

THE CRITICAL TREATMENT OF MYTHS  
IN CICERO AND LUCRETIUS

by

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INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of attempts to account for the origin of myths by the philological, allegorical, and anthropological theories in current treatments of Greek and Roman mythology gave rise to several questions: What was the attitude of the Romans themselves toward the myths? Have the modern theories any basis in ancient treatment? And in what other ways, if any, were the myths treated at all critically?

The first century B.C. was chosen as a period for investigation because that period represents the last phase of the religion of the Republic before the rather pronounced change in the Empire. The scope of this investigation had necessarily to be limited; Cicero and Lucretius, therefore, were selected as representatives of the period.

The method of this investigation has been first to make a complete collection from the philosophical and ethical writings of Cicero and from the De Rerum Natura of Lucretius of all myths which the ancient writer has treated critically in any way at all. If from the con-

<sup>X</sup>test it appeared that some interpretation or critical treatment of the myth was implied, the example was included. On the other hand, all examples have been disregarded in which there was apparently no attempt to interpret or criticize the myth.

The examples collected have been studied in an effort to determine by what methods and different kinds of treatment the myths have been criticized either favorably or adversely. Some attempt has been made to collate these ways of treatment with modern studies of the origin and interpretation of the myths. Wherever possible an effort has been made to note in Cicero's or Lucretius's treatment of a myth any points different from the account usual in the ancient writers.

From Cicero examples have been assembled from the De Finibus, Academica, De Natura Deorum, De Divinatione, De Fato, Tusculanae Disputationes, De Officiis, De Republica, De Legibus, De Senectute, and De Amicitia. Occasionally have one or two references been made to other of his writings. From Lucretius were collected examples from the De Rerum Natura, his only extant writing. Because of the limits of this investigation nothing has been done with the Greek sources for Cicero's philosophical and ethical treatises and for the De Rerum Natura.

Finally, a word ought to be said about the obvious

connection between mythology and Roman religion. It is outside the field of this study to consider religion except as the subject comes up in one way or another in connection with the myths. Cicero, for instance, was doubtless influenced to a broad and highly eclectic treatment of the myths because of his fundamental attitude toward religion. For this reason I have included an opening section on the Roman idea of the close practical relation between religion and the State.

PART I   EXAMPLES OF MYTHS FROM CICERO

1. CICERO'S COMMENTS INDICATING TOLERANCE OR ACCEPTANCE OF MYTHS

A. THE STATE AND THE EXPEDIENCY OF RELIGION

More strongly, perhaps, than other educated Romans of his day Cicero had a sense of duty to the state. For the maintenance of this state he believed the gods were necessary. <sup>1</sup> In one of his criticisms on the Epicurean isolation of the gods from human affairs he asks of what avail piety, sanctity, or religion would be if the gods pay no attention to men. And without piety and religion he fears great confusion and disturbance in life, so great that faith and all associations of human life, and - most important of all - justice, will perish from the earth. <sup>2</sup> The Stoic Balbus is represented by Cicero as asserting that Rome owes her great success to leaders who have performed strictly their religious duties; and Balbus even infers that existence of the gods is proved by the fact that Romans, who, compared with their neighbors, have been noted above other peoples for religious zeal, surpassed these peoples; in a word, that the Romans by the grandeur and fame of their republic had vindicated the gods themselves. <sup>3</sup>

1. Fowler: Roman Ideas of Deity, pp. 83 - 4.

2. Cicero: N. D. I,2,3.

3. N. D. II,3,8.

And Cotta, the upholding Academic doctrines, believes that Rome would never have been so great had not Romulus laid the foundations of religious worship and made the gods propitious.<sup>1</sup>

The gods, then, must serve the state. Mucius Scaevola, Pontifex Maximus, whom Cicero in his youth knew and admired, is quoted by St. Augustine as positing three kinds of religion: the poet's, the philosopher's, and the statesman's. The first two he calls futile, superfluous, or harmful. The poet's religion is nothing but fancy; the philosopher's, however true, is harmful because it is inexpedient for the masses to hear the gods attacked. Only the statesman's religion is to be accepted.<sup>2</sup> Scipio in the De Republica is represented as explaining the kingship of Jove over the other gods because chiefs of the state had seen the benefit to society that would result from belief in a divine King and Father of all creatures.<sup>3</sup>

If religion existed for the welfare of the state, so did the auguries.<sup>4</sup> Cicero has the old Cato say that Quintus Fabius Maximus, the an augur, dared to declare what was done for the safety of the state to be done under the best auspices and whatever was against the Republic to be against the auspices.<sup>5</sup> Jove's thunderbolts, Cicero thinks,

1. N. D. III, 2,5-6.

3. De Rep. I, 36, 56.

5. De Senec. IV, 11.

2. Grenier: Roman Spirit, P. 365.  
Carter: Relig. of Numa, P. 141.

4. Taylor, Ancient Ideals,  
Vol. I, P. 434.

may very well have been ordained as bad signs for an election from reasons of political expediency, because the leaders of the state needed doubtless at times some excuse for not holding an election.<sup>1</sup> And Cicero states directly that tho he is not ready to doubt entirely the authenticity of augury he finds it very often used for political convenience.<sup>2</sup> He uses the term, "ad rei publicae tempus".

It seems, therefore, the only wise thing to Cicero to preserve and honor the religious foundations of the state by retaining their sacred rites and ceremonies.<sup>3</sup> In one of his latest writings, after expressing the gravest doubts of faith in augury, he decides that out of respect for the opinion of the masses and because of the great service to the state, modern Romans must maintain augury and the religious rites and laws.<sup>4</sup> Cicero believes it necessary to do all he can to foster a true religion.<sup>5</sup> From these convictions sprang undoubtedly a certain sympathy with Stoic teachings and a desire to justify in various ways any of the old state religious formalities - as I shall try to show in the following pages.

1. De. Div. II, 18, 42.      3. De Div. II, 72, 148.

2. De Leg. II, 13, 33.      4. De Div. II, 33, 70.

5. *ibid.* II, 72, 149.

## B. EXPLANATION OF THE MYTHS BY EUHEMERISM

A certain number of Cicero's references to the myths seem to show that he was influenced by current Euhemeristic explanations of the deification of various gods.

By the term Euhemerism I shall mean the commonly accepted usage: the theory that the gods were but the deified benefactors of mankind;<sup>1</sup> and that all accounts giving prominence to ancestor-worship and to the cult of the dead are to a certain extent Euhemeristic.<sup>2</sup>

Cicero has Cotta in his criticism of Epicurean doctrine mention Euhemerus in the last part of the De Natura Deorum, Bk. I, 42, 119. I consider the reference important because of Cicero's explanation of Euhemerism and of his adverse comments upon it, which I quote in the original: "Quid? Qui aut fortes aut claros aut potentes viros tradunt post mortem ad deos pervenisse, eosque esse ipsos, quos nos colere, precari venerarique soleamus, nonne expertes sunt religionum omnium? quae ratio maxime tractata ab Euhemero est, quem noster et interpretatus et secutus est praeter ceteros Ennius. Ab Euhemero autem et mortes et sepulturae demonstrantur deorum. Utrum igitur hic confirmasse videtur religionem an penitus totam sustulisse? Omitto Eleusinem sanctam illam et angustam ....<sup>3</sup>

1. Hastings: Enc. Relig. and Ethics, Vol. V, P. 572.

2. Enc. Britan. 11th ed., Vol. 10, P. 887.

3. Hastings: op. cit. Vol. X, P. 856, cites this as the only reference in extant Latin literature to Ennius's trans. of Euhemerus.

J. B. Mayor, editor of the most complete commentary on the De Natura Deorum, thinks that in the above passage Cicero really misunderstands the doctrine of Euhemerus, who, according to Sextus Empiricus, supposed this worship to have been instituted during the lifetime of its founders.<sup>1</sup> Mayor admits but two examples from Cicero of Euhemerism, so far as I have found; the one in the Tusculan Disputations,<sup>2</sup> which he says approaches Euhemerism, and which I quote: "Quid? totum prope caelum nonne humano genere completum est? --- ipsi illi maiorum gentium di qui habentur hinc nobis profecti in caelum reperientur. Quare, quorum demonstrantur sepulcra in Graecia, reminiscere, quae tradantur mysteriis; tum denique, quam hoc late pateat, intelleges." (I, 12-13, 28-9).

The other passage is from the De Natura Deorum, II, 24, 62: 'Suscepit autem vita hominum consuetudoque communis, ut beneficiis excellentes viros in caelum fama ac voluntate tollerent. Hinc Hercules, hinc Castor et Pollux, hinc Aesculapius, hinc Liber etiam; - hunc dico Liberum semel natum, .....; hinc etiam Romulus quem quidem eundem esse Quirinum putant; quorum cum remanerent animi atque aeternitate fruerentur, rite di sunt habiti, cum et optimi essent et aeterni.'" From this list Mayor extracts the name of Romulus only and to it appends the note that Cato and two others were the first among the Romans to turn attention to the national antiquities and were quite pre-

1. Mayor, N. D. Vol. II,  
P. 222.

2. Mayor: op. cit. Vol. I,  
P. 129.

pared to take the view on many national deities that Euhemerus had taken of deities in general.<sup>1</sup> Doubtless because he speaks of attention to Roman deities Mayor singles out Romulus as the only one to be connected with this note, since the remaining names are all Greek in origin.

In the first place I do not think that these two passages hold to the stricter interpretation of Euhemerism which Mayor exacts in his criticism of Cicero (see P. 8), since these passages nowhere imply that worship was instituted during the lifetime of the men who have become gods. Moreover, in these two examples admitted by Mayor to be Euhemeristic occur phrases like "di habentur", "profecti in caelum", and "in caelum tollerent". In other passages which I shall cite more fully later occur phrases like these: "in concilio caelestium collocavit", "animos fortium bonorumque esse divinos", "quem in caelum ... sustulit fortitudo". There seems to me little or no difference in the phrases of Mayor's two admitted passages from those which I have just quoted in comparison. I shall, therefore, from now on disregard Mayor's narrow interpretation of Euhemerism as applying only to men deified during their lifetime, and to which I think not even his own examples adhere; and further, I shall cite passages which I consider parallel.

1. Mayor: N. D. Vol. II, P. 168.

Before leaving, however, the two examples already cited I wish to make a few additional comments. In the passage from the Tusculan Disputations, I, 12-13, 28-9, Cicero lists Romulus, Hercules, Bacchus, Castor and Pollux, and Ino, daughter of Cadmus, whom he identifies with the Greek Leucothea and the Roman Matuta, as people who by illustrious fame and service had become gods in a heaven almost filled with divinities that had once been men. Cicero adds that the Greeks make even their greater gods former men, and reminds his readers of the graves pointed out in Greece and of doctrines taught in the mysteries. In the passage quoted from the De Natura Deorum, II, 24, 62, Cicero has Balbus, the Stoic, list Hercules, Castor, Pollux, Aesculapius, Bacchus, and Romulus as men who had been made gods because of their important services to the state. Here he omits one mentioned in the previous list - Ino, and adds a new one - Aesculapius.<sup>1</sup>

Next, in passages, that I consider quite as Euhemeristic in explanation as the two already discussed, the favorites are first Hercules and next Romulus. Hercules appears as

1. Roscher says, P. 619, that Aesculapius becomes a hero thru his services in medicine; that his death from the hand of Zeus and his subsequent deification are much later additions. Farnell, Greek Hero Cults, P. 276, says that he bears more frequently than any other deity the title of 'Saviour'. Cicero in the references collected stresses the deification of Aesculapius for his great services to man, and also the incubation theory.

the type of man who, in gratitude for all his good deeds and services to mankind, has been deified. Romulus is lauded quite in imitation of Hercules. In his ethical treatise, the De Officiis, Cicero asks whether it is not better to emulate Hercules, who, by undertaking the heaviest toil and trouble for the sake of aiding the world, had by the people's gratitude been made one of the gods - "quem hominum fama beneficiorum memor in concilio caelestium collocavit".<sup>1</sup>

In two passages from De Legibus Cicero cites Hercules again as example of the deified man. In the first passage he commands worship of the gods who have always been held as gods - "qui caelestes semper habiti" - and also of those who by their deeds have deserved the honors of gods - Hercules, Bacchus, Aesculapius, Castor, and Pollux.<sup>2</sup> In the second passage he distinguishes between immortality and divinity: The law by commanding people to worship Hercules and other deified men indicates that souls of all men are immortal but that those of the courageous and good are divine - "indicat omnium quidem animos immortalis esse, sed fortium bonorumque divinos".<sup>3</sup>

Again and again Cicero emphasizes that the role of Hercules as savior of mankind merited for him his apotheosis. Could Hercules, he asks, in slaying the Erymanthian

1. De Offic. III, 5, 25.      2. De Leg. II, 8, 19.

3. Ibid. II, 11, 27.

bear or the Nemean lion have been animated by anger in part rather than by courage, since his very courage raised him to the ranks of the gods - "quem in caelum ista ipsa, quam vos iracundiam esse vultis, sustulit fortitudo"<sup>1</sup>? Or could Hercules in his last hours have been subdued by the power of pain when he was by that very death seeking immortality?<sup>2</sup> The most perfect type of man, he asserts, is the one who regards himself as born to assist and protect others; such a man was Hercules, who would never have gone to heaven had he not paved the path by his golden deeds - "Abiit ad deos Hercules; nunquam abisset nisi cum inter homines esset eam sibi viam munivisset"<sup>3</sup>.

