

view of ‘assimilation to God’ (p. 52). D. identifies the origin of the notion of degrees of virtues in the notion of hierarchy of being, first detected not until the second century, in Numenius’ distinction between a primary and a secondary God (p. 59). In the area of epistemology D. addresses two key issues in the sceptic turn of the New Academy. The first (Chapter 5) is Carneades’ distinction between living life rationally by acquiring a high degree of belief on certain topics and remaining aloof on the question of knowledge (p. 78). The second (Chapter 6) is Plutarch’s attitude towards current philosophic developments. Unlike many of his contemporaries, D. argues, Plutarch considers the sceptic outlook of the New Academy an integral part of the Academy after Plato and himself adopts its aporetic method in many of his works. On this question and throughout the book, D. often modifies positions he has previously held on what he calls ‘a maturer consideration’ (p. 79). This by itself is one of the many exemplary aspects of the book. Leading among them is how much ground is covered by its pithiness.

The Roots of Platonism is D.’s gift of wisdom to the ongoing study of the origins of Platonism, told in a delightful style, philosophising through vignettes on G. Vlastos’s epistemological self-examination of why he has quit smoking and Socrates’ walking out from the wrong bar in Dublin. Without claims for definitiveness, D. has opened new vistas for exploration. The cup of Platonism is always half full for him.

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EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY AND REPUBLICAN ROME

YONA (S.), DAVIS (G.) (edd.) *Epicurus in Rome. Philosophical Perspectives in the Ciceronian Age*. Pp. x+207, ills. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Cased, £75, US\$99.99. ISBN: 978-1-108-84505-2.

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This volume is proof that the debate on the role of Greek philosophy in the Roman socio-political and cultural context still deserves our full attention. The volume brings together nine different studies organised in two sections (Part 1: ‘Epicurus and Roman Identities’ and Part 2: ‘Epicurus and Lucretian Postures’) preceded by an introduction by Yona.

It is this introduction that makes it possible (thanks to a concise but effective summary of the *status quaestionis*) to situate this collection of studies in the scholarly panorama devoted to Roman philosophy in general and Epicurean philosophy in Rome in particular. The aim of the editors and authors is clearly stated: it is an ‘attempt to understand the paradoxical appeal of a system allegedly incompatible with Roman politics and culture through the contrasting (and at times seemingly dialectical) accounts of its most prominent opponents as well as proponents’ (p. 3). The originality of the volume lies in trying to understand not only the reasons for this ‘paradoxical appeal’ but also the way in which some Romans (the socio-political aspect is taken into account as a limiting factor and at the same time as an interesting fact to examine) reacted to this ‘appeal’.

The first study, '*Sint Ista Graecorum: How to be an Epicurean in Late Republican Rome – Evidence from Cicero's On Ends 1–2*' by G. Roskam, investigates the paradoxical aspect of the appeal of Epicureanism in Rome and, in particular, Cicero's account of the irreconcilability of *Romanitas* and Epicureanism. The second study, 'Cicero's Rhetoric of Anti-Epicureanism' by D.P. Hanchey, examines Cicero's practice of referring to Epicureans without naming them in a kind of partial *damnatio memoriae*.

Two key elements of these studies strike me as noteworthy. The first is how much the cliché of Ciceronian *Romanitas* influences our perception of Republican Roman culture and how much this perception makes the presence of Epicureanism in Rome even more paradoxical in our eyes. In this sense, the figure of Cicero is fundamental and cumbersome. With his invectives, but also with his silences and periphrases, he constitutes a fundamental element for our view of Roman Epicureanism. The second element relates to a question that Roskam asks: 'How can one be an Epicurean in late-Republican Rome?' This question suggests that being an Epicurean in Rome may have been a complex exercise because of the different values defended by Roman Republican culture and the disciples of the Garden. The result of this difficult exercise might have been a certain adaptation of the doctrine to the Roman *modus vivendi*. After all, this is precisely what the contributions by N. Gilbert, 'Was Atticus an Epicurean?', and K. Volk, 'Caesar the Epicurean? A Matter of Life and Death', deal with. But this question suggests another: How can one be an Epicurean in Hellenistic Athens? Asking how one can be an Epicurean in Rome and insisting on the irreconcilable aspects of *Romanitas* and Epicureanism may suggest that being an Epicurean in Athens during the Hellenistic period was easier. Even if we want to acknowledge that the Epicurean school was a 'child' of its time and cultural context, we know that Epicurean doctrine was not so easily reconciled with the culture of the Athenians. Of the difficult exercise of being an Epicurean in Rome, how much is due to 'being an Epicurean' and how much to being one 'in Rome'?

