fairly narrow time frame in the late Roman Republic, but they reflect a variety of viewpoints and positions within or relative to the Roman state. Cicero, Lucretius, and Varro shared geographic proximity; Diodorus, too, spent at least some time in Rome but his perspective is firmly Sicilian and his judgment of the Roman system more removed than that of the others. Of the three Romans, Cicero and Varro both held positions within the government for some time; both also took time away from the city but only Varro's exile to his estate was self-imposed. We do not know enough about Lucretius to say definitively

what social class he belonged to or what kind of reputation his family had, but regardless of these factors his devotion to Epicureanism, if nothing else, seems to have kept him out of politics. Cicero was certainly the most invested in the Roman system as it stood, or at least in the ideal version of it that he wanted to help craft. Lucretius, on the other hand, clearly voices his concern for people who are caught up in the Roman political system and suffer from the anxieties that it causes. His work not only attacks the system by discouraging others from participating in it, but also by offering an alternative worldview to replace the hierarchical conception that underpinned social stratification and the exploitation of subaltern people and animals. Whereas Cicero hoped to shape the system and Lucretius wanted to help people escape it, Varro and Diodorus, on the other hand, seem to have been more concerned with living well within (or on the edge of) the system than with reforming it or undermining it. These societal positions and personal priorities helped shape the literary works these authors produced.

A later stage of this research will include additional authors from the same time period—certainly Caesar and Catullus but perhaps also Sallust, Vitruvius, or Philodemus—to develop this picture further. It will also address how authors of this time period represent specific categories of people who were generally ranked lower on the hierarchical schema—namely, women and enslaved people—in order to show how these representations relate to the authors' respective views of the organization of the natural world and the place of humans in it. A careful study of how each of my primary authors deals with these groups of people in their work is outside of the scope of this dissertation, in which my main concern is how each author conceived of interactions between humans and the natural world, including relations with the other beings—bestial or divine—that inhabit it.

In the end, only Lucretius' Epicurean model actually challenges hierarchical theories of nature that were used to legitimize hierarchy in human society. Diodorus' heart-wrenching depiction of mine-workers in Iberia and Egypt and his sympathetic portrayal of the Sicilian slave rebellions challenge the idea that enslaved people are unreasoning property lacking autonomy and undeserving of justice, but he also embraces hierarchy as one kind of potentially successful social arrangement. Varro disregards the traditional Olympian hierarchy of the gods and their supposed involvement in human interactions with nature, but his worldview does accommodate agricultural operations that treat some humans on a level with animals. Diodorus and Varro both 'flatten' the hierarchical notion by blurring the boundaries between gods and humans on one hand and humans and animals on the other; both also appear to support better treatment of humans and animals than is required from the strictly hierarchical model. Of the three main authors I have chosen for close study in this dissertation, Lucretius comes closest to challenging hierarchy among humans on a fundamental level.

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