

Leonardo and Lucretius (and De Rerum Natura in Italy)

Post by “Kalosyni” of July 22, 2023 at 5:36 PM

This looks to be a good article (PDF, by Marco Baretta, University of Bologna, 2009) about Leonardo da Vinci and includes history and reception of De Rerum Natura in Italy.

Excerpt:

Quote

Aware of the difficulties that may be encountered in any research on sources, in this examination of the ties between Leonardo and Lucretius I have adopted an approach that is intended to circumvent at least some of the obstacles mentioned above. While I have sought to identify the significant correspondences between passages written by the two, it seemed to me necessary first and foremost to demonstrate that Lucretius was such a well-known author in the circles frequented by Leonardo in Florence and Pavia that it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for the artist to have remained unaware of the discussions of certain themes that had been sparked by the diffusion of the poem. Therefore, the historical and intellectual context in which Leonardo moved will form the basis here for an interpretation of the text.

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Here is a bit more about De Rerum Natura in Italy:

Quote

Lucretius in Florence

The period in which Leonardo conducted his work as an artist and scientist coincided with the rediscovery of Lucretius and various aspects of the natural philosophy of Epicureanism. Although the text of *De rerum natura* had been circulating for some time in manuscript form, the *editio princeps* was only printed in 1473 in Brescia and, judging from the great rarity of the edition, in very few copies.³ Other editions followed in Verona (1486) and Venice (1495), culminating in 1500 with the first of two by the Venetian printer Aldus Manutius, this one edited by Geronimo Avancio. The first commented edition, by Giovan Battista Pio, was published in Bologna in 1511.⁴ It was followed one year later by an edition printed in Florence by Filippo Giunta that – thanks primarily to the scrupulous work of Michele Marullo – offered readers a text purged of numerous errors. The editor, Pier Candido, dedicated his work to Tommaso Soderini, a Florentine statesman who knew Machiavelli well⁵ and was a great admirer of Leonardo. Eight years earlier, in 1504, the Florentine mathematician Raffaele Francus had dedicated *In Lucretium paraphrasis cum appendicem de animi immortalitate*⁶ to Soderini (Fig. 1). This treatise was published in Bologna by Giovanni Antonio Benedetti, the father of Girolamo Benedetti, who was the printer responsible for the 1511 edition of *De rerum natura* by Giovan Battista Pio, as well as numerous other scientific texts.

In the annals of Italian typography, the Lucretian revival concluded in 1515

with the second edition of *De rerum natura* printed by Aldus Manutius, this one edited by Andrea Navagero. Two years before the death of Leonardo, during a synod held in Florence in 1517 after the Fifth Lateran Council, the Church formally banned the study of Lucretius in schools.⁷ Although this measure was less restrictive than those applying to works considered to be heretical, *De rerum natura* would not be published again in Italy until 1647, in an edition prepared by Giovanni Nardi, physician to Ferdinando II de Medici.

No attempts to translate the text of Lucretius are known of before 1530,...

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