EPICURUS AND THE EPICUREAN TRADITION

EDITED BY

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CHAPTER 5

Not all politicians are Sisyphus: what Roman Epicureans were taught about politics

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When it comes to political involvement, some of our most important sources on early Epicureanism frame the question in terms regularly employed by their Stoic rivals: 'Will the sage engage in politics?' Epicurus and Chrysippus apparently both discussed this question in works sharing the title *On Modes of Life* (Περὶ βίων).[1] Of Epicurus' treatment we have a two-word summary: οὐδὲ πολιτεύσεται ('and the sage will not participate in politics').[2] But if the question were really as simple as its traditional wording makes it seem, this answer would appear to create complications for some, especially for converts in oligarchic aristocracies. What was someone like Cassius, the tyrannicide, to do once he came to be a late-life convert to Epicureanism? On the face of it, if Epicureanism has really taken hold, he would lay down his political influence, withdraw from the larger society and live the rest of his life unnoticed with his Epicurean friends. Otherwise, if he clings to his political career and influence, and even risks his life for them, as Cassius did, we would suspect that he is just dabbling in Epicureanism. As for Epicurean philosophers, we might expect the more rigorous ones to help princes and courtiers find ways to descend from their positions of authority and influence, as Epicurus did with his friend Idomeneus, a politician from Lampsacus.[3] And we might imagine Epicurean philosophers who would not give such advice as parasitic professionals, mere flatterers unwilling to forego the benefits of having rich and powerful patrons. Where would they be if their patron were to forfeit his own power of patronage?

This line of thinking has coloured nearly all interpretation of Epicureanism and politics. A rare exception is the recent ground-breaking work of Geert Roskam, who demonstrates that there was always a flexibility in

I am grateful to David Armstrong, Kirk Sanders and Michael Wigodsky for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

[1] See Joly 1956. [2] DL 10.119. [3] For Idomeneus' biography and fragments, see Angeli 1981.

Epicureanism regarding issues like political involvement.[4] Prohibitions were not dogmatic, but rather suggestions that should be considered according to circumstances. According to the relevant calculus, a political career might prove the best choice in certain cases. In general, however, the views of Cicero and Plutarch continue to predominate, and nowhere more so than in the interpretation of Epicurean statesmen in the Late Roman Republic.[5] This tendency has a long history in modern scholarship. For example, one of the reasons Usener thought that the *Key Doctrines* (*KD*) was a compilation made by a not very intelligent follower rather than by Epicurus himself was its lack of a clear affirmation of μή πολιτεύεσθαι ('forego politics') and λάθε βιώσας ('live unnoticed'). Epicurus, thought Usener, would surely have unambiguously stated the principle of non-involvement in politics.[6]

In the light of all this, it is no surprise that Philodemus' *On the Good King according to Homer* (*De bono rege*) has occasioned scepticism towards both its author and its addressee, Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus. The work assumes that a good man can deal well and to his own profit with princely responsibilities, and that Homer's princes provide useful models of good and bad behaviour. As for the addressee himself, many modern assessments hold that Piso's commitment to Epicureanism did not run deep. So, for instance, Elizabeth Rawson:

> One might suggest that Piso read this [i.e., *On the Good King*] . . . , glanced at some of the other so-called diatribes, sometimes looked in on the dinner parties on the twentieth of the month to which we saw him being invited, and for the rest felt

[4] Roskam 2007 has anticipated me on several important points, although I differ from him, as I point out, at certain significant junctures. Koch 2005 strikes some of the same notes as Roskam but is less informed and sometimes overspeculative (see the review by Warren (= Warren 2007)). The celebrated treatment of Momigliano 1941 serves as a fine starting point. Benferhat 2005 gives a useful review of many of the important figures but lacks Roskam's analysis. Fowler 1989, despite many insights, ignores much of the evidence. Miriam Griffin's informed study in Griffin and Barnes 1989 – which contains a thorough bibliography that is updated in Griffin and Barnes 1997 – shows how difficult it can be to establish connections between the philosophical commitment of a ruler and a particular political course of action (cf. Jocelyn 1977), but this fact does not prove a lack of genuine philosophical commitment on the part of Roman statesmen. Such a commitment may rather be seen more clearly in the emphasis of certain character qualities and attitudes, as Griffin herself shows with regard to Piso in Griffin 2001.

[5] Castner 1988, for example, assumes throughout her prosopography of Epicurean statesmen in the Late Republic that political activity equates with an insincere or unintelligent commitment to Epicureanism. So she says by way of comment on Trebatius' commitment to Epicureanism: 'such adherence among Romans was superficial in that it presented little hindrance to a full range of the political activities traditional for the upper classes' (72).

[6] Usener 1887: xliv.

that a tame Greek philosopher about the villa was a status-symbol, and should be allowed to get on with his work.[7]

Recent work on Piso by Miriam Griffin has taken a much more positive approach. According to Griffin, Cicero's *In Pisonem* 'provides us with clear evidence that Piso himself openly expressed his Epicurean convictions and explained his actions in terms of them'.[8] Moreover, she demonstrates that there is a remarkable correspondence between Philodemus' good king and what we know of Piso's own character and career.[9] When one also considers the inscriptional and other evidence attesting that Piso's daughter, Calpurnia, and even their freedmen and freedwomen were committed Epicureans,[10] the possibility that Piso himself was earnestly committed to his philosophy must itself be taken seriously.

More devastating charges have been directed against Philodemus as the author of such a work. The issue is not advising a ruler per se, since several Epicureans are known to have done this,[11] but the nature of the treatise itself. In the influential article 'Lucretius and politics', Don Fowler argued forcefully that a positive case for Epicurean kingship and political leadership cannot be made. The issue of *On the Good King* surfaces only briefly, and Fowler states simply that he hopes to deal with the treatise at some later date but that perhaps, as Oswyn Murray once claimed, the treatise does not have important connections with Epicurean philosophy after all.[12] The implication is clear: if *On the Good King* were genuinely

[7] Rawson 1985: 59; cf. Rawson 1989: 233, 'Philodemus' *On the Good King according to Homer* is written by the author rather as poet and critic than as Epicurean philosopher.' Cf. also Jocelyn 1977: 352, 'It is interesting that Philodemus went against all Epicurean tradition and dedicated a treatise on ὁ ἀγαθὸς βασιλεύς to his Roman patron Piso.' Roskam 2007: 123–5, is right to claim that there is no contradiction between Philodemus' philosophy and the substance of *On the Good King according to Homer*.

[8] Griffin 2001: 90. Grimal 1966 also takes Piso's Epicureanism seriously.

[9] Griffin 2001: 89–90. Nisbet 1961: xvi, plays down the possible influence of his philosophy: '[H]is political moderation depended on native common sense rather than on philosophical theory'. Even to open the possibility that philosophers might make a difference in their patrons is to go against the grain of some scholarship, e.g. Jocelyn 1977: 352; cf. Dorandi 2005.

[10] See Armstrong 1993: 200–1 n. 29; Boyancé 1955.

[11] For a useful survey, see Benferhat 2005: 43–56.

[12] Fowler 1989: 133, '[P]erhaps we have no alternative but to return to Murray's view of that treatise [*sc.* in Murray 1965: 165] as not in essence an Epicurean work'. Fowler was more emphatic in his review of Dorandi's edition of *On the Good King* (= Fowler 1986): 'There is no doubt that the work is unorthodox [*sc.* with regard to Epicurean attitudes towards poetry and politics], but I suspect Dorandi is right to point to works like Epicurus' *On Kingship* as possible forerunners.' Cf. also Murray 1984a: 236, which states that *On the Good King* 'belongs not with Philodemus' philosophy but with his poetry'. I agree with Murray and Fowler that the treatise is not an *intra-school* work, but would argue that it is very much in keeping with Philodemus' philosophy. It had been previously supposed, for example, that *On the Good King* was inconsistent with Philodemus' own teaching in

Epicurean – written by an Epicurean to an Epicurean – it would argue that power never truly creates safety, which can only be found by withdrawing from public life to the company of Epicurean friends.

