The Philosophizing Muse

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Volume III:
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on Roman Poetry

Edited by

Myrto Garani and David Konstan

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PREFACE

The collaboration that led to this project originated from a fortuitous, but fortunate meeting of the co-editors in the surroundings of the American School of Classical Studies in Athens almost five years ago. The idea for the book, however, had been suggested many years ago by Professor Stratis Kyriakidis, one of the editors of CSP's Pierides series. His unfailing support and belief in the value and the originality of the project, his authentic scholarly enthusiasm which was always coupled with objective—albeit exacting—criticism, made the completion of this book possible. Professor Philip Hardie has also embraced the project from the very beginning with equal interest and zeal and supported it all the way through.

Special thanks are also due to the anonymous readers of CSP and the Pierides series, who offered valuable suggestions and comments.

The person who deserves our deepest gratitude is Eleni Peraki-Kyriakidis: she laboriously proof-read the many drafts of the book in various stages and formats and painstakingly but discreetly saved us from numerous slips and inconsistencies. She was always available, ready to remind Myrto of priorities and values and to stand by her whenever things seemed to reach an impasse; she was a constant inspiration to begin again.

Sophia Foskolou, Efthymia Toumpanou, Louloudenia Velentza and Anna Vythoulka, diligent MA students from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, have greatly assisted us in compiling the index locorum and going through the bibliographical references. This kind of work, despite its great value for such a complicated collaborative project, might have been tedious, had it not been for their excitement and their conscientiousness. Their work has been funded by E.L.K.E. (Special Account for Research Funds, K.A. 70/11/118), which we are pleased to thank. Marianna Thoma, also a postgraduate student at the University of Athens, was ready to share with us her papyrological expertise as she undertook much of the typing of Philodemus' and Empedocles' thorny texts. From the other side of the Atlantic, Scott DiGiulio from Brown University has assisted us with the initial proof reading of the book.

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INTRODUCTION

MYRTO GARANI AND DAVID KONSTAN

Philosophy and poetry seem to us to be different enterprises, but to the ancient Greeks poetry was sometimes a vehicle for philosophy, as in the didactic poems of Parmenides and Empedocles, and drama, epic, and iambic poetry often exploited philosophical arguments—comedy might even take on philosophers and their schools directly, as in the case of Aristophanes' *Clouds* and numerous lost plays. But despite the Romans' reputation for being practical folk and disdainful of abstract speculation, Latin poetry was, if anything, more deeply permeated by philosophy than the Greek. Roman writers were schooled in the Greek language and in Greek thought, and philosophy came to them along with the models for their literary genres and sense of style. From its very beginnings, Latin literature was philosophical. To be sure, philosophical elements and commonplaces in writers such as Vergil, Horace, and Persius have been identified and appreciated, but the extent of the Greek philosophical influence on Latin verse has never been fully delineated. In this volume, an international group of eminent scholars deeply versed in Roman literature and the Greek philosophical tradition have come together to analyze the debt of Latin poetry to Greek philosophy across a range of authors from Plautus to Statius. They have addressed their poets from a variety of points of view, each according to the nature of the work under consideration and its mode of receiving and adapting Greek philosophy. We have not sought to produce a laundry list of passages that betray the influence of some doctrine or other, for this would be as unenlightening as it was dull. Nor is this book a handbook or companion to Greek philosophy and Roman poetry. Rather, each contributor has presented an original essay, illustrating subtle and unexpected ways in which the Roman poets absorbed and transformed their sources.

It was perhaps not a foregone conclusion that Latin poetry would be so hospitable to Greek philosophical ideas. The year 155 B.C. might be considered a crucial juncture regarding the reception of Greek philosophy into Rome. It was then that the Romans banished the Athenian representatives of the Peripatos, the Academy and the Stoa who visited Rome as an embassy on a diplomatic mission. This remarkable political gesture, which was already preceded by the Senate's instructions not to allow rhetoricians

or philosophers to live in Rome (in 161 B.C.; cf. Suet. *Rhet*. 1.1; Gellius *NA* 15.11), reflects an initial Roman resistance to the reception of Greek philosophy. Still, the question remains open whether this preliminary encounter inaugurated a sustained rejection of Greek philosophical tendencies or rather, on the contrary, was something of a catalyst for Roman intellectual history.

1. Ennius, Plautus, Cato and Lucilius

In the first chapter of this volume entitled "The Beginnings: Philosophy in Roman Literature before 155 B.C.", **Dorota Dutsch** undertakes the challenging task of exploring anew the earliest influx of Greek philosophical ideas into Latin poetry. Dutsch argues that Ennius' allusions to Pythagorean thought and Plautus' witty take-offs on philosophizing are signs of an active debate within Roman literature over the status of Greek philosophy. As she explains, "The works of Ennius and Plautus, along with those views of Cato that can be recovered from his writings, offer us a glimpse of philosophy as it was discussed in Rome before Lucretius and Cicero," which can be reconstructed despite the fragmentary state of the evidence. Dutsch concludes with an examination of the satires of Lucilius, as the author in whose texts the tension between Roman praxis and Greek philosophy is most fully played out. In the process, Dutsch illustrates how ancient readers such as Cicero and Plutarch may have distorted our perception of the influence of philosophy in this early period. Dutsch takes into account the social identity of the poets whose verses were imbued with philosophical ideas (especially Ennius, who was a foreign captive) and that of the Roman elite to whom these verses were addressed, discussing their horizon of expectations and their reactions, whether hostile or receptive. She also considers the ultimate purpose of such philosophizing—not strictly philosophical— writings, which, she maintains, was principally that of entertainment. At this preliminary stage of the philosophical presence in Latin verse, it is hard to separate out specific ideas reflecting the one or another of the several Greek philosophical schools. The only exception is Pythagoreanism, or, more precisely, Pythagorean cosmology, the influence of which can be detected in Naevius, Plautus, and Ennius. These poets look back to various literary genres, such as the pseudo-Pythagorean texts that circulated under Epicharmus' name and Pythagorizing Greek Middle Comedy. Otherwise, allusions to philosophy take the form of more general comments about philosophical thinking as such, or the relationship, whether of opposition or of interaction, between the Roman *modus vivendi*

