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EPICURUS RETAINED the traditional demand of Greek philosophers for fixed standards of knowledge and value, but he abolished the traditional means of supplying these standards. He rejected all transcendence and held that the objects known to us by immediate experience undergo continuous motion and change. A central problem of his philosophy, therefore, was to discover fixed points in this world of change.

His solution to this problem, I believe, lay in his notion of limit. Here I follow Lucretius, who tells us that the great prize which Epicurus brought back to us from his triumphant exploration of the universe was the knowledge

*quid possit oriri,  
quid nequeat, finita potestas denique cuique  
quam sit ratione atque alte terminus haerens.* [1.75-77]

This sweeping generalization, repeated by Lucretius in 1.594-596 and again in 5.88-90 and 6.64-66, and reinforced by his use of such terms as *terminus*, *finis*, *certus*, and the like, clearly represents to him the unifying principle of Epicurean teaching. It is applicable not only to the *foedera naturae* (1.586), which insure the constancy of natural processes, and to death, the *terminus malorum* (3.1020; cf. *terminus vitae*, 2.1087), but also to moral precepts, which establish the *finis cupidinis atque timoris* (6.25) and teach men

*quae sit habendi  
finis et omnino quoad crescat vera voluptas.* [5.1432-1433]

Whether this great generalization came to Lucretius from some lost Greek source or from his own poetic and philosophical insight is uncertain. To my knowledge, at least, no earlier Epicurean had put the matter quite so clearly.<sup>1</sup> And yet the notion of limit is everywhere present in Epicurean texts. The purpose of this paper is to show that the Lucretian generalization does indeed provide an illuminating approach to the structural unity of the Epicurean system.

Perhaps the closest parallel to Lucretius' statement of the importance of the *terminus haerens* is in Polystratus, *Περὶ ἀλόγου καταφρονήσεως*. The text, as Wilke published it (Leipzig 1905), is as follows:

<sup>1</sup>It should be remembered, however, that Plato in the *Philebus*, 16-17, had made the discovery of limits the aim of all inquiry into anything that is both one and many. It is quite possible that the Epicureans were influenced by this or some similar passage.

φυσιολογήσαντας δ' ὀρθῶς περὶ πάντων τούτων μόνως ἔστι [τ]ὴν ἀλήθειαν συνιδεῖν. καὶ γὰρ τὰ δυνατὰ καὶ ἀδύνατα, εἴτε κατὰ οὐσίαν εἴτε κατὰ δ[ύ]ναμιν ἢ [ἐνέ]ργειαν [ἦν]τιναοῦν, οὕτως μόνως ἔστιν κατ[α]νοῆσαι καὶ τὰ μέχρ[ι] π[ο]σοῦ δυνατὰ ἢ μὴ [δύ]νατὰ ὑ[π]άρχειν ἢ ποιεῖν [τι ἢ μ[ὴ] ποιεῖν καὶ τὰ ψευδῆ τῶν] κατὰ τοὺς μίθ[ους ἢ τὰ]ς τῶν πολλ[ῶν] δόξ[ας παραδ]εδομένων ἢ καὶ [κε]ν[ῶς κ]ατὰ ὀνόμα[τι]ον π[α]ρὰ δ[ε]δομ[ένων . . .] \* \* \* π[ά]ντα φόβ[ο]ν ἢ πᾶσαν ὑπόψ[ι]αν μ[ά]τα[ι]ον ἀφαιρεῖ· ὡσαύτω[ς δ]ὲ καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ψυχῆς πάθη πάνθ' ὅσα παρὰ κενὰς καὶ ψευδεῖς δόξας ἐγγ[ί]νεται· καὶ μόνῃ τὸν ἐλεύθερον βίον παρασκευάζει θαρρησιάσης τῆς διανοίας ἐκ πάντων τῶν αἰτίων ὅσα ταραχὴν ἐπιφέρει κ[εν]ῶς καὶ πάσης ἀγνοίας τε καὶ ἀπάτης καὶ ψευδοδόξ[α]ς ἀπολυθ[εί]σης, ὅπερ ἦν [τ]έλος [τ]οῦ ἀρίστου βίου.