Romulus, too, it is evident, is a favorite with Cicero from the ranks of deified men. He is generally accepted as a son of Mars. This attribution of divine birth, Cicero says, was wisely maintained by early Roman statesmen in order that men who had done great service to the state might enjoy divinity.<sup>4</sup> Cicero speaks several times of an eclipse of the sun, during which the soul of Romulus had been translated: "ut olim deficere sol hominibus exstinguique visus est, cum Romuli animus haec ipsa in templa penetravit."<sup>5</sup>

In a longer passage Cicero ascribes Romulus's divinity

1. Tusc. IV, 22, 50.                    3. Tusc. I, 14, 32.

2. Ibid. II, 8, 20.                    4. Repub. II, 2, 4.

5. Ibid. VI, 22, 24.

to a deification when he had been taken up to heaven during a sudden eclipse of the sun, emphasizing that no such honor had ever been paid except to men of preeminent fame and valor.<sup>1</sup> But the apotheosis of Romulus is more to be honored because it occurred not, as did most other deifications, in less civilized times, but in a time contemporaneous with the enlightened period of Greece, when less credible fables had already been rejected. Yet, rather to one's amusement, Cicero cannot refrain from mentioning a suspicious rumor current at the time that certain senators had killed Romulus; and that a patrician, Proculus Julius, in order to clear the senators had testified to beholding the divine appearance of Romulus upon the hill which was henceforth to be called the Quirinal, since Romulus had commanded his deity to be worshipped under the name of Quirinus.<sup>2</sup>

Cicero has in another passage given even the date of Romulus's apotheosis - the nones of July; and he adds that the obscurity of the eclipse afforded an opportunity for the miraculous story, in spite of the fact that Romulus died the fate common to all - "quibus quidem Romulum tenebris etiamsi natura ad humanum exitum abripuit, virtus tamen in caelum dicitur sustulisse".<sup>3</sup>

The Tyndaridae are mentioned in an isolated passage

1. Repub. II, 10, 17.

2. Ibid. II, 10, 20.

3. ibid. I, 16, 25.

in which Cato is represented as doubting their appearance in battle after their death and as proposing the more probable idea - that the souls of eminent men, such as the tyn-<sup>1</sup>daridae, are divine and immortal. Amphiaraus and tiresias are put forth as examples of eminent men who attained fame by their wisdom as augurs; the fame of Amphiaraus, indeed, was so great that he was considered a god and oracles were sought at his grave.<sup>2</sup> Mention is also made of the di-  
vine honors paid to Erectheus and his daughters, but Cotta is made to ascribe the motive for their deification to a desire to spur on others in sacrificing and bearing dangers for their country.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, in several passages not connected directly with specific gods Cicero speaks of wise rulers who have come from heaven and to heaven have returned;<sup>4</sup> of many other gods who have been deified because of their beneficent deeds;<sup>5</sup> and of the right of the deities of the

1. Daremberg-Saglio says Castor and Pollux were very popular from after the battle of Lake Regillus till the end of the Empire. Their official character was protector of the Roman cavalry. In southern Italy the two had great fame as protectors of sailors, and from this phase became gods of commerce. Cicero in the examples collected stresses only their help in battles and their great services to the state which have resulted in their deification. N.D. III, 5, 12

2. Div. I, 39, 88.

3. N. D. III, 19, 50.

4. Repub. VI, 13, 13.

5. N. D. II, 23, 60.

dead to be considered sacred.<sup>1</sup>

It is already apparent that Cicero is not consistent in his attitude toward the Euhemeristic theory. Besides his criticism of Euhemerus's doctrines in the passage already quoted (supra, P. 7), there are other criticisms. In the De Natura Deorum Velleius, who upholds Epicurean doctrines, remonstrates with the Stoics who esteem great men divine, and says that nothing can be more absurd than to place in the ranks of the gods men who have died, and to whose memory the only honor that can be paid is but mourning for their loss - "aut homines iam morte deletos repone in deos, quorum omnis cultus esset futurus in luctu?"<sup>2</sup>

Another criticism is contained in a long attack by Cotta upon the stoic attempt to prove by Reason the divine nature of the gods. He ridicules the divine honors paid by the Greeks to Leucothea or Ino, her son Palaemon, Hercules, Aesculapius, and the Tyndaridae; and the honors paid by the Romans to Remulus.<sup>3</sup> His main argument is the question: How was deification possible formerly, and if possible then, why not now?<sup>4</sup> The rest of Cotta's argument is concerned with the impossibility of selecting the true claimant, supposing that one admits the principle of apotheosis. There are six different figures of Hercules;<sup>5</sup> three of Jupiter; five of the Sun; four of the

1. Leg. II, 9, 22.

3. N. D. III, 15, 39.

2. N. D. I, 15, 38.

4. *ibid.* III, 16, 41.

5. *ibid.* III, 16, 42

Muses; four of Vulcan; five of Mercury; three of Aesculapius; four of Apollo; five of Diana; five of Dionysius; four of Venus; five of Minerva; and three of Cupid. These are all old stories, the belief in which ought to be discouraged instead of encouraged by the mysterious meanings and subtle reasonings that the Stoics pretend to find in them.<sup>1</sup>

Altho Cicero does not directly meet these arguments of Velleius and Cotta, he appears to quote them with less seriousness than usual; he also says at the end of the third book of the De Natura Deorum that he thinks the arguments of the Stoic Balbus have the greater probability.<sup>2</sup> Many of the Euhemeristic explanations, in fact all from the second book of the De Natura Deorum, come from the arguments of Balbus. Nowhere does Balbus attack the deification of a mythological character.

1. N. D. III, 21-23, 53-60.

(Of these mythological characters listed above Mayor says, N. D. Vol. III, P. 199, that Cicero differs in many points from the usual tradition but agrees remarkably with four later writers - Clemens Alexandrinus, Ampelius, Arnobius, and Laurentius Lydus. Of these four it is probable that Clemens was unacquainted with Cicero. Mayor appends a comparative table, *ibid.* P. 202-9, of Cicero and the four other writers. Mayor notes, *ibid.* P. 107, that the true explanation of these inconsistencies is the modification in different localities of the same Aryan myth, and the identification by both Greeks and Romans of a native god with a foreign god who had no genuine connection. Apparently Cicero nowhere hints at such an explanation.)

2. *Ibid.* III, 40, 95.

Cicero, of course, does admit the weakness of the story about Romulus (see P. 13 supra) when he allows Scipio to give the date of the eclipse when Romulus had disappeared and then to remark that the darkness during the eclipse afforded opportunity for the story of Romulus's miraculous ascent to heaven, tho he doubtless had died in the manner common to all men.<sup>1</sup> Again, Cicero has Scipio relate the story of Romulus's apotheosis with a great deal of emphasis upon its credibility because of the civilized and cultivated period in which it took place.<sup>2</sup> But Scipio does not omit to note that similar honors have for many years been denied to less illustrious men; and tho he urges his hearers to believe the story of Proculus that Romulus had appeared and commanded his worship under the name of Quirinus, Scipio does not neglect to mention that Proculus was summoned to tell this story by senators who wished to free themselves from the suspicion of having caused Romulus's death. These two instances from the De Republica show that Cicero retains his critical and eclectic attitude toward Euhemeristic explanations. It is perhaps worth noting that both these doubts concern

1. Repub. I, 16, 25.      2. ibid. II, 10, 19-20.

1  
Romulus.

In an interesting passage Cicero comments upon the fame of wise men. Atlas would not be said to support the heavens, Prometheus would not be bound to Caucasus, Cepheus and his wife and son-in-law would not be enrolled among the stars if their superhuman knowledge of the stars had not put them into the realm of fable and thus made of them mythical characters - "nisi caelestium divina cognitio non eorum ad errorem fabulae traduxisset".<sup>2</sup> In this excerpt Cicero seems to rationalize what is really an example of Euhemerism. It is rather curious to observe that he offers a rationalizing explanation for superior knowledge; whereas in cases in which he allows the Euhemeristic process to stand unchallenged he emphasizes the toil and suffering and brave deeds of the hero.

1. Roscher in his article in the *Lexikon* says that our main source for the end of Romulus is the reference in *De Republica*, II, 10 17; that later were added time, place, and other details. According to this article Cicero was one of the earliest writers to identify Romulus with Quirinus. I have found in Cicero two such identifications: "Peccavi igitur, pace vel Quirini vel Romuli dixerim." - *Offic.* III, 10, 41; "Hinc etiam Romulus, quem quidem eundem esse Quirinum putant." - *N.D.* II, 24, 62. Daremberg-Saglio notes that Romulus's mysterious death and apotheosis left little trace either in the cults or in the monuments; no statue, bas-relief, etc. have been noted. The article states that it is almost certain that Ennius forged the apotheosis in imitation of Greek models, and that the later poets and historians exploited the story. Coins of Romulus have the inscription Romulo Conditori or Romulo Augusto, titles inspired by remembrance of the Augurium Augustum and which perpetuated the dynastic pretensions of Octavius and his successors.

2. *Tusc.* V, 3, 7-8.

The adverse criticism already quoted on P. 7, belongs, I believe, in a different class. When Cicero says that Euhemerus was destroying religion by teaching that the gods then worshipped by prayers and adoration were only illustrious men,<sup>1</sup> I believe he was thinking of this theory in relation to Jupiter and the greater gods. One must remember that the accounts of the Euhemerus story stress the description of Jove, Hera, and others of the higher gods, who had once been kings and queens on earth. In the passage above mentioned Cicero remarks apparently with disapproval that the Greeks derive even their greater gods from men: "si vero scrutari vetera et ex eis ea, quae scriptores Graeciae prodiderunt, eruere coner, ipsi illi maiorum gentium di, qui habentur, hinc a nobis profecti in caelum reperientur. Quaere quorum demonstrantur sepulcra in Graecia."<sup>2</sup>

Again, in the De Legibus Cicero quotes a law commanding that both those who had always been held as gods and those later deified should be worshipped - "Divos et eos, qui caelestes semper habitati, colunt et illos, quos endo caelo merita locaverint, Herculem, etc."<sup>3</sup> And tho he uses colo of both he seems to be careful to distinguish between the two classes. Finally, in his lists of deified men he never mentions Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, Apollo, or others of the greater gods; these quotations, moreover, have been

1. Tusc. I, 42, 119.      2. Ibid I, 13, 29

3. Ibid. II, 8, 19.

from works the opinions of which can be ascribed more directly to Cicero than can the argument of Cotta in the third book of De Natura Deorum.

I believe, therefore, that the examples given have been enough to prove that Cicero usually favored in the case of certain lower gods a Euhemeristic explanation. J.B. Carter rejects this view because ancestors, he says, were worshipped only en masse at Rome and therefore no process of deifying great ancestors could take place.<sup>1</sup> Warde Fowler, too, notes Cicero's attack upon Euhemerus,<sup>2</sup> tho he admits that the influence of Ennius's translation was probably strong in Rome.<sup>3</sup> I do not say that the Romans actually did deify individual ancestors. But Cicero and others of his day, notably Varro, had no trained historical sense. They had, as men like Carter<sup>4</sup> and Spengler<sup>5</sup> note, less accurate knowledge of their past history - e.g. Cicero twice makes Homer and Lycurgus contemporaneous<sup>6</sup> -- than we have today. Cicero could, therefore, apply the Euhemeristic theory to certain of the mythological characters of Rome, whether or not it was a true explanation of their origin. In some ways it would be to him a congenial theory. It would justify the divine ho-

1. Relig. of Numa, P. 17.

4. Relig. Numa, P. 19.

2. Ideas of Deity, P. 101-2.

5. Decline of the West,  
Vol. I, P. 11 - 12.

3. Ibid. P. 101.

6. Repub. II, 10, 18.

nors paid to a large number of gods; but especially it would exalt not so much the individual as the services of the individual to the state and the need of the state for faithful and eminent protectors. Hercules is mentioned 7 times, Romulus 6, Bacchus and Castor and Pollux each 4; and constantly their illustrious services to the state are mentioned as meriting the deification of these men. In the end, of course, the individual is made more important and the way for deification of Roman emperors is directly opened.

Cicero, then, has fallen into the Stoic habit of his Greek models in emphasizing how Hercules and other heroes had spent troubled lives aiding and protecting mankind and had in the end become gods.<sup>1</sup> But he gives this process of apotheosis only a limited application; furthermore he suggests in one or two passages a rationalistic explanation for such deifications. Cotta in admitting the possibility of apotheosis observes that divine honors were often paid to particularly courageous people in order to spur on others to emulation: "In pleris civitatibus intellegi potest augendae virtutis gratia, quo libentius rei publicae causa periculum adiret optimus quisque, virorum fortium memoriam honore deorum immortalium consecratam."<sup>2</sup> And Cicero has Scipio say that divine birth, -

1. Murray: Stoic Philos. P. 46. 2. N.D. III, 19, 50.

which seems sometimes to be added to apotheosis, - was wisely ascribed to Romulus in making him the son of Mars, in order thus to honor signally those who have done great service to their state: "etiam sapienter a maioribus proditae, bene meriti de rebus communibus ut genere etiam putarentur, non solum ingenio esse divinum."<sup>1</sup>

It seems to me that Cicero, tho with occasional doubts and reservations, does adopt a Euhemeristic explanation for certain of the demi-gods; and that he is led to such a theory both by Greek models and by approval for the results of so apotheosizing the extraordinary person.

1. Repub. II, 2, 4.

C. EXPLANATION OF THE MYTHS BY ILLUSTRATION,

ALLEGORY, AND ETYMOLOGY

Euhemerism was only one method of interpreting the gods of the popular religion.<sup>1</sup> By illustration, but most of all by allegory - often aided by etymology, the Stoic sought to reconcile his philosophy with the current stories of the gods.

Opposition to the orthodox polytheistic system of the Greeks, goes back to such men as Xenophanes, Pindar, Plato, and Euripides. But the conservatism of various schools was stronger in upholding it. The Cynics early found themselves forced to allegorize the literal stories of the gods, since in positing primitive man as their ideal they had also to accept primitive religion.<sup>2</sup> The Stoics, in turn, because of their religious conservatism, adopted the same system of interpretation - largely by allegory. They wished particularly to prove the existence of a divine and supreme ruler of the world by the testimony of belief in gods by all peoples. They could not, therefore, use such proof and then discard wholly the stories upon which their proof was based; hence the truth of these popular stories, incredible or offensive as they might appear, lay in a veiled meaning, in allegorical interpretations. The Greek Stoic, Chrysippus, is famous for his elaborate and complex allegories, many of

1. Windelband: Hist. of Philos. P. 189

2. Taylor: Deliverance, P. 182. Davidson: Stoic Creed, P. 136.

them contradictory.<sup>1</sup>

Stoicism gained its great strength in Rome. The younger Scipio, Laelius, Panaetius of Rhodes, together with Varro, were avowed Stoics. Cicero is said to follow Varro in the first book of the De Natura Deorum, and elsewhere to be influenced by him.<sup>2</sup> To the educated Roman of Cicero's day the Stoic system of allegorical interpretation was very agreeable because it allowed him to explain and adapt the popular polytheism without breaking away from the state religion which was so integral a part of the republic. Doubtless, too, the elastic monism was congenial to one who, like Cicero, must take part in the public religious rites and ceremonies.<sup>3</sup> The examples which follow show that Cicero follows to some extent the popular system of Stoic interpretation and allegory.