This question implies another one: what does it mean to be an Epicurean? The studies by Gilbert and Volk attempt to answer this question indirectly by reconstructing the portraits of Atticus and Caesar and by trying to understand whether and to what extent they can be considered Epicureans. The reconstruction of 'Atticus the Epicurean' proves complex because, as Gilbert rightly says, 'Atticus is present and absent' (p. 57). Despite numerous accounts of his life, Atticus and his philosophical convictions remain elusive. The reconstruction of 'Epicurean Caesar' runs into the same obstacles with an additional difficulty. In contrast to Atticus, no testimony seems to suggest that Caesar had even a sympathy for the doctrine of Epicurus. Beyond the reconstructions proposed by the two authors, which are interesting and full of detail, I would like to focus on one aspect of their investigation: their reliance on facts, anecdotes and the memory of the lives of the two characters as evidence of their being Epicureans.

This aspect seems to suggest a question: where there is no mention of Epicurean authors, such as Lucretius or Philodemus, how can one identify an Epicurean? Can one really do without Epicurus' theoretical system when defining a person as Epicurean? It is true that the Epicurean system is hierarchically oriented and that the discourse on nature is at the service of ethics. But can we, based on this, consider someone who adopts Epicurean ethical precepts without knowing what lies behind them from a physical point of view to be an Epicurean? And does this attitude then not risk casting doubt on the Epicureanism of certain Epicurean authors whose lives and actions we know little about? I refer, for example, to Lucretius, who in P. Vesperini's reconstruction (*Lucrece: Archéologie d'un classique européen* [2017], which perhaps deserved to be included in the bibliography) is presented as a court poet who lacks true conviction in the exercise of the Epicurean creed.

The studies by M.R. Gale, '*Otium and Voluptas: Catullus and Roman Epicureanism*', and M. Hanses, 'Page, Stage, Image: Confronting Ennius with Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things*', have the merit of drawing attention to two authors, Catullus and Ennius, who are valuable for our understanding of Roman Epicureanism. With regard to Gale's study, I would like to draw attention to two interesting aspects. The first is undoubtedly the Catullus–Philodemus comparison on the poetic terrain. Philodemus' poetic production is still little exploited today by scholars of Epicureanism, and the comparison proposed by Gale shows a new way of approaching it. The other aspect is the reflection on Catullus and his critique of the theory and practice of Epicurean *philia* in relation to patronage. This is a fairly rare example of the application of Epicurean precepts in the concrete, everyday life of Roman society and its perception outside the Epicurean circle.

Hanses's study of Lucretius' debts to the work of Ennius not only has the merit of continuing to complete the puzzle of influences that made Lucretius' poem what it is, but also of taking into account an otherwise neglected source of inspiration, namely painting.