It is possible only for those who have studied the science of nature in the right way to have a comprehensive view of the truth about all these things. For only in this way is one able to apprehend the things that are possible and impossible, whether in respect to existence or power or any activity whatever, and the extent to which they can or cannot exist or do or not do something, and to apprehend the errors of the things transmitted through myths or through popular belief or by any unsound means. \* \* \* It removes every fear or (and?) every vain suspicion, and similarly all the other affections of the soul which arise in it through unsound or false beliefs; and it alone provides the life of freedom, when the mind has become confident and has escaped from all the causes that bring empty anxiety, and from all ignorance and error and false belief; and this is precisely the end of the best life. [col. 5b 9 to 7a 8]

The similarity of this passage to Lucretius is evident; but there is an important difference. Polystratus agrees with Lucretius in making the attainment of a good life dependent on the knowledge of what can and cannot happen, and he speaks of the end (τέλος) of the best life;<sup>2</sup> but he does not explicitly make the discovery of limits and ends a unifying principle. We must look further, then, for evidence to justify Lucretius' claim.

The terms *πέρας* and *ὄρος* are the usual words for limit in Epicurean texts. Their most familiar use is in ethical contexts. In *Ad Menoec.* 133 *πέρας* and *τέλος* are closely joined: Epicurus holds up as a model the man who has empirically discovered the end of nature (τὸ τῆς φύσεως τέλος) and who understands that the limit of good things (τὸ τῶν ἀγαθῶν πέρας) is easily reached, and that the limit of evil is of short duration or causes little pain. The two terms are joined even more closely in *K.D.* 20, which speaks of the mind that has empirically discovered the τέλος and πέρας of the flesh (τοῦ τῆς σαρκὸς τέλους καὶ πέρατος λαβοῦσα τὸν ἐπιλογισμόν).<sup>3</sup> Πέρας and ὄρος are apparently interchangeable in the phrase πέρας (or ὄρος) τῶν ἀλγηδόνων καὶ τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν.<sup>4</sup> In *K.D.* 3 the term ὄρος appears again: "The limit (ὄρος) of the magnitude of pleasures is the removal of all that causes pain."

<sup>2</sup>Cf. also col. 23a 7-11: . . . παρὰ τὸ μὴ δύνασθαι διαγινῶναι (v.l. κατανοῆσαι) τί ἡ φύσις ἡμῶν αὐτῇ ζητεῖ τέλος καὶ ἐκ τίνων τοῦτο συμπληροῦσθαι πέφυκεν.

<sup>3</sup>For my view of the meaning of ἐπιλογισμός see *AJP* 79 (1958) 179-183.

<sup>4</sup>*K.D.* 10 and 11; cf. *Diog. Oen. fr.* 28, col. 7.4-7 Chilton.

It is evident from these passages that Epicurean ethics is concerned as much with limits as with ends. Freedom from pain and fear is the τέλος, insofar as it is that at which we aim (*Ad Men.* 128); but it is also a πέρας and a ὄρος. When the body's pains have been removed, its pleasures are not increased but only diversified.<sup>5</sup> There is also a limit to evil, in the sense that pain can be only so bad; it cannot be both intense and prolonged.<sup>6</sup> The limits of good and evil constitute a rigid framework within which we make our choices and pursue our goals.<sup>7</sup> Even in the area of our choice certain limits must be observed, for example, the limit that nature sets to wealth.<sup>8</sup> In more general terms, the satisfaction of desire is good only if it is restricted to those desires that are natural or necessary; and any action that does not preserve the end of nature (τὸ τέλος τῆς φύσεως) violates the principles of Epicurean teaching (*K.D.* 25). It is a condition of the good life that we know the proper limits of pleasure and desire, and the failure to remain within these limits is a source of pain and distress.<sup>9</sup>