I maintain instead that *On the Good King* itself constitutes a positive case for a form of Epicurean statesmanship.[13] Although Philodemus' analysis of Homeric kings makes use of several stock elements from kingship literature, he concentrates on one theme especially compatible with Epicureanism, and one, I think, especially articulated within the school. *KD* 7 identifies glory as a risky pleasure, but adds that there would be no reason not to enjoy it were it risk-free. A ruler's virtuous exercise of power leads to, or at least tends to promote, his safety.[14] I suggest that, with the help of Philodemus and others like him, Roman statesmen were able to connect two strands of Epicurean thought in order to justify their political life: one, that a person's virtues are productive of the good will and love of others, actual pleasures in themselves;[15] the other, that power can in fact lead to safety. Combining the two could result in the claim that the virtuous exercise of political power can sometimes provide safety as well as pleasure to a ruler. Epicurean statesmen in previous generations likely held a similar point of view.

The suggestion that Epicurus and his followers believed power capable of producing personal safety has itself been controversial. Safety, we are told, can only be found by withdrawing altogether from public life to the company of like-minded friends. Epicureans of the Late Republic clearly thought otherwise, and I maintain that there is a good case to be made in their defence on Epicurean terms. Rather than something inexplicable,[16] or a reflection of an inability or unwillingness to reconcile their philosophical commitments with their public life,[17] the decision of such men to engage

On Poems, in which he denies that moral teaching belongs to poetry's essence, and suggests that poetry is a poor medium for conveying philosophical thoughts; however, Asmis 1991 has shown how it is entirely consistent with Philodemus' views to discover moral teaching in Homer nonetheless.

[13] Others have already made the suggestion, albeit without the kind of detailed support I provide here, that *On the Good King* was written in the tradition of earlier Epicurean thought (now lost) on kingship; see, e.g., Warren 2002: 156–7.

[14] Constrast Schofield 2000: 455, 'The treatise contains nothing distinctively Epicurean in doctrine, but probably this is due principally to the conventions of the genre, which seems to have dealt in variations of stock themes inherited from Isocrates' *To Nicocles* and similar writings rather than in argument from first principles.' My own forthcoming edition of the treatise reveals the need to modify this assessment.

[15] On this see Cassius' reply to a letter of Cicero's (*Fam.* 15.19) and Armstrong's discussion of it in ch. 6 of this volume (pp. 112–13).

[16] Cf. Momigliano 1941: 157.

[17] Cf. Maslowski 1978: 222, 'Epicureanism with them was more of a personal matter than a doctrine guiding their public activities.'

in politics was perfectly reasonable within an Epicurean framework, given their life situations. Without denying that the best life was one of complete withdrawal from politics,[18] these men affirmed that someone who for justifiable reasons was unable completely to avoid politics, could still enjoy many of the benefits of Epicureanism. Epicurus and his followers did not discourage the possession of power per se, only the ambitious pursuit of it. Their position was much more nuanced than Cicero and Plutarch or their modern counterparts would have us believe.

I shall begin not with Epicurus' own opinions on politics and power, but with the Sisyphus allegory as found in Lucretius (3.995–1002), which nowadays is thought to show the vanity and futility of all politics. I shall then move on to discuss other passages in *De rerum natura* (*DRN*) (in particular 5.1120–34) that are thought to present a view of power and safety according to which political life is *always* the worst choice. In conjunction with these verses, I will examine Epicurus' Key Doctrine 7 as well as a passage from Philodemus' *On Vices*, which contrasts with Lucretius by discussing how a virtuous, as opposed to a vicious, person may pursue safety through a good reputation. Finally, I shall consider how power, safety and politics are treated by Torquatus in Cicero's *De finibus* and by Philodemus in his own *On the Good King*.

In Lucretius we find a striking ambiguity about politics. The poem begins with a prayer to Venus that she and Mars embrace, since in time of trouble (*patriai tempore iniquo*) Lucretius cannot engage in his philosophical writing, and Memmius must dedicate himself to politics for the common good (1.41–3). Memmius' political activities are portrayed as legitimate duties. Lucretius does not want him to abandon them during this time of the Republic's need. This opening has proven difficult to reconcile with the prevailing interpretation of other passages, including that of the allegory of Sisyphus in 3.995–1002:

> Sisyphus in vita quoque nobis ante oculos est, 995
> qui petere a popolo fasces saevasque secures
> imbibit et semper victus tristisque recedit.
> *nam petere imperium quod inanest nec datur umquam,* 998

[18] This is expressed clearly at the end of *KD* 14, according to which 'the purest security is that which comes from a quiet life and withdrawal from the many' (tr. Inwood/Gerson). The nature of Epicurean withdrawal from society is generally misunderstood, as Asmis 2004: 135 has noted: 'While opposing traditional values, Epicureanism does not remove the individual from the rest of society. It keeps a person integrated in the daily routine of ordinary life while shifting his or her aims away from those of the rest of society.' Further (140): 'The life that they shared with other Epicureans was especially important; it was, in a sense, the only real life. Yet there was also a life, however attenuated, outside the Garden, and Epicurus gave instructions on how to cope with it.'

atque in eo semper durum sufferre laborem,
hoc est adverso nixantem trudere monte
saxum quod tamen e summo iam vertice rursum
volvitur et plani raptim petit aequora campi.

Sisyphus, too, is here in life before our eyes, he who thirsts to seek the rods and awesome axes from the people and always goes away defeated and dejected. *For to seek an imperium that is in vain and is not ever granted,* and always to undergo harsh labors in the process, this is to struggle to push up the face of a mountain a stone which rolls still yet again from the highest summit and rapidly seeks the level areas of the even plain. (Tr. Englert, with minor changes)

The last 100 years has witnessed the emergence of a nearly universal scholarly consensus regarding the meaning of line 998. The view, first hinted at by Lemaire in 1838, was fully articulated by Giussani:

Power is in essence illusory; one never has true power, because it is always connected with much servitude, with too many obligations and concerns for others . . . Lucretius compares to Sisyphus not only the candidates who repeatedly remain at the bottom of the ladder, but also the fortunate. For that reason, *quod inanest nec datur umquam* is essential: even Pompey and Caesar are among the Sisyphuses.[19]

This declaration of existential despair, we are to understand, makes even the winners of elections resemble Sisyphus, because *imperium* itself is essentially empty and never conferred, no matter the actual election outcome.[20] David West starts from this position and then takes it a step further.[21] According to West, the rock making for the level plain (*plani petit aequora campi*) is itself a reference to successful candidates who, after their year's term in office, return to the Campus Martius 'to stand for election again'.[22]

[19] Giussani 1896–8: vol. III, p. 125. I present Lemaire's comment below.

[20] Subsequent commentators have followed suit; cf., e.g., Kenney 1971 *ad loc.*, 'For the false idea that power confers security cf. 59–86n. *nec datur umquam* means that the *imperium* that men promise themselves is illusory and unobtainable.' So also P. Brown 1997 *ad loc.* Heinze's commentary on Book 3 (= Heinze 1897) was published in the same year as Giussani's. Unfortunately, Heinze does not comment upon *nec datur umquam*, and so we cannot tell the full extent of his agreement with Giussani, but he does agree that *imperium* is something empty per se.

[21] D. West 1969: 101, '"To be a candidate for power, which is an illusion, and is never given" can mean only that all political power is hollow, that even those who win elections have achieved nothing.'

