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## Body, Soul and Sensation: Element of Epicureanism in Lucan. Analysing Luc. BC 3, 38–40.

*The present paper proposes an unorthodox interpretation of Lucan's Bellum Civile, with a particular focus on the Epicurean elements within the text. Adopting a multifocal approach to selected verses from the third book of Bellum Civile allows for an Epicurean reading through meticulous analysis and comparison with their models. The body and soul, understood as the inner and outer components of the human being, are analysed as constitutive of the sentient human and decisive in their impact on the concept of fearing death. The text of Lucan is given greater depth through the utilisation of Epicurean quotations. The key concepts of "body", "soul", and "sensation" are crucial for comprehending Lucan's lines and interpreting them through the lens of Epicurean philosophy, with the purpose of overcoming the fear of death.*

**Keywords:** Lucan, Epicureanism, Death, Body, Soul, Sensation, Lucretius

### Introduction

To comprehend the philosophical thought in Lucan's work, it is essential to consider the influence of Epicureanism and Stoicism in contemporary society.

During the Hellenistic era, philosophy underwent a shift in focus from theoretical to ethical questions. Two schools of thought, Epicureanism and Stoicism, emerged as the most prominent. Epicurus founded the former upon his arrival in Athens in 306 BC, while Zeno established

the latter around 300 BC. The Stoic school was located in proximity to the Agora, a context that involved it in political debates,<sup>1</sup> while the Epicurean school, known as the “Kēpos”, functioned as a gathering place where friends lived together, practiced philosophy, and sought to avoid political commitments. The fundamental purpose of Stoicism was to live in conformity with nature, that in ancient thought was perceived as according to reason. In contrast, Epicureanism emphasised the pursuit of pleasure, which has often led to the misconception that Epicurus’ philosophy was an ode to hedonism. In truth, Epicurus’ concept of pleasure is not merely hedonistic in nature, but rather, it is the pursuit of a life unencumbered by disturbances and excesses. According to Epicurus’ *Tetrapharmakos*, the true path to attaining pleasure lies in the absence of fear – whether it be of the gods, of death, or of pain – and in the recognition of the possibility of attaining happiness.

In Rome, Epicureanism was the subject of criticism due to its stance on politics and religion, and to its disengagement from the political sphere. Consequently, Epicureanism was rejected in favour of Stoicism.<sup>2</sup> However, the philosophy found primary support in Herculaneum. Philodemus of Gadara, a prominent adherent of Epicurus and a significant disseminator of his philosophy within the Italic peninsula,

<sup>1</sup> KLP 5 (1979: 377) s.v. Stoa, “ Die älteren Stoiker hatten nicht die finanziellen Mittel ... so war di St. die einzige Schule, deren Unterricht in einem öffentlichen Gebäude stattfand”.

<sup>2</sup> Cic. *De fin.* 2, 76 (*At vero illa quae Peripatetici, quae Stoici dicunt, semper tibi in ore sunt in iudiciis, in senatu. Officium, aequitatem, dignitatem, fidem, recta, honesta, digna imperio, digna populo Romano, omnia pericula pro re publica, mori pro patria, — haec cum loqueris, nos barones stupemus, tu videlicet tecum ipse rides.*) highlights that Engagement in public life requires virtues that Epicureanism refuses to acknowledge, yet which are central to Stoic and Aristotelian thought.

Cic. *Nat. Deo.* 1, 3 (*Sunt enim philosophi et fuerunt, qui omnino nullam habere censerent rerum humanarum procurationem deos. Quorum si vera sententia est, quae potest esse pietas, quae sanctitas, quae religio?*) expresses the concern that the Epicurean view of the gods, which denies their involvement in human affairs, could undermine essential Roman principles (*pietas, sanctitas, religio*).