bene and the style of life limned by the Greek philosophers; eminent Romans such as Cato and Lucilius juxtaposed Roman moral practice with Greek (commonly Stoic) theoretical approaches, and this ultimately gave rise, among their contemporaries, to something like an eclectic assimilation of the two.

2. Lucretius

Our knowledge about the reception of Greek philosophy in the Roman world from the period around the end of the Republic onwards has been greatly deepened and modified by recent advances in the deciphering of papyri discovered at Herculaneum as well as by the publication of the Strasbourg papyrus of Empedocles in 1998, both of which have caused a revival of studies in this area.

Taking these documents into account, in his chapter "Lucretius, Empedocles, and Cleanthes" **Gordon Campbell** examines Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, a work that belongs to the literary genre of didactic poetry and is thus readily recognizable as deserving inclusion in the present volume. Although the poem presents itself as a faithful exposition of Epicureanism, scholars have noted many non-Epicurean influences; hence Lucretius is often treated as an eclectic poet. Campbell focuses anew on Empedocles, the major poetic influence on Lucretius and his literary forerunner, and reconsiders the nature of their intertextual relationship. He first discusses Lucretius' programmatic statements regarding the value of poetry for philosophical initiation, with particular emphasis on Lucretius' explicit comments about Empedocles; in this vein, he remarks that Lucretius merges his poetic and philosophical sources and concludes that "Lucretius takes on Empedocles' mantle as prophet and Giant." Campbell then narrows the focus of his investigation to the proem to Book 1 of the *DRN*, and discusses the well-known riddle of Lucretius' invocation to Venus, whose presence is particularly alien in an Epicurean poem which in principle denies that the gods intervene in any way in human affairs. As Campbell puts it, such an opening is an "un-Epicurean or even anti-Epicurean motif". To underscore the extent to which this is an alarming inconsistency, Campbell takes note of Philodemus' treatise, *De Pietate*, and in particular Philodemus' critique of poets and philosophers precisely for the allegorical use of myths about gods; special emphasis is placed upon the Stoics' allegorization of Venus, whom they treated as a personification of the harmonizing function of universal reason, that is, Zeus. Campbell takes up Elizabeth Asmis' argument (1982), according to which the Stoic Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* was Lucretius' model, and builds

further upon David Sedley's claim (1998) that there is a palpable
Empedoclean influence on Lucretius' proem. Indeed, he classifies both
Cleanthes' and Lucretius' texts as philosophical hymns and studies the
way their structures mirror one another, as well as their common goal.
Along these lines, he affirms that Lucretius is resorting, in the proem,
precisely to the Stoic technique of allegorization; by appropriating his
enemies' language, the Epicurean poet can the better dismiss their
approach and substitute his orthodox philosophical truth for Stoic imagery.
Finally, Campbell discusses Empedocles' own poem; taking into
consideration lines from the Strasbourg papyrus, Campbell explains that
Cleanthes corrects Empedocles' 'Manichaean' account of two separate and
alternating forces, Love and Strife, and proposes instead "one single force,
Zeus, that blends both good and bad into a single cosmic order." As he
concludes, "Cleanthes had indeed substituted the Stoic masculine force
Zeus for Empedocles' feminine cosmic force Aphrodite, and Lucretius
restores her to her former throne."

3. Vergil

While Vergil's interest in philosophical questions is generally agreed
upon by scholars, in his chapter "Philosophy in Vergil" **Joseph Farrell**
undertakes to investigate anew the nature of Vergil's adherence to specific
philosophical schools, with particular reference to Epicureanism. His
ultimate aim is to show that Vergil did not go through some kind of
philosophical development over the course of his life; rather, his eclectic
engagement with philosophical ideas was conditioned by varying poetical
objectives and generic requirements. Farrell studies in chronological order
all three of Vergil's major works, taking as his point of departure Servius'
and Servius auctus' commentary as a corpus. Regarding the *Eclogues*,
Farrell shows how Servius' allegorical and biographical interpretation of
these poems has clouded modern approaches. Although Servius indeed
recognized Vergil's eclecticism, he mistakenly attempted to reconcile
Epicurean atomic theory with Empedocles' four-element theory. What is
important is that even at this early stage of his poetic career, Vergil already
alludes to wide-ranging philosophical ideas, which have their origin in the
domains of metaphysics, physics and natural science. Farrell next
examines Vergil's *Georgics*, in which natural philosophy dominates.
Specific philosophical themes and tropes, such as Empedocles' four-
element theory, as well as Lucretius' principle of multiple explanations,
point again to Vergil's eclectic treatment of philosophy and his aspiration
to achieve a prominent place in the tradition of philosophical poetry. In

this case, Servius' commentary in the *Georgics* is not as misleading as in the *Eclogues*, since he does not engage in biographical exegesis and hence is prepared to acknowledge Vergil's eclecticism. Farrell considers too the question of philosophical allegoresis in the *Georgics*, a discussion which he takes up again in connection with the *Aeneid*. As he argues, our approach to Vergil's works should take into account allegorical readings of Homer, and more generally Homer's image as a philosophical poet in Vergil's own time. Along these same lines, Vergil exhibits a Pythagorean conception of Platonic eschatology (as reflected in the myth of Er), for which he is intertextually indebted to Cicero's interpretative gloss in his *Somnium Scipionis*.

