

The Tetrpharmakon - Sound Epicurean Doctrine, or Oversimplification?

Post by "Don" of December 6, 2020 at 7:09 PM

[Admin note: This discussion began as a response by Don to a comment made by Charles in this Lucretius Today podcast thread: [RE: Episode Forty-Seven - Death is Nothing To Us](#) . It deserves to stand alone, so was cut from there and placed here. The thread now shows as started by Godfrey due to the way it was moved, but this post by Don was in fact the thread-starter.]

In light of this week's episode, I have to stand up for the Tetrpharmakos. I don't expect to change Charles's mind 😊 but I felt compelled to say at least my two cents in support of the 4-fold Medicine.

Personally, I find the Tetrpharmakos to be a satisfying direct link back to the classical Epicureans. I haven't been able to determine if Philodemus was pro or con regarding the Tetrpharmakos, but I know it's quoted in the ancient source. That appeals to me. And *some* Epicureans were using it for sure.

I also don't see it as an evangelizing tool but rather as a succinct "creed" encapsulating key points of Epicurus's philosophy.

To work through the four lines:

Ἄφοβον ὁ θεός,

Aphobon ho theos

(A+phobon > English phobia)

"The god causes no fear" or "We have nothing to fear from the gods."

Why? See PD1.

ἀνύποπτον ὁ θάνατος

Anuropton ho thanatos

ἀνύποπτον carries the idea of "without suspicion" or "free from risk" We should approach death (thanatos) without suspicion since it is free from risk. See PD2 and other writings of Epicurus.

καὶ τὰγαθὸν μὲν εὐκτῆτον,

kai t'agathon men euktēton,

Kai ...Men = and...on the one hand, ...

τὰγαθὸν is The (Highest) Good which is pleasure.

εὐκτῆτον means "easy to procure" but this refers to the fact that pleasure is readily at hand if we acknowledge it. Additionally, the necessary and natural desires are "easy to procure."

τὸ δὲ δεινὸν εὐεκκαρτέρητον

to de deinon euekkarterēton.

de = on the other hand..

to deinon = The Terrible, in contrast to The Good, = pain (**deinon** > dinosaur)

"Pain" can be "easily endured" or "easily endured with patience." Why? Because PD4.

Post by “Cassius” of December 6, 2020 at 7:49 PM

Quote

I also don't see it as an evangelizing tool but rather as a succinct "creed" encapsulating key points of Epicurus's philosophy

I've said much the same as Charles has, but the key to me is what you say here. In the hands of someone who understands that it is clipped it can be very useful. But in the hands of much of today's internet it is treated as a complete synopsis of what Epicurus taught, and if someone stops there it can be very misleading. I think we touch on more of this in today's episode, with Elayne back, so I will try to get that posted asap.

Post by “Don” of December 6, 2020 at 9:00 PM

One of the reasons I like the Tetrpharmakos is because it's short and easy to memorize in ancient Greek. I find myself reciting it regularly throughout the day.

But another reason I like it is because it challenges me. Is pain *really* easy to endure? Do I believe that? Is pleasure easy to procure? Do I *really* believe - accept - that there's nothing to fear from the gods? That being dead *does* come with no risk? It brings these tenets up to consciousness and makes me confront my doubts and ingrained beliefs.

Post by “Charles” of December 6, 2020 at 10:13 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

One of the reasons I like the Tetrpharmakos is because it's short and easy to memorize in ancient Greek. I find myself reciting it regularly throughout the day.

I take a very similar approach, though it being easily approachable and "snappy" in terms of memorizing and reciting it, is something of a double edged sword. For many, it is their first exposure to the core of Epicurean Philosophy, look no further than the many popular videos online that briefly teach about Epicurus.

For someone well acquainted with the philosophy the point becomes moot. If indeed Philodemus or Zeno (of Sidon) were pro-tetrpharmakon, perhaps the saying only circulated among the inner circles of students within various gardens, as opposed to being a means of teaching others who were unfamiliar.

Post by “Godfrey” of December 7, 2020 at 12:40 AM

First, I enjoyed the discussion on death in the podcast: several good points brought up.