emerged as a notable figure in this context. In Campania, the Neo-Epicureans exhibited a pronounced sense of identity and purpose. They addressed an aristocratic class that exhibited a strong sense of affiliation with Hellenistic culture and utilised the Greek language.<sup>3</sup> Lucretius, thereafter, delivered Epicurean doctrines in his poem *De Rerum Natura*, translating into Latin the principles of this philosophy, which until then had only been available in Greek. While Stoicism undoubtedly had a wider following among the general Roman public, there was nonetheless a quiet adoption of Epicurean ideas. Michael Erler emphasises that the Romans' pursuit of preserving and substantiating moral values through philosophy contributed to the dissemination of Epicureanism throughout Roman society, a process facilitated by the adaptability of Epicureanism and its focus on pragmatic ethical principles.<sup>4</sup> However, Lucretius served as a paradigm for various authors, especially in the wake of the political crisis that marked the conclusion of the Republican era.<sup>5</sup> In looking ahead to the Neronian era, characterised by the rule of a despotic emperor, it is conceivable that Epicurean ideology could have permeated the intellectual circles that the emperor subjugated. Within this context of repression, the literary work of Lucan is particularly relevant.

In examining Lucan, scholars have long observed an inclination towards Stoicism.<sup>6</sup> However, as early as the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, René Pichon suggested that Lucan's work exhibited an eclectic form of Stoicism.<sup>7</sup> Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, scholars have increasingly recognised the presence of eclectic Stoicism in Lucan's writings. Ambiguities concerning themes such as fatalism, providence, and cosmic

<sup>3</sup> MELLINGHOFF-BOURGERIE (1990: 17–18).

<sup>4</sup> ERLER (2019: 124–125).

<sup>5</sup> MAS TORRES (2018: 27–28).

<sup>6</sup> SIKES (1923: 195) writes, "Though Lucan was not perhaps an orthodox philosopher – the general tone of the *Pharosalia* is patently Stoic".

<sup>7</sup> PICHON (1912: 216).

structure has led to a critique of Stoicism, resulting in a discernible distancing from its more orthodox doctrines. A notable aspect of Lucan's work is the presence of contradictory elements regarding the role of the divine and the function of providence.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, a smaller group of scholars recognises epicurean elements in Lucan's work and attempts to understand their meaning.<sup>9</sup> In this context, Thomas Baier identifies an Epicurean theology that is tied to the effort to give a rational explanation for myths.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, various commentators recognise Epicurean passages in Lucan's epic, though without explicitly affirming Epicurean positions. This paper draws inspiration from the examination of these commentaries.

In his commentary on verses 39–40 from Book 3 of *Bellum Civile*, Vincent Hunink astutely observes the presence of an Epicurean sentiment, drawing parallels with the works of other authors.<sup>11</sup> However, no studies have yet elucidated the precise significance of these lines, nor their distinctions or affinities through the models and their underlying implications.

The present study will discuss death based on the interrelation between the body, the soul, and the sensation. These elements will be analysed through the words of Lucan and Epicurus, compared to Lucretius and Plato. This analysis aims to suggest that the fundamental difference between the passages lies in their divergent conceptualisations of the relationship between the soul and the sensation.

### Death as the end of sensation

<sup>8</sup> For further insight: DUE (1970); SCHOTES (1969); LAPIGE (1979); NARDUCCI (1979); LEIGH (1997).

<sup>9</sup> See ERLER (2012), BAIER (2010).

<sup>10</sup> BAIER (2010).

<sup>11</sup> HUNINK (1992: 49).

The third book of *Bellum Civile* opens with Pompey's departure to the East, a journey disturbed by a vivid dream in which his late wife Julia appears.<sup>12</sup> This vision is marked by a sense of disappointment with Pompey's new marriage. She threatens him with the impossibility of dissolving their bond, which she claims will not be averted even after Pompey's death. The apparition that guides the hero is a topos in epic tradition; however, in this instance, it assumes a hostile role, foretelling misfortune. Moreover, subverting tradition, the hero rejects the warning and responds by rationalizing it.<sup>13</sup>

Pompey's reflection on the event is summed up in just three verses.

Luc. *BC* 3, 38–40<sup>14</sup>

Et 'quid ait 'uani terremur imagine uisus?  
Aut nihil est sensus animis a morte relictum  
aut mors ipsa nihil.'

