

Rome Remembers: The Memory and Ethics in Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*

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ABSTRACT

The history and public memory of Roman history have been extensively studied from various kinds of materials, except the poetry in the late Republic. Being a significant figure of Roman literature, Lucretius and his work *De Rerum Natura* (DRN) has been extensively studied for its philosophical and political meanings in the Republic, while the ethics and the impressions of history in the poem still left for further investigation. Through the conduct of semantic analysis and reception theory, the paper investigates into the ethical part of Roman memory, to see what moral standard and pattern did the Roman people, especially the elites possess, and how they interact mutually in the literature. The self-understanding of Roman elites would be explored to gradually answer the question that to what extent do the records of aristocrats fit the definition of Roman history as “the deeds of the Roman people”. This paper aims to prove that poetry could serve as means to investigate memory of Rome, and shed light on the studies of ethics in Roman literature. Further, my research could reveal more information of Lucretius, with different approached applied to investigate his work DRN.

Keywords: *De Rerum Natura, Lucretius, Roman history, Memory.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Rome's tradition of history and memory is rooted in its social context. They continuously recalled the past and stressed the significance of the glorious history, and through the interaction of present and past, the Romans form a kind of collective memory, which blurred the boundary between history, today, and future. As Hölkeskamp defines it, collective memory helps a group or a society as a whole to articulate an awareness of its defining characteristics and its unity, and therefore forms an essential basis for its self-image and identity [1]. Therefore, we need to study closely the texts and semantics of Lucretius's work, exploring what Romans expressed in their time, and how memory interacted with history and tradition and ultimately, form the ideological basis for the society.

It's important to know the self-understanding of Romans, and how Romans understood their societies at a given moment. Besides the flashy concepts of “cultural symbolism” or “identity” [2], terms that have been widely applied to Roman history, we should be conscious about these modern definitions and, instead of directly using these modern concepts to define history, return to

the original sources with fresh theoretical frameworks to investigate memory of Rome in Rome.

One way to investigate in the memory of Rome is through the public memory of Rome, defined by Wiseman as “the memory of events that were believed to have happened and therefore consisted” [3]. Public memory is generally referred to the memory of the Roman citizens, considered as a unity, consisting of various social classes and the main part of it, are those ordinary Roman citizens who occupy the main part of the social ladder but somehow, their voice was unheard due to the lacking of a bibliocentric culture as we are now in Rome and we cannot get access to the mind of ordinary people through written words directly. Through the history of Rome, the written words were produced by the elite for political and religious purposes instead of the thoughts of ordinary citizens. Therefore, to further investigate the memory of the mass, we must apply a different approach to the research. Since Rome was a typical Mediterranean open-air culture of direct interaction, a culture of visibility, of seeing an being seen, of orality and of performativity, as individuals acting out in persona their different social and political roles as Hölkeskamp points out [4], we are able to look into the oratory of Roman writers to see how much political and historical knowledge did the crowd possessed, for the

oratory always suits the rhetorical circumstances of the originals, reflecting the level of audience assumed by the orator. One example in the Roman Republic, shows that memory was very important to the ordinary Roman people let alone the elites: In Cicero's Second Oration on the Agrarian Law [5], he proposed a variety of historical allusions to summon up key elements of presumed in the audience. He made use of a century-old stereotype - the Campanian arrogance - to presume a familiar story for the people and aroused their alert to the law's scope [6]. Therefore, we could assume that these stereotypes and commonplaces appear to have been rooted in highly specific references to a shared historical tradition and collective memory. The oral tradition provides an argument of Roman people's memory and inclined that Roman people possess a kind of collective memory and is closely linked with the history of Rome.

When we switch our aspect from public history of Rome to a more intimate and specific one, it's no doubt that the written words and narratives draws our special attention, for they are the materials that directly expose us to the historical events in the perspective of Roman elites. The earliest written words were mostly about the military history and conquests in the Romanization process, attached with distinctive traits that can be traced from the Greek epics. However, at the same time, the Roman writers started to embody more and more Roman elements and values in their works, beginning to create its own type [7]. The birth of Latin poetry, however, particularly represents a more private, intimate and individual aspect of the Roman memory. Through the various poets of Latin literature, I argue that Lucretius and his poem deserves our special attention. Though we still know less about his life, his work *De Rerum Natura* (DRN) is a great philosophical poem that exerted great influence on the development of Latin poetry and the later poets like Vergil and Horace, to some extent, were affected by it [8]. Lucretius's authority and representativeness could be guaranteed. His poem DRN was also a representative and fruitful material to investigate in for the written history and memory of the Roman elites, including 7400 dactylic hexameters about the tenets and philosophy of the Greek philosopher Epicurus, the history and development of human civilization with some discussions on ethics, and the natural law and order of the universe. Due to its authority, representativeness and richness, DRN appears to be an appropriate source for me to look into for exploring the memory of Rome in private narratives.

