

The Rhetoric of Explanation in Lucretius' De Rerum Natura

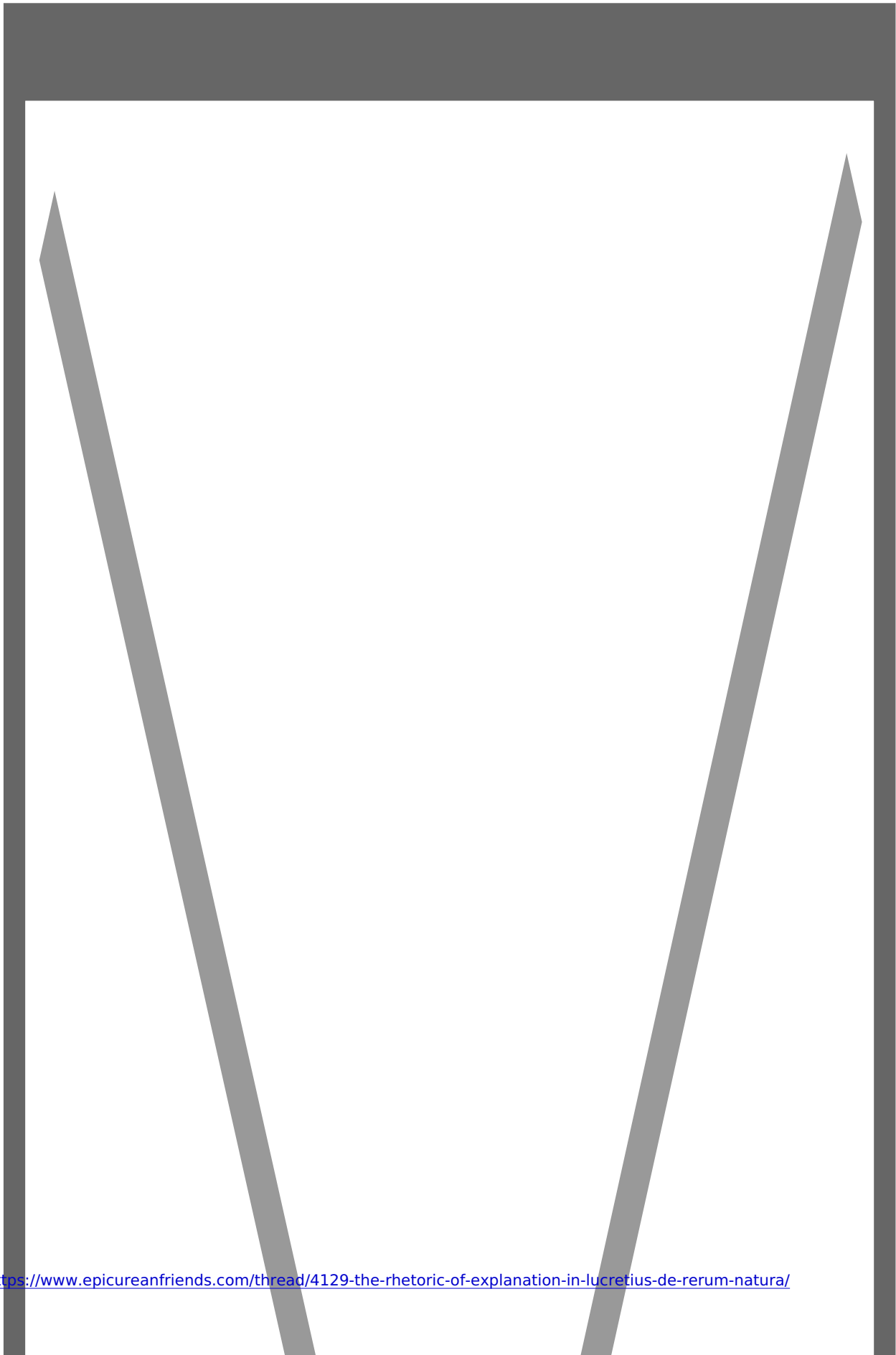
Post by “Kalosyni” of November 5, 2024 at 8:28 AM

This presents Lucretius' writing as intensifying rhetorical elements already present in the work of Epicurus:

Quote

Alleged incompatibility of Epicurus' philosophy with rhetoric has led modern scholars to isolate rhetorical procedures in Lucretius' De rerum natura and regard them as non-Epicurean, accessory features. This study of Lucretius' rhetorical procedures is based on a wider understanding of the term rhetoric, not limited to the genre of oratory. In a fresh discussion of the questions of provenance and the role of the most important formal procedures of exposition in De rerum natura the author argues that instead of injecting rhetorical strategies from non-Epicurean sources, Lucretius in fact intensified rhetorical elements already present in the work of Epicurus. These elements are used for the purpose of explanation, and function as cognitive and mnemonic aids for the reader.

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[The Rhetoric of Explanation in Lucretius' <i>De rerum natura</i>](#)

"The Rhetoric of Explanation in Lucretius' <i>De rerum natura</i>" published on 25 Jun 2008 by Brill.
brill.com

Post by "Pacatus" of November 21, 2024 at 1:39 PM

This site has a brief review of the above book:
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/...018401E33F97963>

The book itself is well beyond my budget. 😞

Reading the free sample on Amazon of the book mentioned by [Joshua](#) at the recent Zoom meeting, I came on this quote:

"While Epicurus scorned poetry as frivolous, Lucretius believed Epicurean philosophy needed poetry's explanatory and persuasive power to be understood and embraced, and he justifies his choice to write in verse with a robust defense of natural philosophical poetry."

- Jesse Hock, *The Erotics of Materialism: Lucretius and Early Modern Poetics*.

I seem to recall some discussion on here (maybe re Philodemus' treatise on poetry) about whether Epicurus' was a general dismissal of poetry *per se*, or whether he was reacting to the superstitious nature of such Greek poetry of his time, as in Homer.

Post by "Joshua" of November 21, 2024 at 1:54 PM

I think you're right about Philodemus' relevance to the question, [Pacatus](#) , but I'll have to look for it after work!

Post by "Pacatus" of November 21, 2024 at 3:23 PM

I think this might have been the thread: [Introduction---Joshua's Notes on "The Good Poem According to Philodemus", by Michael McOsker](#)

Post by “Pacatus” of November 21, 2024 at 3:51 PM

I also found this review of another overly-expensive book: <https://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/1997/1997.02.12/>



Post by “Pacatus” of November 21, 2024 at 4:13 PM

Disclosure: I've never been a big fan of didactic poetry (no real justification: *de gustibus non est disputandum*). But I am getting some renewed interest here in the role that lyric verse might play in that context. Partly, I have [Kalosyni](#) to thank for that: her introduction of Omar Khayyam into Epicurean consideration a while back led me to 1) buy new copies of the Rubaiyat (kindle and paperback) to keep by my side, and 2) to explore, just a bit, Fitzgerald's steadfast belief that Khayyam – far from being a Sufi – was really an Epicurean (at least in spirit).

So now I may be finding new ways to look at Lucretius ...