"Why," said he, "am I terrified by the sight of a meaningless spectre?  
Either no feeling remains to the soul after death, or death itself matters not at all."

The question posited in verse 38 disrupts the mystical moment created by the vision, thereby restoring the discourse to a rational plane. The question is rhetorical, as the answer is suggested by the *vani* contained within. Verses 39–40 exhibit a self-answer that can be read as the author's own commentary. The lines are clearly influenced by Epicurean philosophy, both in terms of thematic resonance and as an almost literal

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<sup>12</sup> Julia is the daughter of Ceasar, the concept of the family bond here has the power to connect the two characters and to define the civil war. Julia's death is considered in the poem as one of the reasons of the war.

<sup>13</sup> ESPOSITO-LANZARONE-D'URSO (2022: 521).

<sup>14</sup> All quotations from Lucan (text and translation) follow DUFF (1928).

echo of Epicurus' teachings, as outlined in his *Letter to Menoeceus*.

Epic. *Ep. ad Men.* 124<sup>15</sup>

Συνέθιζε δὲ ἐν τῷ νομίζειν μηδὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς εἶναι τὸν θάνατον ἐπεὶ  
πᾶν ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακὸν ἐν αἰσθήσει· στέρησις δὲ ἐστὶν αἰσθήσεως  
ὁ θάνατος.

Accustom yourself to the belief that death is nothing to us. For all good and evil lie in sensation, whereas death is the absence of sensation. According to Epicurus, death should be considered null for human beings since good and evil are related to sensation, and this ceases with death.

Lucan's *mors ipsa nihil* echoes μηδὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς εἶναι τὸν θάνατον of Epicurus; similarly, *nihil est sensus animis a morte relictum* corresponds in Epicurus to στέρησις δὲ ἐστὶν αἰσθήσεως ὁ θάνατος. Lucan's use of *aut ... aut*<sup>16</sup> is interesting, as if the author were splitting Epicurus' thoughts. Indeed, the two possibilities that Pompey associates with death, i.e. the deprivation of the soul of sensation or being nothingness, are consequential in the Greek text. In fact, we have the conjunction ἐπεὶ: death is nothingness since after death, a man has no sensation. Death as a deprivation of ἀγαθὸν and κακὸν has no reason to be feared.

To clarify the similarity between the statements of these two authors on the subject of death, it is necessary to consider further aspects. A fundamental concept in understanding the preceding passages is the

<sup>15</sup> All quotations from Epicurus (text and translation) follow LONG – SEDLEY (1987).

<sup>16</sup> HUNINK (1992: 50) observes that the presentation of alternative solutions is a recurring theme in Lucan's approach to scientific issues and further suggests that this approach aligns with Lucretius' philosophical standpoint. Moreover, HESSLER (2014: 83–84) highlights that the antithesis is a recurring device in Epicurus' *Letter to Menoeceus*.

idea of a corporeal soul, a concept that is proper to the material and atomistic philosophy of Epicurus, and, specifically, what happens at the body–soul bond by dying. Looking at some passages from the *Bellum Civile*, Lucan’s depictions of the horrors of battle and death serve to illustrate this point.

### **Dissolution of the dying soul**

The following lines are part of a substantial section of the third book in which Lucan describes the massacres of the Massilians. During the battle, the Massilians face death in several ways, both incredible and horrific.

Luc. *BC* 3, 469–473

At saxum quotiens ingenti uerberis actu  
excutitur, qualis rupes quam uertice montis                    470  
abscidit impulsu uentorum adiuta uetustas,  
frangit cuncta ruens nec tantum corpora pressa  
exanimat, totos cum sanguine dissipat artus.

Like a crag which length of time, aided by the blast of the winds,  
tears from a mountaintop, broke all things in its course, not merely  
crushing out the lives of its victims, but annihilating limbs and  
blood together.