Second, I don't recall that the attached paper deals specifically with the Tetrpharmakos, but it is a study of some of the controversies surrounding epitomizing Epicurean philosophy in ancient times and may be of some interest.

Post by “Cassius” of December 7, 2020 at 9:48 AM

1 - Godfrey you are on a roll with good papers recently - thank you!

Quote from Charles

If indeed Philodemus or Zeno (of Sidon) were pro-tetrapharmakon, perhaps the saying only circulated among the inner circles of students within various gardens, as opposed to being a means of teaching others who were unfamiliar.

2 - Don you are deeper into this now than I am so please keep me honest. It seems to me I am remembering that there are "zero" references to this precise formulation **except for** the passage in the Herculaneum scroll that was reconstructed after their discovery in the 1700's. Am I correct about that? Do we have any examples of any ancient Epicurean using this formulation other than that scroll?

3 - And I usually combine that caveat with the statement that there is also "zero" context in terms of surrounding material on that "page" of the scroll that would tell us how it is being used. Am I also correct about that? I don't even know if "page" is the right measure - I am not aware of anyone stating the content of the last remaining text before this occurs, of the first remaining text after it occurs. Don have you picked up anything on that? I think that would be very valuable information to know, but I have not seen it addressed anywhere.

4 - I make that last observation also in context of how Philodemus is regularly writing in opposition to non-Epicureans and/or some other Epicureans, so that I think we always have to keep in mind the peril of putting too much emphasis on an isolated passage that may not even be something that Philodemus was writing approvingly, since he regularly summarized opposing or incorrect doctrine so he could attack it.. On this point I don't think there's much doubt (of course correct me there too if I am wrong), but on points 2 and 3 I know that's an issue of fact that may actually change over time with new discoveries.

Post by "Don" of December 7, 2020 at 3:38 PM

I'll reply more fully later, but the Tetrapharmakos is contained in P.Herc 1005, column V.

Here is a page I just found from Hiram:

<https://societyofepicurus.com/on-philodemus-scroll-1005/>

He says: Philodemus is aware of the utility of summaries and outlines, and in fact not only is he (and/or his Scholarch Zeno of Sidon) responsible for the shortened formulation known as the Tetrapharmakos (Four Cures), but he also instructs his students to write outlines of the

doctrines on wealth. So he is making full use of these outlines and summaries (also known as Epitomes) in his own method of teaching, and yet he also instructs his students to delve into the sources and read the books. So he is NOT telling people to avoid the use of outlines—he would not have forbidden a practice that he himself engaged in. What he was saying is that the outlines are tools for memorizing and learning, not an excuse to neglect our philosophical studies.

Post by “Cassius” of December 7, 2020 at 5:53 PM

That (quote from Hiram) 's a good example of the concerns I have about going further than the text probably justifies. Everything Hiram wrote there in that first sentence is probably correct as isolated statements (Epicurus advised making outlines; Philodemus was aware of that advice). But does that really mean anything in regard to whether this particular text was an example of one of the good outlines? I think I recall reading that in fact surviving parts of this scroll of Philodemus was substantially devoted to his disputes with other Epicureans as to proper doctrine? (Again, keep me honest, Don, but I think I remember reading that about this scroll/book.)

Perhaps indeed this text is part of just the sort of conversation we have had here at the forum about personal outlines. Our context is to take the examples that people post and then "pick them apart" showing how they might be improved, while still noting the usefulness of the process of drafting the outline.. Without more context it's just not clear to me that we can be sure that this was an "approved" outline, or even possibly an example of an outline that is more harmful than helpful. It's possible that Philodemus would have been making much the same comment about this formulation as Charles himself has here -- illustrating both its merits and deficiencies. Without more context in the text it's just not possible to know with confidence.

Post by “Don” of December 7, 2020 at 8:45 PM

Philodemus, *Against/To the ...* (Πρὸς τοὺς [-], P.Herc. 1005) has been translated/edited at least twice into Italian:

1. Francesco Sbordone. *Philodemi Adversus [Sophistas] e Papyro Herculanensi 1005* (Naples: L. Loffredo, 1947)
2. Anna Angeli. *Filodemo, Agli Amici di Scuola* (PHerc. 1005) (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1988).

