Epicurus undergoes a three-fold process of deification in the *De Rerum Natura*. First, Prologue Three depicts him as Venus' counterpart or 'replacement'. Secondly, his deification culminates the progression observable in *Graius homo* (1.66), *O Graiae gentis decus* (3.3) and *tu pater* (3.9), *deus ille fuit, deus* (5.8): Epicurus is first designated simply as a Greek man, then as 'ornament' of the Greek nation and as 'father', and is, at last, overtly apotheosized. Finally, Epicurus' intelligence is described as 'risen from a divine mind' (3.14-15: *ratio . . . divina mente coorta*); his discoveries are called 'divine' (6.7: *divina reperta*). Prologues Three, Five and Six develop this aspect of his deification which is the concern of the present study.

E.J. Kenney has noted in connection with *ratio . . . divina mente coorta* the 'implicit reference to the birth of Athena, goddess of wisdom, from the head of Zeus, chief of the gods: the allusive application of divine mythology to Epicurus . . . is appropriate in the hymnic setting.' It is appropriate in

1. See Hahn for the framework of this replacement. I discuss the matter further in my 'Venus, Epicurus and the *Naturae Species Ratioque*, (forthcoming).
2. Edelstein suggests that the *Graius Homo* may not refer to Epicurus specifically, but to Epicurus as the general summation of Presocratic philosophy. Cf. Clay's reaction (1969:39) and Buchheit (304n.1), who is not alone in rejecting the notion. Cox (135f) sees in this progression 'a planned triad of praise in which we may see confirmation of the three-part structure of the whole work.'
3. Note the similar language of deification used of Empedocles at 1.730-733 and see Clay 1976:214-216. That language resembles the description of Epicurus' deification at 5.1-6, discussed below.
4. Note also 5.13 where Lucretius argues the superiority of Epicurus' *divina reperta* to those of mythological divinities.
5. Kenney 1971:76. West (212) supports Kenney's observation as one of 'the most important of the many original ideas in his commentary.' He further notes that 'the first thing Athene did after her leap was to utter a great shout, the gods were frightened and Olympus was shaken (*Homeric Hymn* 28, 6-9, *Pindar Olympian* 7, 36-8). So after the springing of *ratio*, it shouted out (*vociferari*) the nature of things, terror ceased and the walls of the world moved apart.' Müller (763) briefly objects to the idea of a reference to the birth of Athena but does not elaborate.

Waszink persuasively defends the Oblongus reading, *coortam* (to be taken with *naturam rerum*). Bailey (*ad loc.*) and others prefer *coorta*. My own point of departure rests with the interpretation which Kenney bases on the latter reading. Either reading, however, is defensible in its own right as Waszink's and West's respective interpretations of *vociferari* would seem to indicate.
the hymnic setting because deities and not mortals are the proper subject of a hymn: in the present case, Epicurus undergoes a process which culminates in his deification as deus (5.8). If Epicurus' ratio is analogous to Athena, then like her, it is invincible. Epicurus, in turn, becomes a Zeus figure, omniscient and omnipotent. Association of this type appears to exemplify the 'unconscious survival of the state of mind in Lucretius' conception of Nature which gave birth to mythology.' A comparison of several passages suggests that the survival may not have been so 'unconscious' and that the mythological undercurrent was the intended, if not inevitable and paradoxical, issue of Lucretius' thought process, of his marriage of verse and science.

We should understand the notion of ratio, divina mente coorta as one of poetic licence since, according to the accepted view, the chest was the seat of reason. So at 5.4-5, Lucretius offers an implicit correction to the myth of Athena's birth by again using the language of birth to describe the praemia of Epicurus, pectore parta suo: ratio came into being, not in the shape of Athena, born from Zeus' head, but in the shape of Epicurus' teachings, born of his pectus. As noted, it is here that Epicurus receives the title of deus (5.8), for it was he, 'as leader who discovered that ratio of life which is now called “wisdom”, and who through his science stationed life out of waves so great and shadows into such calm (waters) and so clear a light' (5.9-12):

\[
\text{qui princeps vitae rationem invenit eam quae nunc appellatur “sapientia”, quiique per artem fluctibus e tantis vitam tantisque tenebris in tam tranquillo et tam clara luce locavit.}
\]