It is noteworthy that in all these poetic works, "high-profile episodes, each infused with celebrated philosophical topoi," are placed at the center, so as to make philosophy the central theme. As Farrell remarks, "all three works allude to natural philosophy as if by synecdoche for philosophy as a whole." Countering a view found in the *Life of Vergil* ascribed to Donatus, according to which Vergil was a Platonist, Farrell concludes: "It is a mistake to read Vergil's major works as tracing his philosophical development from a materialist to a spiritual orientation and from detachment to engagement…. The poems describe a philosophical *rota* parallel to the literary one that traces Vergil's 'ascent' from humbler to more sublime genres." As an appendix to his essay, Farrell considers Vergil's relationship to Philodemus, which might be thought to support the view that Vergil had been an adherent of Epicureanism. Farrell looks at various treatises of Philodemus, such as *On Flattery*, *On Freedom of Speech*, and *On Death*, and concludes that his influence on Vergil reveals an acquaintance with these works, not philosophical dependence on them.

4. Horace

Horace's intertextual relationship with Epicurus, Lucretius and Philodemus has for the most part been viewed primarily through the prism of Horace's close affiliation with Philodemus' addressees, that is, members of Maecenas' circle who are regarded as Horace's ideal Epicurean friends. On the basis of new information drawn mainly from the papyrus rolls of Herculaneum, in his chapter "Horace's Epicurean voice in the *Satires*" **David Armstrong** sheds new light on the relationship between Horace's *Satires* and Philodemus' treatises. Taking his own new edition of Philodemus' *On Anger* as a springboard, Armstrong notes that Horace launches the first book of his *Satires* with three diatribes which fuse Callimachean brevity with Epicurean wit. Armstrong re-evaluates the

literary quality of Philodemus' *On Anger* (hitherto largely disparaged), and shows that in this treatise Philodemus both develops his conception of the 'diatribe' as an appropriate vehicle for Epicurean philosophy (this against the objections of his fellow Epicureans) and then proceeds to offer a sample 'diatribe' of his own, one that Armstrong describes as a "sparkling showpiece combining diatribic rhetorical style and formal argument (*scholai*)." Even as Philodemus keeps his distance from the rhetorical style of Bion's *On Anger* and Chrysippus' *Therapeutikos Logos*, he assembles "a diatribic rant against anger which is in a new and far different style, emotional, incantatory and implying the loud voice and gestures of the professional recite." Armstrong aptly summarizes Philodemus' approach: "The diatribic style could be first analyzed and evaluated explicitly for a student audience, then turned on and run through various levels of 'sincerity' from gentle parody to deep apparent sincerity, then turned off with a brilliant flash of humor against the teacher himself." Philodemus takes on board Epicurus' own eclecticism in regard to ethical philosophy, citing freely from other sources provided that they do not contradict the school's fundamental philosophical tenets in tone or content. In his turn, Horace follows both Philodemus and Lucretius in his own diatribes, reshaping the genre of satire and adjusting it to the style and ethical perspective of Epicureanism. Armstrong argues that "a great deal in Horace in particular that seems 'Stoic' on a first look is straight from Epicurus' and Philodemus' playbooks." What is more, he demonstrates in detail that the first three *Satires* have a strong thematic coherence among themselves, reflecting the Epicurean ideal of "safety from men". Finally, Horace's style of argumentation is shown to hark back to Lucretius' poem and to Cicero's philosophical prose. As Armstrong concludes, "Horace's poetic voice in the *Sermones* takes Epicureanism seriously enough."

5. Ovid

Myrto Garani challenges the generally accepted idea that Ovid's philosophical echoes, which are commonly thought to be at their most dense at the beginning and the end of his *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*, are no more than an eclectic amalgam of Pythagorean, Empedoclean, Epicurean and Stoic elements. Her chapter "The figure of Numa in Ovid's *Fasti*" is inspired by recent studies relating to Empedocles' influence on Latin literature, neatly encapsulated in Philip Hardie's claim that the Roman epic tradition should be read as 'Empedoclean epos.' Garani argues that the unusual way in which Ovid depicts the figure of Numa Pompilius in his

Fasti is indeed conditioned by Empedocles' philosophy, and thus constitutes further evidence of the Roman reception of his poem.

In arguing her case, Garani first turns to the episode of Numa's encounter with Pythagoras in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 15, and explores the intertextual relationship between these two figures and Lucretius's own connection with Empedocles. Garani shows that Ovid follows in Lucretius' footsteps in taking Empedocles as the archetypal *vates*, a figure who combines both poetical and philosophical wisdom. When it comes to the *Fasti*, in turn, Ovid again presents two closely interrelated vatic figures, namely the god Janus and the king Numa; Numa plays the pivotal role in a cluster of stories in *Fasti* 3 which are narrated by his wife, the nymph Egeria (3.259-392). Ovid presents us here with his own Empedoclean version of the vatic ideal, contextualizing and re-mythologizing Lucretius' Empedoclean imagery.

