

AFTER LIFE IN ROMAN PAGANISM

YALE UNIVERSITY
MRS. HEPSELY SILLIMAN
MEMORIAL LECTURES

AFTER LIFE IN ROMAN PAGANISM

LECTURES DELIVERED AT YALE UNIVERSITY
ON THE SILLIMAN FOUNDATION

BY
FRANZ CUMONT



GORGIAS PRESS
2002

First Gorgias Press Edition, 2002.

The special contents of this edition are copyright © 2002 by
Gorgias Press LLC.

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions.
Published in the United States of America by Gorgias Press LLC, New Jersey. This
edition is a facsimile reprint of the
original edition published by Yale University Press, 1922.

ISBN 1-931956-37-5



GORGias PRESS

46 Orris Ave., Piscataway, NJ 08854 USA

www.gorgiaspress.com

Printed and bound simultaneously in the United States of America and
Great Britain.

TO MY FRIEND
GEORGE LINCOLN HENDRICKSON
1888-1922

THE SILLIMAN FOUNDATION

In the year 1883 a legacy of eighty thousand dollars was left to the President and Fellows of Yale College in the city of New Haven, to be held in trust, as a gift from her children, in memory of their beloved and honored mother, Mrs. Hepsa Ely Silliman.

On this foundation Yale College was requested and directed to establish an annual course of lectures designed to illustrate the presence and providence, the wisdom and goodness of God, as manifested in the natural and moral world. These were to be designated as the Mrs. Hepsa Ely Silliman Memorial Lectures. It was the belief of the testator that any orderly presentation of the facts of nature or history contributed to the end of this foundation more effectively than any attempt to emphasize the elements of doctrine or of creed; and he therefore provided that lectures on dogmatic or polemical theology should be excluded from the scope of this foundation, and that the subjects should be selected, rather, from the domains of natural science and history, giving special prominence to astronomy, chemistry, geology, and anatomy.

It was further directed that each annual course should be made the basis of a volume to form part of a series constituting a memorial to Mrs. Silliman. The memorial fund came into the possession of the Corporation of Yale University in the year 1901; and the present volume constitutes the sixteenth of the series of memorial lectures.

PREFACE

AT the invitation of the President of Yale University and of Professor Russell H. Chittenden, chairman of the committee in charge of the Silliman Foundation, the lectures which are here presented to a wider public were delivered in New Haven during the month of March of the year 1921. It was the wish of the committee that I should speak upon some subject from the history of religion. I chose therefore as my theme a matter which had occupied my attention for many years, viz., the ideas current in Roman paganism concerning the lot of the soul after death. The argument has been treated more than once by distinguished scholars and notably—to mention only an English book—by Mrs. Arthur Strong in her recent work “Apotheosis and After Life,” a study characterised by penetrating interpretation, especially of archaeological monuments. But we do not yet possess for the Roman imperial epoch a counterpart to Rohde’s classical volume, “Psyche,” for the earlier Greek period, that is, a work in which the whole evolution of Roman belief and speculation regarding a future life is set forth. These lectures cannot claim to fill this gap. They may however be looked upon as a sketch of the desired investigation, in which, though without the detailed citation of supporting evidence, an attempt at least has been made to trace the broad outlines of the subject in all its magnitude.

The lectures are printed in the form in which they were delivered. The necessity of making each one intelligible to an audience which was not always the same, has made inevitable some repetitions. Cross references have been added, where the same topics are treated in different

connections. However, in a book intended primarily for the general reader, the scholarly apparatus has been reduced to a minimum and as a rule indicates only the source of passages quoted in the text.

My acknowledgment is due to Miss Helen Douglas Irvine, who with skill and intelligent understanding of the subject translated into English the French text of these lectures. I wish also to express my gratitude to my friends, Professor George Lincoln Hendrickson, who took upon himself the tedious task of reading the manuscript and the proofs of this book and to whom I am indebted for many valuable suggestions both in matter and in form, and Professor Grant Showerman, who obligingly consented to revise the last chapters before they were printed.

Rome, September, 1922.

CONTENTS

PREFACE. P. xi.

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION. General view of the subject, 1—The ancient beliefs: after life in the tomb, 3—in the nether world, 4—Philosophical criticism, 5—Academic and Peripatetic schools, 6—Epicureans, 7—Stoics, 12—Scepticism at the end of the Republic, 16—Earthly immortality, 19—Rebirth of Pythagorism, 20—Its teaching, 24—Posidonius, 27—Cicero, 31—Diffusion of the mysteries, 33—Hermetic writings and Chaldean oracles, 38—Plutarch, 39—The second and third centuries, 39—Neo-Platonism, 40—Conclusion, 43.