[22] Ibid.: 101–2. West reiterates the point on p. 102: '[E]ven if you get to the top, you must down again to the Campus, that is to say even if you are elected you must presently demit office and prepare to fight your next election'. West's view has, to my knowledge, gone unchallenged, with the single exception of a brief criticism in a review of the book by M. L. Clarke (= Clarke 1971): 'Lucretius says definitely that the Sisyphus of this world is the politician who is always defeated in elections; West, in some confusing paragraphs, tries to show that he also had in mind electoral success, because Sisyphus' stone reached the top before it rolled down again.' Fowler 1989: 140

Whatever its attractions on a literary-critical level, such an interpretation entails major anachronisms and ignores basic facts of the Roman constitution for the period under consideration. Only two senatorial offices conferred imperium, the praetorship and the consulship. West's suggestion of successful candidates returning immediately after their year as consul or praetor for another term to explain the allegory of Sisyphus and his rock is not easily reconciled with Roman history. Lucretius presumably describes a phenomenon current in his own day (*nobis ante oculos*), which neither successive consulships nor a consulship following directly upon a praetorship were. Not since Marius had consulships been consecutively repeated, and no one was praetor twice.[23] Pompey held the consulship three times (70, 55 and 52) but never consecutively. As far as we know, no statesmen in Lucretius' day tried for the consulship in the year immediately following a term as praetor or for consecutive consulships. We can say with certainty that none succeeded in doing so. Moreover, as with the preceding allegories (3.981–94) on ἔρως and ingratitude respectively, we would expect the Sisyphus allegory to describe a general phenomenon, not something that could have applied at most to a handful of statesmen of the day, even were we to assign the poem a date later than the *ante* 54 BC usually supposed.[24] The reasons are not hard to find as to why a second consulship was attempted only in the rarest of circumstances, even after an interval of some years. Holding the consulship once marked a man for life and meant both the entrance into a privileged inner circle of the Senate and the attainment (if desired) of near kingly power as a proconsul whose tenure usually lasted for several years.[25] Accordingly, there was rarely any reason, at least when Lucretius was writing his poem, why anyone would even want to hold the consulship more than once. West's interpretation seems to conflict with these important facts of Roman political life.

Against the prevailing existentialist interpretation of the passage, I propose reviving the view held by some (perhaps all) commentators prior to Lemaire. Simply put, the passage refers to a perennial candidate for praetor

endorses West's view, as does Gale 2001: 94, although Gale never loses sight of the fact that the passage is primarily about ambition. Others following West include Gigandet 1998: 70, 377–8 and Edwards 2007: 82. Nussbaum 1994: 218–19, embraces an existential view of the passage, if not West's explicit formulation. Benferhat 2005: 83, views Lucretius as not departing from Epicurus here, but claims that political activity 'seems to be thoroughly condemned' in the passage.

[23] Marius held the consulship seven times: 107, 104–100, and 86. Q. Caecilius Metellus Numidicus, consul in 109, tried unsuccessfully for a second consulship in 100 (see Broughton 1991: 9).

[24] For the possibility of a later date, see Hutchinson 2001 and Canfora 1993.

[25] Proconsuls were often considered as counterparts to Hellenistic kings, on which see Rawson 1975. In the 50s, when *DRN* was probably written, the period of tenure abroad was longer than usual (see Badian and Lintott 1996).

or consul, one who cannot win election but continues to try, and nothing more. Certainly, this is the how the earliest surviving commentary on the passage, contained within remarks by Servius on *Aeneid* 6.596, interprets it. Servius' comment presents a fairly extended interpretation of the three allegories in Lucr. 3.978–1010. On Sisyphus he writes: *per eos autem qui 'saxum volvunt' ambitum vult et repulsam significari, quia semel repulsi petitores ambire non desinunt* ('By those however who "roll their stone" Lucretius will have it that political ambition and the "repulsa" [i.e. electoral loss], is signified, because once they become "repulsi" [i.e. electorally defeated] the candidates do not quit campaigning'). This comment almost certainly extends back to earlier interpretations, perhaps even to Probus, who published a critical edition of Lucretius. Beginning here and extending through to Lemaire in 1838, I have been unable to find any evidence that the Sisphyus passage was ever taken to refer to anything other than a perennial candidate.[26] Lemaire's own commentary on the passage functions as something of an interpretative bridge, in that he presents both the older view and (only tentatively) the newer one. Commenting on the word *inane* in 998 he writes: *an quia nunquam datur; vel potius per se vanum est, neque ad hominis veram felicitatem quidquam confert?* ('Perhaps because "it is never granted"; or rather because it is empty in itself and contributes nothing to the true happiness of a man?') Of course, the fact that the newer reading seems not to have held any currency in pre-modern interpretation of the poem does not mean that the current consensus is incorrect, but it does suggest that the old view, all but forgotten, is worth re-examining. To begin with the most obvious aspect of earlier interpretation, *nec datur umquam* does not mean that power is never in any context conferred, or that power is unreal,[27] but that it is never *in this particular case* conferred, because the politician never gets elected to an office with *imperium*.[28] The

[26] Creech's edition of 1818 (revised by Bentley) gives this paraphrase *ad loc.*: *nam petere imperium quod frustra petitur, nec umquam datur & in eo petendo improbum laborem semper sustinere, id profecto est conari saxum volvere adverso monte* ('For to seek imperium, which is sought in vain "and never granted" and always to undergo tiresome labor in seeking it, this is truly to try to roll a stone with a mountain [slope] opposing it'). Creech clearly intends *quod frustra petitur* to paraphrase *quod inanest* as *(petere imperium) quod inane est petere, nec umquam datur; nec datur umquam* is explained as identical with *inane est petere.* This is reflected in his translation (Creech 1682) as well in other translations of the period, e.g. Dryden's: 'For still to aim at pow'r and still to fail, / Ever to strive and never to prevail'. For the period after Lemaire but before Giussani, Bockemüller 1874 clearly holds to the traditional view, remarking on *quod inane est*: 'welches für den eifrigen Bittsteller in so weit gar nicht vorhanden ist, als er es niemals erhält'.

[27] On this passage, cf. Minyard 1985: 48, '*Imperium* is a name without reference in the world of things. It is, in Epicurean terms, part of the void.'

[28] It is important to keep in mind that *imperium* here is not 'power' in general, but rather (see *OLD* s.v. 3) 'an office, magistracy, or command involving supreme power'.

imperium is thus never granted. But how do we understand *inane* on this reading? For Creech *inane* describes an *imperium* that is sought in vain (*quod frustra petitur*).[29] Seeking consular *imperium* in vain, i.e. not getting elected, is to be Sisyphus.

A similar line of interpretation yields a better account of *inane*. A Roman reader would have understood that the kind of person envisioned in the passage has already advanced to the lower levels of the Senate, a prerequisite for someone seeking *imperium*. And yet there is no indication that there was anything Sisyphean about his earlier efforts to become quaestor or aedile. Nor is there any reason to suppose that Lucretius means to convey a general principle to the effect that political involvement at the lower levels of government is permissible for the virtuous person, but forbidden to him at its higher levels. The passage is better understood as a satire of the politician who does not know his limits.[30] He has managed to attain the lower levels of the *cursus*, but to try to go further, and fail continually in the attempt, is to be like Sisyphus. This object of satire may be someone attempting to become a *novus homo* without the necessary backing, but whose ambition drives him to run repeatedly for office. Or he may be someone from the nobility who, despite his social connections, proves incapable of making it to the top but continues trying nonetheless.[31] His resulting embarrassment is called *repulsa*, as part of the common vocabulary of Roman politics, and was feared as a disgrace.[32] The *imperium* here is *inane* because repeated failed efforts have shown that it is beyond reach, a vain and unachievable goal. Alternatively, we may understand *imperium* as something empty per se, though without the implications assumed by modern interpreters. Like wealth or luxurious food, political power should never be treated as a final goal. Anyone who treats it as such, and fails repeatedly in the process, is like Sisyphus.[33] Even this view does not imply that power is somehow

[29] Creech 1695 *ad loc.*

[30] Godwin 2004: 74 also reads the Sisyphus passage as satire, but for him a major part of the satire depends on the idea that even apparent winners in politics are really losers. An unqualified claim of this sort about political involvement would seem to me to spoil the satire.

[31] The most famous American perennial candidate, Harold Stassen, provides a good example. After winning a term as governor of Minnesota, Stassen ran for the Republican nomination for president nine times without success.