Republican Rome was a time when the struggles between elites and populares became white-hot and sharp, leading to continuous conflicts and civil wars [9]. This was a time full of chaos, reformation, acculturation, assimilation, and ethnogenesis. New crisis and inventions appeared from all aspects from the society, and it was a time when the Romans was experiencing the decay of morality and the issues brought by the disappearance of

compromise in internal and external affairs due to the Roman expansion and its stronger power in the world stage. During this time, the Roman people gradually developed the cult of ancestors, and the respect of history. Through the interaction of present and past, they created a unique type of memory, which worth our attention.

The relationship between writers and authority systems could be examined as a possible explanation for bursts of creative literary production in societies and the form of association made possible by the complementary activities of reading and writing is examined from the perspective of each [10]. Therefore, I decide to focus on the private memory in Republican Rome to explore the Roman elite's self-understanding and how they understood themselves and their society, using DRN of Lucretius as example to look into, for its authority, representativeness, richness, and the profound and multiple explanations of the poem allow us to apply different approaches to obtain insight from the work. What's more, since the written words and narratives of history must have concealed the values and ethics in the author's time, I would pay special attention to the moral perspective (ethnics) of history presenting in the texts of DRN and explore the moral standard of Roman elite, an aspect that usually be neglected by most of the researchers in Roman poetry. Also, I'd like to answer the question that to what extent do the records of aristocrats fit the definition of Roman history as "the deeds of the Roman people". My focus would be Book V of DRN, where Lucretius apply the philosophical theory of Epicurus to the development of human civilization and history and dedicated his lines mainly on the narrations of the human history and civilization.

Many scholars have presented distinguished illustrations on the memory of Rome in Rome, both popularly and privately. Jenkyns have discussed the general situation of memory in Rome and proposed a "sensitivity of history" presented in the city arousing by the historical monuments and sculptures, and Romans have a specific cult and passion for the past, attaching great importance to the heritages, both physically and mentally, to sustain a sense of glory, patriotism and honour [11]. Wiseman further explores the popular memory and the specific function of monuments to carry Roman memory and glory in the city, providing a way to educate the Roman people about their own past. He also points out the way of investigating the cultural memory of a citizen body that was largely unlettered through literary sources indirectly [12], while Morstein-Marx points out that civic knowledge and popular memory could be measured through the oratory and coinage in Republican Rome [13]. Simultaneously, Hölkeskamp offered a detailed describing the role of aristocrats in constructing the ideological structure of the society and the collective memory, arguing that the aristocrats always claim to shape and represent history to administer and cultivate its memory [14]. These scholars provided great

examples and arguments to form a general picture of memory of Rome in Rome, mostly in a popular perspective.

For private history and poetry, Elliott have pointed out the Roman historiography was never the way we assume from the historiography describing its origins [15]. The written words were always accompanied with the personal perspectives of the author and the early works were not entirely separated from the religion. Therefore, I argue that we should move from examining the authenticity of history to investigating the memory of history in Rome, for the latter is more reliable in terms of the texts. Lucretius, as I have argued at the beginning, is a great example to explore the relation of politics, history, and memory of elites in Republican Rome. When Kennedy studies the influence and reception of Lucretius' DRN, he argues that his work is ideologically reassuring to its proponents, in other words, by writing he aims to support a memory culture, and it embodies in his lines [16]. We can assume that DRN must have represented the values, memory, and ethnics of a group of people, mostly the elites. Lehoux further illustrates how Lucretius' verse gradually moves from the discussion of physics to ethics, and the matters of reader's perception are not merely intellectual, but also primarily, moral. Lucretius aims to lead people to a moral ideality, without the fearing of fear [17], and he also explores the political epistemology in DRN, arguing that Lucretius' pursuit of Epicurean truth was against the model of late Republican political ideology, with its imperialist narrative of conquest [18]. One of the most distinguished work on Lucretius is Minyard's analysis on the social production of DRN [19], which he explicitly explained the historical background and philosophical foundation of the verse, picturing a greater image of the creation of DRN, focusing on the reforms and crisis of Rome and its influence on the Roman intellectual history.

