

THE TASTE FOR
NOTHINGNESS

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A Study of *Virtus* and Related Themes
in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*

R. SKLENÁŘ

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Dem Andenken meines Onkels

Dr. Klaus Tomfohrde,

der allen, welche ihn kannten, als ständiges Musterbeispiel

der Menschlichkeit, der eleganten Lebensweise,

und des ehrenhaften Einsatzes gottgebener Talente

galt und immer gelten wird,

sei dieses Buch hiermit gewidmet.

PREFACE

This study grew out of my doctoral dissertation and remains much indebted to the insights and advice so generously accorded by the members of my doctoral committee: Rev. Charles Witke, Elaine Fantam, K. Sara Myers, and Ralph Williams. My thanks also to Donka Markus, Stephen Wheeler, Lyn Straka, Blake Landor, Andrew Smith, and several anonymous readers for their valuable comments. I am indebted as well to the *American Journal of Philology* for permitting me to incorporate into this book a modified version of my article “Nihilistic Cosmology and Catonian Ethics in Lucan’s *Bellum Civile*” (*AJP* 120 [1999]: 281–96). Finally, I wish to extend special thanks to my former students at Swarthmore College, to whom I owe a debt greater than I can describe, let alone repay .

Since the submission of my thesis in March 1996, several works have appeared that arrive independently at conclusions and formulations similar to those I advanced there, and I have endeavored to take as much account of them as possible. If I cite these works more often to disagree than to agree, it is because the views I hold in common with them have gained such currency that it is idle to debate questions of priority.

My text of Lucan’s *Bellum Civile* follows Shackleton Bailey’s second Teubner edition (1997) unless otherwise specified. Source abbreviations that are not self-explanatory are listed at the beginning of the bibliography. All Latin outside the footnotes is translated, save where the discussion contains so close a paraphrase as to make translation redundant. Though I have striven to make my renderings as idiomatic as possible, they are intended purely as an aid to comprehension and hence are devoid of literary pretense. Moreover, where I have been

PREFACE

unable, in matters of style or accuracy, to improve on the Loeb version of J. D. Duff (1928) or on the admirable verse translation of Susan H. Braund (1992), I have incorporated the phrasing of one or the other into my own versions.

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