By the term 'allegory' I shall mean substantially the definition given in the article on the word in Hastings<sup>4</sup> - a form of representation which a writer believes himself to find in a work more or less in need of interpretation. Hence a foreign meaning is read into the passage, always with a moral inference; piety becomes the mother of allegory.

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|---|-------------------------|
| 1. Glover: Conflict of Relig. P. 72.            | 3. Fowler: <i>ibid.</i> |
| Taylor: <i>Class. Her. M.A.</i> P. 98.          | P. 46-8                 |
| Hastings: <i>Enc. Relig. Vol. I</i> , P. 328-9. | Hastings: <i>ibid.</i>  |
| Oakesmith: <i>Relig. Plutarch</i> , P. 69-70.   | Vol. X, P. 837.         |
| Zeller: <i>Stoics</i> , P. 335-6.               | Carter: <i>ibid.</i>    |
|   | P. 139.                 |
| 2. Fowler: <i>Ideas of Deity</i> , P. 49-50     | Arnold: <i>Stoicism</i> |
| Carter: <i>Relig. of Rome</i> , P. 124.         | P. 229, ff.             |

4. *Ency. Relig. Vol. I*, P. 327.

This definition will rule out purely rationalistic explanations of the myths; the latter is also a method of compromising with the myths, but it does not seem to me true allegory.

A few references hardly go so far as allegory and yet they imply a certain moral interpretation. They seem to me to be gradations in the process of allegorizing. The Pythian Apollo's command, 'Know Thyself', Cicero says, denotes a wise understanding of the fact that man must attain the highest knowledge possible in order to fulfill his destiny.<sup>1</sup> The wisdom of Apollo is again illustrated when the Pythian oracle is consulted by Athenians who wish to know what religious observances chiefly to cultivate; told to observe the old, and asking again which of the old to keep, they are told the best.<sup>2</sup> In another reference Cicero makes universal application of the oracle's response to Sparta that she should not fall from any other cause than avarice.<sup>3</sup>

In two passages from the De Senectute Cicero has Cato use illustrations from Homer to prove points in his argument. Homer is really celebrating the joys of farming, Cato says, when he represents Laertes as consoling his sorrow at the absence of Odysseus by cultivating and even manuring his farm; by this story Homer is pointing out the

1. Leg. I, 23, 61.  
Fin. V, 16, 44.

2. Leg. II, 16, 40.

3. Offic. II, 22, 77.

pleasure and consolation to be gained from farming.<sup>1</sup>  
 Again, Cato says that Homer is emphasizing and valuing old age with its wisdom when he allows the aged Nestor to proclaim without any reproach his own merits, and when he has Agamemnon wish not for ten men like Ajax but for ten like Nestor. In the latter example a moral interpretation is implied - Homer is really glorifying the power of wise old age,<sup>2</sup> not the power of youthful brawn.

In the Tusculan Disputations Cicero relates at some length the story of Biton and Cleobis, who are awarded death upon the prayer of their mother for the greatest gift that a god could bestow on man. Likewise Apollo had conferred death upon two of his worshippers, and Silenus had offered it to Midas as the best blessing. The self-sacrifice of the daughters of Erechtheus, of Menoeceus, and of Iphigenia are mentioned as proof that death is not to be feared.<sup>3</sup> Throughout this passage Cicero offers no more than the obvious and usual interpretation that death is the greatest gift, and he alludes to the practice of the lecturer in the schools who would include all these examples in his peroration. By these and other examples men affirm that the question has been determined by the gods, Cicero says.

In a discussion of feelings which have fear as their

1. Senec. XV, 54.

2. Senec. X, 31.

3. Tusc. I, 47-8, 113-16.

basis Cicero mentions men's hatred of women; aversions like this come from fear, deeply implanted and inherent in a person's mind, for which there is no good reason and which makes one believe he understands things of which he is really ignorant. So the hatred of women like that felt by Hippolytus is defined, Cicero says, - "similiter definitur et mulierum odium, ut Hippolyti." Here Cicero seems to me to be analyzing by implication Hippolytus's hatred of women, and saying that his hatred really arises from some inherent and unconscious fear.<sup>1</sup> This example seems to me not to go so far as allegory and yet to have elements of allegorical interpretation within it.

Again Cicero compares death to the stone of Tantalus, ever hanging over men's heads - "Accedit etiam mors, quae quasi saxum Tantalos semper impendet."<sup>2</sup> On another page (infra, P. 30) I shall show that he carries this mythological story more fully to an allegorical interpretation, drawing a slightly different moral.<sup>3</sup> In the present reference he says that death may be compared to the stone of Tantalus, implying that the stone of Tantalus can here represent the suspense of hovering death.

As types of ideal friendship Cicero three times<sup>4</sup> cites

1. Tusc. IV, 11, 26-7.

3. Tusc. V, 16, 35.

2. Fin. I, 18, 60.

4. Fin. II, 24, 79.  
Ibid. V, 22, 63-4  
Amic. VII, 24.

Orestes and Pylades, tho he never develops them as types to the same extent that he does Hercules and Ulysses as types of the brave hero and wise man (*infra*, P. 30); yet the same tendency is evident. When, in the play of Pacuvius, Orestes and Pylades each insists that he is Orestes the audience cheers an example of bravery that no one himself could emulate.<sup>1</sup> This example, Cicero says, proves that all men approve a spirit that is loyal and true even to its own disadvantage;<sup>1</sup> or he notes that in this case Nature easily asserts here power in that men approve in another a deed which they themselves could not do.<sup>2</sup> Cicero infers that the friendship of these men becomes the symbol of an ideal so high that it is scarcely attainable.

So, too, Philoctetes in several passages comes to be a symbol for excessive suffering and grief from pain;<sup>3</sup> or the sacrifice of the daughters of Erectheus becomes a type of the truly pious deed.<sup>4</sup>

The remaining examples are more plainly allegorizing. When we call Jupiter by the title of Optimus, Maximus, Salutaris, Hospitalis, Stator we mean that the safety of the human race lies in his keeping.<sup>5</sup> The wise man does not, as did the giants against the gods, war against nature- "Quid

1. Fin. V, 22, 63-4.

4. Fin. V, 22, 62.

2. Amic. VII, 24.

3. Fin. II, 29, 94.  
Ibid. V, 11, 32.  
Tusc. II, 15, 33.

5. Ibid. III, 20, 66.

est enim aliud gigantum modo bellare cum dis nisi naturae  
 repugnare?"<sup>1</sup> In an oath God as witness is only the symbol  
 of one's own conscience, than which nothing bestowed by  
 God upon man is more divine - "meminerit deum se adhibere  
 testem, id est, ut ego arbitror, mentem suam, qua nihil  
 homini dedit deus ipse divinius."<sup>2</sup>

Vesta, according to the meaning of the Greek word re-  
 tained in the Latin, signifies the perpetual fire of the  
 city; and Vestal Virgins guard the fire and keep it ever  
 burning and inviolable, to show that the perfection of a  
 woman's nature is the purest chastity.<sup>3</sup>

Cicero in one interpretation makes even Homer rebel  
 against a Stoic Doctrine - that evil may be lightened by  
 means of religious rites. For Homer understood, Cicero  
 explains, that if everything is fixed by Fate no evil can

1. Senec. II, 5.

2. Offic. III, 10, 44.

3. Leg. II, 12, 29. Cicero in a similar passage speaks of  
 being protected by Vulcanian armor, that is, by reso-  
 lution - "tectus Vulcaniis armis, id est, fortitudine".  
 I take it that this is a stock expression, as when he  
 uses Minerva for wit (Amic. 19), or Mars for war (Offic.  
 III, 7, 34). Indeed, Cicero himself describes the  
 practice of using 'Bacchus' for wine, etc. as an orna-  
 ment of style, which he characterizes as exchanging one  
 proper name for another (De Orat. III, 42, 167). Yet  
 Lucretius objects to the usage, even tho it has become  
 pure habit, because he is reminded too strongly of the  
 superstition behind the usage (II, 652-7).

be lightened when he represents Jupiter as bewailing the fact that he could not contrary to the Fates rescue his son Sarpedon from death. The same idea is expressed in the lines which say that what has been decreed by Fate cannot be prevented by Almighty Jove himself.<sup>1</sup> Here Cicero affirms that Homer in the passage about Sarpedon is representing the implacable and unswerving power of Fate.

The stone of Tantalus is also interpreted in the Tusculan Disputations. Comparison has been noted between the ever hanging stone and death (Supra, P. 27). In this passage Cicero more completely allegorizes the mythological reference. A great misery is the fear, under continual suspense, of some approaching evil. The poets to show this evil make a stone hang over the head of Tantalus. Such a punishment is the common one of folly, and some similar fear hangs over the head of every one who refuses to use Reason -

"Quam vim mali significantes poetae inpendere apud inferos saxum Tantalos faciunt .... Ea communis poena stultitiae est; omnibus enim quorum mens abhorret a ratione, semper

1. Div. II, 10, 25.

aliqui talis terror impendet".<sup>1</sup>

Commentators agree that Ulysses and even more Hercules are favorite heroes of the Stoics, who followed the Cynic practice of making these men models for courageous and virtuous action.<sup>2</sup>

Ulysses' brave endurance of service to Circe and Calypso, of his long wanderings, and of the insults of his servants is cited to show that Ulysses was wise enough to choose his role in life and then to sustain that character.<sup>3</sup> Again, Ulysses in the Homeric story is wise enough not to wish by a ruse to gain a life of tranquility at the price of evading a soldier's service and deserting Greece in her war against the enemy, as

1. Tusc. IV, 16, 35. This version of the punishment of Tantalus, according to Roscher, Vol. V, pp. 75 ff., is older than the one of unsatisfied hunger and thirst. Horace, Ovid, and other Roman poets are the first to make this later form of punishment the symbol of excessive greed or avarice. Gruppe, Griech. Mythol., Vol. II, p. 1023, quotes Cicero's 'Mors, quae quasi saxum Tantalus semper impendit' as "Vorstellung von dem über dem Haupte des Menschen hangenden Tod". Cicero himself refers to the second form of the punishments of Tantalus, Tusc. I, 5, 10: "Mento summam aquam attingens enectus siti Tantali". Gruppe, *ibid.* sees another version of the same motif in the story of the sword hanging by a hair over the head of Democles, flatterer who had wished to live like Dionysius, the tyrant (Tusc. V, 21, 61.)
2. Arnold: Roman Stoicism, P. 295-6. 3. Offic. I, 31, 113-14.

the tragic poets persist in representing him. Finally, Ho-<sup>1</sup>  
 mer did not mean by the Siren's song that his great hero  
 was immeshed in the charm of mere melody; such a story  
 would not be plausible. The magic of the Sirens' song  
 was the promise of knowledge, and one need not marvel if  
 a lover of wisdom held this dearer than home.<sup>2</sup>

So, too, Hercules becomes the type of bold and coura-  
 geous savior of mankind, as in the accounts already given  
 he had been deified for his services. Hercules and Liber  
 feel a natural impulse, like the instinct of the bull to  
 protect his young against lions, to be the protectors of  
 the human race.<sup>3</sup> Again, Cicero speaks of the terrible  
 agonies which Hercules endured to bring safety to the  
 distressed and to become a benefactor of all mankind.<sup>4</sup>

1. Offic. III, 26, 97-9.

2. Fin. V, 18, 48-9. Paul

Shorey in an article in Hastings, Vol. XI, P. 577-9, says  
 that the symbolism of the Sirens in literature and art is  
 more important for the history of morals than any pre-  
 historic origin of the myth would be, supposing we could  
 discover it. He thinks that at their first appearance  
 in Homer the two Sirens embody a conscious allegory, and  
 points to our passage in Cicero and to one in Horace as  
 proof. Ruskin's explicit allegory of their song as the  
 thirst for unsanctified knowledge is but a development  
 of what Homer and Cicero tell us. According to Shorey  
 Cicero is the only extant writer who allegorizes the song  
 as the lure of knowledge; later writers use the allegory  
 of the song as the enticements of sensual pleasure. So  
 far as I could find, the articles in neither Daremberg-  
 Saglio nor Roscher mentioned Cicero's interpretation of  
 the song.

3. Fin, III, 20, 66.

4. Ibid. II, 35, 118.

Cicero speaks, too, of the remarkable freedom of will exerted by Hercules in the story of Prodicus, in which Hercules finds himself at the turning of two roads, one leading to Pleasure, the other to Virtue; he debates long which path to follow but at last chooses the path of Virtue. Cicero implies, of course, that Hercules' role of savior was a carefully sought one.<sup>1</sup> Finally, he uses Hercules' exploits as a symbol for achieving an end with great toil and labor,<sup>2</sup> quite in our meaning of a 'herculean' task.

The fullest treatment of Stoic allegory is found in Cicero in Book II of the De Natura Deorum, where it is explained by Q. Lucilius Balbus. In the main he accounts for the gods of the popular religion as names for benefits received from a supernatural source; or personified virtues and passions; or the spirits of departed benefactors - a theory which has already been illustrated under Euhemerism (cf. supra, P. 7, ff.); or the personified forces of nature.<sup>3</sup>

Balbus is represented as saying that the Greeks and early Romans had deified not only the giver of benefits but the utility produced, as when one calls corn Ceres or wine Bacchus.<sup>4</sup> Likewise Cupid and Lubentine Venus, tho they are frequently too violent stimulants to be wholesome, are personified passions.<sup>5</sup> The impious story of

1. *Offic.* I, 32, 118.

3. *Acad.* II, 34, 108.

2. *Mayor: N.D.* Vol. II, P. XIII, Bd.

4. *N. D.* II, 23, 60.

