

## K. Revue trans-européenne de philosophie et arts

Université de Lille, Laboratoire Cecille

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Call for papers

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### LUCRETIUS: NATURE UNFOUNDED

*Bench'io sappia che obbligo*

*preme chi troppo all'età propria increbbe*

K. proposes an issue dedicated to the figure and thought of Titus Lucretius Carus because thinking about nature appears to be an urgent philosophical and political task. To this end, it is undoubtedly compelling to recreate a genealogy capable of showing that it has never existed a perfect and uncorrupted nature which an ecological thought and practice could restore. It may be possible, instead, that nature has never existed except as an event of encounters between materials, bodies, thoughts. In order to safeguard that type of event, it is necessary to work on keeping open the chance of the event itself.

By choosing Lucretius as the core of our next issue, we would like to discuss the possibility that a *physics*, i.e. an investigation of the “nature of things”, does exist. Dating back to Democritus, Epicurus and then Lucretius, this type of investigation should contrast (both in the past and in the future) the "myth" of nature as a place of individual and collective reconciliation; as a space for the domestication of conflicts and of our human fears; the same fears that relegate us to the hands of power, to any form of power.

By narrating the history of humanity, Lucretius specifies that the disaster that man has reached (the plague description at the end of *De rerum natura* is a plastic image of this disaster) does not derive from his customs and traditions, from his inventions and from industriousness, but, as argued by Gilles Deleuze, from that side of the myth and from that evil infinity that has slipped into his feelings and his works.

Lucretian physics embodies a philosophy of affirmation because it clashes with the prestige of the negative, it destitutes every power of the negative, denies the spirit of the negative the right of speaking in the name of philosophy. In our opinion, ecology today needs this physics, i.e. this work of deconstructing myths, ecology does not need a generic naturalism. In this perspective, as Lucretius identifies and fights the myths of his time ("in *crescendo* during his age", to quote

Leopardi), for us it is a matter of identifying the myths of our age and oppose them through a physics, or, if you like, an ecology.

In his beautiful, dramatic, late writings, Louis Althusser warns us on this. Materialism, or rather: this "underground current of the materialism of the encounter", the French philosopher writes about and of which Lucretius is one of the most significant expressions, has nothing to do with the rationalist tradition. That is, it does not seek any Reason, any Cause, any Sense of events because it knows that everything derives from a rain of atoms that occasionally deviate from their parallels to create and destroy worlds. The acclaimed "clinamen" operates in the infinite void. For us, trying to define a destituent position in the field of political gestures and critical thinking, it will be particularly interesting to discuss a philosophy of emptiness, through Lucretius. The vacuum, is indeed already there, even before the fall of the atoms. It can thus be argued, without any doubt, that Lucretian materialism originates from *nothing*, and from an infinitesimal and aleatory variation of nothing which is the deviation of the fall. Is there an equally powerful dismissal of the claim of philosophy to tell the truth?

We know that Epicureanism means to found an *ethics* on the *physics*. It is therefore legitimate to ask ourselves how it is possible to found a speculative reflection around the practical behaviour of man, especially when searching for the true good right here in the world, around the *nothing*, in an infinite empty space, under an endless rain of atoms. The hypothesis that we would like to put forward in this issue is the following: if physics, this materialist philosophy of Lucretius, presents itself as an investigation into nothingness, that is, if it destitutes every truth, every idea of the world, every sense of things, the ethics deriving from it is necessarily an ethics of liberation even from the idea of any ethics. In other words, Roman Epicureanism, unlike the Greek one, in the context of the crisis of the first century B.C. is presented as a conceptual backlash endowed with a strong revolutionary charge, with great dissolving faculties.

Can a kind of thought that intends to change the conditions of individual existence also become a "destituent power"? Does the destitution of the world by a philosophy of emptiness succeed in prefiguring a political rupture and innovation, what we define as a "destituent power"?

Our next issue on Lucretius may revolve around one of the following issues:

- 1) Lucretius is a thinker of the things of nature and of the catastrophe of history. We would like to verify if this way of seeing the world contributes to defining a toolbox for an unprecedented ecological thought.
- 2) In the infinite universe, things are born all the time and they end. Nature is an infinite sum whose elements do not add up to become a whole, they always remain singular beings. Nature is thus an affirmation of the multiple and of the different as a perpetual source of joy. The power of pluralism that we find in Lucretius' work seems to be particularly productive in the field of the arts: in the visual arts (from the Renaissance to Enrico Baj), in literature (from Alberti and Montaigne to Leopardi, Calvino, Ponge), in theatre (Jean François Peyret, Maguy Marin, Virgilio Sieni, Calixto Bieito), in cinema (Malick, Godard, Straub).
- 3) If the universe is multiple and different, the writing of this universe must be equally varied, contemplating the possibility of the explosion of discourse and its codes. There is a common thread that links the formal choices of literary composition and the framework of a new cosmological model in Lucretius. Writing must not mimic reality, when

Lucretius complains about the poverty of Latin compared to the original Greek, he is not trying to adapt words to things. Rather, the poet prefers creating an infinite game of combinations and intersections between words, whose purpose is not to repeat the rhythm of reality, but to recreate it. It is above all in the use of a new genre compared to the Epicurean tradition that Lucretius reveals his genius. It is poetry that allows him to re-make the world. Going back to the preplatonian tradition, Lucretius invents an everlasting model in the relationship between knowledge of the world and its story (Giordano Bruno, Leopardi, Calvino, Gadda).

4) Thinking about emptiness. In the wake of the late Althusser, we would like to question the materialist tradition starting from the dismissal of the object of the philosophy that it operates. Philosophy, with Epicurus, with Lucretius, is no longer the enunciation of Reason and the Origin of things, but the theory of their contingency. Starting from ancient materialism, we would like to trace the map of those thoughts, those gestures (political and aesthetic too) that dared to start from nothing, from nothingness, from emptiness. Studying Lucretius could allow to interrogate the modern political ontology in a different way, by tracing a path that could have a crucial epicenter in Nietzsche - a great reader of Lucretius - since the Nietzschean instance of the super-man (that is, those who make their impotence-groundlessness the reason for their actions-decisions, deciding for necessity and therefore breaking its implacability) moves precisely in the direction of Lucretius' vision of the void conceived as an indeterminable chain of events.

5) The "destituent power" can be a possible outcome of the philosophy of emptiness. An emancipatory ethic takes shape without problems for the followers of ancient materialism. From this perspective, the question of friendship, decisive in Epicureanism and other Hellenistic philosophical currents, can be studied. Perhaps it is also possible to move a further step. In other words, it will be necessary to verify whether this philosophy of emptiness is also capable of creating a new course for common life, that is, if it allows us to prefigure new institutions, if it is, in short, also a form of "destituent power".

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Deadline for submission of abstract: 7th December 2020 (max 2,500 characters)

Please specify if the abstract is for the "essays" or "readings" section.

Please send abstract to: [krevuecontact@gmail.com](mailto:krevuecontact@gmail.com)

Deadline for submission of papers: 11th April 2021.

Proposals may be submitted in English, Italian and French.