Garani then considers the fact that, contrary to Numa's traditional opposition to sacrifice, which goes hand in hand with his commitment to peace and thereby assimilates him to Augustus, the Ovidian king here performs several sacrifices. In this respect, Numa rather takes after Romulus, and Ovid's stance towards the emperor thus turns out to be ambivalent. Garani affirms that "Numa's atypical behavior reflects and is conditioned by his Empedoclean affiliation: only by a violent act, i.e. a sacrifice, may peace be achieved." By way of corroborating her view, she calls attention to a number of passages in Ovid's *Fasti*, in which a similar pattern of Strife followed by Love can be identified, thus forming a kind of Empedoclean hemi-cycle; for example, in Ovid's Empedoclean *bougonia* (*F.* 1.363-380), a sacrifice (that is, a death) is shown to be a necessary precondition for the creation of life. Along the same lines, the restoration of the elementary equilibrium between fire and water in the aetiologies of the Lautolae (*F.* 1.267-272), the Fordicidia (*F.* 4.629-72), and the Parilia (*F.* 4.783-806) reflect the dominance of Venus. Garani concludes that "The Ovidian Numa, as the embodiment of the philosophical aspect of Empedocles' vatic ideal, is presented as an agent of peace in an innovative sense, a compromise between the stereotypic images of Romulus and Numa. In this way, Ovid reflects and justifies Augustus' behavior in regard to the civil war."

Last but not least, Garani discusses the intertextual relationship between Egeria's narration in *Fasti* 3 and texts which have cosmological connotations (Vergil's *Eclogue* 6 and *Georgics* 4) and more specifically Empedoclean echoes (the shield in Vergil's *Aeneid* 8.630-728, discussed also in relation to the Ovidian figure of Vesta in *F.* 6.265-282).

In sum, although Ovid explicitly rejects Empedocles' ideas on transmigration, he nevertheless treats Empedocles as Numa's principal poetic and philosophical mentor.

6. Manilius

As we proceed into the imperial period, Stoicism becomes increasingly dominant. But if Lucretius' philosophical poem seems not to have advanced Epicureanism sufficiently to make it competitive with Stoicism at Rome, it nonetheless was something of a model for later philosophical poetry in Latin, whatever the sectarian allegiance—playing the role in this respect that Empedocles had played for Lucretius himself.

Ilaria Ramelli examines the presence of Stoicism within Manilius' didactic poem, *Astronomica*. In her chapter "Manilius and Stoicism" she first offers a survey of conflicting views concerning the nature and significance of the philosophical undertones. Scholars do not agree as to whether the poet intended his work primarily as a technical exposition of astronomy or rather meant the astronomy to serve as a vehicle for a philosophical, that is, Stoic view of the world, according to which the universe is governed by god (as the Stoics understood the idea). Ramelli favors the second interpretation and emphasizes the interdependence of physics, ethics, and theology within the poem. At the same time, she considers Manilius' verses in relation to a wide range of other writers of the same period, in whose works the presence of Stoicism is generally taken for granted, for example, Seneca and Lucan, as well as Manilius' presumed astronomical and philosophical sources, such as Aratus and Eratosthenes' *Katasterismoi*. She demonstrates cogently, and despite the tradition of scholarly skepticism, that Manilius is thoroughly grounded in the Stoic tradition, and this not just here and there but at the very heart of his poem.

One fundamental but still controversial question that Ramelli tackles is that of the definition of 'orthodox Stoicism(s)', against which she evaluates Manilius' philosophical positions. At the same time, she casts doubt upon the common view that certain specific works, such as the fragments of Posidonius and Hermetic texts, were Manilius' direct sources. In both cases, Ramelli shows how popular misconceptions can be corrected by turning directly to the original Stoic fragments, as Manilius himself plausibly did.

In order to demonstrate that Stoic influence is pervasive in Manilius' poem, Ramelli examines a variety of philosophical themes. First, she investigates the Stoic idea of cosmic sympathy and the world soul, which

is considered to be a divine principle and the intellect of the cosmos. As she puts it: "God pervades all the world and governs it with a harmonious law. The cosmos lives in harmony and is moved by the Logos, in that one and the same spirit is immanent in all of its parts." In this same vein, Manilius introduces the Stoic image of the human being as a microcosm. Ramelli then explores Manilius' take on the much debated Stoic relationship between Fate and human free will and responsibility, and affirms that the poet in fact believes in the inexorable necessity of Fate, as illustrated by astrological determinism, without thereby excluding the possibility of moral evaluation; this stance agrees with the Stoic conception according to which "Human beings can either follow their Fate spontaneously or be dragged by it, but in both cases they do what Fate dictates."

Ramelli also considers Manilius' purpose in investigating the stars, which she associates with the discovery of the divine, and she stresses the ethical value of the principle that human behavior is governed by the stars; for "Human souls come from heaven and return to heaven." Another Stoic image that the poet appropriates is that of the cosmos and stars as living beings.

Manilius' idea of progress can also be labeled as Stoic, though it requires more argument, since it is different from that of Posidonius, the Stoic allegorists, and Seneca; the poet seems to propose an eclectic view that appropriates elements also from the corresponding Epicurean theory. Ramelli explores Manilius' use of myths within the Stoic context of allegoresis, with its ethical interpretations of physical phenomena. Last but not least, she examines Manilius' allusions to political ideas, and after comparing them with Seneca's and Lucan's attitudes she suggests the possibility that Manilius entertained republican sympathies.