The contributions by E. Asmis, P. Gordon and T.H.M. Gellar-Goad deal more specifically with Lucretius' work. Asmis's study, "'Love It or Leave It": Nature's Ultimatum in Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things* (3.931–962)', examines the famous verses of *De rerum natura* 3. In this section Nature rebukes men who complain about being mortal by imposing an ultimatum on them. If one has enjoyed life to the fullest, there is no reason to complain about death. A diner who has eaten well and to satiety does not complain about leaving the table. If life has been a source of unhappiness in this case too, one should not complain about dying because, if one has not been able to enjoy what Nature has offered of the extra time, nothing will change. The analysis of these verses, from the point of view of Nature speaking and her interlocutors, is detailed and interesting. In the last verse of this section Nature states: 'All things are always the same'. Asmis interprets this concluding verse in two ways: in a subjective way and in a universal way. The subjective interpretation is that things cannot change for a human who complains because of their inability to enjoy the goods of nature (they would waste even an immortal life). The universal interpretation is that even the satisfaction of pleasures is part of a whole, a 'universal arrangement' that has always been the same, forever and ever. It is up to the complaining human to change their attitude and learn to be happy according to nature. This interpretation is more convincing to me because it is based on a more general concept of nature as non-anthropocentric as set out in Book 5 (218–34), a nature that does nothing for humans but to which humans must adapt.

Gordon, in 'Kitsch, Death and the Epicurean', presents an original analysis of Lucretian work (and more generally of Epicurean doctrine) in the light of the concept of kitsch. If we understand kitsch, as M. Kundera does ('a folding screen set up to curtain off death'), i.e. as an 'absolute denial of putrefaction' (p. 131), then Lucretius (and Epicureanism) can only repudiate it. Beyond the difficulty, of which Gordon is fully aware, involved in using a modern concept of this kind, I agree with the idea that two aspects of the doctrine inevitably clash with a universalising and sentimentalist tendency (such as that which characterises kitsch), a general disdain for 'the many', which in Philodemus becomes a refusal to oversimplify doctrine in order to share it with the greatest number of people, and a systematic mistrust of the workings of the mind when it departs totally from the data provided by sensation. The first aspect prevents the universal outburst of kitsch that wants 'to please the greatest possible number of people' (p. 135) and the second encourages the elimination of the 'folding screen' and reliance on the senses to avoid ideological constructions (such as those of the lover at the end of *DRN* 4).

The final contribution, Gellar-Goad's 'Lucretius on the Size of the Sun', deals with the Epicurean theory of the dimensions of the sun. If from a thematic point of view it seems to deviate from the other contributions, the way in which the topic is treated makes it consistent with the rest of the volume. Gellar-Goad does not merely analyse the theory, but also examines the way in which this theory is expounded and understood by non-Epicureans. His thesis is that this theory (more than the others? this aspect is less clear) represents Epicurean doctrine as a kind of badge and that its understanding functions as a discriminator between Epicureans and non-Epicureans.

This volume is part of a rich tradition of debates on the presence and essence of Greek philosophy in Rome and in particular on the relationship between Epicureanism and *Romanitas*. It does so in an original and interesting way, and where it does not provide certain answers, it suggests new questions or questions to be discovered anew.

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CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

BROUWER (R.), VIMERCATI (E.) (edd.) *Fate, Providence and Free Will: Philosophy and Religion in Dialogue in the Early Imperial Age*. (Ancient Philosophy & Religion 4.) Pp. viii + 335. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2020. Cased, €134, US\$161. ISBN: 978-90-04-43566-7.

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The sixteen essays collected in this volume derive from two conferences, organised by Vimercati and M.L. Gatti, which took place in 2017 at the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome and at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan. The book contributes to the scholarly debate on topics that have been the subject of a good number of studies and miscellanies in recent years, which the editors mention in the introduction.

The specific point of view and the original contribution this volume intends to offer to scholars are indicated in its subtitle: it aims to show how – between the end of the first century BCE and the third century CE – the philosophical debate on the themes of divine providence, fate and human freedom intertwined with the reflection produced in the religious sphere, creating the conceptual premises and language that in the following centuries determined the discussion on these topics.

Although it was not conceived as a textbook, one can see in the roughly chronological arrangement of the chapters and in the choice of topics of the contributions an effort to offer a sufficiently complete and orderly overview of the problems addressed and the positions taken by the main authors and movements of thought (although an explicit treatment of Epicurean theses is lacking).

The contributions each have their own autonomy, but a continuous reading of the volume is not only possible, but opportune. It is facilitated by the fact that in the introduction the editors draw a historical summary of the development of reflection on providence, fate and human freedom, which offers a unified perspective, while in the