The importance of limits in Epicurean ethics clearly justifies Lucretius' claim that the good life is not possible without the knowledge of limits that Epicurus gives us. But Lucretius was referring not only to ethics but also to physics; and here too he is in complete accord with the Greek sources. Limits are everywhere present in the Epicurean account of the physical world. There is a limit to the variety of atoms (*Ad Herod.* 42; *Lucr.* 2.478-521), to their size (*Ad Herod.* 55-56; *Lucr.* 2.498-499), and to the size of their minimal parts (τὰ ἐλάχιστα καὶ ἀμερῆ πέρατα, *Ad Herod.* 59). There is a limit to the number of atoms that can occupy a finite space (*Ad Herod.* 56). There is a limit to the possible shapes of a cosmos (*Ad Herod.* 74); and every cosmos has a finite magnitude (*Ad Pyth.* 88; cf. *Ad Herod.* 73). The behaviour of atomic compounds is also limited; only certain combinations are possible (*Lucr.* 2.700-729). No combination is unique, but all recur so as to constitute classes of objects (*Lucr.* 2.1077-1089); and they pass through a kind of cycle from origin to dissolution.<sup>10</sup>

These limits are the Epicurean equivalent not only of natural laws

<sup>5</sup>*K.D.* 18. On the limit of pleasure see also *K.D.* 19 and fr. 434, 477 Usener; on its diversification, see below, p. 109. The πέρατα τοῦ βίου in *K.D.* 21 are also ethical rather than temporal; but in *Gnom. Vat.* 48 the "end of the road" is presumably a metaphor for death.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. also *Ad Herod.* 81 μὴ ὀρίζοντας τὸ δεινόν, and *Ethica Epicurea* (P. Herc. 1251) col. 4.1-4 Schmid.

<sup>7</sup>See also P. Herc. 831, col. 8 (Körte, *Metrodorea*, p. 583 = fr. 434 Usener): . . . ἐν τῷ κατὰ φύσιν περάτι κατακέλειται τὰ γαθὸν καὶ τὸ κακόν.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. *K.D.* 15; *Gnom. Vat.* 25; fr. 471 Usener.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. fr. 202 Usener; *Gnom. Vat.* 59, 63.

<sup>10</sup>*Lucr.* 2.1105-1143; cf. 1087, *vitae depactus terminus alte*.

but also of specific forms and essences. Since they are eternally the same, the knowledge of them inspires confidence in the knower and dispels the fears which arise from ignorance. In physics, then, as in ethics, the knowledge of limits is of central importance.

The doctrine of limits has for the Epicureans still another advantage. It permits variation within the limits. There is room for individual differences and even for spontaneity and freedom. One of the terms that the Epicureans use for variation is *παραλλαγή*. For Epicurus himself the term was not narrowly technical. He used it of the variation in the size of atoms (*Ad Herod.* 55; cf. 63), the changing lengths of day and night (*Ad Pyth.* 98), the irregularities in the motions of the planets (*Ad Pyth.* 113), and the unevenness of the lunar surface (*Ad Pyth.* 95).<sup>11</sup> It is much more technical in Philodemus. In *De Signis*, cols. 23-24, Philodemus separates the variations (*παραλλαγαι*) found in different fires from their common features. In col. 21, with reference to the nature of man, he states that while the Epicureans do not throw out all *παραλλαγή*, they would not admit that there are men with the nature of iron who go through walls as we go through air. In col. 38.5 he again mentions the differences (*παραλλάγματα*) among men, and in col. 17.26 he uses the participle *παραλλάττουσαν* of variation in length of life.<sup>12</sup>