[32] Cf. Cic. *Fin.* 1.71; on *repulsi* see Broughton 1991: 4, who suggests that losing the first time might have helped candidates get elected on the second try. According to Hopkins 1983: 33, 'losing elections was tolerable to upper-class Romans, because it involved only political, not social demise'. Whether this is true or not, perpetual political defeat must have been held in contempt.

[33] Desires that are both non-natural and non-necessary are referred to in Cic. *Fin.* 1.59 as *inanes* (= κεναί): *animi autem morbi sunt cupidates immensae et inanes divitiarum, gloriae, dominationis,*

unreal. The paraphrase '*imperium* is not given because it does not really exist' is unjustifiable. The words *nec datur umquam* refer to the fact that *imperium* is not granted to the candidate, because he continually loses. Thus, on any acceptable construal of *imperium*, the passage cannot be read as a prohibition of politics *tout court*. Rather, it satirizes the destructive desire for prestige and power.

The existentialist interpretation of the passage is also untrue to Epicurus and the history of Epicureanism. Like most other philosophical schools, Epicureanism denies that political and military authority is all it may seem. Such authority is often precarious and limited. In 5.1226–33, Lucretius describes how even the prayers and vows of a consul may not prevent a fierce storm from obliterating the fleet. He follows this by remarking (in an echo of 3.996) how a hidden power similarly crushes humanity 'and seems to trample upon the noble rods and the cruel axes (*pulchros fascis saevasque secures proculcare*), and hold them in derision' (5.1234–5). But while authority may be tenuous and subject to other powers, it is not therefore unreal or incapable of ever actually being conferred. This distinction has too seldom been appreciated. Bailey's commentary on Lucr. 3.998 includes the claim that 'power is *always* futile, i.e., as Epicurus says, it does not give *asphaleia*'.[34] A. A. Long, citing *KD* 7 and 14, approaches the same opinion: 'He [*sc.* Epicurus] diagnoses political ambition as a "desire for protection from men", and argues that this [i.e. security from men] in fact can *only* be secured by a quiet life in retirement from public affairs.'[35]

The words 'always' and 'only' in these respective commentaries are potentially deceptive. Let us examine what Epicurus says in *KD* 7:

libidinosarum etiam voluptatum ('Illnesses of the mind are boundless and empty desires for riches, glory, dominion and even sexual pleasures'). Phld. *De elect.* col. 5,11–17 Indelli/Tsouna-McKirahan illustrates the limits to which one may go in trying to realize such empty desires: ἕνεκα γὰρ τῶ[ν] ξε|νοτάτων ὡς ἀναγκαιοτά|των τὰ χαλεπώτατ' ἀναδέ|χ[ο]νται κακά, δυναστείας | λέγω καὶ λαμπρᾶς δόξης | καὶ π[ε]ριουσίας ὑπεραγού|σης καὶ τ[ρυ]φῶν τοιούτων | καὶ τῶν ὁμοίω[ν] ('For on account of the most alien and unnecessary desires (I mean desires for power and a glorious reputation and extravagant surplus and such luxuries and the like) they assume the harshest evils').

[34] Italics mine.

[35] Long 1986a: 71 (italics mine); Long 1986b, however, seems to equivocate on this: 'But he [i.e. Epicurus] does not categorically deny that the head of General Motors or the President of the USA could achieve an Epicurean happiness' (293). He then goes on to quote *KD* 7 in support. However, in a reply to Gigon recorded in a transcription of conference discussion, Long seems to lean against this possibility (324). After stating that deleting ἀρχῆς καὶ βασιλείας from *KD* 6, as do Usener and Bailey, is a mistake, he adds: 'But I am inclined to read *KD* 7, the clearer and fuller statement, counterfactually: political power could not be impugned it if actually generated ἀσφάλεια, but *in practice* it fails to achieve this' (emphasis Long's). Fowler 1989: 131 n. 51, invokes the authority of this latter statement for his own position.

Ἔνδοξοι καὶ περίβλεπτοί τινες ἐβουλήθησαν γενέσθαι, τὴν ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀσφάλειαν οὕτω νομίζοντες περιποιήσεσθαι ὥστε, εἰ μὲν ἀσφαλὴς ὁ τῶν τοιούτων βίος, ἀπέλαβον τὸ τῆς φύσεως ἀγαθόν· εἰ δὲ μὴ ἀσφαλής, οὐκ ἔχουσιν οὗ ἕνεκα ἐξ ἀρχῆς κατὰ τὸ τῆς φύσεως οἰκεῖον ὡρέχθησαν.

Some people conceived a wish to become famous and held in high honour, thinking that they would thus acquire security from men. Consequently, if the life of such men is safe, they received a natural good; but if it is not safe they do not possess that for the sake of which from the start they conceived a desire which was in accord with what is suitable to nature.

The subject is clearly public prominence, and most likely political prominence in particular. The limited context provided by the ordering of the *Key Doctrines* already suggests as much: the immediately preceding maxim deals with power and kingship.[36] Certainly Lucretius understood *KD* 7 (or perhaps the larger context of Epicurus from which it derives, probably also a cultural-historical account) in this way.

In fact, Lucr. 5.1120–34 can shed some light on how this Key Doctrine should be read. Long and Sedley's commentary on *KD* 7 implies, correctly I think, that Epicurus' own maxim allows for the possibility of the people it describes attaining safety. Like Bailey, however, they maintain that the passage from Lucretius does not.[37]

at claros homines voluerunt se atque potentes,
ut fundamento stabili fortuna maneret
et placidam possent opulenti degere vitam –
nequiquam, quoniam ad summum succedere honorem
certantes iter infestum fecere viai,
et tamen e summo, quasi fulmen, deicit ictos
invidia interdum contemptim in Tartara taetra,
invidia quoniam, ceu fulmine, summa vaporant
plerumque et quae sunt aliis magis edita cumque;
ut satius multo iam sit parere quietum
quam regere imperio res velle et regna tenere.
proinde sine incassum defessi sanguine sudent,

[36] *KD* 6: Ἕνεκα τοῦ θαρρεῖν ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἦν κατὰ φύσιν ἀρχῆς καὶ βασιλείας ἀγαθόν, ἐξ ὧν ἄν ποτε τοῦτο οἷός τ' ᾖ παρασκευάζεσθαι ('The natural good of public office and kingship is for the sake of getting confidence from (other) men, (at least) from those from whom one *is* able to sometimes provide this'; tr. Inwood/Gerson, slightly altered). Usener deleted ἀρχῆς καὶ βασιλείας on the grounds that they must have been a gloss on ἐξ ὧν.

[37] LS vol. ii, p. 131: 'Lucretius develops the point [*sc.* of *KD* 7] at length, Lucr. 1120ff., but without entertaining the theoretical possibility that such a life could achieve ἀσφάλεια.' Cf. Roskam 2007: 94, comparing Lucretius and Epicurus more generally: 'It is clear that Lucretius is here much more radical and apodictic than Epicurus, as he fundamentally excludes any possibility of achieving a more permanent political success.' For an extreme statement of this view, see Nichols 1976: 142.

angustum per iter luctantes ambitionis,
quandoquidem sapiunt alieno ex ore petuntque
res ex auditis potius quam sensibus ipsis.