The metaphor compares the enemies’ attack on the target to a rock descending from the elevated summit of a mountain, thereby rendering the victims unable to respond and resulting in the obliteration of their vulnerable bodies and the dissemination of their remains. The initial

observation is that the trithemimeral caesura of Lucan's verse separates the term *exanimat* from the rest of the sentence. The verb in the opening position is given greater charge and is isolated, almost like a lemma in a dictionary. The second part of the verse expands the term, constituting a visual and plastic explanation of it, making it possible for the reader to imagine the scene as if it were performed on stage. The boulder kills the crushed bodies yet literally takes away their souls.

The culmination of the metaphor's power is manifested in the final verse, in which the incipit *exanimat* elucidates the previously implicit content. *Exanimat* summarises the concept of death (TLL 1175.10 explain *exanimo*: *anima, spiritu exuere, vita privare*). This is not merely another way of expressing the concept of death; it conveys the concrete phenomenon of the separation of the soul from the body. The phrase *nec tantum corpora pressa exanimat* encloses the contrast between body and soul, between the outer and inner worlds, and between two distinct representations of existence.

In the following lines, the narrative continues, depicting the ongoing conflict and the persistent loss of life.

Luc. *BC* 3, 578–579

Hi luctantem animam lenta cum morte trahentes  
Fractarum subita ratiū periere ruina

Others, while still drawing breath that struggled against tardy death,  
perished by the sudden downfall of their wrecked craft.

A group of soldiers perish in the destruction of their ships, and their souls are dragged away reluctantly. The concept of *luctor* can be defined as signifying both struggle and opposition, thereby giving concrete form

to the words *luctantem animam*. The soul is dragged along in the process of dying, thus acquiring a corporeal existence. The soul can be interpreted as a metaphor for the soldier who attempts to resist death but is ultimately dragged along by it, gradually slipping away with death itself. Moreover, the graduality of the process is emphasised by the term *semianimes*, referred to the same soldiers at verse 576. This interpretation of the soul's slippery nature aligns with a concept posited by Epicurus, emphasising the material aspect of the soul's existence. In his *Letter to Herodotus*, Epicurus states that the soul is composed of minute particles, atoms. In chapter 65, he further elaborates on this concept, explaining the soul as a corporeal entity that can disengage from the body.

Epic. *Ep. ad Herod.* 65

τὸ δὲ λοιπὸν ἄθροισμα διαμένον καὶ ὅλον καὶ κατὰ μέρος οὐκ ἔχει τὴν αἴσθησιν ἐκείνου ἀπηλλαγμένου, ὅσον ποτέ ἐστι τὸ συντεῖνον τῶν ἀτόμων πλῆθος εἰς τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς φύσιν. Καὶ μὴν καὶ λυομένου τοῦ ὅλου ἄθροίσματος ἢ ψυχὴ διασπείρεται καὶ οὐκέτι ἔχει τὰς αὐτὰς δυνάμεις οὐδὲ κινεῖται, ὥστε οὐδ' αἴσθησιν κέκτηται.

But the rest of the aggregate, when either all or part of it remains, does not have sensation following the separation of however many atoms it takes to make up the nature of the soul. Moreover, when the whole aggregate disintegrates the soul is dispersed and no longer has the same powers, or its motions.

Epicurus' writings articulate the notion of the soul's composition and its relationship to the body. It is argued that the loss of a significant proportion of the atoms constituting the soul results in the body's subsequent deprivation of the faculties associated with the soul, including

sensation.<sup>17</sup> Conversely, the complete destruction of the body is said to cause the dispersion of the soul. Accordingly, the Epicurean passages referenced herein delineate the soul as consisting of atoms existing and flowing within the body yet dissolving at the moment of death. The concept is poetically expressed by Lucan: in the context of a violently destroyed body, the terms *exanimat* and *luctantem anima* appear amid a vocabulary that emphasises corporeal rupture and scattering, linking the soul's departure to the body's destruction. Although Lucan does not refer to atoms explicitly, this language allows us to interpret the soul as bound up with the body's dissolution, which may suggest an Epicurean sense of death as the disaggregation of body and soul.