Another term used to describe the manifold variety of particulars is *ποικίλος*. In *De Sign.* col. 20 Philodemus lists among the necessary conditions of valid inference the inspection of many homogeneous and varied instances: *πολλοῖς ὁμογεέσι καὶ ποικίλοις*.<sup>13</sup> In another passage, where the text is less sure (col. 25), he gives it as a principle of method that one who observes the variations (*ποικίλματα*) within our experience will judge that they occur also beyond our experience.<sup>14</sup> He goes on (cols. 25-26) to give examples of valid and invalid inferences drawn from the *πολλή καὶ ποικίλη διαφορά* that is found in foods and in the beings nourished by them. The variation permits the identification of poisons, purgatives, and so on, but it does not permit the inference

<sup>11</sup>In fr. 27.22.15 Arrighetti, *παραλλαγή* has been taken to mean alteration rather than variation; see W. Schmid, *Epicurus Kritik der platonischen Elementenlehre* (Leipzig 1936) 18; but even here the latter meaning is possible. The form *παρηλλαγμένος* occurs in fr. 29.12.9 and 12 Arrighetti, with reference to things similar to a class but not belonging to it. In P. Herc. 831, cols. 5.10 and 7.10 (pp. 581, 582 Körte), *παραλλάγμα* means riddance.

<sup>12</sup>See also cols. 6.12 and 19.20, 35. Philodemus also uses *παραλλαγή* of the difference between classes; cf. *De Sign.* cols. 34.31; 36.17-21; fr. 2.7-9.

<sup>13</sup>So also Galen, *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, p. 763 Müller: *ἐν πολλοῖς τε καὶ ποικίλοις (sc. παραδείγμασι) γυμνάζεσθαι*.

<sup>14</sup>Col. 25.11-14; cf. also 33.10-13: *πᾶς ὁ καλῶς σημειούμενος τὸ παντοδαπὸν ποικίλμα τῶν φαινομένων κατοπτέυσας ὥστε μὴδὲν ἀντιπίπτειν . . .*

that men can eat and digest hay.<sup>15</sup> Finally, in col. 35, ποικίλος and παραλλαγή reinforce each other: Philodemus says that in order to make a valid inference about animals we must have encountered ποικίλα ἐκ ταύτου γένους ζῶα which exhibit παραλλαγαί in some respects but have certain other features in common.<sup>16</sup>

The use of ποικίλος and related terms to designate the variations found in members of a group is not limited to Philodemus. A fragment of Epicurus' *Περὶ φύσεως* (31.8 Arrighetti) seems to describe a situation in which the mind is unable to make an inference because of the variety ([διὰ] τὸ ποικίλον) present in the pertinent data. Plutarch, in a paraphrase of Epicurean teaching, says that every aggregate is ποικιλλόμενον by the continual coming and going of atoms (*Mor.* 1116c = fr. 282 Usener). A phrase in Diogenes of Oenoanda expresses the instability of the variation in things: τὸ ἐν τοῖς πράγμασι ποικίλως ἄστατον (fr. 16 Chilton). This instability cannot be in the boundaries, which are fixed; it can only be in the individual things and events that fall within the framework of the fixed boundaries. Here, then, is the domain of choice, chance, and the swerve. In one of the fragments from his discussion of freedom of choice<sup>17</sup> Epicurus seems to say that the mind is able to alter the motions of the atomic compound that constitutes the soul because necessity does not govern the particular motions of the compound but only requires that it be a soul with a disposition and motion of such and such a kind. The laws of physics determine the τοιόνδε, but not the τὸδε τι.<sup>18</sup>

Chance, like freedom of choice, presupposes some degree of indeterminateness in the movement of the atoms. Chance is ἄστατος, freedom of choice is ἀδέσποτος (*Ad Men.* 133). Neither would be possible without the swerve, which occurs *incerto tempore ferme/incertisque locis* (Lucr. 2.218–219), and which must be accepted, as Philodemus says (*De Sign.* col. 36.14), διὰ τὸ τυχηρόν καὶ τὸ παρ' ἡμᾶς. But even the swerve has a limit; it can be no more than the minimum (Lucr. 2.244). Its consequences must not disrupt the fixed limits of natural processes but must

<sup>15</sup>Accepting Gomperz' restoration, κά[ρφην]. Cf. the allusion to χόρτος in Plutarch *Mor.* 1108b and 1117f.