I. AFTER LIFE IN THE TOMB. Survival of primitive beliefs, 44—After life of the body, 45—The tomb “eternal house,” 48—Food for the dead, 50—Sacrifices, 51—Funeral meals, 52—Gardens, 56—Connection of the dead with the living, 57—The aerial souls, 59—Beneficent, 60—or Malevolent, 63—Souls of the unburied, 64—Become ghosts, 67.

II. THE NETHER WORLD. Belief in the nether world, 70—After life prolongation of earthly life, 72—Greek doctrines introduced into Italy, 73—Philosophical criticism, 76—Hades transported to this life, 78—Distinction of “soul” and shade, 79—Hades is the lower hemisphere, 79—Hades in the air, 81—Scepticism, 83—Persistence of old tradition in literature and art, 84—Ancient beliefs maintained in the people, 86—Neo-Platonists, 87—Persian dualism, 89.

III. CELESTIAL IMMORTALITY. Widespread beliefs that souls rise to the stars, 91—Unknown in ancient Greece, 94—Pythagorism, 95—Lunar immortality, 96—Solar immortality, 100—Combination of both, 102—Stellar immortality, 103—Combined with the other doctrines: three stages, 106—Passage through the planetary spheres, 107—Souls rise above the stars, 108.

IV. THE WINNING OF IMMORTALITY. Ancient conception of immortality, 110—Eminent men gods on earth, 111—Immortality of the few, 114—Mysteries claim to procure "deification," 116—Lustrations, 118—Unctions, 119—Ritual banquets, 120—The *gnosis*, 121—Identification with a particular god, 122—Illumination by the astral divinities, 123—Philosophy also leads to union with God, 124.

V. UNTIMELY DEATH. Children not admitted to the Elysian Fields, 128—Those who die violent deaths, 129—Influence of astrology, 131—Pythagorism, 132—Magic, 134—Philosophical reaction, 136—Children initiated, 138—Their souls rise to heaven, 139—Different categories of *biothanati*, 141—Soldiers slain in battle, 142—Suicides, 143—Executed criminals, 145—Persistence of ancient beliefs, 146.

VI. THE JOURNEY TO THE BEYOND. Journey to the nether world, 148—The Pythagorean Y, 150—The two roads, 152—How the dead reach heaven, 153—On foot, by means of a ladder, 153—In a boat, 154—On horseback, 155—In a chariot, 156—As a bird, 157—Carried by an eagle, 158—Solar attraction, 160—Physical theory, 161—The air peopled with demons, 162—The gates of the planetary spheres, 162—Guide of the souls, 163—Physical character of the dead, 164—The shade and the soul, 167—Distinction of soul and reason, 168—Neo-Platonic "vehicle," 169.

VII. THE SUFFERINGS OF HELL AND METEMPSYCHOSIS. Origin in Homer, 170—Orphic theology, 171—Resemblance to penal law, 172—Apocryphal gospel of Peter, 173—Oriental influence, 174—Fire of hell, 175—Metempsychosis, its animistic basis, 177—Origin in Greece, 177—Souls passing continuously through different kinds of beings, 179—Reincarnation a punishment, 180—"Palingenesis" or uncontinuous reincarnation, 182—Transmigration from man to man, 183—Purification of the soul in the air, 184—by water and fire, 185—Purgatory in the atmosphere, 186—The purified spirit remains in heaven, 187.

VIII. THE FELICITY OF THE BLESSED. Rest in the tomb, 190—in the nether world, 193—in the light of heaven, 193—Persistence of these ideas among the Christians, 196—Repast of the dead, 199—Repast in the nether world, 201—The funeral

CONTENTS

xv

banquet and the sacred meal of the mysteries, 203—Banquet in heaven, 205—Persistence in Christianity, 206—The sight of the god, 207—In the astral cults, 208—Communion of man with the stars, 209—Immortality a contemplation of the astral gods, 210—Astral mysticism, 211—Ecstasy of the Neo-Platonists, 212—Last conception of eternal bliss, 213.

INDEX. P. 215.