These researches provide great illustrations and arguments for the interaction of politics, history and memory of Roman elites and allow us to see the different layers of DRN with multiple approaches. However, I'd like to point out that the previous researches pay too much attention to the oral and public memory of Rome, while I will focus on the private and written part of Roman history. What's more, for the researches about private history, they mostly focus on traditional history writings and oratory [20], while I will propose that poetry should be considered as a new approach to apply. Still, for the relation of poetry and memory, scholars mainly attach importance to the political and social parts under the surface of the poem, while I will investigate into the ethical part of memory, to see what moral standard and pattern did the Roman people possess, and how they interact mutually in the literature. Through the paper, I would explore the self-understanding of Roman elites and gradually answer the question that to what extent do the records of aristocrats fit the definition of Roman

history as "he deeds of the Roman people". For the research of memory of Rome in Rome, this paper provides new material – poetry - as means to investigate memory of Rome, and new perspective to see the ethical and moral side of Roman literature. Further, my research could reveal another side of Lucretius, with different approached applied to investigate his work DRN.

Choosing Lucretius and DRN as my research example still contains some challenges. First of all, the poem is a literary work apart from the historiography, its historical narratives are more subjective and scattered, mainly serving for the rhetorical and philosophical purposes. Also, DRN is mainly a philosophical poem whose content is an illustration of Epicurean philosophy and it's hard to trace the social and ethical part of it. Therefore, I decide to focus on memory of history presented from the lines of DRN rather than the actual history of Rome to avoid the problem of objectivity. Simultaneously, I will mainly pay attention to the specific section of Book 5, selecting some representative lines about the development of human civilization and progress. Since DRN's philosophy, politics, and history are all closely linked together, it's rather impossible to separated memory as an independent element to discuss, I'd like to further explore the memory of Rome in a philosophical context rather than dividing them strictly. Lucretius' lines, no doubt, cannot represent all the people's memory and ethics of Rome, but due to the popularity and great influence of DRN, we can still get a general picture of what the elites thought in their time and how they view Rome and its history.

Before starting the narrative, I feel like obliged to distinguish the relations and differences of a few terms. The first pair is "history" and "memory" in my paper. Memory in this paper mainly refers to the description and presentation of historical events of the Roman intellectual elites, represented by Lucretius, as "history" in private writing. While "history" refers not only to various events in the development of Rome, but also to the presentation of the development of human civilization in DRN. Readers should pay attention to distinguish them when reading, depending on the specific context. As for "private history", I adopt the definition method relative to "public history". History itself has a certain publicity, being a record written for specific groups, and it's impossible to define a completely private historical record. The private history in this paper refers to the description of Roman historical events in the literary works of the poets represented by Lucretius, which has the characteristics of individuality and elitism. Correspondingly, the unwritten historical memory of the general public is defined as public history [21]. For the above characteristics, private history can also be called semi private history.

Some scholarships have applied a variety of approaches and theories in the research of memory and

DRN, and I am going to apply multiple methods to explore the mystery of DRN. I would take semantic theory as the main approach to analyze the texts, to show my respect for the original work, and to further dive into the different layers of DRN to see whether we could dig something new from the old soil. Reception theory would be applied to further clarify the relation of history and poetry of DRN, and in a larger context, implying the interaction of politics and literature in Republican Rome.

2. HISTORY AND TRADITIONS

Virtually nothing is known about the life of Lucretius, and there is insufficient basis for a confident assertion of the dates of Lucretius's birth or death in other sources. Less specific estimates place the birth of Lucretius in the 90s BC and his death in the 50s BC, in agreement with the poem's many allusions to the tumultuous state of political affairs in Rome and its civil strife [22]. However, though Lucretius' life left few evidence for us, we could infer from his birth and death date that he might have experienced a series of social conflicts, to some extent. From 90s-50s B.C, domestically and internationally, Roman was facing a series of severe crisis. It was a time when Pompey, Crassus and Caesar first developed their domination and exerted immense influence on the society, and the heritages of former consuls were being exploited and re-built through a series of reforms. After the reformation and civil war started by Sulla, the conflicts between senates, tribunes, and the citizens went white-hot and the society was going through a reformation. The history of Roman literature and the intellectual crisis of the Late Republic explain the form and content of the *De Rerum Natura*, and the relationship between its form and content: why this content was chosen and then put in, of all things, this form [23]. Within this frame, the poem developed its own style as a literature of history.

Though we may could not decide how much he was affected by those events, he might have been surrounded by what called "sensitivity of history" in the society, that honours and glories were called up again and again to stress the importance of Roman domination and power. From his contemporary writers' works [24], we could sense that how powerful the cult of ancestors and the historical allusions functioned in the social events, therefore, since Lucretius himself, is a lettered man that shared similar interest with the other Roman elites, he might have provided some thoughts and hints about the history in his work, implicitly and inexplicitly.

For the sake of a more accurate and objective observation into the ideology and memory of Lucretius' poem, I have to stress the distinctives between Roman values and non-Roman-centered values. The Roman values were absolutely those recorded and promoted by

the Roman writers, including Lucretius, whose works occupy the main content of our literary sources of Latin literature, while the local norms, not Roman-centered, were the voice of tribes and kingdoms apart from Rome could not be heard directly, but could only inferred from the Roman texts in a Roman perspective [25]. Therefore, I must clarify that the research material is based on a highly Roman aspect and its outcome would undoubtedly embodies its Roman traits other than a general, universal value of all the Latin people. It might be boring and overlapped to explain it time and again, but I feel it necessary to stress the importance of mainstream voices and its opposite, silent "others" in our historical research.