5. *Ibid.* II, 23, 61

Caelus castrated by his son Saturn, and of Saturn chained by his son Jupiter imply the personification of physical forces and a more subtle meaning than is at first obvious: The pure, ethereal, fiery nature which is the source of all things lacks any member of generation, is wholly self-sufficient. <sup>1</sup> Mayor, Vol. II, P. 170, remarks that Cornutus and other commentators offer another interpretation - that Cronos, the god of the harvest, puts an end to the excessive fecundity of Uranus, thus allowing room for the other powers of earth and heaven.

One of the popular Stoic methods of allegory was by etymology, often the most forced. Kronos is identified with Chronos, or time. Saturn is filled, saturatur, with years and devours his children just as time consumes the passing years. The chains imposed by Jupiter are the course of the stars. Jupiter, i.e. iuvens pater, is called Jove from a iuvando. <sup>2</sup>

In turn each of the higher deities is explained. Juno is the air, sister and wife of Jove because in close conjunction with heaven, feminine because than air nothing is softer. Or Juno comes from a iuvando. Dis, denoting riches, is applied to Pluto because all things spring from the earth and return to it. Pluto steals Proserpine, or seed of grain; hence the story of Ceres searching for her daughter. Ceres comes from a gerendis frugibus. Neptunus

1. N. D. II, 24, 64.

2. Ibid. II, 25, 64-5.

like portunus is derived from a nando. Mavors denotes him qui magna vorteret; Minerva from her quae minueret or minaretur.<sup>1</sup> As our children are called liberi, so the offspring of Ceres are called Liber and Libera, masculine and feminine respectively.<sup>2</sup> Janus comes from ab eundo, and is the god of passages; Vesta from the Greek Hestia; Apollo from solus, whence he is called Sol. The moon is Luna from a lucendo; Diana gets her name from making night a kind of day;<sup>3</sup> Venus comes from ad res omnes veniret.

In a concluding paragraph, the exact meaning of which is doubtful, Balbus comments something like this: From physical forces and utilities have come these fictitious gods, whose relations, lives, etc. represent human passions and weaknesses; who have had wars, not only when they were on the side of two armies, but when they fought in self defense against the Titans and Giants. Understood as symbolized activities of one great power they are to be worshipped; interpreted literally they lead to abuse and superstition.<sup>4</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine these interpretations, except to note that Mayor finds Chronos an untenable etymology; Juno, Neptune, Proserpina, Ceres, and Mavors orthodox Stoic derivations, most of them presenting errors; Minerva not the usual Stoic interpretation; Venus an absurd derivation.<sup>5</sup> That these Stoic interpretations did

1. N. D. II, 26, 66-7.

3. Ibid. II, 27, 67-9.

2. Ibid. II, 24, 62.

4. N. D. II, 28, 70.  
Mayor, Vol. II, P. 182-3.

5. Mayor, Vol. II, P. 174-81.

not go unchallenged we know from the writings of both Epicureans and Academicians. In Cicero's De Natura Deorum he presents Velleius as representing the former, Cotta the latter.

Velleius complains that Zeno's interpretation of Hesiod's Theogony omitted the chief gods - Jupiter, Juno, Vesta, and the rest by saying that these are but names for mute and inanimate beings.<sup>1</sup> He finds that Chrysippus calls the sky Jupiter, the air - qui per maria manarat - Neptune, the earth Ceres, the immutable and eternal guiding law of the world Jupiter; that to these interpretations he tries to adapt the stories of Orpheus, Hesiod, and Homer. Velleius's important objection is that by this method the most ancient poets, who never dreamed of such interpretations, are made to seem Stoics. Diogenes, a follower of Chrysippus, he adds, places a natural interpretation upon the account of Minerva's birth from the head of Jove. Velleius<sup>2</sup> sums up all such interpretations as "delirantium somnia".

Cotta finds much serious difficulty with Balbus's interpretations. The scrites of Carneades, he says, show that one cannot distinguish between what is divine and what is merely human. If there are gods, are nymphs also goddesses? If Saturn is a god, so must be all his relatives.<sup>3</sup>

1. N. D. I, 14, 36.

2. N. D. I, 15, 40-1.

3. N. D. III, 17, 43-4.

If men like Hercules with a mortal parent are gods, then why are not Theseus and Hecate and Orpheus gods? Shall Ino be deified and not Circe or Pasiphae, among others? If the daughters of Erectheus are deified, why not Codrus? If one portion of the earth or sky is deified, why not all the rest? These are representative examples from Cotta's long argument, in which a great number of instances are listed.

The meaning of the castration of Caelus and the binding of Saturn is dismissed abruptly by Cotta as senseless. The strained etymologies are attacked more fully. If derivations can be made as easily as the examples of Neptune from a nando, in which the etymologist is 'more at sea' than is Neptune himself, then one can find the origin of all names by simply matching one letter. In working out these explanations of the names of deities the Stoics really confess that they are dealing with natural and not supernatural objects. If one calls Neptune the intelligence pervading the sea, one has not therefore defined what that intelligence is.

One must note again that Cicero, just as was noted in the discussion of Euhemeristic doctrine, says at the end of Book II of the De Natura Deorum that he favors the argu-

1. N.D. III, 18, 45-7.

2. Ibid. III, 19, 47-50.

3. Ibid. III, 20, 51-2.

4. Ibid. III, 24, 62.

5. Ibid. III, 24, 63.

6. Ibid. III, 25, 64.

ments of Balbus the Stoic, who makes the elaborate allegories and etymologies; altho Velleius, the Epicurean, finds Cotta's arguments most logical.<sup>1</sup>

#### D. SUMMARY

The preceding examples show, as one might expect, a highly moral interpretation of the myths. Outside of the special sections concerned with the stock stoic allegories and etymologies for the greater gods Cicero gives the most examples of moral interpretations from the lives of the demi-gods and heroes.

As in the section on Euhemerism my examples show a great interest and preoccupation with the lives of Hercules and Ulysses. These are the types of wise and good men that appealed evidently to men of Cicero's temperament as examples for the individual to emulate. The examples about Hercules, tho they mention or imply his great physical strength, seem to emphasize more his virtue and courage and even his wisdom, as the quotation from the story of Prodicus shows.

The examples of the allegorization of Tantalus and the Sirens emphasize Cicero's preoccupation with moral issues. If, as Shorey says, Cicero's allegory of the Sirens is

1. N.D. III, 40, 95.

unique among extant ancient writers, it is at the same time important. Later writers, who interpret the song as the enticement of sensual pleasure, are clearly, so it seems to me, not so concerned with the moral character of Ulysses as is Cicero. "It was the passion for learning that kept men rooted to the Sirens' rocky shores. This is their invitation to Ulysses .... It is knowledge that the sirens offer and it was no marvel if a lover of wisdom held this dearer than his home", says Cicero.<sup>1</sup> Clearly, Cicero will not impute to Ulysses a base temptation that shall hold him even for a minute. In the same way he scolds the tragedians for permitting Ulysses to try to evade by a ruse warfare at Troy, and he praises Homer for not ascribing any such action to his hero.<sup>2</sup> Wisdom, love of knowledge, bravery, moral courage - these are the virtues which Cicero is proclaiming again and again.

The wisdom of Apollo is praised; yet examples in a succeeding section will show that he and his oracle are often impugned. This contradiction seems to me to be characteristic of a man of Cicero's eclectic principles. So, too, Cicero shows plainly that he does not swallow all the absurdities of the Stoic system of etymology and allegory.

As I shall note in my conclusion, Cicero often de-

1. Fin. V, 18, 49.  
supra, P. 31.

2. Offic. III, 26, 97-9.  
Supra, P. 31.

scribes a method of treatment for the myths that has proved popular in modern criticism - etymology. Max Müller is famous for his attempt by comparative philology to explain the meanings of the myths from the etymology of their names. Like those of Balbus his interpretations have been largely discredited. Out of the examples from both Cicero and Müller for the greater gods Jupiter is the only etymology admitted by present scholars. Cotta's ridicule should have proved to be more of a warning.

2. CICERO'S UNFAVORABLE COMMENTS ON THE MYTHS.

A. BELIEFS IN THE UNDERWORLD THAT INSPIRE FEAR

No people has ever had so intense and vital an imaginative power to interpret the world as had the ancient Greeks in their native mythology. But all later peoples, including, of course, the Romans could find no such meaning as the original emotion had inspired. Continued adherence to gods that must be justified arbitrarily in order to remain at all adequate led, as I have tried to show in the first part of this paper, to endless explanations and allegories. These arbitrary interpretations with no deep hold on the real seemed often thin and nebulous, so that the first skeptical attack scattered them.

Attacks were not lacking early in Grecian history; and with the followers of Plato and of Epicurus opposition became strong. Carneades, chief Epicurean critic of the current mythology, whose views are closely followed in Cicero's third book of the De Natura Deorum, thought the interpretation of the myths wholly meaningless and ridiculed the Stoics for advancing such foolish allegories.<sup>1</sup>

Cicero seems always to have treated religion in a sceptical and eclectic way. To him the whole matter is a subject more or less for pleasant discussion, says Fowler.<sup>2</sup>

1. Hastings: Enc. Vol. II, P. 529.      2. Ideas of Deity, P. 8-10.

Mayor does not agree; he thinks that Cicero in his De Divinatione is making a real effort to eradicate superstition and yet to preserve the genuine part of religion.<sup>1</sup>

My collection of examples shows that Cicero, the augur and upholder in his public speeches of the traditional religious rites, does attack certain of the accepted myths.

Beliefs in the underworld, which seem often the most stupid and certainly the most persistent, are criticized sharply. Cicero attacks beliefs in the underworld because he thinks they arouse irrational fears. In a passage in The Natura Deorum he defines as superstition that "in quae<sup>2</sup> inest timor inanis deorum". In the same writing Balbus is made to argue the omnipotence and omnipresence of Jove from the fact that belief in him remained firm and even gathered strength with lapse of time, whereas other beliefs in false things have already been forgotten. He then goes on, "Quis enim Hippocentaurum fuisse aut Chimaeram putat? quaeve anus tam excoors inveniri potest, quae illa, quae<sup>3</sup> quondam credebantur apud inferos portenta, extimescat?"

The Tusculan Disputations naturally offer several comments on the myths of the underworld. In one passage Cicero says that we should bear without too much grief our sorrow for the dead if it be only ourselves that we are thinking of; as for those who have died, should one even suspect them

1. N. D. Vol. III, P. XI.      2. N. D. I, 42, 117.

3. Ibid. II, 2, 4-5.

afflicted with the evils which are generally supposed - "such a suspicion would give us intolerable pain; accordingly I wished for my own sake to pluck up this opinion by the roots and hence have been more prolix than necessary.<sup>1</sup>

Belief in the survival of the dead, Cicero thinks, arises from a common opinion of all peoples; but the want of scientific knowledge, however, has caused the idea of shades below and of various dreads and fears, which the fancy of the poets has but increased. These fears are now largely removed; it was the difficulty of imagining a soul without a body that gave various shapes to the dead in the account of Homer and placed in Cicero's very neighborhood the lake of Avernus, from which issue forth the phantoms of the dead.<sup>2</sup> Again, Cicero chides the Epicureans for boasting that natural philosophy had delivered them from the fear of the underworld. What old woman is there, he asks, so mad as to fear Orcus and Acheron and the pale abodes of the dead?<sup>3</sup>

Earlier in the first book Cicero has one of his characters ask the other whether he is afraid of Cerberus, the waves of Cocytus, Acheron, the punishments of Tantalus - lying of thirst while water touches his chin -, Sisyphus - who tries in vain to reach the top of the hill, or the dread judges Minos and Rhadamanthus. The other answers no,

1. Tusc. I, 46, 111.            2. Tusc. I, 16, 36-7.

3. Ibid. I, 21, 48.

he is not so mad as to believe such things. The first speaker then says he is sorry, because he is prepared to be very eloquent in attack - "Quia disertus esse possem, si contra ista dicerem". And the first replies that anybody can refute those silly tales of the poets and painters - "aut quid negotii est haec poetarum et pictorum portenta convincere?" - and that books of the philosophers, full of attacks against these stories, are so much time and effort wasted.<sup>1</sup>

In these passages Cicero would imply that no one at all continued any more to believe in the old ideas of the underworld - "Quae est anus tam delira quae timeat ista?"<sup>2</sup> But Professor Hadzits in a review of Cumont's After Life in Roman Paganism objects very strongly to this view, citing the Carmina Epigraphica Latina and other references to show that among various and inconsistent views the old orthodox ones probably predominated in popular opinion even later than Cicero's time.<sup>3</sup>

It seems to me that Professor Hadzits' point is well taken, and that one of my references especially bears it out: Cicero speaks of the evils of the underworld that

1. Tusc. I, 5-6, 10-11.

2. Ibid. I, 21, 48.

3. Class. weekly, Vol. XX,  
P. 168.

afflict the dead, as are generally supposed, and excuses the length of his argument upon the ground that he wished for his own sake to eradicate such beliefs.<sup>1</sup> In the passage above cited, when the one speaker refuses to let the other cite arguments,<sup>2</sup> the situation is changed; the dialog is represented between educated people and intimates who know each other's skill in peroration, and who have by reading and discussion emancipated themselves from what they have come to regard as the baseless fears of the ignorant. But in certain moods even the most learned and intelligent are affected by the beliefs of large groups of people; and it seems to me only natural that Cicero should be now disdainful and again anxious about the beliefs in Hades. It is of course obvious that such would be the case in a book on death written while he was still mourning deeply for his beloved daughter Tullia. Finally, there is the chance that Cicero in some of his arguments may be influenced by the uncompromising attitude of Lucretius.