See also <https://laudatortemporisacti.blogspot.com/2013/03/the-ep...rmakos.html?m=1> where the Tetrpharmakos and its context are on p.87 of Sbordone.

Hiram appears to be referencing *Les Epicureans* again in his post on P. Herc 1005. And that French work appears to include a translation so I'm inclined to accept his take although it would be nice to see his source (even if I don't read French).

I also found an article in Italian that discussed P.Herc 1005 (attached). I ran the Italian sections from the manuscript through Google Translate:

Col. II

<I therefore agree, as I said at the beginning, on the fact that among those who want epicurean passphrases some say and write many things with material affirmed from various parts and many personal things in disagreement with respect to the content of the writings of the school and some things that are detached from those writes superficially and hastily. But I'll make a distinction between the things said by them. If indeed ...>

Col. III

This is not possible at all, unless even the things that all those who entered the sect after Ermarco did, someone present wanted and done in the same way, a sosa that will not be able to prove, I believe, before men are all black and small and misshapen. But if they did not take the name of Epicureans in conformity with those who wrote the dondamenral books, they are not worthy of this name>. >>

Col. VII

<If we call them by the names of wise men in general, we do not descend from those who have become worthy of memory and gritudine, not for some, but for all, and this we do not wish that it will happen to some of our friends, but we turn the disease towards the wild goats. If, on the other hand, one calls with these names and other similar ones the one who has learned to understand by method what is found in the books of the Masters in order to contribute something in a single point regarding those books, they are not wise but unworthy of that denomination. >>

Col. XII

<< ... with a comparison through the juxtaposition of his phrases in other places and in the first book of the Aristaia (?), he who was proud to have put together the documents found in Epicurus and who judged this, as it actually is , superior in all expressions to the 'moderns' and thought that a very serious injustice would be claimed against him, indeed an act of impiety performed, if ... >>

Col. XV

<< ... so that even in the most varied ways they start to defame the ways of life, both the procurement of friends and the relationships of love and the single companions, as if they had not read the precepts of the school, having to perčsjmpio themî € considered enemies both if

they have become completely evil (among those completely devoid of philosophical education not many are balanced people) as if they are good (even among those who follow other schools or who deserted), without spreading slander or causing harm. >>

Col. XIX

<< and for Zeus we on the one hand defend ourselves by opposing ourselves without giving in, on the other we discover that we are writing dispassionately about ways of living. That was not the first behavior held by the first philosophies that, when they become familiar with those they fall into error by mistake on their own or in the company of others, they do not remain attached to them and neither, when they come across irreconcilable people of the external world, do we clearly demonstrate.

Col. XX

<< ... also with regard to the reading and writing of books he can closely follow those (the Masters) and he does not judge as evil that kind of writings on which we are investigating; therefore whoever violates the measure in excess or in defect and behaves inappropriately in fundamental things will be classified as incompetent in relation to the whole discipline. And I to those who have lain as incompetent and who are discovered as such <I will never cease to resist.

Post by “Cassius” of December 7, 2020 at 9:32 PM

Again many thanks Don. Do you get an impression of where the Tetrpharmakon fits among the parts that are translated above?

(This does seem to confirm my memory that the full context of the book seems to be a discussion of controversies within or among the Epicurean community, so I continue to think that context is important to consider.)

Post by “Don” of December 7, 2020 at 10:30 PM

The Tetrpharmakos appears in Column V... Of course, that's not one the article translates!

But I did find the transcription of the entire PHerc 1005! <http://papyri.info/dclp/62437>

Post by “Cassius” of December 8, 2020 at 6:29 AM

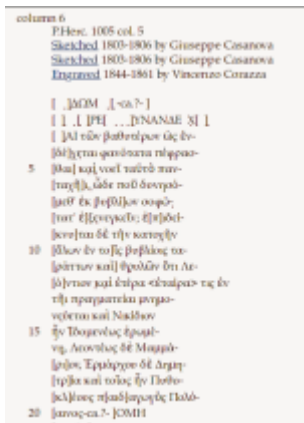
OK that page seems to be the best source.