<sup>16</sup>Whether Epicurus intended a similar link between ποι[κί]λως and παρηλ[λαγ]μέ-να(ς) in fr. 29.12.2 and 9 Arrighetti is not clear.

<sup>17</sup>Fr. 31.24 Arrighetti; cf. C. Diano, *Epicuri Ethica* (Florence 1946), 129.

<sup>18</sup>For the distinction see Aristotle *Metaph.* K 2 (1060b 20–22), and compare Plato's contrast between τοιοῦτον and τὸδε in *Timaeus* 49D–E. The Epicureans took from Aristotle the term τὸδε τι and used it even in the masculine gender; cf. *Ad Herod.* 69; fr. 20.1.7; 27.28.6; 27.29.2, 4, 5, 9; 29.10.24 Arrighetti; Philod. *De Sign.* col. 1.7; fr. 5.6. In fr. 31.11 Arrighetti, Epicurus appears to say that an atomic ἄθροισμα is a τὸδε τι, and the same fragment contains the word [ποι]κίλην (line 7).

only add variety within those limits.<sup>19</sup> An example of random variation outside the range of free choice is Lucretius' account of heredity. Sometimes, he says, the child resembles the mother, sometimes the father, sometimes even a grandparent. Such things happen *varia sorte*;<sup>20</sup> they are not the product of *semina certa* (4.1209-1232).

In the ethical sphere the doctrine of variety within limits has the useful role of establishing the relation between kinetic and catastematic pleasures. The limit is of course the *τέλος*, the *summum bonum*, which is catastematic: τὸ εὐσταθὲς σαρκὸς κατὰστημα (fr. 68 Usener). But within this limit there is room for ποικιλίαι. As Plutarch explains it, "Nature adds to pleasure only to the point where pain is abolished and does not allow it any further increase in magnitude, although the pleasure, when the state of painlessness is reached, admits of certain unessential variations."<sup>21</sup> The scholium to *K.D.* 29 gives expensive foods as an example of such variation. In *De Finibus* 2.10 Cicero states the Epicurean view more fully, in an effort to make it look absurd:

*ista varietas quae sit non satis perspicio, quod ais, cum dolore careamus, tum in summa voluptate nos esse, cum autem vescamur iis rebus quae dulcem motum afferant sensibus, tum esse in motu voluptatem, qui faciat varietatem voluptatum, sed non augeri illam non dolendi voluptatem, quam cur voluptatem appelles nescio.*<sup>22</sup>

The indeterminateness of particulars makes it all the more imperative that the boundaries be "deep-set," for these boundaries are the only fixed points in the Epicurean system. They determine the essential, as opposed to the accidental, qualities of things.<sup>23</sup> Whatever crosses a boundary becomes something other than what it was before:

<sup>19</sup>It is important to note that although the swerve is a precondition of free choice, it is not its instrument; on this point see D. J. Furley, *Two Studies in the Greek Atomists* (Princeton 1967) 232-233.

<sup>20</sup>*Varia* here refers to indeterminate variation and is thus a close equivalent to ποικίλος in the sense discussed above. But *varius* in Lucretius usually refers to different kinds of things, rather than to differing individuals; cf. *variae volucres* (1.589) and *varium genus omne ferarum* (5.1338). The Epicureans also used ποικίλος of the variety of kinds; Philodemus, for example, contrasts π[οι]κίλαι κτ[ή]σεις with μονοειδέεις in *Περὶ οἰκονομίας* col. 26 (p. 72 Jensen). See also P. Herc. 831, col. 10.1-2 (p. 584 Körte).

<sup>21</sup>*Moralia* 1088c = fr. 417 Usener. Cf. also *K.D.* 18; *Gnom. Vat.* 69; Cicero *De Fin.* 1.38.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. also Cicero *De Fin.* 2.75.