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

THE idea of death has perhaps never been more present to humanity than during the years through which we have just passed. It has been the daily companion of millions of men engaged in a murderous conflict; it has haunted the even larger number who have trembled for the lives of their nearest and dearest; it is still constantly in the thoughts of the many who nurse regret for those they loved. And doubtless also, the faith or the hope has never more imposed itself, even on the unbelieving, that these countless multitudes, filled with moral force and generous passion, who have entered eternity, have not wholly perished, that the ardour which animated them was not extinguished when their limbs grew cold, that the spirit which impelled them to self-sacrifice was not dissipated with the atoms which formed their bodies.

These feelings were known to the ancients also, who gave to this very conviction the form suggested by their religion. Pericles¹ in his funeral eulogy of the warriors who fell at the siege of Samos declared that they who die for their country become like the immortal gods, and that, invisible like them, they still scatter their benefits on us. The ideas on immortality held in antiquity are often thus at once far from and near to our own—*near* because they correspond to aspirations which are not antique or modern, but human, *far* because the Olympians now have fallen into the deep gulf where lie dethroned deities. These ideas become more and more like the conceptions familiar to us as gradually their time grows later, and those generally admitted at the end of paganism are analogous to the doctrines accepted throughout the Middle Ages.

I flatter myself, therefore, that when I speak to you of the beliefs in a future life held in Roman times I have chosen a subject which is not very remote from us nor such as has no relation to our present thought or is capable of interesting only the learned.

¹ Plut., *Pericl.*, 8.

We can here trace only the outlines of this vast subject. I am aware that it is always imprudent to hazard moral generalisations: they are always wrong somewhere. Above all, it is perilous to attempt to determine with a few words the infinite variety of individual creeds, for nothing escapes historical observation more easily than the intimate convictions of men, which they often hide even from those near them. In periods of scepticism pious souls cling to old beliefs; the conservative crowd remains faithful to ancestral traditions. When religion is resuming its empire, rationalistic minds resist the contagion of faith. It is especially difficult to ascertain up to what point ideas adopted by intellectual circles succeeded in penetrating the deep masses of the people. The epitaphs which have been preserved give us too scanty and too sparse evidence in this particular. Besides, in paganism a dogma does not necessarily exclude its opposite dogma: the two sometimes persist side by side in one mind as different possibilities, each of which is authorised by a respectable tradition. You will therefore make the necessary reservations to such of my statements as are too absolute. I shall be able to point out here only the great spiritual currents which successively brought to Rome new ideas as to the Beyond, and to sketch the evolution undergone by the doctrines as to the lot and the abode of souls. You will not expect me to be precise as to the number of the partisans of each of these doctrines in the various periods.

At least we can distinguish the principal phases of the religious movement which caused imperial society to pass from incredulity to certain forms of belief in immortality, forms at first somewhat crude but afterwards loftier, and we can see where this movement led. The change was a capital one and transformed for the ancients the whole conception of life. The axis about which morality revolved had to be shifted when ethics no longer sought, as in earlier Greek philosophy, to realise the sovereign good on this earth but looked for it after death. Thenceforth the activity of man aimed less at tangible realities, ensuring well-being to the family or the city or the state, and more at attaining to the fulfilment of ideal hopes in a supernatural world. Our sojourn here below was conceived as a preparation for another existence, as a transitory trial which was to result in infinite felicity or suffering. Thus the table of ethical values was turned upside down.

"All our actions and all our thoughts," says Pascal, "must

follow so different a course if there are eternal possessions for which we may hope than if there are not, that it is impossible to take any directed and well-judged step except by regulating it in view of this point which ought to be our ultimate goal."²

We will attempt first to sketch in a general introduction the historical transformation which belief in the future life underwent between the Republican period and the fall of paganism. Then, in three lectures, we will examine more closely the various conceptions of the abode of the dead held under the Roman Empire, study in three others the conditions or the means which enable men to attain to immortality and in the last two set forth the lot of souls in the Beyond.

* * * * *

The cinerary vases of the prehistoric period are often modelled in the shape of huts: throughout, funeral sculpture follows the tradition that the tomb should reproduce the dwelling, and until the end of antiquity it was designated, in the West as in the East, as the "eternal house" of him who rested in it.