### **Sensation is a result of the interaction between body and soul**

To comprehend the interconnection of the passages proposed in this paper and to recognise how Lucan's verses can convey an epicurean subtext, it is necessary to consider the role of the floating soul in the body and how the interaction between body and soul is a constitutive element for the sensation. Finally, it is crucial to emphasise the impact of death on these elements.

Epic. *Ep. ad Her.* 64

Καὶ μὴν καὶ ὅτι ἔχει ἡ ψυχὴ τῆς αἰσθήσεως τὴν πλείστην αἰτίαν δεῖ κατέχειν· οὐ μὴν εἰλήφει ἂν ταύτην, εἰ μὴ ὑπὸ τοῦ λοιποῦ ἄθροίσματος ἐστεγάζετό πως. τὸ δὲ λοιπὸν ἄθροισμα

<sup>17</sup> LONG – SEDLEY (1987: 70–71) about the soul in Epicurus explains, “For him the soul's primary functions are consciousness in all its aspects – especially sensation, thought and emotion – and the transmission of impulses to the body. Of these, thought and emotion are localized in the ‘mind’...The other functions belong to the ‘spirit’, which extends throughout the body and interacts closely with the mind”.

παρασκευάσαν ἐκείνη τὴν αἰτίαν ταύτην μετείληφε καὶ αὐτὸ  
τοιούτου συμπτώματος παρ' ἐκείνης

We must grasp too that the soul has the major share of responsibility for sensation. On the other hand, it would not be in possession of this if it were not contained in some way by the rest of the aggregate. And the rest of the aggregate, having granted this responsibility to the soul, itself too receives from the soul a share of this kind of accidental attribute – though not of all those which the soul possesses.

In this passage, Epicurus argues that the soul possesses the faculty to perceive sensation, with the body participating in this process. Furthermore, the body provides the stimulus for sensation, which the soul then perceives. Accordingly, Epicurean philosophy posits that the soul consists of minute atoms disseminated throughout the body, which react to the stimuli the senses provide. While the Epicurean theory on this subject has largely been lost, Hossenfelder explains that atoms would be subject to orbital movements that preserve the cohesion of the body when subjected to pleasant stimuli; whereas, when subjected to pain, atoms would be driven to unstable movements that are detrimental to the cohesion of the body.<sup>18</sup> This perspective on the relationship between body and soul places the body as the conduit through which the soul experiences pleasure and pain, as the movement of the body's atoms is interconnected with the movement of the soul's atoms, thereby generating sensation.<sup>19</sup>

In *Ep. ad Herod.* 65 (quoted above), Epicurus asserts that the soul is a subtle body which is part of the organism. When this is destroyed, the soul disperses and loses its faculties. In summary, sensation is a faculty of the soul, yet it cannot exist independently of the body; the death of

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<sup>18</sup> HOSSENFELDER (1985: 145).

<sup>19</sup> *Cfr. supra.*



yet that is nothing to us, who by the welding and wedding together  
of body and spirit exist compacted into one whole.

Lucretius's theory posits that death does not affect man because the soul is mortal. The disunion of the soul and body signifies the termination of the capacity to experience sensation. This is because humans are constituted of the whole of soul and body, and the moment they separate, humans cease to exist.<sup>21</sup> Even if the sensation does not perish, it is of no relevance to humans, who thus need not to worry about it.

In agreement with Epicurus and, perhaps, as a model for Lucan, Lucretius argues that death is not a concern for humanity and attempts to clarify the reasons for these beliefs. Lucretius's treatise is predicated on the duality of the soul and body, and their mortality, a standpoint that is likely adopted to elucidate a fundamental theme that accentuates the disparities with Stoicism, a philosophy that regards the concept of mortality and immortality of the soul as more intricate.<sup>22</sup> Lucretius also hypothesises a continuation of sensation; this, remaining relegated only to the soul, now separated from the body, would not afflict the dead man in any way. The *nihil est sensus animis a morte relictum* in Lucan

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<sup>21</sup> JONCHERAY (2020) writes about the verse 830: "En effet, la mort est privée de réalité par rapport à nous qui sommes encore dans la vie (*ad nos*). La première personne du pluriel désigne ici le vivant en tant qu'individu, c'est-à-dire comme être possédant à la fois la sensibilité, caractéristique du vivant, et une identité propre faisant sa singularité."