At 3.9-10 Epicurus was called rerum inventor, the supplier of patria praeccepta. At 3.15, his ratio was considered a thing born of him. The passage just quoted strengthens the relationship between inventor and ratio by saying that Epicurus 'discovered reason' (rationem invenit). At the same time, 5.11-12 bring together and condense several images from the openings of previous prologues. Compare 5.11-12 (above) with:

6. For the particular aspect of divinity which suited Lucretius' conception of Epicurus as a god, see n.12 below.
7. Sellar 350.
8. For extensive bibliography on Lucretius' position in regard to Epicurean aesthetics and, in particular, to Epicurean dogma on the practice of poetry, see Lenaghan 221ns.3 and 6 and Classen 110n.49.
9. The phrase, pectore parta suo (5.5), occasions contrast with mortali corpore cretus (5.6) where Lucretius asserts that no one 'grown of mortal frame' could sing a poem worthy of the thoughts 'born of his [Epicurus'] mind.'
10. Ars includes both art and science. Cf. Bailey ad loc.
2.1 Suave, mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis
3.1 O tenebris tantis tam clarum extollere lumen.\(^{11}\)

At 5.11-12 the waves and shadows of 2.1 and 3.1, respectively, combine in a single verse as the twin evils. The ‘life’ which Epicurus removes from their midst is syntactically placed between them in the very middle of the verse (5.11: \textit{vitam})\(^{12}\) and its transference to the realms of light is conveyed by the double repetition of the adverb \textit{tam} in the following verse, which picks up on the last syllable of \textit{vitam}.

After citing the indispensability of Epicurus’ discoveries and their superiority to those of mythical figures (5.13-18), the poet reaffirms his master’s divinity, this time in language reminiscent of a former petition to Venus:

\[
\begin{align*}
5.19 & \textit{quo magis hic merito nobis deus esse videtur.} \\
1.28 & \textit{quo magis aeternum da dictis, diva, leporem.}
\end{align*}
\]

At the same time, the association with 1.28 is strengthened at 5.52-53 where Epicurus is described as ‘being accustomed to making pronouncements in a divine manner about the gods themselves’:

\[
\begin{align*}
5.52-53 & \text{divinitus ipsis} \\
& \text{immortalibus de divis dare dicta suerit.} \\
1.28 & \text{quo magis aeternum da dictis, diva, leporem.}
\end{align*}
\]

Though their syntax differs, the exact verbal correspondences are suggestive in the overall dynamics of Epicurus’ deification and of his relationship to Venus, in general (cf. n1, above): \textit{divis$\sim$diva, dare$\sim$da, dicta$\sim$dictis}.

At 5.20-21 we learn that the sweet comforts of life (\textit{dulcia . . . solacia vitae}) which Epicurus provides spread far and wide to assuage the minds of great nations:

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{ex quo nunc etiam per magnas didita gentis} \\
& \text{dulcia permulcent animos solacia vitae.}
\end{align*}
\]

Epicurus here brings to all peoples a spiritual calm which corresponds, in a general way, to the physical calm that Venus brings to sea and sky (1.8-9):

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{tibi rident aequora ponti} \\
& \text{placatumque nitet diffuso lumine caelum.}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{11}\) Despite wide editorial preference for \textit{E} at 3.1, \textit{O} gives a much better sense. See West 1969:80f.

\(^{12}\) Thury (156) notes that Epicurus has placed human life into clear light (5.11) as Venus had earlier led all forms of life onto the shores of light (1.22). Cf. \textit{ibid.}, 157 for Epicurus as the ‘one deity who . . . belongs to man . . . and, ultimately, is more important a god than Venus.’ Strauss (120) likewise stresses Epicurus’ divinity vis-à-vis its importance for mankind. ‘Epicurus was then a god, if we understand by a god not a being which is deathless, but a supreme benefactor of men.’ Kenney’s is another recent voice in support of Epicurus’ divinity (1977:5): ‘there was one god, Epicurus (\textit{D. R. N. 5.8}), and Lucretius was his prophet.’ Minadeo (39f) surely argues to excess against any notion of Epicurus’ divinity.
Venus may bring unrest to animals (1.14: *persultant*, 1.15: *tranant*), but the end results are orderly compliance (1.16):

> te sequitur cupide quo quamque inducere pergis

and unimpassioned propagation (1.19-20):