So how to tackle the problem of Lucretius' relation of Greek tradition and Roman elements, how to explain that Lucretius was a "Roman" writer than a Greek descendant? When considering DRN as a historical literature, we could feel his inventions of new narratives of history and forms of literature. Here is an example I quote from Hardie's analysis on the influence of Lucretius' temporal writing and histories of large-scale process and change on Virgil [26]. One is that Lucretius argued that the individual, didactically addressed, should be free from the fear of dark and be educated into enlightenment [27]. The other is his portrait of Epicurus as a model and the climax of transforming the history of civilization narrated in the later part of Book 5, which creates a type of analogy between the history of the individual and the history of the race – the Romans, and this kind of literary narrative repeatedly fashioned in the later works, for example, Virgil' *Eclogues*. This implies that a group of Latin writers share, to some extent, a literary pattern of historical writings and traditions invented. Of "invented traditions" I mean, with a set of practices which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition [28], it automatically implies continuity with the past and when possible, establish continuity with a suitable historic past. Lucretius on the one hand inherited the Greek philosophy and to some extent, its social ideology, on the other hand, he invented a new style of historical writing focusing on the individual's process of discovering and enlightenment associated with the fate of the race. They, as Eric Hobsbawm explained, are response to novel situations which take the form of reference to the old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition. Inventing traditions is essentially a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, using history as a legitimator of action and cement of group cohesion, in other words, forming a sense of collective memory. He replaced the old source of knowing and the old standard of interpretation with adding a literary dimension to the Epicurean philosophy, and this literary pattern was expanded to the later writers and gradually, replace the old poetry.

3. THE POETRY AND SEMANTIC ANALYSIS

Few scholars have applied, or continuously applied the semantic theories into the ethics and historical part of DRN. Lehoux [29] have presented great semantic analysis on the philosophical part of DRN, clarifying the images of seen and unseen with its relation of lost and enlightenment of human. Minyard [30] presented absolutely impressive work on the social production of DRN and its detailed analysis with semantic methods, but he failed to point out its ethical perspective hidden in the verse. Therefore, this section really deals with semantics to understand the meaning and the hidden script of DRN, and to better apply the method on my research, I choose to use lexical semantics, a linguistic theory that mostly investigates word meaning of the texts [31]. I would closely dive into the meaning of a word reflected by its context, and the way it constituted by its contextual relations. The real goal is to uncover the systematical meaning under the surface of the texts, revealing another side of Lucretius and DRN.

As I have explained before, Book5 of DRN is mainly a discussion on the development of human civilization and the forming of universe. We could conclude that this is the chapter that best combines the law of nature and the law of human's world. The fifth book is described by Ramsay [32] as the most finished and impressive, while Stahl [33] argues that its "puerile conceptions" is proof that Lucretius should be judged as a poet, not as a scientist. This book introduces the forming of world chronologically, with a climax and highlight in the beginning of human civilization. More explicitly and specifically, the last part "the beginning of civilization", a direct composition on the origins of civilization, is the most representative and fruitful materials to look into for the memory of Rome in Rome.

3.1. Beginning of Civilization

This is the most specific and detailed narrative of the human civilization and its development in the whole poem, and every word and phrase carry profound meaning. I would divide the passage into different sections and conduct lexical semantic analysis separately:

And more and more each day... /For beauty then/imported much, and strength/Had its own rights supreme [34].

The beginning of the section is a description of the "good old days" of history, when people were determined by beauty, strength and sense. It, to some extent, reflects Lucretius' ideal social organization. This kind of imagination of the past is a very interesting psychological phenomenon, that people have a tendency to beatify and glorify the past, for various purposes. The imagination

and beatification of the past is closely linked to the cult of ancestors and the formation of a collective memory, which makes up the cement of the group cohesion. The purposes and contents of beatifying varies, but as I concluded, they share some similarities. First, the ancient past in the imagination conducts the best political and social systems. As we can see in the text, Lucretius pointed out that in the good old days, flocks and fields were distributed equally to the people by the kings, who found the first cities and settlements of the civilization. In Lucretius' work, he continued this kind of beatification, to better illustrate his denouncement of the moral decay and his ethical persuasion on reconstructing a clear and wise society without fear and lust. The second trait is that in the ancient times, the morality was at a perfect peak and functioned well among our ancestors. Like Lucretius wrote, "After the beauty, strength, and sense of each-/For beauty then imported much, and strength/Had its own rights supreme.", that in their time, people possess the best ethics and follow the noblest, wisest moral systems: people were determined by beauty, strength, and senses. This type of ideality echoes from the ancient to modern city, from Lucretius' praise of wisdom to Martin Luther Kings' call for equality and stress on ability. We could get a hint of Lucretius' and, even some Roman elites' ideal ethics from their perspective: the importance of beauty and strength other than the greed and lust as follows:

Thereafter, wealth/Discovered was, and gold was brought to light,.../For men, however beautiful in form

Or valorous, will follow in the main/The rich man's party

Lucretius points out that it was wealth and gold not only harm the health of morality, but also changes the way the society functions. Our sight, however should not be limited in the denouncements, but should be expanded to the reality. The occurrence of wealth may, to some extent, implies the transition from the primitive society to the class society, when people started to be divided by wealth rather than ability and wisdom as Lucretius wrote in the previous chapter. The new social system results in the inequality of distribution, and even worse, the social conflicts. I argue that the criticism towards wealth should be considered with the crisis of Republic together. Lucretius sarcastically referred it to the Roman elites and leaders who played the game of money in the political system, causing severe corruption and social crisis. It is not hard to find that in Lucretius' time, the conflicts between tribunes and *populares* were intense and white-hot, and since the reforms of the Gracchi set out the fire on land distribution, the battles have never stopped with a series politicians, reformers, and speculators stirring the water of Roman politics. Wealth has always been the central and most significant issue and interest for the people and the country. These lines reveal a cruel but true reality for us, that politics were dominated by the rich

people, and the ordinary and talented people, were rejected from this corrupted game of wealth and fortune.

*Yet were man to steer/His life by sounder reasoning,
he'd own/.../Is there a lack of little in the world*

The poem shifts from a negative description of politics to a moral persuasion, or in other words, a commentary on history. It is not hard to infer from the texts Lucretius' ideal persona: a man with sound reasoning, rich and content mind, who is self-sufficient and lacks nothing. His illustration of a perfect man embodies distinctive Epicurean traits, advocating that people were best able to pursue philosophy by living a self-sufficient life and behave ethically amoral behaviour will burden them with guilt and prevent them from attaining *ataraxia* (peace and freedom from fear). Combining the denouncement before, we could infer that Lucretius might seem to believe that the morality and ethics of a person is the ultimate driver of the historical process. In his lines, pride and lust lead to conflicts and a content mind with sound reasoning would be the remedy of a corrupted, unsatisfied society. It, for one thing, shows the literary tradition that connects the individual development with the human race again, for the other, reveals the Roman memory and opinions of the moral decay and conflicts of the city.

*But men wished glory for themselves and power/
.../So better far in quiet to obey,/Than to desire chief
mastery of affairs/And ownership of empires*

This picture is an alert to those people who couldn't conceal their lust and greed for wealth and power, warning them it would ultimately cause fall and failure. Again, we could sense Lucretius' pattern of combining historical event with individual actions together, and more specifically, actions that were driven by lust and envy. We could relate this paragraph to the crisis of Republic Rome, when different parties and senates with different interests struggled for their own benefits and their conflicts lead to the death of politicians like the Gracchi brothers, and the wars both domestically and internationally. This has proved the influence those social events exerted on Lucretius, and himself, responded to them in his own way.

*Be it so;/And let the weary sweat their life-blood
out/All to no end, battling in hate along .../And all they
seek is known from what they've heard/And less from
what they've thought*

In this paragraph, Lucretius explicitly expressed his ideas on human behaviour, that people should acquire wisdom from thinking rather than hearing from others, for the latter seems to be one of the main factors contributing to "the narrow path of man's ambition". One aspect that deserves our attention is Lucretius's use of sensory faculties. In the proem, he wrote "who by cunning craft, out of such mighty waves, out of such

mighty darkness, moored life in havens so serene, in light so clear.", and in the later part his comparison of "heard" and "thought", these evidences all point to Lucretius' opinion that the problem of seen and unseen is fundamentally a moral problem, characterized as blindness, living in a shadow and not seeing what nature demands. Moreover, to see is to think and discover the truth, being free from fear and ethically enlightened, and to be blind and relying on hearing is to be immoral or fearful. This immoral statue accelerates to climax of chaos in the next few lines:

*Nor is this folly/Greater to-day, nor greater soon to
be,...*

*Thus things/Down to the vilest lees of brawling
mobs/Succumbed, whilst each man sought unto
himself/Dominion and supremacy*