7. Seneca

In her chapter "'Stoic tragedy'—a contradiction in terms? **Claudia Wiener** attempts to reconcile the two sides of Seneca's double identity, that is, as a Stoic philosopher and as a tragedian. Her point of departure is the near total denial, among scholars, of the very possibility of Stoic tragedy, some of whom go so far as to regard it as a 'contradiction in terms'. By way of challenging this view, Wiener treats Seneca's moral treatises and tragedies in parallel, revealing in the process that their different approaches to philosophical questions are conditioned by generic constraints and literary objectives. At the same time, Wiener questions whether philosophy itself should be expected to serve only a therapeutic

function and to provide satisfying solutions to all the problems of the world—that is, whether philosophy is essentially optimistic. She draws attention as well to the fact that Seneca seems clearly to separate the two literary domains, as evidenced by his practice of excluding his own tragic stories and characters from the lists of moral examples he adduces in his philosophical writings. Despite the difference in style of argument and intention between Seneca's philosophical treatises and his tragedies, there is no doubt that both corpora share a variety of Stoic themes (e.g. political morality, the psychology of the passions, the role of *fortuna* and *fatum*, the virtrues of *constantia* and *sympatheia*).

As regards Seneca's philosophical works, their aims and methodology are easily spelled out. His *Dialogi* are protreptic essays in which dialectical strategies are employed in order to shake up false—even if commonly accepted—opinions, encourage readers to alter their perception of their situation, and finally adjust their everyday lives in accord with Stoic values through intensive self-discipline. The implied position of readers of Seneca's tragedies is more complex. Wiener takes it for granted that Stoic psychology is at the root of tragic characterization, and she rejects the view that the message of the plays is that Stoic principles are helpless to solve real-life problems. With an eye to Seneca's *De ira* and *De clementia*, Wiener evaluates the Stoic theory of passions, which play a fundamental role in Seneca's behavioural therapy even as they are instrumental in the transformation of the tragic hero into a monstrous criminal. Wiener analyzes in detail the arguments in Seneca's *Medea* and *Agamemnon* by which subordinate figures attempt, unsuccessfully, to deter the protagonist from the fatal act. Seneca clearly acknowledges the difficulty of the task, but the tragedies can nevertheless be read as motivating readers to "make a profound change in their mindset and undertake long-term training."

A related issue is the nature of the dialectical arguments that the Stoics held to be "the most efficient resource for establishing the truth." Wiener examines the method in Seneca's *De clementia* and *Thyestes* and observes that "Seneca and Atreus both use syllogisms, the former to demonstrate the validity of the Stoics' moral principles, and the latter to contradict them and justify his own perverted precepts." She concludes that the moral-didactic strategy of Seneca's tragedies is to "encourage us to analyze received ideas and to acquire a different perspective from which we can assess the consequences of our actions in a more complex network of relationships."

Wiener takes up Seneca's Stoic claim that "the telos of self-determination and self-discipline should be the attainment of a state of

magnanimitas, by means of which we are able to raise ourselves above external influences," and tests it against his representation of the two tragic heroes, Atreus and Medea. She neatly demonstrates that the protagonists' apparent self-sufficiency and near godlike status (as though they approximated the autarky of the Stoic sage) are illusory; on the contrary, their false perceptions and beliefs result in their social isolation.

Last but not least, Wiener considers the Stoic concept of determinism and explores the frontier between determinism and fatalism, along with questions of human free will and individual responsibility, since just this indissoluble tension in Senecan drama has often been considered to be a sign of non-Stoic pessimism. As she notes, the tragic genre had long since incorporated fate as a motive of action (but this is not to deny that "the subject of fate remains a problem never entirely resolved in Stoic philosophy"). Wiener argues that, contrary to the more optimistic moral treatises, in which the emphasis is placed upon individual responsibility, Seneca's tragedies relocate the issue of determinism from the domain of logic to that of ethics, and thereby reveal "the complexity and multi-dimensionality of the sphere in which humans perform actions."

8. Lucan

Although the presence of Stoic ideas in Lucan's *Bellum Civile* is unanimously recognized, the poet's stance towards Stoicism is widely debated. Whereas some scholars believe that Lucan has written an optimistic poem, others point to "sporadic lack of faith in divine providence" within the poem. This latter view is taken to an extreme by those who regard Lucan as a political and philosophical nihilist, whose ultimate goal is not just to challenge but to ridicule and finally reject Stoicism.

In her chapter entitled "Consolation, Rebellion, and Philosophy in Lucan's *Bellum Civile* Book 8" **Francesca D'Alessandro Behr**, following the approach of scholars such as Narducci and Bartsch, rejects a radical deconstructionist or nihilistic approach to the poem. In order to evaluate the nature of and reasons for Lucan's apparent dissatisfaction with Stoicism, which is manifested in the way he unveils the tragic paradoxes of human existence, D'Alessandro Behr turns to Stoic poetics and the Stoic notion of *apatheia*, which "does allow the sage to maintain practical involvement in the world and also highlights the sage's controlled employment of passions." As she affirms, Lucan has created a "pedagogically useful mimesis," in line with Aristotelian as well as Stoic aesthetic principles: he looks to the nature of the reader's emotional

reaction and promotes a cognitive progress that is associated with reasoned judgment. Lucan's narrator "enacts a kind of Stoic poetics that brings to the fore his ethical concerns and promotes a detached spectatorship rather than total immersion in the narrative."

To illustrate her claims concerning the relationship between philosophy and poetics, D' Alessandro Behr examines a specific episode in *Bellum Civile* 8, Pompey's final encounter with Cornelia, his wife, in the course of which the general plays the role of consoler for both his wife and himself. Scholars have identified intertextual allusions to various texts, for example poems by Catullus and Ovid, but D'Alessandro Behr shows how this episode encapsulates a mixture of philosophical ideas, both Stoic and Epicurean, which calls into question Lucan's adherence to traditional Stoic doctrine, above all the role of Providence, and places the emphasis on the individual's struggle against fate. Lucan is deeply influenced here by the *consolatio*, which had acquired the status of a genre already in the Hellenistic age as philosophers crafted a response to grief; by Cicero's time, the *consolatio* had developed clear thematic and structural conventions, which were conditioned by both philosophy and rhetoric. Lucan thus engages with a tradition that includes both Ovid and Seneca, and more specifically fashions a response to Lucretius' *consolatio* in Book 3 of *De rerum natura*.