> omnibus incutiens *blandum* per pectora amorem
efficis ut cupide generatim saecla propagent.\(^{13}\)

As if to underscore the corresponding calm which each produces, 5.22-34 depict the fearsome beasts of myth subdued by the *ratio* of the real Epicurus, while 1.10-20 depict the real animals of Nature following in the train of the mythological Venus. At 5.37-48, Lucretius argues that even if Hercules had not destroyed the beasts of mythology, they would do us no harm, and that what real beasts do abound ‘throughout forests, mighty mountains and deep woods’\(^{14}\) can, for the most part, be avoided. It is, instead, the internal battles against greed, pride etc. that are most harmful. Epicurus has subdued these spiritual beasts. This accomplishment also suggests the psychological calm he instills as a counterpart to the physical harmony that Venus’ advent brings to nature. Lucretius attributes to Epicurus the overthrow of all such fears and conditions ‘by precepts, not arms’, for which, again, he is worthy of deification (5.50-51):

> expulerit dictis, non armis, nonne decebit
hunc hominem numero divum dignarier esse?

The theme of *dulcia . . . solacia vitae*, first encountered at 5.20-21, is resumed at greater length at the start of Prologue Six where the famed Athens is described as Epicurus’ parent (6.1-5):

> Primae frugiparos fetus mortalibus aegris
dididerunt quondam praeclaro nomine Athenae
et recreaverunt vitam legesque rogarunt

\(^{13}\) The use of *cupide* in this and in the preceding quote does not contradict the notions of *orderly* compliance and *unimpassioned* propagation. Clay (1969:35f) notes in connection with *cupide* at 1.20 that ‘by her influence she [Venus] compels the animal world to gather together across the barriers which have separated kind from kind; she has filled kind with desire or *longing* for kind. *Cupido* in Latin, like πόθος in Greek, is desire, but often it is desire for something absent or distant.’ Accordingly, *cupido* at 1.16 and 1.20 describes the animal *instinct* which Venus controls. But as Clay also notes (1969:37n.19) it may also designate human lust (the *dira cupido* of 4.1090) and the natural impulse or tendency of matter (2.199 and the *cuppedo medii* of 1.1082). It is also significant that Venus strikes the animals with *blandum amorem* (1.19). Elder (113) notes that *blandus* (or *blanditur*) is ‘the key-word for the impersonal, “safe” reproduction that the animals practice.’

\(^{14}\) The regions mentioned at 5.41:

> per nemora ac montes magnos silvasque profundas
denique per maria ac montes flaviosque rapacis
frondiferasque domos avium camposque virentis.
et primae dederunt solacia dulcia vitae
cum genuere virum tali cum corde repertum.\textsuperscript{15}

The last word, repertum, though taken by Bailey (ad loc.) as ‘little more
than the participle of sum or = \( \pi\epsilon\rho\omega\upsilon\kappa\omega\tau\alpha \)’, may here be considered of
greater significance in its designation of Epicurus as ‘a man discovered (sc.
to be) with such a spirit.’\textsuperscript{16} For at the start of Prologue Five it is the
discoveries of Epicurus himself which Lucretius feels are incapable of suffi-
cient praise (5.1-2):

quis potis est dignum pollenti pectore carmen
condere pro rerum maiestate hisque repertis?

The two contexts create a bilateral notion of Epicurus as a discovery and as
discoverer. The latter designation is apparent from such usages as rerum
inventor (3.9) and rationem invenit (5.9); the former, from our understand-
ing of Epicurus as a man of such singular discoveries that he may himself, in
a sense of the word, be considered a discovery.\textsuperscript{17} Epicurus’ discoveries are
‘godlike’ (6.7: divina reperta), reinforcing the notion of his own divinity
and recalling such designations as ratio . . . divina mente coorta (3.14-15)
and pectora parta suo . . . praemia (5.5). This last designation elicits the
poet’s most explicit acknowledgment of his master’s divinity: deus ille fuit,
deus (5.8). These considerations, taken together with Epicurus’ Athenian
‘parentage’, create a picture of parthenogenetic invincibility: Zeus gave
birth to Athena through parthenogenesis, Athena became Athens’
patroness, and Athens, quite literally ‘gave birth’ (6.5: genuere) to Epicurus
— ‘a man discovered’ (to be) with such a spirit, at birth ( . . . genuere virum
. . . repertum). At the same time, Epicurus becomes a Zeus figure: the birth
gives to wisdom from his mind suggests, by analogy, Athena’s birth from
the forehead of Zeus. Because of these divine discoveries his glory, voiced
about of old, is now raised up to heaven (6.8):

divolgata vetus iam ad caelum gloria fertur.