Thus a conception of the tomb which goes back to the remotest ages and persists through the centuries regards it as "the last dwelling" of those who have left us; and this expression has not yet gone out of use. It was believed that a dead man continued to live, in the narrow space granted him, a life which was groping, obscure, precarious, yet like that he led on earth. Subject to the same needs, obliged to eat and to drink, he expected those who had been nearest to him to appease his hunger and thirst. The utensils he had used, the things he had cared for, were often deposited beside him so that he might pursue the occupations and enjoy the amusements which he had forsaken in the world. If he were satisfied he would stay quietly in the furnished house provided for him and would not seek to avenge himself on those whose neglect had caused him suffering. Funeral rites were originally inspired rather by fear than by love. They were precautions taken against the spirit of the dead rather than pious care bestowed in their interest.³

For the dead were powerful; their action was still felt; they were not immured in the tomb or confined beneath the ground. Men saw them reappear in dreams, wearing their former aspect. They were descried during shadowy vigils; their voices were

² *Pensées*, III, 194 (t. II, p. 103, ed. Brunschvigg).

³ See Lecture I, "Life in the Tomb."

heard and their movements noted. Imagination conceived them such as they had once been; recollection of them filled the memory and to think of such apparitions as idle or unreal seemed impossible. The dead subsisted, then, as nebulous, impalpable beings, perceived by the senses only exceptionally. Here the belief that their remains had not quite lost all feeling mingled with the equally primitive and universal belief that the soul is a breath, exhaled with the last sigh. The vaporous shade, sometimes a dangerous but sometimes a succouring power, wandered by night in the atmosphere and haunted the places which the living man had been used to frequent. Except for some sceptical reasoners, all antiquity admitted the reality of these phantoms. Century-old beliefs, maintained by traditional rites, thus persisted, more or less definitely, in the popular mind, even after new forms of the future life were imagined. Many vestiges of these beliefs have survived until today.

The first transformation undergone by the primitive conception was to entertain the opinion that the dead who are deposited in the ground gather together in a great cavity inside the bowels of the earth.⁴ This belief in the nether world is found among most of the peoples of the Mediterranean basin: the *Sheol* of the Hebrews differs little from the Homeric *Hades* and the Italic *Inferi*.

It has been conjectured that the substitution of incineration for inhumation contributed to spreading this new manner of conceiving life beyond the tomb: the shade could not remain attached to a handful of ashes enclosed in a puny urn. It went, then, to join its fellows who had gone down into the dark dwelling where reigned the gods of a subterranean kingdom. But as ghosts could leave their graves in order to trouble or to help men, so the swarms of the infernal spirits rose to the upper world through the natural openings of the earth, or through ditches dug for the purpose of maintaining communication with them and conciliating them with offerings.

The Romans do not seem to have imagined survival in the infernal regions very differently from the survival of the vague monotonous shades in their tombs. Their *Manes* or *Lemures* had no marked personality or clearly characterised individual features. The *Inferi* were not, as in Greece, a stage for the enactment of a tragic drama; their inhabitants had no original life, and in the lot dealt to them no idea of retribution can be discerned.

⁴ See Lecture II, "The Nether World."

In this matter it was the Hellenes who imposed their conceptions of Hades on the Italic peoples and gave them those half mythical and half theological beliefs which Orphism had introduced in their own religion. Hellenic influence was felt directly through the colonies of Greater Greece, indirectly through the Etruscans, whose funeral sculpture shows us that they had adopted all the familiar figures of the Greek Hades—Charon, Cerberus, the Furies, Hermes Psychopompos and the others.⁵

From the time when Latin literature had its beginnings and the Latin theatre was born, we find writers taking pleasure in reproducing the Hellenic fables of Tartarus and the Elysian Fields; and Plautus⁶ can already make one of his characters say that he has seen “many paintings representing the pains of Acheron.” This infernal mythology became an inexhaustible theme which gave matter to poetry and art until the end of antiquity and beyond it. We shall see, in later lectures, how the religious traditions of the Greeks were subjected to various transformations and interpretations.

* * * * *

But Greece did not introduce poetic beliefs only into Rome: she also caused her philosophy to be adopted there from the second century onwards, and this philosophy tended to be destructive both of those beliefs and of the old native faith in the Manes and in the Orcus. Polybius,⁷ when speaking appreciatively of the religion of the Romans, praises them for having inculcated in the people a faith in numerous superstitious practices and tragic fictions. He considers this to be an excellent way of keeping them to their duty by the fear of infernal punishment. Hence we gather that if the historian thought it well for the people to believe in these inventions, then, in his opinion, enlightened persons, like his friends the Scipios, could see in them nothing but the stratagems of a prudent policy. But the scepticism of a narrow circle of aristocrats could not be confined to it for long when Greek ideas were more widely propagated.