<sup>22</sup> In verse 847, Lucretius puts forward the concept of palingenesis, which is the reorganisation of atoms with the potential to revive a dying subject. This notion is further elaborated upon in the commentary provided by ERNOUT-ROBIN (1962) and BAILEY (1947), which draws parallels with the philosophical tenets espoused by Heraclitus, as well as the Stoic doctrine propagated by Zeno and Chrysippus. The cited commentaries further elucidate that Epicurus would have considered this notion as not implausible, given the indestructibility of atoms. However, Epicurus attributes events to fortuitous chance; thus, although palingenesis is possible, it would not be necessary. In Lucan, however, the prospect of palingenesis is not entertained. The text of the *Bellum Civile* is pragmatic and does not require recourse to philosophical dissertations. However, the absence of the hypothetical palingenesis and the choice of words could be attributed to a direct reference to the Epicurean model.

is not a direct quotation from Lucretius, but it encapsulates the sense of his broader argument. Lucretius elucidates how death signifies the disunion of the soul and body, *quibus e sumus uniter apti*; this disunion precipitates the dissolution of the sentient self and, consequently, the incapacity to experience sensation. While asserting the preservation of this ability, Lucretius conceptualises death as the disunion of the body from the soul as from the *animae potestas*, which is precisely the capacity to feel. In its broader and more articulate form, Lucretius's discourse thus functions as a re-proposition of Epicurus's theories concerning the notion of the soul's faculties being diminished upon death and the symbiotic relationship between soul and body in their exercise, as set out in chapters 64–65 of his *Letter to Herodotus*.

Up to this point, it has been noted that Lucan's text is comparable to that of Epicurus and the verses of Lucretius. The idea of death that does not cause affliction makes it possible to associate Lucan's verses with a passage from Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, as has been done in various commentaries. Further examination of this text provides a clearer understanding of how a widespread concept in classical culture could be interpreted with different nuances, emphasising the potential for an Epicurean interpretation of Lucan's verses.

Pl. *Ap. Soc.* 40 c<sup>23</sup>

δυοῖν γὰρ θάτερόν ἐστιν τὸ τεθνάναι· ἢ γὰρ οἷον μηδὲν εἶναι  
μηδὲ αἴσθησιν μηδεμίαν μηδενὸς ἔχειν τὸν τεθνεῶτα, ἢ κατὰ τὰ  
λεγόμενα μεταβολή τις τυγχάνει οὔσα καὶ μετοίκησις τῇ ψυχῇ τοῦ  
τόπου τοῦ ἐνθένδε εἰς ἄλλον τόπον.

<sup>23</sup> Text follows BURNET (1961 [1900]); translation is mine.

To be dead is one of two things: either it is like being nothing and the dead one has no perception of anything, or, according to what is said, it happens to be a change or a migration of the soul from this place to another.

In Plato's writings, the concept of death is explored through the lens of two possible outcomes: the absence of sensation or the transmigration of the soul.<sup>24</sup>

While there is a correspondence between the concept expressed in Lucan and the Platonic text, from which the pattern *aut ... aut* (ἢ ... ἢ in Plato) could be taken, the two texts present differences. The two options that Lucan presents in his verses, i.e. that death leaves no sensation or that death is nothing, in Plato represent two aspects of a single option set apart from μηδὲ (in an array of alliteration: μηδὲν εἶναι μηδὲ αἰσθησιν μηδεμίαν μηδενός); that is, they are two parts of the same system. In contrast, the latter possibility, as outlined by Plato, is characterised by the survival of the soul (μεταβολή – μετοίκησις), a concept that is central to his philosophical system.<sup>25</sup> Closely examining the similarities reveals significant differences, with the primary distinction lying in the textual differences. Plato writes that τὸν τεθνεῶτα (the dead one) has no sensation.<sup>26</sup> In Lucan, death leaves no sensation to the soul

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<sup>24</sup> VAN HARTEN (2011: 168, n.4) provides further bibliographical references on the issue of the two Platonic options, which are considered non-exhaustive as they do not propose other positions on death known to the Athenian people. For example, the possibility of punishment is also present in Platonic philosophy.