1. Tusc. I, 46, lll.  
Supra, P. 41.

2. Cf. Note 1, this page.

## B. THE IMMORALITY OF THE MYTHS

In the following examples I shall try to show that Cicero disapproves often of the manner in which a mythological character is portrayed. He takes very nearly the attitude of Plato, whom he quotes - that the poets do harm by representing even the bravest of men lamenting over their misfortunes; that the poets should, therefore, be banished from the good state, in which the highest morals are required.<sup>1</sup> The poet has power to do harm, he says again, by the very sweetness of his language - "quae poetarum vocibus fusa ipsa suavitate nocuerunt".<sup>2</sup> More than once the poet is blamed - even the gods of the poets, Phoebus and Neptune, ought to have foreseen the fatal results of their promises and therefore to have broken them.<sup>3</sup>

Again, the poets, tho they may portray even Jupiter himself caught in the lust of love, ought not to give gods the imperfections of men, but rather men the perfections of the gods.<sup>4</sup> Thyestes, Cicero says, is made to appear too cowardly to have been descended from Jove himself; and Aetes is hardly worthy of the light of his own father Helios.<sup>5</sup> Better than Sophocles is Pacuvius, who does not have the wis-

1. Tusc. II, 11, 27.

3. Ibid. III, 31, 76-7.

2. N. D. I, 16, 42.

4. Tusc. I, 26, 66.

5. Ibid. III, 12, 26.

est man of all Greece, Ulysses, bemoan his wounds too violently.<sup>1</sup> Better than the tragic poets is Homer, who does not assign to Ulysses the ruse of madness.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting to note that hardly once does Cicero assail directly the god or the hero himself. It is the poet or even the philosopher who is to blame in so loosely portraying the character of the god or hero. That Cicero attaches blame to the assignation of defects to the heroes is to me further proved by his citation later in the same passages of men, often humble ones, like the common soldier or the gladiator, or spartan women and boys, who knew how to endure pain without lamentation; or how to be brave without the motive of anger or wrath.<sup>3</sup> Evidently Cicero is not concerned with literary art, which requires the character to be portrayed with greater realism. For him the characters must be moralized and must preferably be without vices.

In a few instances Cicero shows by implication that he does not approve of some point in a story. The old cato in De Senectute remarks, more than half jestingly, to be sure, that no one shall ever draw him back, once death is near, and boil him up again as if he were a second Pelias.<sup>4</sup> Revenge

1: Tusc. II. 21. 49.

3. Tusc. II, 22-6.

2. Offic. III, 26, 97.  
Supra, P. 31.

4. XXIV, 83. Editors note that C. confuses Pelias with Aeson.

on dead enemies is senseless. Achilles and Hecuba are foolish to think that the dead Hector feels the indignity of being dragged about the walls; and Pelops should have taught his son Thyestes better than to wish not only that Atreus might die by shipwreck but that his body might be horribly mangled.<sup>1</sup> The useless exaggeration of mythical characters in certain plays is also commented upon. Zethus is represented in the plays, Cicero complains, as too inimical to learning, too rough and uncouth.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Amphion is ever-subtle. When he has described a creature in highly obscure and figurative language the Athenians ask him what he means; he replies, so the play goes, a tortoise. Thereupon they ask why he could not have said so in the first place.<sup>3</sup> Endymion, Cicero would say, was a fool to accept life on terms that the very swine would refuse. According to the stories he has slept on Mt. Latmos for such a period that he is probably not yet awake; but Cicero cannot see how his sleep differs from death.<sup>4</sup>

Courage, one of the great virtues, must be pure and not inspired by rage or anger, Cicero asserts. One ought not to represent Hercules, whose very courage raised him to heaven, as actuated partly by anger when he slew the Erymanthian boar or the Nemean lion;<sup>5</sup> nor should one so repre-

1. Tusc. I, 44, 105-7.      3. Div. II, 64, 133.

2. Repub. I, 18, 30      4. Tusc. I, 38, 92.  
Fin. V, 20, 55.

5. Tusc. IV, 22, 50.  
Supra, P. 11.

sent Theseus in his slaughter of the Marathonian bull.<sup>1</sup>

What can make a worse appearance, Cicero asks, than Homer's representation of the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon? Ajax's ungoverned temper caused his madness and finally his death; he was most brave when he was inspired by frenzy.<sup>2</sup> In touching upon the story of Atreus and his sons Cicero decides that anger became so strong that it was really madness.<sup>3</sup>

Agamemnon indulges in excessive grief, tearing his hair as if he imagined that baldness would soothe his grief; over the desert waste Bellerophon wanders in an abandon of sorrow;<sup>4</sup> if fear can prevail over grief, as it did with Pompey's soldiers, certainly true philosophy and reason ought to have the same effect in the case of a wise man.<sup>5</sup> In three passages Cicero also comments upon the weak and womanish behavior of Philoctetes, who bore his suffering with too little hardihood: He was no brave man who lay in a bed wet with his tears; he still wished to live, tho he was racked with unbearable pain;<sup>6</sup> he disgraced himself not by feeling pain but by crying out, rejecting the balm of courage and of stern endurance.<sup>7</sup> But perhaps we ought<sup>8</sup>

1. Tusc. IV, 22, 50.

5. Ibid. III, 26, 66.

2. Tusc. IV, 23, 52.

6. Ibid. II, 14, 33.

3. Ibid. IV, 36, 77.

7. Fin. V, 11, 32.

4. Ibid. III, 26, 62-3.

8. Ibid. II, 29, 94.

to allow Philoctetes his excessive grief, Cicero comments, if he saw Hercules himself indulging in loud groans. Sophocles has Hercules - and Cicero quotes a long passage - when Dejanira has put on him the tunic dyed in the Centaur's blood suffer too great agony with too great impatience; such surrender to pain is not becoming to one who is on the point of attaining immortality by death.<sup>1</sup>

Again, Aeschylus, who was not only poet but Pythagorean philosopher, ought not to represent Prometheus bearing with such misery the pain he is suffering for the theft of celestial fire and its bestowal on mortals, tho Jove's punishment be ever so severe.<sup>2</sup> Sophocles, too, is censured; for Pacuvius was a better dramatist than he in not permitting Ulysses, wisest man in all Greece, to lament or grieve too much over his pain.<sup>3</sup>

Thyestes, descended from Jupiter himself, is too broken hearted at the enormity of another's crime. And Aetes is unworthy of his own father Phoebus's light in behaving with heavy grief that came really not from the loss of his daughter but from the loss of his kingdom.<sup>4</sup> Wise men have known how to refrain from grief and how to bear the severest pain, as Zeno of Elea, Anaxarchus, and Calanus.<sup>5</sup>

1. Tusc. II, 8-9, 20-2.                      3. Ibid. II, 21, 49-50.

2. Ibid. II, 10, 23.                          4. Ibid. III, 12, 26.

5. Ibid. II, 22, 51-2.

Cicero remonstrates, again, with the poets who impute to the gods the imperfections of men. He cannot believe that the gods really enjoy ambrosia and nectar and Juventas handing around the cups; nor that the gods stole Ganymede for his beauty only - too weak an excuse for doing Laomedon so great a wrong.<sup>1</sup> One may allow the poets to present Jupiter himself engaged in the debaucheries of love;<sup>2</sup> but in such a way are they giving gods the imperfections of men instead of giving men the perfections of the gods, as they ought to do.<sup>3</sup> The philosophers do no better; for who can misunderstand - Cicero reverts to the Ganymede episode - not only what the poets mean by the rape of Ganymede but what in the play of Euripides Laius says and what he desires.<sup>4</sup> In another passage Cicero has Velleius, the Epicurean, rail at the immoralities of the gods; the poets, he says, have by their arts made the stories of the gods powerful, representing the gods as en-

1. Tusc. I, 26, 65.

3. Ibid. I, 26, 66.

2. Ibid. IV, 33, 70.

4. Ibid, IV, 33, 71. Ac-

ording to Pauly-Wissowa the love of Laius for Chrysippus, young son of Pelops, was the first instance in Thebes of paederasty. When Pelops allowed the crime to go unpunished the Sphinx was sent - in some stories by Hera, outraged by this example of perverted love - to punish Laius and his house thru his son Oedipus. Cicero hints in the above passage with great reserve at an instance treated openly by the Greeks in plays of Aeschylus and Euripides.

raged with anger or inflamed with lust; indulging in all kinds of quarrels, wicked deeds, and amours with both gods and mortals.<sup>1</sup>

Deeds motivated by expediency rather than by moral purpose are wicked. Here Cicero attacks Romulus, so often his hero. Romulus decided it was better for him to reign alone and so, offering only the inadequate excuse about the city wall, he killed his brother Remus; but he committed a crime, Cicero pronounces, be he Quirinus or be he Romulus.<sup>2</sup>

In the following examples Cicero attacks other ethical weaknesses in heroes and even in the gods. Promises, he says, had better often not be kept. Of the three wishes which Neptune promised to grant his son Theseus, Theseus' third was, in a fit of suspicion about his son's relations with Phaedra, for the death of that son, Hippolytus. The granting of this wish caused overwhelming grief and the promise had much better not been kept. Together with this promise of Neptune is also mentioned the fatal promise of Apollo, who granted to his son Phaeton the wish to drive his father's chariot. Before the boy could return he was struck down by lightning. How much better for Phaeton if his father's promise had not been kept, is again the refrain.<sup>3</sup>

In the second of the two passages Cicero adds a third

1. N. D. I, 16, 42-3

2. Offic. III, 10, 40-1.

3. Offic. III, 10, 40-1  
Ibid. III, 25, 94-5.

example of fatal vow. Agamemnon, having vowed to Diana the most beautiful creature born that year within his realm, was forced to sacrifice his own daughter Iphigenia, tho he ought to have broken the vow rather than commit so terrible a crime - "Promissum potius non faciendum quam tam taetrum facinus admittendum fuit".<sup>1</sup> In a third reference Cicero has Cotta comment even more harshly upon the first two promises; doubtless in this case, as will appear, he omits the third because Agamemnon is not a god. How could the gods err or be deceived, he asks, as was Phoebus when he gave his chariot to Phaeton or as Neptune when he granted Theseus his wish? Even tho these be poetical stories, he continues, even the gods of poetry must have foreseen the fatal outcome of their indulgence and must therefore be accounted guilty. - "Atque hi tamen ipsi di poetici si scissent pernicio<sup>2</sup>sa illa filiis, pecasse in beneficio putarentur."

In all of the examples given in this section censure of one kind or another is implied or expressed. In one way, of course, the treatment is an allegorizing one, because a moral lesson is taught by the theory of opposites: Here are a number of heroes and even of gods

1. Offic. III, 25, 95.

2. N. D. III, 31, 76-7.

whose deeds have not been virtuous; see that your own acts are not like them. But the treatment does not seem to me truly allegorical because no care is taken to justify the act criticized.

So, too, in the section immediately to follow an explanation is given, to be sure, of the offending episode; but it is not such an explanation as tends to justify the case and allow it still to stand with those reservations in the canonical literature.

## C. ATTACKS ON THE GROUND OF SCIENCE OR COMMON SENSE

A number of examples seem to show that Cicero and his friends did not hesitate to offer scientific or common sense explanations that in the process pretty largely discredited many of the accepted myths.

In a long passage at the end of the second book of the De Divinatione Cicero rails against superstition, the destruction of which, he says, will not destroy true religion, since genuine religion is closely associated with the knowledge of nature - "quae (religio) est iuncta cum cognitione naturae".<sup>1</sup> Cotta at the end of his long attack upon the Stoic Nature of the Gods says he does not wish to destroy the belief in any existence of the gods but only to show how difficult it is to prove their existence.<sup>2</sup> In rationalizing many of the mythological stories Cicero does not apparently feel that he is attacking thereby religion as a whole.

Several examples show that Cicero attacks conventional beliefs which he can explain otherwise than in the usual way. The belief in Hippocentaurs and Chimaeras was false because it has already fallen into oblivion; one ought not to imagine something that never had existence and never can have, like Scyllas and Chimaeras.<sup>3</sup> Niobe was supposed to be turn-

1. Div. II, 72, 148-9.      2. N. D. III, 39, 93.

3. Ibid. II, 2,5; I, 38, 108.

ed into stone because she was speechless so long a time from excessive grief; and Hecuba was thought to be turned into a dog because her rage and bitterness at the death of Hector reminded one of a mad dog.<sup>1</sup>

The precept of the Pythian Apollo, 'Know Thyself', was attributed to a god because it was for long too profound a thought for man's understanding - "Quod praeceptum quia maius erat quam ut ab homine videretur, idcirco assignatur est deo".<sup>2</sup> Either the poets have corrupted the Stoics or the Stoics lend authority to the poets in attributing to the influence of a deity the impure passion of an Aegistheus or a Paris. The crime speaks for itself and should be so called.<sup>3</sup>

Niobe by her own rash and reasoned act of scorn brings upon herself her misfortunes. Medea and Atreus plan out their own wicked deeds. Thyestes in his adultery with Clytymnestra was purposely aiming at the kingdom and was not driven by the avenging fates.<sup>4</sup> Aetes lost his kingdom thru his own fault and not thru any accident of fate or of

1. Tusc. III, 26, 63.

2. Fin. V. 16, 44.

3. N. D. III, 38, 91. Thus Hecuba in Euripides' Trojan Women seems to see (Cornford, Greek Religious Thought, p. xviii) that Helen's unacknowledged passion for Paris is objectified as 'fate' or as the will of divinity, just because it is resisted by the conscious self.

4. N. D. III, 26, 66-8.

the gods.<sup>1</sup> The significance we attach to an oath is not fear of the wrath of Jove - for one thing gods ought never to be angry; and for the other, suppose Jove was angry, what greater injury in the case of Regulus could Jove have inflicted than Regulus brought upon himself.<sup>2</sup>

Again, Cicero accounts for gods by the deification of physical forces, or the like. The wonder and fear of primitive man attributed to Jove lightning and thunderbolts. But the idea that these phenomena were unfavorable for elections was doubtless merely an excuse when it was considered expedient not to hold an election, since in all other cases they were considered good auspices.<sup>3</sup> No one, he continues, now believes that the Cyclopes make Jove's thunderbolts under Mt. Etna because one realizes that these phenomena are due to natural causes. This last fact alone ought to preclude a belief in such phenomena as portents; besides the argument that Jove would not waste so many, if they were portents, in unpopulated or desert places or in lands where people know not his power.<sup>4</sup>

Some people, anyhow, tho Cicero does not say he agrees, think the tale of Jupiter on his throne is a fable and one believed only by the very ignorant.<sup>5</sup> One may doubt the power of the gods, as did Harpalus and Dionysius, who dese-

1. Tusc. III, 12, 27.            3. Div. II, 18, 42.

2. Offic. III, 28, 102.        4. Ibid. II, 19, 44.

5. Repub. I, 36, 56.

desecrated holy temples; yet Jove struck him down with no thunderbolt and Aesculapius visited him with no dreadful disease. In course of time he died in his bed, had the accustomed funeral honors and left his kingdom duly to his son.<sup>1</sup> In earlier times the obscurity of an eclipse offered opportunity to affirm that Romulus had been borne to heaven,<sup>2</sup> the doubtless he died a wholly natural death.