Still, human beings wanted to be famous and powerful so that their good fortune would stand fast on a firm foundation and they with their wealth would be able to lead a smooth life – all in vain, since struggling to advance to the height of honour they saw to it that the path of their life was filled with danger. And yet envy, like a thunderbolt, sometimes strikes and hurls them down with great scorn into bitter Tartarus, since envy, like a thunderbolt, usually sets ablaze the heights and whatever raises up higher than the rest. Thus it is much better to obey quietly than to desire supreme command over things and to rule kingdoms. Therefore let them get exhausted and sweat blood in vain, struggling with difficulty along the narrow path of ambition, since their wisdom comes from another's mouth and they are seeking things more from hearsay than from their own feelings. (Tr. Englert, with slight changes)

Lucretius appears to interpret the conditional 'if the life of such men is safe they achieved a natural good' from *KD* 7 as a counterfactual expressing an ironic impossibility. The attempt of these men to create safety has been in vain (*nequiquam*). Their struggle to reach the top creates its own unintended perils (1123–4). But Lucretius' subsequent description of *how* their path is made dangerous contains some surprises. He says that 'resentment *from time to time* (*interdum*) strikes and hurls them down with great scorn into bitter Tartarus, since resentment, like a thunderbolt, *usually* (*plerumque*) sets ablaze the heights and whatever raises up higher than the rest' (1126–8). Odds that lie somewhere between 'sometimes' and 'usually' admittedly do not inspire much confidence. Nevertheless, the characterization of these men's search for security as *nequiquam* seems excessively strong, almost misleading. Long and Sedley's translation of lines 1125–6 suggests one way of removing this difficulty: 'Even from the summit, resentment *in a while*, like a thunderbolt, strikes and hurls them down with ignominy into a foul abyss.'[38] This way of rendering *interdum* creates continuity by maintaining the absolute tone of *nequiquam*. These safety-seekers may not meet their destruction immediately, but it is certain to happen eventually. Any contingency that *plerumque* might have suggested in the next line is thus obscured. Despite its attractions here, however, this

[38] The French translation of Long and Seldey by Brunschwig and Pellegrin (= Long and Sedley 2001) does not translate the word *interdum* at all, unless as 'soudain': 'Même parvenus au sommet, l'envie, comme la foudre, les frappe soudain et les précipite ignominieusement dans l'horrible Tartare' (1125–6).

meaning for *interdum* is otherwise unattested.[39] The correct translation is therefore almost certainly 'from time to time'. We are left with the apparent incongruity between the certainty of *nequiquam* and the more qualified vocabulary that follows it.[40] Rather than attempt to eliminate the incongruity, I suggest that we see this passage as one example of a pattern found throughout the *DRN*, according to which Lucretius first stakes out an extreme position before intentionally providing the reader something of an out in choice places. Without abandoning his extreme rhetoric, Lucretius nevertheless acknowledges the possibility (however remote) that safety may indeed come from prominence and political power. His acknowledgement of this more moderate position lends authority to reading *KD* 7 in the same way. An allowance is made, though cautiously and perhaps even somewhat begrudgingly, for finding safety through political power. Lucretius' ultimate position is virtually identical to that of Philodemus, for whom the political faculty brings its possessors '*sometimes* greater (good) things than what is to be found in private life, and *often* greater evils'.[41]

The pursuit of safety by means of one's reputation is also discussed, albeit in a very different light, in Philodemus' *On Flattery* (*De adulatione*) col. 4:

. . . καιων λόγος ἥιρει κακὰ τη|λικαῦθ' ὑπομένειν ἐκτίν[ειν] | εἵνεκα τῶν περισαλων αι|[.]ησει̣[.· ἡ] δόξα τοίνυν χάριν ἀσφαλείας ἐδιώχθη κατὰ φύ|σιν, ἣν ἔξεστιν ἔχειν καὶ ἰδι|ώτηι καὶ φιλοσόφωι, κακία[ς | δ' ο]ὐ πάσης, ἐν αἷς ἡ κολακεία | [πρ]ωτα[γ]ωνι[στ]εῖ καὶ μεί[ζο]|νά [γ'] ἀδοξ[ί]αν ε̣ἰ̣[κ]ῆ π[ε]ριτίθ̣[η|σιν ὅταν ε]ὐδοξίαν ἀποτελ[εῖ|ν προσδοκᾶται . . .[42]

. . . the argument demonstrates that they endure to pay such a great price in evils on account of . . . ; so therefore, good repute was pursued according to nature for the sake of security (from men), good repute which is open to non-philosophical men and philosophers alike; not for the sake of any vice, among which [*sc.* vices] flattery plays the first role, and recklessly[43] puts upon one greater disrepute whenever it is supposed to accomplish good repute . . .

[39] The only other meaning given in the *OLD* is 'in the meantime', 'meanwhile'; 'for the time being', but this is a very late usage (Silius Italicus and Apuleius).

[40] *Interdum* is like the ποτε in *KD* 6, quoted above in note 36 of this chapter, p. 82, and in DL 10.121b: καὶ ὑπὲρ φίλου ποτὲ τεθνήξεσθαι ('on occasion the sage will die on behalf of a friend'). This obviously does not happen always nor (in a given person's life!) frequently, but it can happen and must be taken into account. Cf. also the ποτε in DL 10.119, quoted below in note 82 of this chapter, p. 93.

[41] Phld. *Rhet.* 2 col. 142,26–8 Hammerstaedt: ἔστιν ὅτε | πλείω τῶν ἐν ἰδ[ι]ωτεί|ᾳ, πολλάκις δὲ κ[ακ]ὰ πλεί|ω.

[42] The text is from Gargiulo 1981: 107.

[43] ε̣ἰ̣[κ]ῆ in place of Gargiulo's αἰ[κ]ῆ, which is a poetic form, was suggested to me by David Armstrong. On εἰκῆ, cf. Chadwick 1996: 97. This portion of *On Flattery* survives only in a disegno.

The situation the papyrus describes is not entirely clear. Someone, perhaps Epicurus himself, is being defended against the charge of flattery.[44] The text would seem to have a political dimension, or at least be open to such an application. It initially appears that Philodemus departs from the position expressed by Epicurus in *KD* 7 and elsewhere.[45] Michael Erler has suggested that this statement constitutes a concession on the part of Philodemus to his Roman audience.[46] The focus is certainly different from that of *KD* 7. In the first place, this fragment deals with seeking merely a good reputation, not celebrity status and fame. This observation in turn suggests a more important point about the sort of people under discussion in the fragment. Unlike Lucretius in the passages cited and Epicurus in *KD* 7, Philodemus has in mind a *good person* who pursues a good reputation for the sake of security. Such a person, unlike a flatterer, can seek good repute κατὰ φύσιν, in accordance with nature, and 'not for the sake of any vice'.[47] This characterization implies that his reasons are based in fact and an accurate assessment of his own advantage, not perverted by any false opinion.[48]

Why does Lucretius by contrast never explicitly consider the possibility that safety can be acquired through political power? Hedonic calculations, though crucial to Epicureanism, did not present him with rhetorically and therapeutically compelling prospects. The therapeutic effectiveness of his

[44] Gargiulo 1981: 105, points out that Epicurus was accused of flattering Mithres, minister to Antigonus (DL 10.4), and suggests alternatively that Philodemus may also have his own defence in mind, in view of the kind of accusations that arose from his service to Piso.

[45] DL 10.120a: εὐδοξίας ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον προνοήσεσθαι, ἐφ' ὅσον μὴ καταφρονήσεσθαι ('The sage will pay just so much regard to his reputation as not to be looked down upon').

[46] Erler 1992a: 196. Gargiulo 1981: 105, takes a similar view. Roskam 2007: 111–12, disagrees with Erler and associates this passage with *KD* 6 and *KD* 7; however, he fails to note the crucial fact that *KD* 7 primarily deals with vicious persons, whereas this fragment from *On Vices* refers to the *virtuous* pursuit of reputation. It is true, as Roskam affirms (113) that fame is not Philodemus' preferred road to security, but the vices against which Philodemus elsewhere warns (φιλοτιμία and δοξοκοπία) are not shared by the person here referred to. As a result, Roskam's discussion on the perils of ambition, while accurate and insightful in itself, does not seem to me to follow naturally from a discussion of this fragment.