Lucan presents Pompey in the last hours of his life as adopting a Stoic stance, even as he is at odds with the gods. The poet constructs a Cato-like image of Pompey, taking Cato as "the only character in the *Bellum Civile* who, being free from excessive and personal concerns, can judge matters properly and be moved in the right way." D'Alessandro Behr points to Lucan's ostensible historical source, namely Livy, whose version of Pompey's encounter with Cornelia is thought to be reflected in Plutarch's *Life of Pompey*. According to this reconstruction of Livy's narrative, rather than Pompey consoling his own wife, the general himself sought consolation from the Peripatetic philosopher Cratippus. Lucan's Pompey, however, enacts the Catonian theme of 'rebellion in acceptance'. As D'Alessandro Behr remarks, "the struggle of *pietas* against *fatum* is juxtaposed to the exhortation to accept adversities," and "passive *pietas* is reshaped as active Stoic *virtus*, ready to fight fate; patient toleration of hardship—not necessarily followed by triumph—assumes a rebellious note." Pompey's stance is equally remarkable when he approaches closer to his death, which is again described in Stoic colours: "Pompey is portrayed as a Stoic individual resolute in his desire to excel in his trial and to become a worthy example for future generations". Yet, quite unexpectedly, as D'Alessandro Behr shows by looking more closely at

Lucan's wording, although Pompey seems to accept his fate and his condition as victim of the gods, he nevertheless cannot conceal his disdain for and, by implication, his disobedience toward the gods, who might be expected to guarantee a providential order in human affairs; in precisely this respect Lucan differentiates himself from Seneca. In this way, Lucan redefines the sage's relationship with god; contrary to the Stoic belief in the similarity and indeed equality between sage and god, in Lucan's poem "the wise man can be represented as happier, more just than the gods and opposed to them." Indeed, D'Alessandro Behr suggests that Lucan's Pompey looks back to none other than Vergil's Mezentius in the *Aeneid*, and that this intertextual dialogue concerning Roman *virtus* is staged on philosophical premises. Mezentius, who is represented by Vergil as a *contemptor divum* and thus embodies, no doubt in a perverse way, an Epicurean posture, shares significant traits with Pompey, such as calmness when facing death and a deep understanding of his situation as a result of both personal suffering and pride. D'Alessandro Behr concludes that "Stoic philosophy provides a fundamental 'anti-model' to Lucan's epic discourse."

9. Persius

Against the current trends of scholarship to detect elements of Stoicism or of any other philosophical school in the poetic texts, Shadi Bartsch in her research on the *Satires* of Persius ("Persius' Fourth *Satire*: Socrates and the Failure of Pedagogy") probes into the issue of '*how* and *why*' the poet concerns himself with Roman Stoicism "in the context of his satirical framework." To this end she discusses the intertextual relationship between Persius' fourth satire and several Platonic dialogues, among which Plato's *Alcibiades I* is identified as the main intertext. This dialogue, although its authenticity has been suspected by modern scholars, was considered in antiquity to be most representative of Plato's fundamental philosophical tenets as well as his great protreptic to philosophical study. Socrates engages in a conversation with Alcibiades about the latter's misguided decision to enter Athenian politics and assume a role of leadership, relying on his own natural abilities although he lacks philosophical training and adequate self-knowledge. Socrates succeeds in persuading Alcibiades of the need for self-knowledge; in the process, Plato presents us with an idealized image of Alcibiades which clashes with the persona sketched in the *Symposium* and in historical sources.

Bartsch examines the way in which Persius rewrites *Alcibiades I* by adapting the philosophical dialogue to satiric verse and informing his

poem with contemporary Stoic concepts. As she suggests, Persius'
ultimate goal is "to enact for us effective dialectic, or at least, effective
philosophical pedagogy in action." Persius' Socrates responds to Plato's
critique of Alcibiades' ignorance of philosophy and the errors that follow
upon wrong principles by way of metaphors and images that have both
Platonic and Stoic undertones. However, Persius distances himself from
Plato in respect to the outcome of Socrates' protreptic; in Persius' version,
it proves to be a vain endeavor and Alcibiades fails to learn, among other
things because of his sexual appetites and tendency to self-display. More
particularly, Persius exposes Alcibiades' erotic relationship with the
popellus (that is, the masses: a contemptuous diminutive of *populus*) along
with his luxurious tastes. Bartsch concludes that "Persius' Alcibiades'
apparent failure to show himself responsive to Socrates' teachings …
suggests that this Alcibiades represents the worst-case scenario worried
about by Socrates at the end of the Platonic dialogue."

Persius himself undertakes to answer the question, "how to teach
philosophy effectively in the face of Socrates' failure to do so." In the
process, he evaluates anew the stance of Plato's Socrates in *Alcibiades I*
and his fear that Alcibiades will be seduced by popular influence and
"emerge as an *erastes* of the demos rather than as a good student of
Socratic philosophy." By reproving Alcibiades' sexual exhibitionism,
Persius implicitly reveals as the reason for Socrates' failure his approach
to his student in the guise of lover, since "as an *eromenos*, a love object,
the demos has the potential to corrupt its lover (the *erastes*) rather than
producing in him the sublimated sort of love that leads to self-
improvement and self-knowledge." Unlike Plato, Persius shifts the blame
for Socrates' failure from Alcibiades to Socrates himself, without any
attempt to exculpate him; on the contrary the philosopher, who is
presented as naked and depilated, is being dragged "into a negatively-
charged sexual context." Socrates himself thus emerges as an *eromenos*
who courts the attention of the *popellus*. Persius' Socrates thus evokes—
with a view to making us reject it—the sexual aspect of Socrates'
relationship with Alcibiades in Plato's *Symposium*, a Socrates who "has
turned from being Alcibiades' *erastes* to his *eromenos*, that is, to
Alcibiades' object of desire." As Bartsch observes, "Not only is the
politician a prostitute—Socrates' worst-case scenario in the *Alcibiades I*—
but in this satire, the philosopher too emerges as one."