15. Strauss (133) suggests that the proem to Book Six is a corrective of the proem to
Book Five: ‘Lucretius now praises Epicurus again as a man, as a mortal [6.5: virum]; he no longer
praises him as a god . . . what survives Epicurus are his “divine discoveries” (cf. \textit{ibid.}, 81).’
Prologue Six is no more a corrective of Five than — as Strauss also argues — Four is of Three
or Two is of One. Prologue Six merely ‘backs up’ to the point of Epicurus’ ‘mortal’ beginnings
before he merited ‘divine’ praise.

16. Clay (1976:217) has recently suggested that ‘Lucretius’ description of himself as
“discovered”’ in Book V [336: ipse repertus] might have dissuaded Bailey from his vacuous
explanation of repertum in VI.5 as “little more here than the participle of sum”.’

17. I was pleased to find this idea corroborated by Clay (1976:217): ‘By this conception of
history, discoverers are themselves discovered.’ And further, ‘As a part of the gradual
discovery of the arts of improving life, the discoverer of the true account of the world is
himself discovered.’ The frequent appearance of repertus-a-um at line ending in the closing
part of Book Five (dealing with the ‘discoveries’ of civilization) prepares us for the idea of
Epicurus as a ‘discovery’ ( . . . virum . . . repertum) at the start of Book Six. Cf. 5.1113, 1241,
The following schema may help to illustrate these relationships:

Epicurus' divinity is then established, figuratively, through his birth and through that to which he, in turn, gives birth. The praemia or ratio which he engenders and announces are divine for what they resemble (Athena) and for the results they produce (i.e. 'ataraxia'; 5.21: permulcent animos). They are divine, as well, for the manner in which they are spoken: there is a suggestive similarity between the language used of Venus' petition to Mars and that of Epicurus' pronouncements to mankind (cf. 1.39-40 and 6.6):

suavis ex ore loquellas

funde petens . . .

omnia veridico qui quondam ex ore profudit

18. For the divinely spoken nature of Epicurus' pronouncements see 5.49-53 (p.49, above). Epicurus' mouth is described as 'true-speaking' at 6.6: veridico . . . ex ore profudit. The usage appears once again of Epicurus at 6.24: veridicis igitur purgavit pectora dictis. The idea of speaking the truth at 6.6 is not at variance with the parallel cited at 1.39-40 where Venus' words are suavis: suavis ex ore loquellas/funde. Elder (113) observes that: 'suavis, tied to the concept
Epicurus may thus be expected, with the unerring wisdom of Athena, to overcome irrational thinking, *dictis, non armis* (5.50), as Venus overcomes Mars. The neutralization of Mars is the culmination of the process through which Venus composes not only Nature at large, but human nature, in particular. Through Venus’ agency, mankind is primed for the task yet left to Epicurus, that of extirpating the spiritual beast within and assisting mankind to realize his potential for happiness. Whether mankind listens will depend as much on Venus’ power to sustain control over Mars as on Lucretius’ artistic exploitation of her ability to do so.*

of Epicurean peace describes the sort of mental generation which contains in it an element of ataraxy. So Venus is asked to pour forth *suavis loquellas* upon Mars as she seeks *placidam pacem*. Epicurus’ pronouncements have a similarly calming intention and effect (6.25):

et finem statuit cuppedinis atque timoris.

19. Our present considerations should not cause us to lose sight of the fact that Athena is also the fierce armed goddess of combat (cf. Hesiod, *Theog.* 924-926). This aspect of her divinity ill suits the conception of Epicurus as *victor* (cf. 1.75) ... *qui cuncta subegerit ex animoque/expulerit dictis, non armis* (5.49-50). Lucretius here no more intends the armed Athena than he intends the destructive Venus in the opening prologue.

20. Venus works her control over Mars from above him (1.39: *circumfusa super*). So in the first mention of her powers over Nature is Venus described as working from above (1.2: *caeli subter labentia signa*). For the association of Mavors in the opening prologue with *mors* and *mortalis*, see Elder 116 and Wormell 39.

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