[47] Gargiulo's rendering of κακία[ς | δ' οὐ πάσης as 'e non esclusivamente per vizio' cannot be correct. Roskam (2007: 113) was aware of the grammatical difficulty, and accordingly left the text unsupplemented. But while Gargiulo's construal of the passage cannot be defended, his text itself can. The phrase οὐ πᾶς can be used as an equivalent of οὐδείς (see LSJ s.v. πᾶς B.VI). Such a usage is in fact frequent in the Greek of the New Testament, on which see Arndt et al. 2000 s.v. πᾶς 1.a.α *sub finem*. Regarding the use of οὐ πᾶς for οὐδείς in Philodemus, Richard Janko has kindly drawn my attention to the following parallel, or rather parallels, from *On Poems* 4 col. 107,2–6 in Janko 2010: τ[ὸ δ' ἴδ]ιον [οὐ πᾶ]σα μίμ[η]σ[ις ἀκο]ύσετ[αι, οὐ] | δ' ὑπ[ομνήσει] πᾶς τοῦ κεῖ[σθαι] | τὴ[ν πρᾶξιν] περὶ ποιηματ[ι]|ῆς ('But its particularity will not be understood as just any mimesis, nor will anyone [οὐ . . . πᾶς] make mention of [his claim] that "action is essential to the definition of the art of versification"').

[48] Cf. Demetrius Laco *Opus incertum* col. 67 Puglia.

exempla is directly connected to their extreme and absolute nature, which results in occasional oversimplifications and the reduction of the more careful and detailed casuistry found in other writers to mere qualifying adverbs.[49] We see an example in the case of Lucretius' initial severity, which he later softens, regarding people's emotional reactions to the prospect of death.[50] At times Lucretius also adopts the same harshness towards religion that he does towards politics, conveying the impression that there could be nothing but evil associated with it. Elsewhere, however, he shows a more moderate attitude that conforms with Epicurean orthodoxy.[51] In the case of *DRN* 5's discussion of politics, despite having opened the door slightly to a third possibility, the two options Lucretius explicitly entertains are either abstention from politics ('obeying quietly' *parere quietum*) or embrace of the foolish desire 'to rule with *imperium* and to hold kingdoms' (5.1129–30). Those who opt for the latter course depend for their 'wisdom' on other people's opinions rather than their own feelings, and Lucretius suggests that one would do best simply to leave them 'struggling on the narrow path of ambition' (1131–4). Their disillusionment results from blindly treating a non-natural and non-necessary desire as though it were instead both natural and necessary. As described in *DRN* 3, the bad man animated by the fear of death is full of *ambitio* and *invidia* and driven by greed and 'blind lust for honours' (*honorum caeca cupido*) (3.59). He is friendless and treacherous. It comes as no surprise that his position is unlikely to be secure, given that he makes one wrong choice after the other both as a human being and as a ruler. Such a man is quite the opposite of the one Philodemus considers in the fragment from *On Flattery*, whose pursuit of a good reputation is prompted by nature and not by any vicious motive.

One unfortunate result of Lucretius' choice to focus exclusively (with the exception of Memmius) on vicious people in politics has been the

[49] In the 'diatribe' portion of Philodemus' *On Anger* there are descriptions of angry people so extreme as to seem absurd to us, but this was part and parcel of the therapeutic technique: 'as for emotions in our soul that are consequent upon our own entertainment of false opinion – some (bad for us) in kind, some by their intensity – *the chief cause of their dismissal lies in our perceiving their intensity and the mass of evils they contain and bring along with them*' (col. 6.13–22). Extreme examples were apparently regarded as the most efficacious. On the technique in Philodemus, see Tsouna 2001a as well as her ch. 9 of this volume.

[50] Cf. Fish 1998 on Lucr. 3.933–4 and 3.952–3.

[51] Without a theology that removes the fear of the gods, one cannot 'approach their shrines with a peaceful heart' (*delubra deum placido cum pectore adibis*) (6.75). Bailey comments on this line: 'We may perhaps guess that Lucretius himself did not show the same devotion as his master.' But newer studies have focused more on Lucretius' developing expectations of the reader over the course of the poem (see esp. both Volk 2002 and Solomon 2004). By this late point in the poem one can be confident that Lucretius expects his reader to know the truth about religion, thus allowing him to join in conventional worship with a peaceful heart.

shared assumption over the last century of scholarship that he regards anyone in a position of political power as necessarily filled with greed and ambition. Whereas in fact it is only '*desiring* to rule with *imperium* and to hold kingdoms' that Lucretius denounces (5.1130), commentators have mistakenly taken ruling generally or the possession of any political power whatsoever as also coming in for condemnation. It is difficult to find fault with those who advocate such a reading, insofar as they seem to have been led to it by a kind of Lucretian sleight of hand. It may even be that Lucretius wants his readers to embrace this more negative view of politics. Nevertheless, there remains within *DRN* both space for the orthodox view and even some acknowledgement of it. Thus, for example, Lucretius acknowledges both the nobility by birth of the poem's addressee (*Memmi clara propago*), and the need for him to attend to politics more than philosophy in the trying times Rome currently faces (*patriai tempore iniquo*) (1.41–3). *Ex hypothesi*, the purpose of the poem cannot have been to withdraw Memmius from politics.[52] In the end, Lucretius' position is both faithful to Epicurus and compatible with that of his own contemporary, Philodemus, even if Lucretius' own treatment of the subject lacks the nuances found in their works.

Any discussion of Epicurean sources treating the idea that a ruler might obtain safety through a reputation for virtue must also include the first book of Cicero's *De finibus*, a work roughly contemporaneous with Lucretius' poem, in which T. Manlius Torquatus plays the role of the Epicurean spokesman. In the course of discussing the bravery of his ancestor, Manlius Torquatus Imperiosus, who as general put his own son to death for insubordination, the younger Torquatus credits the elder's bravery with securing 'honour and affection (*laudem et caritatem*), which are the strongest guarantees of leading a life without fear (*vitae sine metu degendae praesidia firmissima*)'.[53] His infamous severity is said to have been aimed at securing the safety of his fellow citizens 'on which he knew his own depended'.[54] Cicero of course rejected the idea that the principal value of political virtue is to create safety for the statesman himself. He represents the risks he himself underwent in quite the opposite terms, claiming to have sacrificed

[52] As Benferhat 2009: 395 rightly notes. Cf. Maslowski 1974: 77, 'The political career of Memmius was of course the main initial obstacle to his conversion to Epicureanism.'

[53] *Fin.* 1.35; cf. 1.52, where *caritas* is described as 'most suited for living a life of peace' (*aptissimum est ad quiete vivendum*) and 1.53: *nam diligi et carum esse iucundum est propterea quia tutiorem vitam et voluptatem pleniorem efficit* ('for to be esteemed and held dear is pleasant moreover because it makes life safer and pleasure fuller').

[54] Ibid.

his own safety for that of others,[55] something no true Epicurean could ever consistently do. Cicero's intention in selecting Torquatus as his Epicurean spokesman was presumably to enforce a paradox, although the creation of a backdrop that served to subvert Torquatus' argument may also have been a factor. The fact that Torquatus had died as a hero in battle less than two years before the composition of *De finibus* will have been constantly present to the minds of its audience. Cicero is hardly alone in doubting that a willingness to take political risks, even while attempting to minimize these through virtuous behaviour, could lay claim to an authentic Epicurean provenance. In commenting on the account of virtue attributed to Torquatus in *Fin.* 1, Phillip Mitsis points to a perceived Stoic taint as well as to the fact that Torquatus' arguments 'are generously sprinkled with such common terms of Roman public approval as *liberalitas* (liberality), *caritas* (esteem), and *benevolentia* (kindness)' in support of the conclusion that the entire account is infused with 'strong overtones of social class and social obligation that are absent from Epicurus' own account [of ethics]'.[56] In response to Mitsis, David Sedley has argued convincingly for an alternative explanation as to why the four Stoic cardinal virtues figure so prominently in Torquatus' ethical discussion: the widespread acceptance of these virtues as somehow foundational makes them 'the most prominent explananda' for Epicurean hedonists and so a necessary subject of discussion within their ethical theory.[57] I would like to supplement Sedley's response with the suggestion that Torquatus' account is also indebted to Epicurean *kingship* literature, which would have explored the virtues of liberality, esteem and kindness in addition to the cardinal virtues.[58]

[55] See, e.g., *Rep.* 30: *non dubitaverim me gravissimis tempestatibus ac paene fulminibus ipsis obvium ferre conservandorum civium causa meisque propriis periculis parere commune reliquis otium* ('yet I could not hesitate to expose myself to the severest storms, and, I might almost say, even to thunderbolts, for the sake of the safety of my fellow citizens, and to secure, at the cost of my own personal danger, a quiet life for all the rest'). For further discussion of this point, see Asmis 2001.