Persius turns next to the topos of philosophical and critical reciprocity.
Whereas in *Alcibiades I* the philosophical reciprocity between *erastes* and
eromenos led to self-knowledge, in Persius' fourth satire the philosophers'
eagerness to criticize one another mutually is a sign of their own lack of

self-knowledge and is responsible for their failure in the pedagogic procedure. As Bartsch states, "successful dialectic has been replaced by mutual recrimination, while the philosophical relationship based on the mutual idealization of lover and beloved becomes a diatribe in which both the love object and the lover are unmasked as narcissistic and given over to the wrong kind of *eros*. Socrates-as-pedagogue has given way to Socrates-as-pervert."

Persius' satire reflects a shift from Hellenistic to early imperial Roman attitudes on the part of Stoics towards the tendency of the Greek philosophy to idealize pederastic relationships, a move which coincides with Roman homophobia. Persius is in line with his contemporary Stoics in rejecting the erotic component of Socratic philosophy. What he proposes is rather a "shift to self-inspection and self-criticism," as advocated by Roman Stoicism, as the means for achieving self-knowledge and self-improvement. Persius' recommended practice echoes the Roman Stoic idea that "one is both subject and object of philosophical amelioration." Finally, Bartsch turns to Persius' *Satire* 5, in which the poet stages a scene of successful pedagogy involving himself and his Stoic teacher Cornutus, a scene which answers to the failed educational program of *Satire* 4 as well as to Alcibiades' praise of Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*. As Bartsch concludes, "Persius eliminates *all* forms of *eros* from his idealized philosophical relationship and replaces erotic reciprocity with a purified metaphor of the exchange of hearts and minds. Mutual criticism is acknowledged as an inefficient way to proceed and given up in favor of introspection—or in favor of a Stoic, rather than Platonic, form of dialogue."

10. Valerius Flaccus

Although a Stoic influence on the major Flavian epics is widely acknowledged, scholarly discussion has so far been limited to Statius' *Thebaid* and Silius Italicus' *Punica*. In his chapter "Stoic thought and Homeric reminiscence in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*" **Andrew Zissos** shifts the focus to Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* and examines Valerius' Stoicism against the Stoicizing elements in Vergil's *Aeneid* as well as the philosophical background to Apollonius Rhodius' epic. As opposed to Vergil's relatively coherent ethical and cosmological system, Valerius makes manifest in his narrative contradictions in the philosophical system he has inherited. Apollonius Rhodius' poem is of course Valerius' main intertext, but he was also influenced, Zissos shows, by later Stoicizing writers such as Aratus (along with his Roman translators), Vergil, Manilius, Lucan and Seneca. At the same time, Valerius purges non-Stoic

material in both his literary predecessors, for example Apollonius'
Empedoclean cosmology and Vergil's nods to Epicureanism.

Nevertheless, Zissos questions the degree of Valerius' commitment to
Stoic ideas. He begins his discussion with the first book of the epic, which
presents a coherent and condensed reflection of Stoic ideals. In this
connection, Zissos highlights the attributes of the Stoic hero as represented
in two specific exemplars. First, he explores Hercules' "Stoicizing
'makeover' vis-à-vis the Hellenistic epic," and his relation to the
mythological hero. Zissos then turns to Valerius' innovative and heroic
version of Aeson's suicide, which is associated with contemporary
"'political' suicides." As Zissos remarks, "Aeson is in important respects
cast as the quintessential Stoic martyr with the murderous tyrant Pelias a
stock Stoic villain," and he concludes that "in the figure of Aeson the
Flavian *Argonautica* offers an emergent paradigm of Stoic heroism; in that
of Hercules it presents a well-established Stoic 'saint.'" And yet, despite
this unambiguously positive gesture toward Stoicism in the opening book
of the poem, Zissos maintains that "the initial Stoic 'energy' provided by
these two heroic types seems to dissipate in the subsequent books."

A crucial aspect of Valerius' departure from his major epic
predecessors, that is, Apollonius and Vergil, is predicated on what Zissos
calls a "return to the origins for the genre as a whole." In this regard,
Valerius reintroduces the Homeric concept of Jupiter's anthropomorphic
role and his 'loose' association with Fate, which Vergil had suppressed in
deference to Stoic views to the point of representing both Jupiter and Fate
as entirely coinciding. As Zissos puts it, "The poet has rather chosen to set
two conceptions—the impassive Stoic deity of the *Aeneid* and the self-
interested Homeric king of Olympus—against one another, to generate
interference patterns arising from alternating Vergilian and Homeric
intertextual appropriations." Zissos goes on to demonstrate that this
juxtaposition of Stoic concepts with ideas originating from other systems
of thought operates on various levels, for example when Valerius suggests
multiple and contradictory explanations for a meteorological event or for
cosmological eschatology as a whole; with regard to the latter, Valerius
combines incompatible Stoic and Homeric elements in such a way as to
produce what Zissos calls "a jarring metaphysical clash."