Anthropomorphism of the gods is also questioned. Cotta in his attacks on the Epicurean gods asks how the form of these gods is to be conceived. Suppose we know Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, Neptune, Vulcan, Apollo, and the other deities from forms given to them by painters and sculptors; then Juno must ever wear the goatskin, spear, shield, and broad sandals; Jupiter must always be bearded; Minerva must have grey, Neptune blue eyes; Vulcan must ever be lame. Yet the same god in different countries wears different features and garb,<sup>3</sup> even a different name.<sup>3</sup> Cotta suggests that anthropomorphism has taken place either by the advice of wise men who wished by that means more easily to influence the ignorant to worship of the gods; or thru the superstition of men who thought that in adoring images they were approaching the gods themselves; or from the fact that man in common with other animals likes his own form best and therefore attributes it to the god whom he worships.<sup>4</sup>

1. N. D. III, 34-5, 83-5.      3. N. D. I, 29, 30, 81-4.

2. Repub. I, ly, 25 Supra, P. 16.      4. Ibid. I, 27, 76-7.

In the following paragraphs most of the examples will be taken from the De Divinatione. This book was written as a sequel to the De Natura Deorum and in many ways seems to represent Cicero's most sincere opinions. It is divided into two books; in the first Cicero's brother Quintus is represented as arguing the case for divination; in the second Cicero in his own person takes the opposite side and with well coordinated examples ridicules the whole subject.

Quintus argues for the authority of the oracles at Dodona and Delphi; for incubation at the shrine of Pasiphae - by incubation is meant the theory that sleep on the sacred spot will bring dreams directing or effecting cures; for the truth of Calchas's prophecy about the Trojan war; especially for the divine inspiration of Apollo's oracle.<sup>1</sup> A vast number of responses attest the fame of the oracle in earlier times; its present decadence only proves its former glory; the vapors, inspiration for the priestess, have doubtless vanished as rivers are wont to dry up by the long lapse of time.<sup>2</sup>

To these arguments Cicero answers fully. As to the fame of Apollo's responses, great numbers of which Chrysippus had collected, - some were false; some were so equivocal a lawyer would be needed to interpret them; some came true by chance as happens often in ordinary life; and,

1. Div. I, 43, 96; Ibid. I, 36, 79-80; Ibid. I, 33, 72.

2. Ibid. I, 18. 37.

finally, others were so obscure that an oracle was needed to interpret the oracle. As examples Cicero gives the famous response to Croesus - 'He will a mighty kingdom overthrow', which would be true in either case; and Ennius's account of the oracle to Pyrrhus - "Aio te, Aeacida, Romanos vincere posse" is palpably false because the oracle never spoke in Latin; it had ceased giving responses by that time; and Pyrrhus or anyone else could see that 'te' could be either subject or object of 'vincere'.<sup>1</sup> As to the decadence of the oracle, Cicero says that no length of time could ever destroy what was truly divine, as the inspiration of the priestess was supposed to be; the power began to disappear, he remarks, precisely at the time when men began to be less credulous - "Quando ista vis autem evanuit? an postquam homines minus creduli esse coeperunt?"<sup>2</sup>

The story of Calchas predicting the number of years of the Trojan war from the number of sparrows Cicero disbelieves. The dragon turned to stone is ignored by Calchas; yet it, if it were credible, would be a much more unusual fact than ordinary sparrows; the sparrows, moreover, might quite as well denote weeks or months as years.<sup>3</sup>

In a passage from the De Legibus, written some ten years earlier than the De Divinatione, Cicero is more re-

1. Div. II, 55, 113; II, 56. 115-16. 2. Ibid. II, 57, 117.

3. Ibid. II, 30, 63-4.

reluctant to condemn prophecy utterly. He thinks perhaps the very fame of men like Calchas and Helenus attests some truth to their prophecies and that doubtless their science has vanished from age and neglect; but he cannot refrain from adding that he does not agree with either extreme: He thinks that augury with his ancestors was of a double nature - sometimes used for political convenience but often a real guide to action.<sup>1</sup> In the De Fato he tries to argue against prophecy from the law of antecedent causes; Apollo could not predict that Oedipus would kill his father because at that time there existed no antecedent cause.<sup>2</sup> A passage from the De Natura Deorum is famous: 'It seems a strange thing that one sooth sayer does not laugh when he sees another.'<sup>3</sup>

Quintus's argument for incubation Cicero disposes of neatly. What is the sense, he asks, of seeking relief for ills from dreams rather than from a physician? If Aesculapius and Serapis can prescribe cures thru dreams, then Neptune ought to aid pilots or the Muses ought to convey knowledge in the same way; but they never do, and so the aid of Aesculapius is proved false.<sup>4</sup> In another passage Cicero has Cotta say that those who have recovered from illness owe more to Hippocrates than to Aesculapius.<sup>5</sup>

1. Leg. II, 13, 33.

3. N. D. I, 25, 71.

2. Fato, 14, 33.

4. Div. II, 59, 123.

5. N. D. III, 38, 91.

Vesta, Juno, and the other gods besides Apollo are attacked likewise in their role of prophets. Not long before the capture of Rome by the Gauls, Quintus reminds his brother, a voice was heard from the sacred grove of Vesta warning that walls and gates must be repaired or the city would be taken; later an altar was erected to 'Aius the Speaker' to commemorate this warning voice.

At the time of the earthquake a voice from Juno's temple demanded a pregnant sow as expiatory sacrifice, and from this warning Juno is called 'Moneta'.<sup>1</sup> Golden stars in the temple of Castor and Pollux fell from the wall before the defeat of the Spartans at Leuctra. While Spartans were consulting the oracle of Jupiter at Dodona an ape disarranged all the lots and the priestess thereupon predicted defeat.<sup>2</sup>

Cicero replies partly by questions: Did 'Aius the Speaker' before anyone knew who he was speak and from that fact derive his name? Did Juno Moneta ever warn about anything except a pregnant sow? The disappearance of the golden stars from the temple of Castor and Pollux sounds more like the work of thieves than of gods. And nothing could be more ordinary than for an ape to do an awkward act.<sup>3</sup>

1. Div. I, 45, 101.

2. Ibid. I, 34, 75-6.

3. Div. II, 32, 68-9.

Quintus does not omit Cicero's own pious attentions to the gods. He quotes Cicero's own poem on his consulship - and one smiles at the ruse by which Cicero quotes his own poetry- which is full of allusions to the gods; also Cicero's remarks in the speech against Catiline about the prodigy of the statue of Romulus and Remus and the <sup>1</sup>opportune erection of the statue of Jupiter. Cicero comments rather equivocally on the prodigies, saying that Jupiter was wise enough to use signs in the case of the statue of Romulus struck by a thunderbolt; as to the placing of the statue of Jupiter, he asks whether lack of energy or lack of funds on the part of the contractor might not have delayed the completion of the statue till so convenient a <sup>2</sup>time.

There are, indeed, many places in which Cicero speaks slightly of the myths in general. He attributes the de Senectute not to Tithonus - "parum enim esset auctoritatis in fabula" - but for greater weight to the venerable <sup>3</sup>Marcus Cato. Myths should have no place in philosophy, he says, in dismissing the story of Romulus's augural staff, which no fire could burn. <sup>4</sup>If one calls the errors of the gods poetical fictions one ought nevertheless to expect

1. Div. I, 10-13.

3. Senec. I, 3.

2. Ibid. II, 20-1, 45-7.

4. Div. II, 37, 80.

truth and not fables from philosophers.<sup>1</sup> In another passage Cicero begs not to be forced to believe in the myths; no matter how charming and polished in style they may be, one ought not to believe in fictitious incidents or to use them as authoritative.<sup>2</sup>

Often Cicero will give mythological stories to illustrate a point and with then an explicit heightening of effect will pass over to historical illustrations. He does this, for instance, when after giving an account of Ulysses he says: "Sed omittamus et fabulas et externa; ad rem factam nostramque veniamus."<sup>3</sup> Again, after citing the daughters of Erectheus, Orestes, and Pylades for their great bravery he says: "Talibus exemplis non fictae solum fabulae verum etiam historiae refertae sunt, te quidem maximae nostrae."<sup>4</sup> Cicero has the Stoic Balbus say that if one considers the stories of Mopsus, Tiresias, Amphiaraus, Calchas, and Helenus to be fabulous he can prove the power of the gods from Roman history - "Quodsi ea ficta credimus licentia fabularum, Mopsum, (etc.), quos tamen augures ne ipsae quidem fabulae ascivissent, si res omnino repudiarent, ne domesticis quidem exemplis docti numen deorum comprobabimus?"<sup>5</sup> Let us proceed to instances of a later date, Cicero says, in

1. N. D. III, 31, 76-7.

3. Offic. III, 26, 99.

2. Div. II, 55, 113.

4. Fin. V, 22, 64.

5. N. D. II, 3, 7. Also Tusc. I, 49, 114.

making the break from myth to history.<sup>1</sup> Quintus admits that he has been drawing examples too much from the tragic poets. He will therefore cite an example on Cicero's own authority, not a fiction but a real event - "Non commenticiam rem, sed factam eiusdem generis audivi".<sup>2</sup>

In these and other examples Cicero always lays the greater emphasis on the historical examples; and he passes always from myth to fact, never from fact to myth.

1. Tusc. I, 49, 116.

2. Div. I, 52, 68.

## D. SUMMARY

It is apparent, I think, that Cicero has little or no belief in many of his country's gods; and that in his intimate writings he takes little pains to conceal his disbelief. From my examples I suggest the following inferences:

Cicero condemns utterly the stories of punishment in the underworld, nor does he once offer any admissions of their validity. Even punishment in this world from the gods he discountenances, preferring rather to believe that evil is the direct result of men's deeds. Among Cicero's friends the attacks on belief in the underworld had become so stereotyped that they were almost like reference to a comic strip or a stock joke.

Warde Fowler in his Roman Ideas of Deity says that Cicero attacks Jupiter and Vesta less than he does other gods.<sup>1</sup> On the whole, my examples will bear out this statement; except that I should say Cicero attacks Vesta far less than he does Jupiter. And I think an additional note might be added - that the mythological stories about Vesta were very few, indeed, and that she was worshipped as an abstract deity even later than the other gods. Until a fairly late time she was the fire of the

1. op. cit. P. 15.

hearth or the spirit of the fire and very few if any personal characters were assigned to her. In the case of Jupiter, moreover, faults in his character can be assigned to the poets, since there is no genuinely authoritative and inspired 'Bible' in either Greek or Roman religion.

My examples show by count that Cicero attacks the lesser gods far more than he does the greater with one possible exception - Apollo. Warde Fowler says that Cicero outside of one or two mythological chapters in the De Natura Deorum hardly mentions him at all.<sup>1</sup> My references are to the Pythian Apollo for the most part and include both favorable and adverse allusions. Even the attacks seem to me to show that Cicero is more or less preoccupied with the belief in this god.

A majority of my examples will show that Cicero draws his characters from the plays rather than from Homer and Hesiod, tho to these when he does mention them he assigns more authority. This fact tends to prove that Cicero adopts a more literary and less serious and religious attitude toward the myths. Because of this fact, also, Cicero does not escape the danger of confusion in his criticism of characters that part of the time seem to him wholly dramatic and again wholly religious.

1. Ideas of Deity, P. 139.

As religious characters they must be moralized. Just as in the first section we have seen that Cicero allegorizes the myths, drawing moral lessons from them, so now he condemns certain heroes and gods for immoral actions, drawing a moral lesson by opposition and contrast. Do not emulate, he says by implication, deeds recounted often by the myths. According to certain stories Hecuba, Achilles, Endymion were silly; Hercules, Theseus, Ajax not truly brave; Philoctetes, Thyestes, Hercules weak in endurance; Agamemnon, Neptune, Phoebus wicked in keeping rash promises; Romulus criminal, Jupiter and Laius lecherous.

The common sense explanations that would occur to a lawyer accustomed to weighing evidence are offered for many of the more incredible stories. More than once Cicero implies that the credulity of barbarous peoples made possible stories that a later and more enlightened race had repudiated - as the power of Jove's thunderbolt, forged by the Cyclopes; or the belief in oracles of Apollo. In the final summary I shall have more to say about this theory in comparison with modern anthropological theories of the myths.

## PART II. EXAMPLES OF MYTHS FROM LUCRETIIUS

## A--ATTACKS UPON THE MYTHS-COMPARISON WITH CICERO

Lucretius is the great interpreter of Epicureanism; his *De Rerum Natura* is the only complete exposition extant of the system of Epicurus and Democritus.

In his poem Lucretius attacks with great bitterness religion and all the myths in general, offering in their place a rational conception of the world and nature as a fortuitous concourse of atoms. Gods do exist, but they are giant forms in a space between heaven and earth, with no interest or concern in the affairs of men; by contemplation of these detached and intermundian gods man might influence his own life toward a high ideal. The highest good in life is the understanding of nature - not blind resistance. Naturally, such a philosophy leads toward quietism, but various commentators have pointed out that Lucretius is no true Epicurean.<sup>1</sup> He is as eager to denounce the false gods and superstitions of his day as any prophet of old; he ascribes to that force back of nature the powers of a god, tho he will not call the force divine. Most of all, in the very ear-

1. Fowler: *Ideas of Deity*,  
P. 47-9.  
*Social Life at Rome*, P. 328.

ness of his efforts to free men from the tyranny of Religion and to celebrate the triumph of Reason, Lucretius shows a religious zeal.

The question now arises - what comparison is there between Cicero and Lucretius? According to one account Cicero was Lucretius's literary executor. In a much disputed letter to Quintus, Cicero comments favorably upon the work of Lucretius. But the concern of this paper is rather to compare their treatment of the myths and to see what similarities there may be, in spite of different philosophical beliefs.