<sup>23</sup>Lucretius defines *coniuncta* (1.451-454) as qualities or properties of things that cannot be removed without the destruction of the thing to which they belong, as for example heat in fire, or fluidity in water. They are thus the essential features of a thing, the limits beyond which it cannot go without ceasing to be what it is. *Eventa*, however (1.455-458), can come and go without harm to the "nature" that receives or loses them.

*nam quodcumque suis mutatum finibus exit,  
continuo hoc mors est illius quod fuit ante.*<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, the Epicureans must know what these boundaries are, since they insist on the absolute certainty of their teachings. Their beliefs are unshakable;<sup>25</sup> the conclusions that they reach by their reasoning are necessarily true;<sup>26</sup> their wise man never changes his mind about anything;<sup>27</sup> they are *εὐπαγείς πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν*, solid in respect to happiness (fr. 29.14.9-10 Arrighetti). They must have exact knowledge of what can and cannot happen.

Here a serious difficulty arises. The fixed boundaries have become limits of variation, and it is notoriously difficult to discover the precise location of such limits. In the face of this difficulty the Epicureans are often content to prove that the limit exists, without saying precisely where it is. They prove its existence by pointing to the absurdity or impossibility of extending variations indefinitely. It is absurd to suppose, for example, that a man could be tall enough to wade through the sea (Lucretius 1.199-200; 5.914), or hard enough to walk through walls (Philod. *De Sign.* col. 21), or able to grow new eyes and a new head, as we grow new hairs and nails (col. 13).

Lucretius uses a similar argument in his account of the first birth of men and animals from the earth (5.837-924). He extends the limit of possible births to include not only extinct species but also the *portenta* that could not survive because they lacked the necessary means of growth and reproduction. The abnormalities that he mentions are not fanciful; no doubt they could be found in medical case-histories. But the range of possible abnormalities does not extend so far as to include centaurs, scyllas, and the chimaera; these creatures could never have existed, because they violate the distinctions that nature makes between one kind of animal and another; for in truth

*res quaeque suo ritu procedit et omnes  
foedere naturae certo discrimina servant.*

[5.923-924]

<sup>24</sup>Lucretius 1.670-671, 792-793; 2.753-754; 3.519-520. Birth is also a crossing of boundaries, an emergence *in luminis oras*; cf. 1.22, 170. Thus there are some boundaries (e.g., between life and death, justice and injustice) that can in some sense be crossed; others (e.g., the limits imposed on atoms or on the increase of pleasure) that cannot. I have found no clear terminological distinction between these two kinds of boundaries.

<sup>25</sup>Epicurus, for example, uses the term *ἀσειστος* in *Ad Pyth.* 87; Polystratus speaks of *ἀσάλευτος πλίστις* in *De Contempt.* col. 3b.5-7; and Philodemus is concerned to defend the Epicurean method of inference against anything that would shake (*σαλεύειν*) it, *De Sign.* cols. 15.5, 20.13. Plutarch, in a paraphrase of Epicurean doctrine (*Mor.* 1089e), uses the phrase, *χαρὰν ἀσάλευτον*.

<sup>26</sup>See especially Philodemus' discussion in *De Sign.* cols. 31-35 of the conditions under which empirical inference is "necessary."

<sup>27</sup>Fr. 222 Usener.

The argument by which Lucretius sets a limit to the shapes of the atoms also rests on the impossibility of unending variation. If atoms were not limited in shape, any given extreme might be exceeded. Since this is not the case, since

*rebus reddita certa  
finis utrimque tenet summam, fateare necessest  
materiam quoque finitis differre figuris.* [2.512-514]

In the following lines he again combines an appeal to impossibilities with a generalized statement about the fixed order of things:

*Denique in aethere non arbor, non aequore in alto  
nubes esse queunt nec pisces vivere in arvis  
nec cruor in lignis neque saxis succus inesse.  
certum ac dispositumst ubi quicquid crescat et insit.*

In 3.784-787 he uses these lines to prove that a soul cannot continue to exist outside a body; and in 5.127-131 he uses them (with very slight changes) to prove that the heavenly bodies are not divine.