Finally, Zissos questions the traditional interpretation of Medea's
passion in terms of Stoic psychological theory, according to which
passions are viewed as "a diseased state of the intellect brought about by
false perception." Medea's struggle between *ratio* and *furor* is instead set
against the mechanisms of divine persuasion. Valerius subverts the
positive interpretation of Aphrodite's girdle, as described in Homer's *Iliad*,

which the Stoics had traditionally allegorized in such a way as to convey disapproval of the passions. Once her girdle fails to have the desired effect on the Colchian princess, Aphrodite—in the guise of Circe—has recourse both to her supernatural powers and to clever argument, among other things by appealing to the Stoic notion of the world citizen! Zissos reads this episode as "a singularly degrading 'Homeric' framing of Stoic content" and concludes that "Valerius abuses a philosophical principle through a violently ironic framing that reduces Stoic ideas to a meaningless situational rhetoric."

In sum, Zissos argues that Valerius Flaccus' systematic engagement with Stoic ideas succeeds more in destablizing than in affirming the possibility of a Stoicizing epic.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BEGINNINGS: PHILOSOPHY IN ROMAN LITERATURE BEFORE 155 B.C.

DOROTA DUTSCH

The topic of the present chapter may seem a contradiction in terms.[1] We have it on Cicero's authority that no one before his time had ever "shed the light of Latin literature" on the subject of philosophy (*Tusc. disp.* 1.5). Furthermore, narratives about Roman reception of Greek philosophy commonly begin with the crucial visit of the Athenian embassy, in 155 B.C., which included representatives of the Peripatos, the Academy, and the Stoa.[2] And yet, historical evidence from early second century B.C. points to a vivid interest in philosophy that manifested itself in a series of senatorial decrees.[3] In the decades that witnessed both the burning of the alleged Pythagorean books by King Numa (181 B.C.) and the banishment of Greek philosophers from Rome (173 B.C. and 161 B.C.), Romans must have been engaged in a debate on the role Greek philosophy should play in their lives.[4]

I will argue here that Ennius' allusions to Pythagorean concepts and Plautus' witty definitions of philosophizing are an integral part of this

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[1] I am very grateful to Myrto Garani and David Konstan for their comments on the earlier version of this paper and to Donna Williams for her editorial help. All translations, unless otherwise specified, are mine.

[2] See for example, e.g. Griffin and Barnes (1989); more recently; Morford [(2002) 2] conceded that the Romans may have encountered philosophy before 155 B.C. while stressing Cato's unqualified hostility towards Greek philosophy [(2002), 16-22]. See contra Horky (2011) and his interpretation of the fragmentary *Sententiae* of Appius Claudius Caecus as related to the Samnite stateman's Herennius Pontius' modified Peripatetic views on friendship and enmity.

[3] See Gruen (1990) 172-177 and his arguments.

[4] These were Epicureans, Alcaeus and Philiscus in 173 B.C., and unnamed philosophers in 161 B.C.; cf. Gruen (1990) 177 and his references.

early debate.[5] The works of Ennius and Plautus, along with Cato's views
on virtue, offer us a glimpse of philosophy as it was discussed in Rome
before Lucretius and Cicero. In this chapter I reconstruct the major themes
of these discussions, and further ask whether these themes resonated with
later Roman attitudes towards philosophy. My argument falls into five
sections. First, I establish the importance of Ennius' philosophical work
and point to the reasons behind the lessening of his importance in the
dominant Ciceronian narrative of early Latin philosophy. Second, I trace
Plautine perceptions of philosophers and their practice. Third, I discuss
Cato's anxieties about Athenian philosophy in the light of his teachings
about moral praxis. Fourth, I outline the tensions between moral praxis
(advocated by Cato and Ennius) and practice of philosophy (as portrayed
in Plautus). In a fifth and final section, I show how these tensions played
out in the wake of the famous Athenian embassy of 155 B.C. The satirist
Lucilius serves as my test case.[6]

1. Philosophy's Beginnings

1.1 Cicero on Ennius

In his *Tusculan Disputations* Cicero describes the beginnings of
Roman philosophical literature:

> *Philosophia iacuit usque ad hanc aetatem nec ullum habuit lumen
> litterarum Latinarum; quae inlustranda et excitanda nobis est, ut, si
> occupati profuimus aliquid civibus nostris, prosimus etiam, si possumus,
> otiosi. in quo eo magis nobis est elaborandum, quod multi iam esse libri
> Latini dicuntur scripti inconsiderate ab optimis illis quidem viris, sed non
> satis eruditis.* (*Tusc*. *disp*. 1.5.12-16—2.6.1-4)

> (Philosophy lay neglected until our time and has not been illuminated by
> the light of Latin literature. I have to shed light on it and rouse it, so that if

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[5] On philosophical motifs in early Latin literature, see Skutsch (1985), Garani
(2007a) 17, 25-28; on Ennius see Leitao (1997) and Dutsch (2008); see Dutsch
(2009) on Plautus; and Gehrke (1994) on Cato.
[6] I choose Lucilius rather than Terence because of satire's more immediate
relationship with contemporary issues. Terence's comedies engage with complex
ethical considerations that certainly reflect Hellenistic philosophical thought. For
example, Grant (1975) identifies Aristotelian motifs in the *Adelphoe*; cf. also Lord
(1977) on the same play and Saylor (1975) on Gnatho's posturing as philosopher in
the *Eunuchus*. Lucilius' satires however, even in their fragmentary state, spell out
Roman attitudes towards Greek culture more clearly than Terence's *palliatae*,
which deliberately blend and play with cultural distinctions.