The four-part cure [\[edit \]](#)

As expressed by Philodemus, and preserved in a [Herculaneum Papyrus \(1005, 4.9–14\)](#), the tetrapharmakos reads:^[a]

Don't fear god,	ἄφοβον ὁ θεός,
Don't worry about death;	ἀύναρτον ὁ θάνατος,
What is good is easy to get,	καὶ τῶσθ' ἂν μὲν εὐκταίον,
What is terrible is easy to endure	τὸ δὲ δειρὸν εὐκαταλήπτον

Is this it?



Don can you make any context out of that?

Post by “Don” of December 8, 2020 at 7:12 AM

Sorry. Some confusion on my part. It's actually the one right above the image you clipped.

column 5 P.Herc. 1005 col. 4

(I think it's just a transcription vs physical scroll numbering thing)

The Tetrapharmakos starts on line 8 there.

You'll see the word itself half on line 8, ending in line 9:

μένον] ἡ τετραφάρμα- (menon hē tetrapharma-)
κος· ἄφοβον ὁ θεός, (kos; "aphobon ho theos,...)

I'm going to try and puzzle through the immediate context of those surrounding lines and columns. Don't expect anything for a little while 😊 but I'll keep y'all posted.

Post by “Don” of December 8, 2020 at 2:07 PM

I literally just found this. It looks promising if you can read French:

<https://journals.openedition.org/philosant/3044?lang=en>

One can also run it through Google Translate if you're using Chrome.

Post by “Cassius” of December 8, 2020 at 3:41 PM

Yes it does look promising - it at least seems to entertain that the formulation is "simplistic" -- I too will see what I can do with Google Translate:

1245 / 5000

Translation results

The hypothesis of the orthodoxy of the tetrapharmakos, which is based on the proximity of these four elements to the content of Men. 133 and MC I-IV, is almost universally accepted today; most editors, translators and commentators on Epicurus spontaneously reconcile these different testimonies and assume that the tetrapharmakos is well understood directly, as well in Men. 133 than in MC I-IV¹⁸. Comparetti¹⁹, Usener²⁰, Crönert²¹ and Bignone²² are probably at the origin of this reading, because, from the appearance of the first critical ecdotic works on Epicureanism, they defended not only the hypothesis of an orthodoxy of the tetrapharmakos, but that of an invention of the formula by Epicurus himself. However, according to Sbordone, the only dissenting voice, it is on the contrary an oversimplification operated by little seasoned Epicureans, who are in the text of the PHERC. 1005 the adversaries of Philodemus²³. This uncertainty is linked to the very poor condition of the papyrus concerned, and in particular to the enormous gap in the title; from this gap, a Sbordone will thus have postulated a *Against the Sophists*, where Marcello Gigante and his suite Anna Angeli rather suppose an *Aux Amis de l'Ecole*²⁴.

The consensual reading of the text, since the edition of Anna Angeli²⁵, is based on two elements: on the one hand, the fact that Philodemus himself does not attribute the tetrpharmakos to Epicurus; on the other hand, and contrary to what Sbordone supposed, the hypothesis which he defends in the Πρὸς τοὺς [... the thesis according to which it remains a correct and exact formula, in accordance with the spirit of the ethics of 'Epicurus. The claim made by Philodemus, to which he does not seem absolutely hostile, is a claim of orthodoxy; In any case, this is strongly suggested by the legible elements in the whole of the preserved part of the treaty²⁶. It is then necessary to understand with a little more subtlety what makes Philodemus cautious with regard to this statement. The question, as we will see, is not so much content as it is method; and it will shed suggestive light on the very teaching of ethics within the Garden, and on the question of the relationship between short speeches and long speeches.