Greek philosophy made an early attack on the ideas held as to a future life. Even Democritus, the forerunner of Epicurus, spoke of “some people who ignore the dissolution of our mortal nature and, aware of the perversity of their life, pass their time

⁵ See Lecture II, p. 73.

⁶ Plautus, *Capt.*, V, 4, 1.

⁷ Polyb., VI, 56, 12.

in unrest and in fear and forge for themselves deceitful fables as to the time when follows their end."⁸ It is true that in the fourth century Plato's idealism had supplied, if not a strict proof of immortality, yet reasons for it sufficient to procure its acceptance by such as desired to be convinced. But in the Alexandrian age, which was the surpassingly scientific period of Greek thought, there was a tendency to remove all metaphysical and mythical conceptions of the soul's destiny from the field of contemplation. This was the period in which the Academy, Plato's own school, unfaithful to its founder's doctrines, was led by men who, like Carneades, raised scepticism to a system and stated that man can reach no certainty. We know that when Carneades was sent to Rome as ambassador in 156 B. C. he made a great impression by maintaining that justice is a matter of convention, and that he was consequently banished by the senate as a danger to the state. But we need only read Cicero's works to learn what a lasting influence his powerfully destructive dialectics had.

The dogmatism of other sects was at this time hardly at all more favourable to the traditional beliefs in another life.

Aristotle had thought that human reason alone persisted, and that the emotional and nutritive soul was destroyed with the body, but he left no personality to this pure intelligence, deprived of all sensibility. He definitely denied that the "blessed" could be happy. With him begins a long period during which Greek philosophy nearly ceased to speculate on destiny beyond the grave. It was repugnant to Peripatetic philosophy to concern itself with the existence of a soul which could be neither conceived nor defined by reason. Some of Aristotle's immediate disciples, like Aristoxenus and Dicaearchus, or Straton of Lampascus, the pupil of Theophrastus, agreed in denying immortality altogether; and later, in the time of the Severi, Alexander of Aphrodisias, the great commentator of The Stagirite, undertook to prove that the entire soul, that is the higher and the lower soul, had need of the body in order to be active and perished with it, and that such was the veritable thought of the master. But profoundly as Peripateticism affected Greek thought, directly and indirectly, in practically discarding the future life, this was not the philosophy which dominated minds towards the end of the Roman Republic. Other schools then had a much wider

⁸ Diels, *Fragm. Vorsokratiker*³, II, p. 121, fr. 297.

influence and made this influence felt much more deeply on eschatological beliefs. These schools were Epicureanism and Stoicism.

Epicurus took up again the doctrine of Democritus, and taught that the soul, which was composed of atoms, was disintegrated at the moment of death, when it was no longer held together by its fleshly wrapping, and that its transitory unity was then destroyed for ever. The vital breath, after being expelled, was, he said, buffeted by the winds and dissolved in the air like mist or smoke, even before the body was decomposed. This was so ancient a conception that Homer had made use of a like comparison, and the idea that the violence of the wind can act on souls as a destructive force was familiar to Athenian children in Plato's time.⁹ But if the soul thus resolves itself, after death, into its elementary principles, how can phantoms come to frighten us in the watches of the night or beloved beings visit us in our dreams? These simulacra (εἰδωλα) are for Epicurus no more than emanations of particles of an extreme tenuity, constantly issuing from bodies and keeping for some time their form and appearance. They act on our senses as do colour and scent and awake in us the image of a vanished being.

Thus we are vowed to annihilation, but this lot is not one to be dreaded. Death, which is held to be the most horrible of ills, is in reality nothing of the sort, since the destruction of our organism abolishes all its sensibility. The time when we no longer exist is no more painful for us than that when we had not yet our being. As Plato deduced the persistence of the soul after death from its supposed previous existence, so Epicurus drew an opposite conclusion from our ignorance of our earlier life; and, according to him, the conviction that we perish wholly can alone ensure our tranquillity of spirit by delivering us from the fear of eternal torment.

There is no one of the master's doctrines on which his disciples insist with more complacent assurance. They praise him for having freed men from the terrors of the Beyond; they thank him for having taught them not to fear death; his philosophy appears to them as a liberator of souls. Lucretius in his third book, of which eighteenth-century philosophers delighted to celebrate the merits, claims, with a sort of exaltation, to drive from men's

⁹ Homer, *Il.*, Ψ, 100; Plato, *Phaed.*, 77 D; cf. Rohde, *Psyche*, II⁴, p. 264, n. 2.

hearts "that dread of Acheron which troubles human life to its inmost depths."¹⁰ The sage sees all the cruel fictions, with which fable had peopled the kingdom of terrors, scattered abroad, and, when he has rid himself of the dismay which haunts the common man, which casts a mournful veil over things and leaves no joy unmixed, he finds a blessed calm, the perfect quietude or "*ataraxia*."

