

BROOKE HOLMES : The poetics of anthropogony: men, women, and children in Lucretius, book five

“The Poetics of Anthropogony: Men, Women, and Children in Lucretius, Book Five” analyzes how Lucretius handles a significant problem in Epicurean accounts of the origins of humans and human culture – namely, how a species that, unlike any other, enters the world “in need of every kind of vital support” (*indigus omni uitali auxilio*) as Lucretius himself famously writes in an argument against a providential ordering of the cosmos, ever managed to survive. The young nurturing earth plays a crucial role in the early survival of the species, but the earth’s aging necessitates another solution. I argue that this takes the form of the early societies that Lucretius describes in a well-known but puzzling excursus at 5.1011-1027. With the rise of human society, fathers come to take on the role of the young earth in protecting children as well as women, while at the same time taking care to protect themselves through a male community. The passage thus responds not only to Epicurean ideas about justice and friendship but also obliquely addresses, through what I term “poetic logic”, questions of infancy, vulnerability, and care that are generated by the first phases of the origin narrative.

Mots-clés :

altruism – animals – wild – anthropogony – domesticity – earth (as mother) – evolution – family – fathers – friendship – justice – kinship – mothers – offspring – *oikeiōsis* – pity – prehistory – primitivism (see also progressivism) – progressivism (see also primitivism) – propagation – reason – self-interest – social pacts – survival – of species – teleology – utility – violence – vulnerability – human