[56] Mitsis 1988a: 70. Annas 2001: xvi, offers an even more negative assessment of Torquatus' exposition, or rather of Cicero's presentation of him.

[57] Sedley 1998b: 149.

[58] Obviously discussion of these particular virtues was not exclusive to Epicurean kingship literature, but the emphases within Torquatus' discussion of his ancestor's life suggest a specifically Epicurean source. Philodemus (though not specifically his treatise *On the Good King*) has previously been suggested as a possible source for the Torquatus material in *Fin.* 1. This proposal gains a certain credence from the fact that Torquatus himself apparently regarded Philodemus and Siro as Epicurean authorities (see Cic. *Fin.* 2.119 and *Fam.* 6.11.2). On the general question of Cicero's use of Philodemus for Torquatus' exposition of Epicurean ethics, see Tsouna 2001b and the response to it in Erler 2001b. For more or less positive valuations of Cicero's presentation of Epicurean ethics, see LS vol. 1, p. 122; Mitsis 1988a: 49; and Stokes 1995: 145–70. For a decidedly negative assessment, see Gosling and Taylor 1982: 375–94.

Philodemus devotes several columns in his *On the Good King* to showing that a king wins safety by his virtue. When he praises kingly virtues, it is not because of any intrinsic value they possess, but because they lead to a sound monarchy:

ἀπὸ δὴ τῶν τοι|ούτω[ν ἀ]ναχωρήσαντες, | π̣άλι τ[ὸ] σπουδαῖο̣ν β̣ᾳ̣σ̣ιλεῖ | παραι[νῶ]μεν· αὐσ̣τ̣[ηρὸ]ν̣ | μὲν κᾳ[ὶ] τ̣ραχύ [τι ἦθος καὶ] | πικρὸν ἐχθ[ρ]αίρει[ν καὶ] π̣[α]ᾳ̣ᾳ̣ό̣|τητα δι̣ασκεῖν κ[αὶ] ἐπιε̣ί̣|κειαν καὶ τὸ βα[σιλέ]ως ἥ|μερον καὶ συ[γ]γ̣γ̣[ω]μονι|κόν, ἐφ' ὅσον π̣̣λεῖστον, ὡς | φορο̣ῦ̣[ν]τα π[ρ]ὸς εὐσταθῆ μο|ναρχ[ία]ν [καὶ] μὴ δεσ[ποτικῶι] | φόβωι δυνα[σ]τ̣εί[αν].

Departing therefore from such topics, let us again recommend that which is good for a king, to be averse to a harsh, austere and bitter character, and to practise gentleness, goodness and a king's mildness and leniency as much as possible, *since these lead to a sound* (εὐσταθῆ) *monarchy and not arbitrary rule based on fear of a despot.* (Col. 24,6–18 Dorandi, with minor changes)

Philodemus finds the idea of a king's deriving safety from his virtue in Homer's *Iliad*, particularly in the contrasting attitudes of the Trojans towards Hector and Paris. They have tender love (φιλοστοργία, cf. *caritas* above in Cicero) for Hector, and when Achilles drags his body around the city walls, it is as though all of Troy were burning.[59] Newly recovered quotations from the *Iliad* in the earliest surviving portion of the treatise show that this theme occupied Philodemus for several columns. Paris, by contrast, is despised by the Trojans. When he is faced with danger, they 'would not hide him out of friendship if someone were to see him' (*Il.* 3.453).[60] Helen wishes he had perished on the battlefield (*Il.* 3.248). And when Paris and Menelaus are about to fight in a duel, a prayer is offered requesting that the guilty party perish and go down to Hades (*Il.* 3.321–2).[61]

Philodemus elsewhere emphasizes that a king's gentleness should be apparent in order that he may be loved.[62] The concern that there be a bond of love between a ruler and his subjects is a common theme in kingship literature.[63] But there is also a great deal in Philodemus' treatment of this

[59] Col. 5,17–22 Dorandi quotes *Il.* 22.411–12: 'It was most like what would have happened, if all lowering Ilion had been burning top to bottom in fire.' Of course Hector perishes, but by his own folly, according to Philodemus (col. 36 Dorandi).

[60] Col. 5 Fish (in preparation). [61] Col. 2 Fish (in preparation). [62] Col. 25,13–14 Dorandi.

[63] Cf. Cairns 1989: 21 s.v. K 6 iii. On the importance of the love of a ruler's people, cf. Pseudo-Aristeas 265: τίς ἐστι βασιλεῖ κτῆσις ἀναγκαιοτάτη; τῶν ὑποτεταγμένων φιλανθρωπία καὶ ἀγάπησις· διὰ γὰρ τούτων ἄλυτος εὐνοίας δεσμὸς γίνεται ('What is the most necessary possession for a king? The benevolence and love of his subjects, for through these, an indissoluble bond of good will arises'). The closest parallel that clearly refers to the bond of love between ruler and ruled deriving from the king's own virtue is found in Plut. *Praec. ger. reip.* 821F: οὕτως ἁπάντων ἐρώτων ἰσχυρότατος ἅμα καὶ θειότατός ἐστιν ὁ πόλεσι καὶ δήμοις πρὸς ἕνα δι' ἀρετὴν ἐγγιγνόμενος

theme that is suited to a specifically Epicurean viewpoint, and foreign to other philosophical points of view. The value of virtues is described in unabashedly instrumental terms, as means to the end of a secure and prosperous reign. So Philodemus claims that a king should avoid shameful behaviour in symposia, 'lest he not be loved with reverence, *since there is a use for this* (χρείας [ὑπα]ρχού[σ]ης)'.[64] The Epicureans' practical approach to the virtues makes χρεία, usefulness, paramount.

Although there is an understanding that the just ruler will reign over a prospering and peaceful kingdom, Philodemus' focus is the well-being and happiness of the ruler.[65] In a quotation already known to earlier editors, through the just and pious king a land is said to flourish for him, and its people are said to prosper (*Od.* 19.111–14). Of crucial importance to Philodemus, Homer affirms that there is *enjoyment* in living and ruling justly. Such a view of virtue is entirely foreign to Stoicism, a point overlooked in previous attempts to view the treatise through that lens.[66] It would also have proven unappealing to Peripatetics or Platonists.[67] Although Cicero stresses the importance and utility of a good reputation in his letter to his brother Quintus on how to best govern a province,[68] he is committed to viewing the happiness of a ruler and the happiness of his people as essentially two separate things. The goal of happiness for those governed will often mean the unhappiness of the virtuous ruler, a false dichotomy for Philodemus.[69] By exploring how a ruler, through his virtue, creates as safe and stable a rule as possible, Philodemus' treatise also presents the inverse of what we find in the discussion of politics by his contemporary and fellow Epicurean,

('Thus of all loves the strongest and most godlike is the one which is engendered in cities and peoples towards an individual on account of his virtue').

[64] Col. 20,18–20 Dorandi.

[65] Even the hardest virtues, in Epicurus' system, are subservient to pleasure, and he admitted that glory, honour and power confer real pleasure. There are at least suggestions in *On the Good King* that the ability to do good to friends and to one's people is a pleasure, in the remarkable passage (col. 37 Dorandi) on how it is entirely justified that Homer's kings are called 'godlike' (*theoeideis*), and certainly also his use of *Od.* 19.109–14, the only Homeric verse which Philodemus quotes twice in the treatise (cols. 4 and 30 Dorandi). Roskam 2007: 147, notes that in the perspective of Philodemus, 'the Epicurean needs no longer to remain blind to the great merits of some famous statesmen and he can even praise their actions and accomplishments if they are based on a rational *calculus* and serve their personal security and their pleasure'.