This doctrine, which Lucretius preached with the enthusiasm of a neophyte won to the true faith, had a profound reaction in Rome. Its adepts in Cicero's circle were numerous, including Cassius, the murderer of Caesar. Sallust goes so far as to make Caesar himself affirm, in full senate, that death, the rest from torment, dispels the ills which afflict mankind, that beyond it there is neither joy nor sorrow.¹¹ Men of science, in particular, were attracted by these theories. In a celebrated passage Pliny the Naturalist, after categorically declaring that neither the soul nor the body has any more sensation after death than before the day of birth, ends with a vehement apostrophe: "Unhappy one, what folly is thine who in death renewest life! Where will creatures ever find rest if souls in heaven, if shades in the infernal regions, still have feeling? Through this complacent credulity we lose death, the greatest boon which belongs to our nature, and the sufferings of our last hour are doubled by the fear of what will follow after. If it be indeed sweet to live, for whom can it be so to have lived? How much easier and more certain is the belief which each man can draw from his own experience, when he pictures his future tranquillity on the pattern of that which preceded his birth!"¹²

Even Seneca in one of his tragedies, an early work, makes the chorus of Trojan women declaim a long profession of faith which is the purest Epicureanism.¹³

The invasion of the Roman world by the Oriental mysteries and superstitions in the second century caused the unbelievers to exalt Epicurus yet higher. The satirist Lucian, using almost the same expressions as Lucretius, proclaims the truly sacred and

¹⁰ III, 38:

"Et metus ille foras praeceps Acheruntis agendus
Funditus humanam qui vitam turbat ab imo."

¹¹ Sall., *Cat.*, 51, 20.

¹² Pliny, *H. N.*, VII, 55, § 190.

¹³ Seneca, *Troades*, 382 ss.

divine character of him who alone knew the good with the true, and who transmitted it to his disciples, to whom he gave moral liberty.¹⁴ Believers everywhere looked upon him as a terrible blasphemer. The prophet Alexander of Abonotichos enjoined all who would obtain divine graces to drive away with stones "atheists, Epicureans and Christians," and exclude them from his mysteries.¹⁵ He ordered by an oracle that the writings of him whom he called "the blind old man" should be burnt. When mysticism and Platonism triumphed in the Roman world, Epicureanism ceased to exist. It had disappeared in the middle of the fourth century, yet Julian the Apostate thought it advisable to include the writings of Epicurus among the books which were forbidden to the priests of his revived paganism.¹⁶

Thus during several centuries this philosophy had won a multitude of followers. The inscriptions bear eloquent witness to this fact. The most remarkable of them is a long text which was set out on the wall of a portico in the little town of Oenoanda in Lycia. A worthy citizen, Diogenes by name, who seems to have lived under the Antonines, was a convinced partisan of the doctrine of Epicurus; and feeling his end draw near, he wished to engrave an exposition thereof on marble for the present and future edification of his countrymen and of strangers. He does not fail to evince his contempt for death, at which, he says, he has learnt to mock. "I do not let myself be frightened by the Tityi and the Tantali whom some represent in Hades; horror does not seize me when I think of the putrefaction of my body . . . when the links which bind our organism are loosened, nothing further touches us."¹⁷ These are ideas which we find reproduced everywhere, in various forms, for Epicureanism did not only win convinced partisans in the most cultivated circles, but also spread in the lowest strata of the population, as is proved by epitaphs expressing unbelief in an after life. Some do not go beyond a short profession of faith, "We are mortal; we are not immortal."¹⁸ One maxim is repeated so often that it is sometimes expressed only by initials, "I was not; I was; I am

¹⁴ Lucian, *Alex.*, c. 61; c. 47.

¹⁵ Lucian, *ibid.*, c. 38; c. 44; c. 47.

¹⁶ Julian, *Epist.*, 89 (p. 747, 23, ed. Bidez-Cumont).

¹⁷ Cousin, *Bull. corr. hell.*, XVI, 1897; cf. Usener, *Rhein. Mus.*, N. F., XLVII, p. 428.

¹⁸ CIL, XI, 856=Bücheler, *Carm. epigraphica*, 191.