Of the famous passage in Lucretius about the underworld one commentator remarks: "In a fine passage Lucretius at once ridicules and allegorizes the current fables of punishment in the lower world.<sup>1</sup> It seems to me that Lucretius treats other passages than this in much the same way - allegorizing and yet often ridiculing them. In the first part of this section I should like to consider the above passage together with others which seem to me similar.

The tales of Acheron are but reflections on experience in this life: The rock that ever threatens the wretched Tantalus is the vain fear of the gods and the

1. Hicks: Stoics and Epicureans.  
P. 302. Lucr. III, 977 ff.

blows of chance that threaten men. Tityos, stretched over nine acres and eternally mangled by birds, is a type of the man tortured by the lust of amorous passion. Sisyphus is the discouraged politician; for to seek power that is power in name only, in the face of all kinds of opposition is but to roll uphill a stone that always rolls down again. The Danaids, ever refilling their vessels full of holes, represent the type of person who is never satisfied with the blessings of life. Cerberus, the Furies, and Tartarus, tho themselves imaginary, are the representation of punishment and fears of punishment with which the mind lashes itself when it reflects on its crimes and sees no limit to vengeance, not even in death.

Comparisons of this passage with passages in Cicero are often drawn. Munro says that Cicero in his "mors quae, quasi saxum Tantalos, semper impendet" may have been thinking of Lucretius, since in another passage (Tusc. IV, 16, 35) he draws another moral. In the second passage Cicero seems to me to draw about the same comparison as in the first. In the first it is the fear of death that troubles man; in the second the suspense and dread of evil threaten him as the punishment for folly. One may note again that Cicero twice and Lucretius once

1. Lucr. III, 975-1023.      2. Fin. I, 18, 60.

refer to the impending stone as the sole punishment of Tantalus; only once does Cicero refer to the usual punishment of unsatisfied hunger and thirst. Horace and all later poets use wholly the second version of the punishment.

In another famous passage in Lucretius the symbolism of the Great Mother of the Gods, Cybele, is both explained and repudiated. Her chariot is drawn by a pair of lions to show that the great earth, poised in the air, cannot rest on earth. The animals are wild beasts because the offspring of the mother should be softened by the kindly power of the parent. The crown on her head symbolizes the hills of earth crowned with cities. Her Phrygian attendants show that first from Phrygia came grain, the gift of Mother Earth. 'Galli', also, attend her because those who have been ungrateful to their parents ought not in turn to retain the power to become parents. The cymbals are used to inspire the vulgar with fear of the goddess's power. The armed throng of Phrygian Curetes recall the Dictaeon Curetes who with their clashing arms prevented Saturn from hearing its cries and therefore swallowing the infant Jupiter; or they show the power of arms in the worship of the goddess. This symbolization is all very beautiful but we must remember that the gods do not at all concern themselves with the affairs of men; and one

may call the earth Mother of the Gods only as one calls the sea Neptune or grain Ceres or wine Bacchus - being careful not to believe the associated superstitions.<sup>1</sup>

In a brilliant opening passage Lucretius apostrophizes Venus, mother of Aeneas and the race of the Romans, and her lover, Mars.<sup>2</sup> The implicit allegorization<sup>3</sup> in this passage is Venus as Love and Mars as Strife, the two opposing forces of Empedocles. For a time Mars is at rest, lulled in the bosom of the goddess, and Rome has time for the arts of peace. Again, Venus is used as the synonym in various passages for sensual passion.<sup>4</sup>

In a very beautiful passage Lucretius describes Phaeton's fatal driving of his father's chariot. Fire was represented as prevailing; Lucretius says, when the sun's horses whirled Phaeton far from his course. Jupiter, greatly incensed, struck the ambitious Phaeton - "magnanimum Phaethonta" - from his car with a sudden thunderbolt; and Phoebus caught up again the lamp of the world, yoked again the scattered and trembling horses, and put back the sun in its course.<sup>5</sup> Munro, quoting a complaint of Grote that the fine description of Cybele is spoiled by unsatisfactory allegorizing, comments that

1. II, 600-80.

3. Santayana: Three Phil. Poets. P. 39-42.

2. I, 1-40.

4. IV, 1058.

5. V, 396-406.

this moralizing is the very condition of the existence of the former passage and the present one; and that both show the constant struggle between the poetic instinct of the writer and his philosophical principles.<sup>1</sup> At any rate, Lucretius goes on to say that such is the tale sung by the poets of old, but very far removed, he conscientiously adds, from true reasoning. In this description Lucretius hints that the boy Phaeton was adventurous and high-souled to wish to attempt so hazardous a deed. In Cicero's account of the story emphasis is laid wholly upon the father's guilt in keeping a promise that he should have known was to be fatal to the boy.<sup>2</sup>

So, too, the victory of water is recounted in the story that floods once upon a time overwhelmed many cities; and when the force of the water was diverted the rivers went down, leaving the land free. The names of Deucalion and Pyrrha are not mentioned.<sup>3</sup>

Again, Lucretius says, he will explain certain matters lest his readers may think that earth and sun and sky and all the rest were made by the gods and must endure forever; and should therefore think it right that, like the Giants, all ought to be punished who with their reasoning shake the walls of the universe and seek by

1. Vol. II, P. 304-5.

2. Offic. III, 25, 94.

3. V, 411-15.

their impious speech to put out the light of the sun.<sup>1</sup>  
 Munro remarks that this interpretation of the war between the gods and the giants probably represents an old allegorization of the Stoics, who allegorized everything.<sup>2</sup>  
 Cicero refers once to this struggle,<sup>3</sup> and once allegorizes it as fighting against nature.<sup>4</sup>

Lucretius denies that the generations of man have been let down from the high heavens by a golden chain.<sup>5</sup>  
 Munro comments that Lucretius is doubtless referring to the golden chain of Homer, in the passage in which Zeus says that if the gods were to fasten a golden chain to heaven they could not pull him down; and probably also to a Stoic allegory suggested by the above passage.<sup>6</sup>

In the second half of his fifth book Lucretius describes at great length the long course and growth of the world and mankind. Starting from the most primitive forms of life he follows man up thru his long apprenticeship until finally "Ships and agriculture, fortification and laws, arms, roads, clothing, and all else of this kind, .... all these as men progressed gradually step by step were taught by practice and the experiments of the active mind, ... For

1. V, 113-21.

4. Senec. II, 5.

2. Vol. II, P. 291.

5. II, 1153-4.

3. N. D. II, 28, 70.

6. Vol. II, P. 176.

their intellect saw one thing after another grow famous<sup>1</sup> among the arts, until they came to their highest point."

Yet quite in the purest mode of the orthodox poets he can here and there inject items from the conventional 'Golden Age', which was so directly the opposite from his portrayal of man's long struggle up from barbarism. "But one day did not then send to destruction many thousands of men in the battlefields; then ships and mariners were not dashed on the rocks by the turbulent billows of the sea. Then it was all in vain, all useless, all for nothing if the sea sometimes rose and stormed, or gently calmed his threats without meaning; nor could anyone be enticed to his ruin by the treacherous witchery of a quiet sea with laughing waves. The wicked art of navigation then lay hidden and obscure."<sup>2</sup>

Lucretius in a number of examples attacks the myths either by saying flatly that he does not believe them or more often by offering some explanation for the origin of the story. Frequently, as Cicero does, he attacks the morality of the myth.

In an impassioned and poetic passage Lucretius charges religion itself with fostering criminal and impious deeds - "religio peperit scelerosa atque impia facta": The altar of Diana had been foully defiled by the

1. V, 1448-57.

2. V, 1000-06.

blood of the maiden Iphigenia, a pitiful victim to her own father's hand; the ghastly deed performed that the Grecian fleet might be able to set sail. Such power had religion, Lucretius ends, to impel to wicked deeds - "tantum religio potuit suadere malorum"<sup>1</sup>. Lucretius here is much more harsh and bitter than Cicero, who, as we have mentioned, condemns the same sacrifice. Mayor comments upon this passage,<sup>2</sup> but he does not draw a distinction that seems to me important: Cicero motivates the deed wholly from the part of Agamemnon - he should have broken his vow rather than commit so horrible a crime ("promissum potius non faciendum quam tam taetrum facinus admittendum fuit."<sup>3</sup>). Here he does not hint that the goddess Diana or religion was at fault, only that Agamemnon should have known that promises sometimes are not to be kept. Lucretius, on the other hand, roundly asserts that the power of religion has both fomented impious deeds and driven men to perform them.

Lucretius attacks, too, the greater gods. Some discoveries were accounted so godlike that Ceres, for instance, was said to have given grain to mortals, Liber wine. Yet life is possible without even these things; but a good life is not possible without someone to purge the heart from

1. I, 82-102.

2. N. D. Vol. III, P. XI.

3. Offic. III, 25, 95.

vain fears; so that Lucretius would judge Epicurus more<sup>1</sup> godlike than Ceres or Liber.

Rather queerly, it seems to me, Lucretius does not attach the same stock exchange of terms to Ceres for grain that Cicero does. One may call the sea Neptune or grain Ceres or wine Bacchus, he says, only provided that one is careful to keep out of the mind any base superstition. To Lucretius the literal meaning is still too<sup>2</sup> evident.

Jupiter also is attacked. If Jupiter and the other gods shake the heavens with lightning and the thunderbolt, why do they not strike the guilty rather than the innocent person? Why do they waste their bolts on the desert, on the sea, on the bare earth, on the tops of mountains? Most of all, why does Jupiter strike holy shrines of the gods and even his own temples? It is queer that Jove does not thunder when the heavens are clear; that he shoots - presumably with one bolt - in so many directions at once; that he either warns us with<sup>3</sup> darkness or does not show the bolt itself.

There are, of course, striking parallels in Cicero to this passage. Munro and Merrill both mention the passage from the De Divinatione: If Jupiter has but one

1. V, 13-21.

2. II, 652-6.

3. VI, 387-422.

bolt it is strange that he hurls it so often; if thunderbolts are warnings, many are sent to no purpose - into the sea, deserts, tops of high mountains, shores of strange peoples.<sup>1</sup> The above mentioned editors do not note a passage that seems to me analagous: The ill fortune of good men and the prosperity of bad men like Harpalus and Dionysius are a kind of witness against belief in the gods. Thru all kinds of desecration Dionysius lived on, nor did Jove strike him with his thunder nor Aesculapius cause him to die by disease.<sup>2</sup>

Again, Lucretius attacks the power of Venus. Nor is it due to a god's influence, he says, or to arrows of Venus if a woman homelier than most is loved by a man. It is the woman's own management of herself and the situation that wins a lover.<sup>3</sup> In like manner Cicero refuses to impute to a god the passion that stirred Aegistheus or Paris.<sup>4</sup>

Apollo's power is also doubted. Men have given responses with more holiness and with more assurance than the Pythian Apollo.<sup>5</sup> And in another passage Lucretius repeats practically in the same words his disbelief in Apollo's oracles.<sup>6</sup>

1. Div. II, 19, 44.

2. N. D. III, 35, 84.

3. IV, 1278-87.

4. N. D. III, 38, 91.

5. I, 737-41.

6. V, 110.

The lesser gods are of course included in the aspersions. The goatfooted satyrs and the nymphs, the half human form of Pan - all such wonders are mere fancies of the farmers in order that they may not seem to occupy a countryside which even the gods have deserted; or because they are, like all mankind, eager to tickle the ears of the credulous.<sup>1</sup>

In a long passage Lucretius deprecates the fame of Hercules. The deeds of Hercules do not rival those of Epicurus. For no harm can come to us from the Nemean lion, the Arcadian boar, the Cretan bull, the Lernean hydra, the threefold Geryones, the Stymphalian birds, Diomedes' horses, or the enormous serpent - guardian of the golden Hesperides. Even now great wild beasts menace us in mountain and deep forest, places which we can usually arrange to avoid, says the practical Lucretius. Thereupon he comes very near to allegorizing these labors of Hercules. If the mind is not purged what monsters will not there rule - lust, fears, pride, filthiness, brutality, debauchery, sloth! The man who has cast out these monsters by words, not by swords, is really worthy to be counted in the number of the gods.<sup>2</sup> Cicero allegorizes the labors in almost the same way - "... Carneades achieved an Herculean labor when, as if it had been a savage and formidable

1. IV, 580-94.

2. V, 22-51.

monster, he extracted assent, that is to say, vague opinion and rashness from our minds."<sup>1</sup> Munro comments from a note of Nettleship that as the Stoics delighted to honor Hercules, so Lucretius places his merits below those of Epicurus.<sup>2</sup>

The fabulous monsters Lucretius attacks from the point of view of logic. Chimaeras and other monstrosities are impossible because all things cannot be joined together in all ways; for all things bred in a fixed way reproduce the laws of their heredity.<sup>3</sup> Centaurs, in like manner, have never existed, since the limbs of horses and men are incompatible in the same body; for instance, a horse at three years has full vigor, but not so the boy. The Scylla, half fish and half dogs, is also an incompatible joining of parts. The threefold Chimaera - lion, serpent, and goat, is another example of impossible combination.<sup>4</sup> In still another passage Lucretius accounts for the impossible shapes of the Centaur, Scylla, and Cerberus as thin fancies and dream images that come to us awake and sleeping, when the image of one thing may be joined to that of another.<sup>5</sup>

Obviously, as commentators have remarked, there is little or no difference in the origin of such monsters and that

1. Acad. II, 34, 108.

3. II, 700-10.

2. Vol. II, P. 285.

4. V, 878-906.

5. IV, 732-43.

of the Epicurean gods. Cicero himself saw this when he has Cotta remark that if the gods have no solidity or substance there can be no difference between thinking of a Hippocentaur and thinking of a deity.<sup>1</sup> In another passage Cicero is content to say that the belief in Hippocentaurs and Chimaeras is so lost that no old woman can now be found to fear them.<sup>2</sup>

Lucretius is very bitter in his attack upon beliefs in the underworld; he even thinks it necessary to disprove any belief in immortality because by this means he can overthrow all monsters of Hades. From early times, he says, there has been ignorance of what happens after death; so that Ennius could teach both that the soul entered animals and that it went to Orcus.<sup>3</sup> Lucretius attempts in various ways to refute this belief. No one is delivered into black Tartarus, he says, because always one thing is made anew from the old; matter is needed that coming generations may come forth and that the new may never cease to rise from the old.<sup>4</sup> This is, of course, a purely materialistic and mechanistic argument against an after life. Again, he explains that no one must believe spirits or ghosts to escape from Acheron, since at death both body and mind have dissolved, each into its own first