In each of these cases the argument proves that the limit exists, but it does not tell us where the limit is; and in regard to atomic shapes we are told explicitly that their complete range is beyond our power to grasp (*Ad Herod.* 42). To be sure, we do not need to know the number of atomic shapes, nor is it necessary to know the precise hour of one's own death in order to live pleasantly.<sup>28</sup> But some situations call for an exact determination of boundaries, as between just and unjust laws. A law ceases to be just when it ceases to be beneficial (*K.D.* 38), and our conduct relative to it must be modified accordingly. Similarly, the acquisition of wealth changes from good to bad when it crosses the natural limit of wealth (cf. *K.D.* 15). In practical matters, therefore, we must have some means of knowing where the limit is, if we are to avoid improper action.

There was also a theoretical difficulty. In *De Signis* cols. 1 and 2, Philodemus tells of unfriendly adversaries who argued that rare things (*σπάνια*), such as dwarfs and giants, and unique things (*μοναχά*), such as magnets, vitiate any attempt to set the limits to what can happen. The full range of possible variation can never be determined empirically. The claim that it is impossible for any man to be immortal does not establish the existence of a limit but presupposes it (cols. 2-4). The Epicureans do not prove even that limits exist.

In response to such difficulties as these the Epicureans rejected the demand for formally valid demonstration and asserted rather that for them certainty is a matter of confidence and firm belief. We have confidence in the certainty of our carefully tested empirical generalizations,

<sup>28</sup>Cf. *Ethica Epicurea* (P. Herc. 1251), col. 16, with Schmid's notes; Philod. *De Morte*, cols. 37.23-27, 39.15-25.

and this confidence cannot be got from any other source (cf. Philod. *De Sign.* cols. 30-31). The Epicurean emphasis on the "subjective" or "psychological" aspect of certainty is reflected in their language. The familiar *πρόληψις* is so authoritative that it can be used as a criterion of truth (cf. Diog. Laert. 10.31). Inconceivability, also, is a reliable test. Epicurus says, for example (*Ad Herod.* 71), that the permanent and transient properties of things cannot exist *per se*, because that is not conceivable: οὐδὲ γὰρ τοῦτο διανοητόν. Even the central doctrine that pleasure is the only good receives confirmation from the fact that no other good is conceivable.<sup>29</sup> Philodemus quite explicitly makes inconceivability an alternative to logical necessity as a test of inference. One of his examples is that since in our experience every square of four has its perimeter equal to its area, every square of four in the infinite κόσμοι has this same property. The person who makes this inference will infer well, κατα[κ]λείων εἰς ἀδιανόητον τ[ὸ] τοῖς] μὲν παρ' ἡμῖν τοιοῦτους [εἶν]αι τοὺς δ' ἄλλαχῆ μὴ τοιοῦ[τ]ους.<sup>30</sup>

These Epicurean tests of truth provide the basis for confident assertion. Sometimes the Epicureans use in this context the term *δυσχυρίζεσθαι* (cf. *De Sign.* col. 25.30), but the commoner term is *θαρρεῖν*. Philodemus says, for example, "If men are found to differ in other respects, but have been observed to have no difference in this, then on the basis of those men whom we have encountered and about whom we have learned from history, why should we not say confidently that all men admit of old age and disease?" πῶς οὐ φήσομ[ε]ν θαρροῦντες ἅπαντας εἶναι γήρωσ καὶ νόσου δεκτικούς;<sup>31</sup>

The confidence which the Epicureans have in their theory of the nature of things extends also to their way of life. As Polystratus said, the person who has become confident and has rid himself of ignorance

<sup>29</sup>Cf. fr. 67, 423 Usener. For other examples see Arrighetti's index verborum *ισθ.* νοέω, ἐπισοέω, διανοέω, and especially *Ad Pyth.* 97: εἰς τε τὸ ἀδιανόητον φερομένους.