The Πρὸς τοὺς [...] is probably addressed or alluded to Epicureans who do not commit errors, strictly speaking, but who do not have a very clear conception of the relation which unites the abstracts of the doctrine to its full developments. It is therefore a question of inviting them to make fair use of each of these media, that is to say to start not being satisfied with the abstracts; but it also means knowing how to use them without fear when the opportunity arises, and not to doubt them. Epicureanism is working and deepening; a true epicurean cannot therefore be satisfied with the tetrpharmakos or any other epitome and must only resort to it when the case presents itself without risk of caricature or confusion. Philodemus thus allusively reports controversies created by ignorance of the details of the Epicurean doctrine; to be able on the one hand not to be intimidated by incomplete refutations, on the other hand to respond effectively, research in books is essential.

This kind of controversy seems to have blossomed during an important part of the Garden's life, as an echo of this disputed practice of abstracts is found in another scroll in Herculaneum's library, the PHerc. 1044, which alludes to the activity of a certain Philonides who is said to have produced a large quantity of these summaries. To take up the completely suggestive but perhaps somewhat forced translation of Koch Piettre²⁷, these books are supposed to have been composed "to serve lazy young people" (νεοῖς ἀργοῖς ὠφελίμους).

Mais, dans le Πρὸς τοὺς [...] de Philodème, on lit également ceci:

(col. XVI) [- - -] δ [ύ] ναγ [ται] μ [έν] τοῖς [β] υβλίοις παρακολουθεῖν οἱ καὶ τετυ [χ] ὅτες ἀγωγῆς Ἑλλησι καὶ [ο] ὑ [Πέρσαις] πρεπούσης καὶ παι [δευθέ] ντες ἐν μ [α] θημασι, δι [δά] σκουσι καὶ [τ] ἂ τῶν ἐπιτετηδευκότων ἀσάφειαν ἐξευρίσκειν καὶ ὁμοειδῆ γ ', εἰ μηδὲν ἕτερον, ἐκ παιδίου μέχρι γήρωσ φ [ι] λοσοφήσαντες καὶ τοσαῦτα καὶ τοιαῦτα ταῖς ἀκριβεῖαις συντεθεικότες · ο [ι] δὲ δουλεύσαντες ἐργατικῶς ἢ ἀνάγ [ω] γοι καὶ γράμματα μὴ μ [α] θόντες [---

²⁸ Πρὸς τοὺς [...] col. XVI, trad. Delattre & Monet 2010, p. 739.

Women are more likely to pay attention to books, as they are, because they have the opportunity to attend a school that is owned by the Greeks, not by [...], and are formed in school disciplines, explicitly just for men who are occupied by the elixir which is obscure. It has been studied by philosophers - from infancy to life - from similar observations of the moon, to

the choice of others, or to the composition of very numerous and very interesting scripts by their precision. In revenge, those who are enslaved and accomplished through work, or who are deprived of education, and who are not free to write and write, [...] 28.

This passage may be the start of a well-reasoned defense of the use of abstracts for a certain type of audience. Philodemus distinguishes here, not two categories of philosophical texts, but two categories of people: the scholars, who having studied "as philosophers" - and it will be noted that here the philosophical activity is defined as a school activity - are in able to make useful use of the vast developments which elucidate what is obscure in a detailed fashion, and laymen who, due to their condition of laborious existence, cannot have any bookish approach. Such a distinction can open the way to two kinds of argument: an apologetic argument, which will take the defense of the type of philosophical support adapted to this second uneducated public - the summary or the memorable and simple formula being all indicated for the slave who does not know how to read but who nevertheless has the right to access a happy life; or else an aristocratic argument intended to limit philosophy to this first cultivated public, the only one capable of understanding it - and which in the context of Πρὸς τοὺς ... leads to ridicule those who, although having by education and social status the possibility to read and study philosophy at school, refuse to do so - to be honest, the young idle smokers denounced according to Koch Piettre in the PHERC. 1044. This second argument is possible - and it is the one retained by the most recent French translators of this text, Daniel Delattre and Annick Monet; it nevertheless seems a bit problematic to us if we take into account the general posture of Epicureanism, a philosophy that aims to be popular and which is being built in the mouth of Epicurus against the training program of classical paideia²⁹. We should therefore see perhaps a little irony in this passage from Philodemus, and in the description of these apprentice philosophers bent over their grimoires and strictly occupied in understanding the letter of an obscure text. In reality, the full argument of Philodemus's text is very subtle, since what we can read about it indicates at least three demonstrative tracks:

the need for a real deepening of the doctrine (not to be satisfied with anthologies or summaries);

the defense of the texts of the first Epicureans, even though their detail would contradict recent philosophical developments, and the need not to question the entire corpus because some books appear doubtful; ³⁰ Cf. the different occurrences of συμμετρία, Πρὸς τοὺς [... col. XVIII, 3 and XX, 4.