This is the peak of disaster in memory, and it seems that since human went out from the dark ages and be enlightened, history just turned into another chaotic period. This paragraph is full of terrified terms and phrases describing the crisis: slain, dust, bloody, greedy, mobs..., picturing a disturbing image of the world. Here, the people were described as mobs trampling beneath the rabble heal, expressing their radicalness and mania towards the kings. Related to his contemporary colleagues' comments on mobs: "rash and treacherous" [35], Lucretius seems to continue such kind of stereotype as the other Roman elites. Further, we could sense his idea of history that history should be led by individual with either great talents or high social position rather than sinking in the crowd of mediocracy, in other words, the mass. This kind of historical view could be astonishingly found in the later work of Locke [36], where he argues that the society should be free from the public opinion as a mediocratic unity, and criticized the mass's way of taking opinions from newspapers and media. The critics towards mass and the praise on thinking and discovering individuality seems to be passed on from generations to generations. This paragraph, at the same time, left us question that to what extent did the records of aristocrats fit the definition of "deeds of people".

*So next/Some wiser heads instructed men to
found/The magisterial office, and did frame .../Tis
thence/That fear of punishments defiles each prize*

Of wicked days

The next chapter provides a solution of the chaotic situation: the application of law. Lucretius argues that law emerges from the fear of violence and disorder of people. Sam as the founding and construction of magisterial office, that forces the free will of people yield to strict codes and laws. He encourages the respect of law, and moreover, we should adopt the law of nature to the law of society. The Republic is, and should be a perfect form to apply the law, which are positively

charged and to promote the order. Together with the last part of proem, where he raises the tone of verse to the height to the law of nature, we could sense Lucretius' own way of combining causality of the epistemology and the function of society with a medium of law – naturally and socially. The followers of Epicurus believes that physics always accords to structure over history, and their incorporation into cosmology of the precedence of causal structure of law [37]. It is a history of formation, deformation, and reformation of code, and the construction of law should be the remedy for annoying and chaotic stages, and he further explains its power in the next lines:

for force and fraud ensnare/Each man around, and in the main recoil.../(As stories tell) and published at last/Old secrets and the sins

Lucretius' attitudes towards laws and gods deserves our attention. To some extent, DRN is made to emerge from the ruin of civil order as a non-civic remedy for the errors and evil inherent in that order as the seeds of its own destruction, in which law serve as a useful and powerful approach to revise the sins of the society. Detailed references of law didn't appear in the lines, but what Lucretius attempt to do is to apply the law of nature to the human society, including many philosophical discussions and moral restraints provided as revisions of the corrupted world. The subtle connection of natural and human law lies in the historical narrative, memory of conflicts, and philosophical arguments, embodying as a type of moral persuasion in the verse. DRN presents the characteristics of secularization and humanization, with philosophy and morality at the same time. Instead of religion and the cult for gods, Lucretius regards law and morality as the remedy for sins and evils, both of which follows the guidance of natural law.

Now we could conclude from the previous arguments for the deeper meanings under Lucretius' narratives of human civilization and his memory focusing on some repeatedly-showing terms.

(1) Divine and Gods

In Lucretius' perspectives, gods are not theological, but more than a historical sense to describe the origins of Rome, for Lucretius' Epicurean philosophy makes its position against the cult of divine, and denounces them as obstacle for the freedom of human nature. This reflects some clues on the ideology and memory in Republican Rome, where religion and gods gradually change their position from the dominants of world to the historical background and memory basis of the group cohesion. The failure of gods encourages the rise of laws and human themselves as savior of the delusion.

(2) Lust and Greed

They are considered as the cause of human failure and moral decay according to Lucretius' ethics. They destroy

the mind, then the action, the society, and ultimately the history, when history was affected by the fortune and wealth and defined as "the rich man's party".

(3) Wealth and fortune:

The repeated denouncing of wealth and fortune in the poem reflects the social reality of the Roman Republic, which was plagued by civil wars as people struggled for wealth. Wealth and fortunes carry original sins for their appearance changes the peaceful society in the "good ole times", contributing to the moral decay and conflicts in the later generations.

(4) Glory and power

The origins of the "rich people" deeds: attempting to attain glory and power, to sustain their place and domination. Power is the ultimate goal for people to quarrel, for it brings more wealth. Lucretius adds irony and warning by reminding that the endless pursuit of wealth will eventually lead to failure, because once people reach the top, they are more likely to be blown down by the wind of envy. This is probably the most realistic parts of the poem.

(5) Sins and law:

The stress on glory and power embodies denouncements towards the rich men's deeds, that their actions were full of sins and dirty secrets, leading to the inevitable failure. Lucretius presents law as the remedy to reconstruct and revise the social order and peaceful life, for it grounds the sins and secrets of people and as the poem writes, "ensnare each man around".