<sup>30</sup>*De Sign.* col. 15.37-16.1. See also cols. 14.14-27, 37.21-24. (In col. 12.27, however, the reading should be μὴ δύνα[α]τ[ὸν] rather than ἀδιανόητ[ον].) For the connection between inconceivability and *πρόληψις* see, for example, Philod. *De Diis.* 3, col. 13.22-23 (p. 36 Diels): [τοῖ] του γὰρ αὐ χωρὶς οὐδ' ἐτι τοιαῦτα ζῶα νοήσομ[εν] οἷα προεἰλήφαμεν.

<sup>31</sup>*De Sign.* col. 21.3-12. Sometimes the Epicureans speak of safe (*ἀσφαλής*) and unsafe notions or standards; cf. fr. 24.42.3-6 Arrighetti; Philod. *περὶ οἴκ.* col. 13.40 (p. 43 Jensen). A much more common term is *βέβαιος* (*βεβαιῶω*, *διαβεβαιῶω*, etc.), which is used not only of confirmed truths (cf. *Ad Herod.* 52, 68; *K.D.* 24; fr. 24.34.3, 31.28.3 Arrighetti; Philod. *De Sign.* cols. 16.31-17.8, 24.36, 35.35) but also of firm hope and pleasure (fr. 68, 520 Usener; Seneca, *De Otio* 7.2: *voluptatem . . . quam ratione efficit* (sc. *Epicurus*) *firmam sibi*). See also P. Oxy. 215, col. 1.15: τὸ βέβαιον [εἶ]σεβείας. These terms are not distinctively Epicurean; they are, if anything, Platonic. Cf. *Phaedo* 100b (*ἀσφαλέστατον*); *Theaet.* 154a (*δυσχυρίσαιο*); *Sophist* 258b (*θαρροῦντα*); *Resp.* 586a (*βεβαιοῦν . . . ἡδονῆς*).

and false opinion is able to live a life of freedom.<sup>22</sup> Such a person has a firm trust, even about the future.<sup>23</sup> He lives in safety,<sup>24</sup> and his happiness is assured. This assurance, however, is possible only because the wise Epicurean recognizes the limits within which he moves. "The same judgment makes us confident that nothing frightful is eternal or even of long duration and sees clearly that within the limits themselves safety is best achieved by friendship."<sup>25</sup>

Our conclusion must be that Lucretius was indeed correct in identifying the doctrine of limits as a unifying theme in the Epicurean philosophy, but that he overstated his case when he claimed that Epicurus tells us where the limits are.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>See above, p. 105. Confidence in practical matters is everywhere stressed; see for example *K.D.* 6, 39, 40; fr. 532 Usener; Plutarch, *Mor.* 1100ε, 1103Α; *Ethica Epicurea* (P. Herc. 1251) cols. 21.14, 23.8.

<sup>23</sup>*Cf.* *Ad Herod.* 63 (ἡ βεβαιωτάτη πίστις); *Ad Pyth.* 85; *K.D.* 40; *Gnom. Vat.* 33, 39; fr. 68 Usener; Polystratus, *De Contempt.* col. 19b.12 (p. 28 Wilke); Philod. *Περὶ οἴκ.* cols. 25.13, 26.43; Cicero *Nat. D.* 1.51 (*exploratum*), with Pease's note *ad loc.*

<sup>24</sup>*K.D.* 7, 13, 14; *Gnom. Vat.* 17; also fr. 200 Usener (ἐπισφαλές) and Philod. *Περὶ οἴκ.* cols. 15-16, 25.4.

<sup>25</sup>*K.D.* 28. In spite of Bignone's defence of the manuscripts, the dative φίλῃ or φιλίῃς seems required, as the phrase ἐν αὐτοῖς τοῖς ὀρισμένοις is attributive, not predicative.

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