I. Overview: The Therapy of Desire

A. Overarching goal: defend the idea that Hellenistic philosophy is a “medical” conception of philosophy, and leverage the resources of that approach for modern readers

1. Coordinates with her effort to make the emotions discursive, helpful, and integral to a good life

2. κενὸς ἐκείνου φιλοσόφου λόγος, ὡς οὐ μηδὲν πάθος ἀνθρώπου θεραπεύεται· ὡσπερ γὰρ ἱατρικὴς οὐδὲν ὀφελοῦσι μὴ τῶν νόσων τῶν σωμάτων ἐκβαλλούσης, οὔτως ὀφελεῖ φιλοσοφίας, εἰ μή τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐκβάλλει πάθος. (Epicurus fr. 221)

“Empty is the argument of that philosopher by which no suffering of man is treated. For just as there is no benefit of a medical practice which does not expel diseases from bodies, so there is none of a philosophy, unless it expels suffering from the soul.”

B. This medical, Hellenistic approach is contrasted with:

1. A Platonic model of philosophy which looks to discover, as if scientifically, what the Good is and then achieve it (regardless of foreignness to human life)

2. An “ordinary language philosophy” which takes the claims of the populace as “healthy and normative.” (Nussbaum 1994: 25)
C. Follows the character “Nikidion” through some crucial features of Aristotelian, Stoic, Epicurean, and Skeptical philosophy; three chapters dedicated to Lucretius

D. Nussbaum identifies 8 features that characterize medical philosophy
   1. Most significant are instrumental value and anthropocentrism

II. Chapter 5: Beyond Obsession and Disgust: Lucretius on the Therapy of Love

A. Secular West has made a religion out of love and so has failed to recognize the cogency of Lucretius’ attack on it (cf. Jerome)

B. Lucretius attempts to transcend the “beloved as obsession, beloved as disgusting” dichotomy and arrive at the healthy perspective of “beloved as object of clear and genuine affection” (Nussbaum 1994: 47)
   1. Lucretius has a more “trans-generational” and positive view of marriage and children than Epicurus

C. Nussbaum also denies the claim that Book 4 serves as a reduction of love and rebuttal to Book 1 (pace Clay 1983)
   1. Venus was healthy propagator for early humans (as now for animals); she became “softer” and “civilized” in marriage (Nussbaum 1994: 162)
   2. 4.1058 marks a distinction between true love and how we apply the name:

   haec Venus est nobis; hinc autemst nomen amoris ...

   3. The section after the “behind-the-scenes” [poscaenia] doesn’t end with scorn but acceptance (4.1190-1):

   et, si bello animost et non odiosa, vicissim
   praetermittere <et> humanis concedere rebus.

III. Chapter 6: Mortal Immortals: Lucretius on Death and the Voice of Nature

A. Nussbaum defends the Epicurean position from attack (e.g., Nagel 1979) but ultimately finds it lacking; death should be regarded as an evil

B. Lucretius paradigmatically attempts philosophical therapy with respect to fear of death with a four-part diagnostic argument (Nussbaum 1994: 196):
   1. Pattern of behavior best explained by fear of death
   2. Subjective condition best explained by fear of death
3. Occasion of confession or acknowledgement
4. Background, normative picture of a person unaffected by such a fear
C. Religion is a consequence of the fear of death, not a cause (Nussbaum 1994: 200-1)
D. The “banquet argument” sets up a tension between what is naturally pleasant/good and the possibility of Epicurus-like deification:

\[ \text{cur non, ut plenus vitae conviva, recedis} \]
\[ \text{aequo animoque capis securam, stulte, quietem? (3.938-9)} \]

1. “The banquet image is introduced by Nature in order to show that it can be too late to die; but it implies, just as surely, that it can be too soon.”
(Nussbaum 1994: 214)
E. \text{natus enim debet quicumque est velle manere}
\text{in vita, donec retinebit blanda voluptas. (5.177-8)}

“For whoever is born must wish to remain in life so long as alluring pleasure will hold him.”

F. Fear of death, pace Lucretius, enables virtue (Nussbaum 1994: 227)

Note: Chapter 7 on Anger and Aggression

**Bibliography**