To conclude, for the Romans, history is determined by individual, whether in Lucretius' opinions, Epicurus, or for the whole Roman group whose memory of past is filled with great deeds of their ancestors [38]. Moreover, we could sense a circulation consisting the procedure of greed-pursuit of glory-conflicts-corruption-failure-greed in the narrative of Lucretius. This responds to the Greco-Roman view of history as "circular and repetitive" as a consequence of their anti-temporal metaphysics [39] as the scholar points out. The elites who don't play the game of the Republic were blamed for shifting from the way of democracy and based history on autonomy. They were responsible for the moral decay of the city.

4. ETHICS AND MORALITY

Here I would like to answer these basic questions: What is the relation of memory and ethics in DRN? What are Lucretius' attitudes and moral standard concerning the history? Further, what are the Romans' self-understanding and memory of the city's history? Although DRN is technically not a formal historical writing in official definition, its strong moral tendency could still inspire us to explore the culture and moral standard of Roman people. On the one hand, for Romans,

including Lucretius, the history of Rome is undoubtedly glorious and radiant, with the guardian of goddess and great traditions, and the worship of ancestors and traditions formed the collective memory of the Romans, and was further reflected in private writing. On the other hand, Lucretius believed that moral corruption was an important factor and motive force contributing to the breakdown of social order, and he spent long verse to describe the “good old times”, condemning unrestrained greed and the desire for power, which is the original sins for human being. Memory and ethics are complementary and inseparable in the verse.

At the same time, we could conclude that the moral persuasion serves at the same time a reflection on the Roman crisis, the social events that have influence on every Roman citizen. Faced with these struggles, they would have opinions and discussions towards them but unfortunately, no literary materials have survived during time. The only thing we are certain is that they also share the passion and cult for history and traditions, but we could infer from the reforms conducted in the Republic together with the literary records to imply a more subtle image of the populares. The conflicts over land reform and a series grain law have been the center of the crisis since the project of the Gracchi, which is closely related to people’s livelihood. As the economic foundation always affects the superstructure of the society, the political conflicts and struggles were just are the externalized form of economy interests in Republic. The elites’ struggles on distribution on land and grain would, I suppose, be simplified as greed and lust for wealth by the people, as some distinctive figures of the former continuously impressing the audience with great oratory speeches alerting the danger of pride, arrogance, and greed of the others. I argue that the tiredness of conflicts and dissatisfaction towards the elite’s greed would be the basis of public opinion in the Republic, an aspect that occupies important position in DRN. Therefore, the narratives of DRN and the ethics in it would to some extent, reflects the thoughts of Roman people, that the private history narrative shares the same memory with the publics.

Further, to answer the question that to what extent do the records of aristocrats fit the definition of Roman history as “the deeds of the Roman people”, we need to apply new method to investigate the texts. According to Harold Marcuse [40], reception history is “the history of the meanings that have been imputed to historical events”. It traces the different ways in which participants, observers, historians and other retrospective interpreters have attempted to make sense of events both as they unfolded and over time since then, to make those events meaningful for the present in which they lived and live. Here Lucretius himself both serves as a participant and observer, and so do the Roman people of his contemporary times. His narrative of the historical events implies the memory of Rome as from an elite’s

perspective and with his praise of the ancient good morality and his rebuke and lament for the subsequent disputes and moral decline, reflecting his attitudes towards history, that is, it runs in a downward direction, and the current chaos in the Republic is the low point in a sense. In other words, the process by which history is used may be better understood as a continuous process between the participants and receptionists, of which the production of historical claim regulated mutually and reconstructed itself all the time. The audiences, whether the Lucretius and his colleagues or the ordinary citizens, didn’t passively receive historical claims, nor did they simply act as constraints on history-claim making, but rather co-produce the historical narratives, in which their ethical claims and political commentaries, together with philosophical thoughts, were input and combined as a whole. They keep elaborating what they have experienced, and their own accounts may echo, challenge, or revise as an initial historical claim.

On the other hand, the Romans distinguish themselves from other nations by their morality, which is emphasized by the historians when interpreting Roman history [41]. The formation of the concept of moral history is first of all the introspection and response of the Romans in the face of the impact of Greek culture, and at the same time, it shows the politically dominant Rome. As historian points out, the concentrations on individuals and on the characters of notable figures encourages moralistic interpretations of history, and such interpretations were a prominent feature of ancient historiography [42]. The moral interpretation of history is one of the main features of Roman historiography, and it reflects itself in the lines of DRN. The relation between philosophy and politics, and the interaction of memory and history indicates the ethical tendency to construct a better world for the Republic, and the intension to teach people with moral principles through historical writings among the lettered class. DRN, as a distinctive work in the given historical period, would absolutely embody particular trait and meanings.