1. N. D. I, 38, 108.

3. I, 120-6.

2. Ibid. II, 2, 5.

4. III, 964-71.

beginnings.<sup>1</sup> If the nature of mind were immortal, he says in another passage, it would have to be equipped with the five senses; yet apart from the body one cannot have eyes, nose, hands, tongue, or ears.<sup>2</sup>

Avernus itself has various explanations. Openings into Tartarus have been imagined near Cumae, and in Athens by the temple of Pallas Athene, and in Syria. Birds flee these places not because of any entrance to the lower world, but because nearby are mountains filled with sulphurous fumes and hot springs.<sup>3</sup> These poisonous exhalations from the earth near the reputed opening to Avernus are described in still another passage.<sup>4</sup> Because of these natural explanations there is no need to fear the kingdom of Orcus or the infernal deities said to draw souls down to their region.<sup>5</sup> Lucretius has explained in such fullness the errors of Hades, he adds, because it is the fear of Acheron that so deeply troubles the life of man, marring all his joys and delights, persuading him even to violate honor or to betray all natural feeling for parents or native country.<sup>6</sup>

Cicero, on the other hand, seems to think that men have already long been freed from the fear of the underworld. One of his characters is disappointed that the

1. IV, 37-41.

2. III, 624-33.

3. VI, 738-68.

4. VI, 818-39.

5. VI, 760-8.

6. III, 31-86.

other has no fear of Cerberus, Cocytus, or the punishments of Tantalus and Sisyphus, because he could have delivered such a long and pat argument against them; the other replies that such a stock argument is no longer needed.<sup>1</sup> Again, no philosopher ought to boast of having freed himself from the fears of dread Orcus, in which no old woman is now so weak as to believe.<sup>2</sup> Belief in Jupiter is proved because belief in false gods like those of Orcus did not last long.<sup>3</sup> Cicero's explanation is that men of old could not imagine a disembodied spirit - neither can Lucretius; hence the monstrous figures and shapes conceived to inhabit the underworld.<sup>4</sup> Cicero felt at times, even, that life after death was possible without all the horrors of Orcus, as when he seems to have planned the apotheosis of his daughter Tullia.

1. Tusc. I, 5-6, 10-11.

3. N. D. II, 2, 4.

2. Ibid. I, 21, 48.

4. Tusc. I, 16, 36-7.

B. SUMMARY

Lucretius does not mention, even if comparison were made between works of the same compass, nearly as many of the myths as does Cicero. Some one has suggested that the Epicureans in discarding the old mythology built up a new one of their own about Epicurus and Democritus. This is probably true to some extent.

Lucretius mentions Apollo twice; Phaeton, Hercules, the Giants, Cybele, Iphigenia, and Jupiter each once; Venus several times; Orcus frequently. Of this list the only character not treated fully by Cicero is Cybele. Yet she is treated very fully by Lucretius. Here one may mention that Cicero emphasizes a great many times the sanctity of the state worship. The individual ought not to worship private or strange gods but only those accepted by the priests and the senate.<sup>1</sup> Altho the Phrygian goddess had been received in Rome over a hundred and fifty years before the time of Lucretius and Cicero, her priests were foreign and her worship confined in the main to the temple precincts.<sup>2</sup> Doubtless to a pious Roman interest in her worship would not seem proper. Perhaps the more strongly emotional nature of Lucretius is shown by his interest in Cybele.

1. Leg. II, 10, 25-6.  
Ibid. II, 11, 28.

2. Carter: Relig. of  
Numa, P. 102.

Lucretius has a great sympathy for the individual. His hatred of religion is caused partly by his belief that from its evils come the suffering and ills of mankind. Consequently Lucretius is much more likely to spare the mortal and attack the god, whereas Cicero will do the reverse, since he is interested more in the state as a whole and not in the individual and will therefore seek always to preserve the state religion. Finally, the two men show the difference in their temperaments. Lucretius with his fervor and intensity will accept no halfway measures. Cicero is the lawyer who is accustomed to weighing both sides of the argument and is therefore more tolerant. After all, one is tolerant only when one does not care quite so intensely.

## CONCLUSION

Summaries have been given at the end of each section; this conclusion will attempt to be a more general summarizing of the paper as a whole.

The collected examples of both Cicero and Lucretius show that they applied to some extent to the explanation and criticism of the myths the methods of modern criticism:

(a) Theory of Nature Allegories: The periodic change of the seasons and of day and night was inexplicable to early man; so he assigned their causes to superhuman gods.<sup>1</sup> Dread of violent winds, fear of the thunderbolt, dread of earthquakes, all caused the deification of physical forces.<sup>2</sup> Cicero several times offers such explanations. One of the most important is: "Nonne perspicuum est ex prima admiratione hominum, quod tonitrua iactusque fulminum extimuisent, credidisse ea efficere rerum omnium praepotentem Iovem?"<sup>3</sup> There is no hint in either Lucretius or Cicero at an attempt to trace heroes like Hercules and Theseus to a solar origin. The elaborate symbolism of the meteorological school finds no support here.

(b) The Euhemeristic theory: Cicero, as we have already shown, both uses and attacks this theory; tho probably in only a few cases did he apply the theory correctly.

1. V, 1183-93.

2. V, 1226-32; 1218-21;  
1236-40.

3. Div. II, 18, 42.

Lucretius does not employ this explanation at all. There are several reasons. Lucretius is eager to prove that the gods have no connection at all with the affairs of men and that therefore men do not have to fear the gods. Obviously gods who had once been men could never be so remote as his intermundian beings who exist totally unaware of such creatures as men. The rather naive and sometimes childish stories about the prowess of the gods does not impress the philosophical Lucretius nearly as deeply as do the wise teachings of Epicurus, whom he prefers, he says quite frankly, to Hercules.<sup>1</sup> With Cicero the precedent of Greek stories and his own desire to eulogize the efforts of great heroes in behalf of the state would make him kindly toward such a theory.

(c) The Artistic theory: This is the theory that art has had a great influence upon the myths. Cicero has Cotta remark that statues and pictures compel us always to think of gods in a certain way and may give rise to great confusion.<sup>2</sup> Lucretius does not mention this explanation.

(d) The Ethical Theory: This is the theory that tales are made up by rulers for their moral influence upon the common people. Cicero touches upon this explanation when he says that the Greeks and Romans, contrary to Persian practice, have wished the gods to inhabit the cities of men instead of removing them to some remote region; that such an

1. V, 22-51.

2. N. D. I, 29-30, 81-2.

opinion of religion has a useful influence upon society. Pages 46 and following show many examples of Cicero's finding fault with the myths because he thought them a bad influence. In the same way the educated Romans always deprecated any public display of disbelief in religion because they feared the effect upon the common people. The philosopher's religion, however true it may be, Mucius Scaevola is quoted as saying, is harmful because it is inexpedient for the masses to hear the gods attacked.<sup>1</sup> Romulus and other wise leaders of the early state introduced the stories of the gods because in their wisdom these leaders saw the benefit that would result to society.<sup>2</sup> I think that educated Romans were fully aware of the ethical basis for religion, and with all their allegorizing they yet recognized many of their motives in wishing to preserve the old religion.

(e) Philological explanations of the myths have already been commented upon in the section on allegory.<sup>3</sup> It is strange that Max Mueller carried to such an extreme a method that already had been the source of so much error among the Stoic allegorists. He trusted, of course, in the expected advantage of comparative grammar. As noted, only one or two of his elaborate derivations has withstood expert criticism. The extent to which Stoic commentators applied these derivations is shown by an example from Seneca, who says that Bacchus

1. Supra, P. 5

2. Supra, P. 5-6.

3. Supra, P. 39.

received the name of Liber because he had been the liberator of the Boeotian cities.

(f) Survival Theory: Anthropologists claim this theory as a modern discovery.<sup>1</sup> Cicero and Lucretius are full of such interpretations. Cicero speaks of the credulous primitive who believed that the Cyclopes forged Jove's thunderbolt.<sup>2</sup> The ancients, he says, had erroneous views on many subjects; and the belief in augury has changed thru education and wider experience.<sup>3</sup> The power and virtue of the Delphic oracle began to disappear when men began to be less credulous.<sup>4</sup> Lucretius's whole attack on religion is on the basis that the reason and growing intelligence of man has now proved the old traditions false.<sup>5</sup>

Neither Cicero nor Lucretius appears to take into account the influence of foreign myths upon the native version. Apparently neither one recognizes the wholesale borrowing from the Greek as purely borrowing.

The collected examples seem to me to point the danger of one's stressing too hard the original source and meaning of the myth. The Stoic method of allegorization tended too much to infer that the best meaning was the original meaning. I believe that for both Cicero and Lucretius interest in the

1. Fairbanks: Mythol. Greece and Rome, P. 14-5.

2. Div. II, 18, 42.

3. Ibid. II, 33, 70.

4. Ibid. II, 57, 117.

5. V, 110, ff; 1161, ff.

myth is often in its richness of interpretation and in its fertility. For instance, the myth of the Sirens, of Tantalus, of Phaeton proved capable of rich and constant interpretation. To Cicero the interest of the Phaeton story lay in Apollo's blind granting of his son's request and in the consequent moral. To Lucretius interest lay in the beautiful and poetic account of the boy's tour of the sky, and in his bravery and high-souled daring to attempt so perilous a trip. The very fact that the myths continued to be a rich mine of inspiration to many people guaranteed their survival.

The moralizing tendency so strong with Cicero, and strong with Lucretius except that he cannot attach it so directly to the myths, becomes an obsession with a writer like Seneca. In the early part of this study I made a partial collection of myths recounted or touched upon by Seneca. In them myths are moralized to a greater extent than they are with Cicero. Hercules conquered nothing for himself, Seneca says; he traveled all over the world, coveting nothing for himself, liberating the countries which he conquered, fighting bad men and defending good men, making peace on land and sea.<sup>1</sup> Aeneas bearing his aged father out of the burning Troy is moralized as an eternal example of what filial piety can accomplish.<sup>2</sup> And the three Graces are elaborately moralized; for instance, they dance in a circle

1. De Ben. I, 13.

2. Ibid. III, 37.

hand in hand because the course of a benefit is from hand to hand, back to the giver; they are young because the memory of benefits ought not to grow old, etc.<sup>1</sup>

I believe that the moralizing tendency was strong because to the Romans their religion was long a state affair. Many of my examples show that the gods approved by the priests and the senate were to be worshipped for the good of the state. Nowhere were Jupiter and the other gods considered guides for merely individual action, says Warde Fowler;<sup>2</sup> and my examples seem to bear out this statement. The Roman must therefore look elsewhere for private counsel; this he did, I believe, by moralizing the myths till they served as moral guides. "Show me," begs Seneca, "by the example of Ulysses how I am able to love my country, my wife, my father; and how, even after suffering shipwreck I am to sail toward these ends, honorable as they are."<sup>3</sup> Before him Cicero had pointed out continually moral virtues to emulate and vices to avoid by allegorizing the characters in the myths.

Thruout these examples the question of consistency and sincerity presents itself. Earlier in this study I felt that Cicero with all his great compromising and hedging certainly could not escape the charge of hypocrisy. To the modern mind Lucretius is certainly more sincere and honest. I doubt now

1. De Ben. I, 3.

2. Social Life, P. 341.

3. Mor. Ep. Vol. II, 38, 7-8.

whether to the classical mind Lucretius would have seemed so. His very ideas of the world and of life were often foreign to the Roman mind. He ridicules the fixed and definite ends of the Stoic earth- stationing at the limit an archer who is to shoot into the not-beyond.<sup>1</sup> But Cicero praises, as against the Persian idea of gods whose home is the boundless universe - the Greek and Roman view of gods who lived in temples within the cities of men that could be publicly dedicated to them.<sup>2</sup> Apparently with no thought of inconsistency with his theoretical attacks upon the gods, Cicero can say, "I, who suffered not the statue of Minerva, guardian of our city, to be polluted by impious hands".<sup>3</sup> In Cicero's attack upon Verres his whole religious invective is directed against Verres' theft and profanation of the sacred statues. Cicero disapproves of Epicureanism because if its doctrines be true, adoration, worship, devotion to the gods would be of no use; and without religious rites and ceremonies society would fall.<sup>4</sup> Religion is for the state he says again and again.

In the second book of the De Divinatione Cicero approaches most closely the attitude of Lucretius. Pompey was dead; the Republic was falling, as Warde Fowler points out. Cicero's own habit of proving the falsity of a tradition by its gradual disappearance would shake now his faith in religious rites,

1. I, 954-1007.

3. Verr. IV, 57.

2. Leg. II, 11, 28.

4. N. D. I, 2, 3-4.

the sole authority of which was the good of the state. But, in my opinion, there still remained an insurmountable difference between the attitude of Cicero and that of Lucretius. In spite of all misfortunes Cicero's temperament was political; he thought of man as a member of society, of his actions as they influenced society. Speculation was proper for the individual, who had the right to reach the most intelligent opinions of which he was capable. But society could not be ruled by pure reason, nor could even any progress in government be so attained. Cicero, who lived in the world and had faith in the orderly government of people by the state, could not wholly reject what were to him the lessons of experience. Sacred rites and ceremonies and images must be honored because society does not live by Reason alone.

Lucretius, on the other hand, believed that nature and the world were inexorable in their demands; and that the wise man could only detach himself from the world and by a life of contemplation learn conformity to the most rigid of life's demands. A life of detachment always means the emphasizing of the individual. Therefore to Lucretius the individual was more important than the state. Religion with its fears and dreads kept man from a free and untrammelled contemplation of what life is. Only Reason, with its realization of what the world really is, can teach man.

Both men, so it seems to me, have the disadvantages of their temperaments. Cicero could not escape the vain pride of the aristocrat who, by adapting his public utterances and religious observations to the comprehension of the masses is always in danger of over-estimating their ignorance. And Lucretius, in his great anxiety to free the individual from the evils of religion, does not succeed in detaching himself from fear of the fear of religion.

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