taking into account the different social and intellectual situations, which gives its proper place to each type of writing, summary or detailed. From this perspective, the abstracts are valid "to a fair extent³⁰" as long as they are used wisely and without claiming to replace the developed texts.

²¹The tetrapharmakos, despite its extreme concentration, then remains a valid statement if and only if it can be linked at one time or another in philosophical practice, or to the already somewhat more consistent form it takes in the Maxims, or, even better, to a complete and reasoned ethical presentation. But, for want of anything better, it remains a solid basis for

Epicureans who are temporarily in situations that are not very appropriate for a school philosophical practice.

I am going to tag [Charles](#) here to be sure he catches this part of the article.

Post by “Don” of December 8, 2020 at 10:49 PM

So it seems to me that, according to that article:

1. The tetrapharmakos is a legitimate, authentic Epicurean epitome.
 2. It could be used for several purposes including instruction for those who didn't have the time or education to study the full texts themselves.
 3. It could also be used by more scholarly students of the philosophy to keep key points more readily at hand and to serve as "une invitation à la réflexion et au calcul" an invitation to reflection and calculation. (I think they're referring to the calculation of "choices and rejections.")
 4. That being said, Philodemus definitely advocated study of the actual texts was the best course of action in studying the philosophy.
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Post by “Cassius” of December 9, 2020 at 6:09 AM

I think that's probably fair, Don, but I personally side more with:

[Quote from Cassius](#)

However, according to Sbordone, the only dissenting voice, it is on the contrary an oversimplification operated by little seasoned Epicureans,

And I would really like to read the full argument here, if I could eventually find it and get a translation: Francesco Sbordone. *Philodemi Adversus [Sophistas] e Papyro Herculaniensi 1005* (Naples: L. Loffredo, 1947)

I woke up today too thinking of this one additional point, that in addition to thinking each aspect is an oversimplification, I would vigorously object to the "don't fear "GOD"" if indeed the original is singular rather than plural. The implicit approval of monotheism is a direct conflict with Epicurean doctrine of the nature of "gods" and I would consider that a huge breach in a core element of the philosophy. I suppose it is possible in some contexts (dealing with Jews perhaps?) but I can't imagine that the original founders talked that way in most contexts, and if this version is singular.

I note Don that you translated it both ways in one of your earlier posts here. What is your view on which is most likely?

Post by “Don” of December 9, 2020 at 7:43 AM

The tetrapharmakos uses singular ο θεός (the) god but I wouldn't read monotheism into this. That's a regular construction in ancient Greek. The singular can be used to refer to gods/deity in a general sense. There is definitely no "implicit approval of monotheism" implied here

Yes, getting a look at Sbordone would be nice but I would rather see Angeli: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/800107647>

Sbordone tries to say the title of PHerc 1005 is Pros Tous Sophistas "Against the Sophists" but he is blue-skying that last word. The final word of the title on the papyrus is missing, torn off. All that's there is Pros Tous... ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ... "Against/To The..." To imply otherwise is disingenuous. Angeli leaves the title alone if I remember correctly. That's why I'm a little mistrustful of Sbordone.

Post by “Don” of December 9, 2020 at 8:07 AM

Consider ο θεός in this case to read "the divine" as in "that which is blessed and incorruptible."

Post by “Joshua” of December 9, 2020 at 12:44 PM

I second what Don said re: singular/plural. Compare with the Hebrew Torah where "God"—clearly singular—is referred to sometimes by the plural.