<sup>25</sup> The initial option delineates the notion of death as a state of eternal sleep, devoid of sensation. Socrates' argument appears to be centred on the second option. In the preceding passages, Socrates asserts that death is the supreme good for humanity, a notion that can be clarified through the passages in chapter 40sq. The prospect of survival might be regarded as the most desirable state for Socrates, as it would allow him to continue his pursuit as a philosopher. CHRISTIANSEN (2000: 51) has argued that this option would express the tension to a better world, such as to a higher level of reality and experience, typical of Plato's theory of transcendence.

<sup>26</sup> ROOCHNIK (1985: 214) highlights that as, in the *Apology*, Socrates describes this as a

(Luc. *BC* 3, 39–40: *nihil sensus... a morte relictum*). In Plato's philosophy, this relationship between soul and sensation is not explicitly delineated; the dead individual experiences no sensation or undergoes a transformation of the soul. In contrast, in Lucan's perspective, it is the soul itself that is devoid of perception upon death. This concept aligns with Epicurus' theory that sensation ceases with death because of the ultimate dissolution of the soul (Epic. *Ep. ad Men.* 124: *στέρησις δέ ἐστιν αἰσθήσεως ὁ θάνατος*). In the Epicurean doctrine, sensation is contingent on the physical body. Consequently, the dissolution of the soul–body duality, a central theme in the transition from Lucretius's work, results in the cessation of sensation. Despite the evident parallels with Plato's text, Lucan appears to adopt an almost literal interpretation of Epicurus' philosophy, encapsulating its fundamental tenets and synthesising the explanatory framework primarily provided by Lucretius.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evident that there are striking parallels between Lucan *BC* 3, 39–40 and Epicurus *Ep. ad Men.* 124, which appear to be more than a mere quotation or a casual reference. Through the parallel with other texts, Lucan appears to adopt Epicurus' model, both in terms of lexical choice and in his summary of the philosophy itself. He adopts the Epicurean doctrine, which posits that sensation is experienced by the contingent relationship of the soul with the body. The concept of death, as the dissolution of the soul–body duality, signifies the termination of sensation.

Even though the Epicurean interpretation of Lucan's passage has been the subject of extensive debate and is not universally accepted,<sup>27</sup>

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peaceful dreamless sleep, the absence of sensation would not make it possible for this dreamless sleep to be pleasant.

<sup>27</sup> HUNINK (1992: 49).

the proposed analysis demonstrates that the key to interpreting the passage lies in the relationship between the three concepts of body, soul and sensation. The concatenation of these concepts and their utilisation in the description of the concept of death facilitates the association of Lucan's verses with Epicurus *Ep. ad Men.* 124.

Epicurus's philosophy on the subject is outlined in his *Letter to Herodotus*<sup>28</sup>, where he asserts that death is defined by the loss of the faculties of the soul. Upon the dissolution of the body and its separation from the soul, the latter is no longer capable of perception and, in the absence of these components, death is devoid of sensation. Consequently, Epicurus and Lucan posit that death exerts an influence on the body–soul–sensation system and that the alteration of the equilibrium between these components ultimately results in death. The argument is thus advanced that in the event of death, and the concomitant disruption of the balance, no sensation is experienced and that fear of death is, therefore, unnecessary.

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<sup>28</sup> Epic. *Ep. ad Herod.* 63: τοῦτο δὲ πᾶν αἰ δυνάμεις τῆς ψυχῆς δηλοῦσι καὶ τὰ πάθη καὶ αἰ εὐκίνησιαι καὶ αἰ διανοήσεις καὶ ὧν στερόμενοι θνήσκομεν.

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