5. CONCLUSION

Though poetry was generally recognized as subjective and ambiguous apart from the traditional writing of Roman history, we could, however, turn our attention from examining the authenticity of history to people's acceptance and views of history, which is, memory. Lucretius' narration of the origin and development of Rome in DRN could not only show the attitude of the Roman intellectual elite represented by him towards history, but also provide new materials for us to study the private memory of Rome. Moreover, my research also shed lights on the study of Lucretius' own moral and historical attitudes. Little do we know about Lucretius’s life, and the only thing remains is his long philosophical poem DRN. Compared with the long

philosophical discussion, his description of the origin of human civilization in Book 5 could most directly express Lucretius' personal moral concept and attitudes towards history. Also, my research fills the gap of previous researches which mainly focus on the philosophical and political parts of the poem by investigating into the ethical aspect of memory, to see what moral standard and ethics did the Roman elite and people possess, and how they express themselves in the literature. Through the paper, I gradually reveal the self-understanding of Roman people and their memory, and further discuss the question that to what extent do the records of aristocrats fit the definition of Roman history as "the deeds of Roman people" as they claim themselves.

The arguments were generated through the use of lexical semantics to investigate the word meaning of the texts and understand the meaning and hidden script of DRN, combining with reception history to trace the different ways in which Roman elites and populares interacted and viewed history as a form of memory at their time. With the analysis of selected terms, we could frame a rough picture of Lucretius' view of history, that he seems to consider human civilization as a history falling down, with a series of crisis and conflicts derived from the greed and lust of human nature, and his imagination and beatification of the remote past reflects his ideal society compared with the present chaos. For him, the social affairs could be, and should be considered and dealt with natural law, more specific, Epicurean philosophy that emphasizes peace and order. Among the poem, Lucretius' attitudes towards divine and law deserves our attention. While Lucretius still inherits the tradition of praising divine of the Greek literature, and continues to depict Epicurus as a "god", the function of gods and law shows differences. Law and order could not only serve as remedy of the falling society but could also be viewed as the replacement of the mighty god that used to dominate the social affairs of the city. The development of Book 5 could hint a greater picture of social development, that the complex transition of human civilization from the primitive society to the building of Republic, that DRN is a material that preserves the memory of Lucretius towards history and expresses his own attitudes towards historical events.

Considering Lucretius' social position as a lettered man and an educated elite, it's questionable that to what extent did his records of history or, his memory represent the deeds of people. Though these elites always tend to separate themselves with the masses in their oratory or literary narratives [43] and so does Lucretius, when he described the people as mobs trampling beneath the rabble heel, expressing their radicalness and mania towards the kings in the middle of his narratives, we could still find consistency and similarities in the ideas of Roman elites and people, and this clue is their collective memory. History is not only traditional, but ethical, political, and educational. Lucretius' denouncements on

greed, lust, wealth, pride and the violation of law might have matched the people's attitudes towards the consuls and senates whose political game had resulted in unsatisfied consequences. Lucretius' moral standard gives credit to modesty, peace, and wisdom is not only a product of Epicurean philosophy, but also a reflection on the real crisis of the Republic.

There is value in this research, but nonetheless recognized limitations, with too limited methods to apply, mainly semantic analysis and reception history. Moreover, this research has primarily focused on issues related to the historical parts of Book 5, lacking of analysis on the philosophical parts. Issues related to the influence of Epicurean philosophy on Lucretius' memory was outside the scope of this present research. As I argued before, the Epicurean philosophy dominates the ideology of DRN, but I lack of enough analysis on the social production of it, and its connections with literature and politics of the Roman Republic. Therefore, it is important to future work to build on these findings, which would be meaningful for further investigations in the memory of Rome in a philosophical aspect.

One aspect that could be done in the future research is the combination of various research methods. Specifically, intertextual analysis of different poetries in Republic Rome to compare the narratives of history and the memory and see whether they could make any similarities or differences. Moreover, all the literary works could be included such as Cicero's oratory and Lucilius' poems to attain a fuller understanding of Roman literature and history. It's observed that, when history events meet with literary records, memory begins. The historical literature as a common phenomenon also deserves our attention, and more research could be done to investigate how literature interacts with history in different cultures and timelines, and how their combination result in a type of collective memory. Future research is needed to shed light on the relation of ethics and philosophy presented in DRN, for the author lacks of adequate philosophical analysis of the texts and the transition of Epicurean tenants to Roman values and ethics deserves more attention. Therefore, one suggestion moving forward with research is to investigate how Lucretius innovated his style of Epicurean philosophy, which contributes to his literary traditions. Last but not least, I am anticipating further research on the transition from the cult of divinity to the obedience of law in Roman Republic, which could clarify the gaps and clues about history and philosophy. All in all, it has proved that memory begins when different groups and minds crashes and mixes, the muses first sing the prelude of its glorious history, and when the elites and *populares* battles, for power and interests since the very old times, and that's the time when Rome remembers.

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