Post by “Cassius” of December 9, 2020 at 12:55 PM

I guess then as to "Don't Fear God" what we are saying is that this is an example of how superficial use of the Tetrpharmakon in unfamiliar hands is frequently going to lead to miscommunication. In my experience is general usage "Don't fear God" is going to be read as going along with the dominant monotheism paradigm, which we definitely don't want people to think we are doing.

Post by “Don” of December 9, 2020 at 2:25 PM

I don't think you're doing it, but I don't think it's fair to slight the Tetrpharmakos itself for it's being misused.

I still maintain it's a nice direct link for modern "practicing" Epicureans back to our classical forebears.

Post by “Cassius” of December 9, 2020 at 2:30 PM

I agree with your conclusion as you state it, Don. I hope we can continue to dig into the commentaries that have been written on this particular scroll because they seem to be right on point with many of our current issues. It sounds like Philodemus was dealing with much the same problem that we deal with today, in terms of how to be clear and accurate and yet make our point to people outside the circle.

Post by “Cassius” of December 12, 2020 at 8:14 AM

This point of Don's stuck in my mind and I want to come back to it:

[Quote from Don](#)

Sbordone tries to say the title of PHerc 1005 is Pros Tous Sophistas "Against the Sophists" but he is blue-skying that last word. The final word of the title on the papyrus is missing, torn off. All that's there is Pros Tous... ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ... "Against/To The..." To imply otherwise is disingenuous. Angeli leaves the title alone if I remember correctly. That's why I'm a little mistrustful of Sbordone.

As to Sbordone's use of "Sophists" -- I've never been able to get my mind around just what is meant by "sophists." The word and usage seems all over the board, and I get the impression that "sophism" has come to be a catch-all label for anyone a writer disagrees with. For example, this from the sophism page at wikipedia says Socrates was labeled a sophist:

Criticism

Many sophists taught their skills for a price. Due to the importance of such skills in the litigious social life of Athens, practitioners often commanded very high fees. The sophists' practice of questioning the existence and roles of traditional deities and investigating into the nature of the heavens and the earth prompted a popular reaction against them. The attacks of some of their followers against [Socrates](#) prompted a vigorous condemnation from his followers, including [Plato](#) and [Xenophon](#), as there was a popular view of Socrates as a sophist. For example, in the comic playwright [The Clouds](#), [Aristophanes](#) criticizes the sophists as hairsplitting wordsmiths, and makes Socrates their representative.^[9] Their attitude, coupled with the wealth garnered by many of the sophists, eventually led to popular resentment against sophist practitioners and the ideas and writings associated with sophism.

My point in posting this is that Sbordone may be blue-skying the title of the work, but it *would* be useful for us to have an acceptable name for the scroll. It sounds like indeed that the topic was something about being against those who misunderstand or misapply Epicurus, so what would be a good way to refer to this one other than perhaps by number so that we can carry on an ongoing discussion about it in the future? If not "Against Sophism" (and I agree that is probably not a good idea given the ambiguity of the word) then what? I would expect that using "Sophists" misleads us into thinking that he is attacking primarily members of another school, when in fact it sounds like the topic is an "attack" - some of which is probably friendly - on Epicureans who he thinks could be doing a better job teaching the philosophy.

Given that the work indeed seems to be attacking errors in Epicurean philosophy, that would be something important to know about the source of the "tetrpharmakon."

For example it seems to me this is a fair sentence: "The only known source for the tetrapharmakon is a work by Philodemus which attacks oversimplifications and misapplications of Epicurean philosophy."

Post by “Don” of December 12, 2020 at 8:25 AM

I've seen it simply referred to as either the papyrus no. "P.Herc 1005" or the partial title in Greek "Pros Tous..." The thing about the Greek ΠΡΟΣ (pros) is that it can mean either "against x" or "(addressed) to x" when followed by the accusative case (which is the case that the plural article ΤΟΥΣ "the" is in) See Section C in this definition from LSJ for all the potential accusative meanings:

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...057:entry=pro/s>

Post by “Cassius” of February 26, 2022 at 5:00 AM

Crossing to more on this issue: [RE: Tetrapharmakos in Philodemus's On Choices and Rejections](#)