[66] See, e.g., Paolucci 1955: 489–90.

[67] Cf. Pl. *Rep.* 363a.

[68] See the astute observations on Cicero's letter (*Q. fr.* 1.1) in D. Braund 1996: 24–36. In observing that much of Philodemus' advice in *On the Good King* could benefit a provincial governor, he suggests (p. 33) that *On the Good King* was composed 'in the early 50s BC, when Piso was a sort of monarch, first as consul in 58, and then as governor of Macedonia from 57–55'.

[69] Cf. Long 2006: 189, 'That these virtues actually "generate" the pleasurable life (τὸν ἡδὺν γεννᾷ βίον) is a striking claim. Among other things, it denies any perch to the Greek notion, ubiquitous in Greek popular morality, that justice and pleasure are natural antagonists.'

Lucretius. In this regard I suspect that *On the Good King* picks up a theme that may have been at the heart of Epicurus' own lost work *On Kingship*.[70]

Another contrast provided by *On the Good King* lies in the area of friendship between statesmen. Whereas in Philodemus' *On Rhetoric* (*De rhetorica*) the thing most inimical to friendship is *politeia*, because of the jealousy (*phthonos*) it produces,[71] in *On the Good King* we are told unambiguously that relationships without these emotions, apparently friendships, are possible between statesmen. Statesmen such as Nestor and Odysseus, the 'most prudent' (*phronimôtatoi*) of Homer's heroes according to Philodemus, are depicted as 'so far removed from these passions (*sc.* jealousy and the like) that "neither in war nor in counsel did they walk apart, but worked out how things would go best for the Argives"' (*Od.* 3.127–9).[72] When this statement is paired with that in *On Rhetoric*, it seems plausible to conclude that, while politics may engender envy, it is not impossible for friendships to develop between politicians for sake of the greater good.[73] Finding like-minded friends normally entails withdrawing from public life.[74] Philodemus may have had in mind here friendships between Epicurean statesmen such as Piso, Cassius, Torquatus, Gaius Pansa and perhaps even Julius Caesar himself, men all seriously committed (albeit some more than others) to Epicureanism, and for whom leaving public life was simply not an option. Or he may have envisioned friendships crossing philosophical and ideological boundaries between statesmen working together for the common good.

But the crucial question remains: why would any Epicurean want to be in politics? The answer is straightforward. All things being equal, a genuine Epicurean would never aspire to public life. On this point the school never compromised. From the beginning the school's position remained that one should not *desire* a political career, as a fragment of Metrodorus makes clear: λέγειν δεῖ, πῶς ἄριστα τὸ τῆς φύσεως τέλος συντηρήσει καὶ

[70] Warren 2002: 156–7 suggests that *On the Good King* recalled earlier Epicurean treatments of kingship.

[71] Book 2 col. 158. See Roskam 2007: 115.

[72] Col. 29 Dorandi. Philodemus singles out τὸ ζηλότυπον (begrudging someone else what he has), rather than φθόνος, in the passage preceding his reference to Odysseus and Nestor, but 'these passions' probably refers to jealousy and strife of all kinds.

[73] This point also gives further support to something Murray 1965 already noted about the treatise, namely that Philodemus intended to speak not to liberal 'monarchs' but to the Roman dynamic of an oligarchy; for more on this point see also Rawson 1989: 254. Braund 1996: 32–4 emphasizes those parts of *On the Good King* which could apply in particular to a Roman provincial governor as a quasi-monarch.

[74] Cf. Long 1986b: 314, 'He withdraws from much of civic life, not simply to avoid pain to himself, but to secure the kinds of pleasures that only the like-minded, the similarly committed, can provide for each other.'

πῶς τις ἐκὼν εἶναι μὴ πρόσεισιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐπὶ τὰς τῶν πληθῶν ἀρχάς ('It is necessary to tell how a person will best uphold the purpose of his nature and how, *as far as it depends on his own will*, he is not to present himself for public office in the first place').[75] All Epicurean injunctions about withdrawal from or avoidance of public life must have similarly had attached to them the implicit or explicit caveat: *if you are able to do so without bringing greater troubles and disturbances to yourself and your loved ones.*[76] Cicero conveniently omits this fact when he attributes to the Epicureans the claim that *rem publicam capessere hominem bene sanum non oportere* ('a truly sane man ought not to undertake affairs of state').[77] His original source presumably contained the far more innocuous assertion that anyone without a need to enter politics, and for whom doing so was likely to make life more troublesome, would be insane to embark on a public career.

Nevertheless, it seems clear from the writings of both Epicureans and their opponents that the best possible life, the one belonging to the sage, will be free from major political entanglements. Just as the Epicurean gods do not involve themselves in directing the affairs of the universe, so the sage will refrain whenever possible from involvement in directing human affairs. Diogenes Laertius includes no such qualifier when he summarizes an entire book of Epicurus' *On Modes of Life* with the words 'the sage will not engage in politics'.[78] Seneca and Cicero, however, tell us that Epicurus had in fact said that 'the sage will not enter public life *except in an emergency*'.[79] Other passages in Diogenes suggest an occasional tendency on his part to overgeneralize when summarizing Epicurus' views. On the subject of whether the wise man will ever compose poetry, for example, Diogenes credits Epicurus with an unequivocal denial.[80] In the course of a recent re-evaluation of this claim, however, Michael Wigodsky has contrasted it with Diogenes' neighbouring description of Epicurus' views on marriage.[81]

[75] Fr. 41 Körte = Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1125c; on which, see Roskam 2007: 50. Piso's reluctance to take the censorship (Dio 40.63.2) may have been in response to such considerations; or it may, as Griffin 2001: 89 suggests, indicate a reluctance to undertake 'this disagreeable role of moral censure and punishment'.

[76] Epicurus' encouragement to Idomeneus (Sen. *Ep.* 22.5–6) to withdraw *antequam aliqua vis maior interveniat et auferat libertatem recedendi* ('before some great force intervenes and takes away the liberty of withdrawing') indicates that this could indeed happen.

[77] *Q. Rosc.* 23. [78] DL 10. 119.

[79] Sen. *De Otio* 3.2 = fr. 9 Us. (emphasis mine); cf. Cic. *Rep.* 1.10: *Illa autem exceptio cui probari tandem potest, quod negant sapientem suscepturum ullam rei publicae partem, extra quam si eum tempus et necessitas coegerit?* ('Who in the world is able to approve of that exception, their saying that the sage will not undertake any part in public affairs unless some crisis compels him?').

[80] DL 10.121b. [81] Wigodsky 1995: 61–2.

The two passages begin similarly, but that on marriage tempers its initial, apparent absolutism with an additional sentence: 'Moreover, the wise man will both marry and father children . . . But he will on occasion marry in accordance with the circumstances of his life'.[82] It seems possible that Epicurus' *On Modes of Life* also discussed the issue of 'circumstance of life' (περίστασις τοῦ βίου), including factors such as inherited responsibilities and individual dispositions, with regard to the sage's political involvement.[83] Even if it did so, however, any concession made must have been relatively minor. Even Philodemus, who is often regarded as more accommodating on such matters, is adamant on this point. In contrast to even his most talented students, who may practise politics, the professed and professional philosopher will observe from the sidelines.[84]

[82] DL 10.119; I print here the text of Arrighetti: Καὶ μὴν καὶ γαμήσειν καὶ τεκνοποιήσειν τὸν σοφόν, ὡς Ἐπίκουρος ἐν ταῖς Διαπορίαις καὶ ἐν ταῖς Περὶ φύσεως, κατὰ περίστασιν δέ ποτε βίου γαμήσειν. There is some uncertainty about the text (see, e.g., Brennan 1996), which may require a negation in the first clause. In any case, the main point is sufficiently clear: Epicurus in general recommended not marrying and having children but allowed that in certain cases it would be the best thing to do. In noting that the Epicureans 'rejected the family just as they did political life', Asmis 2004: 166 comments upon this same passage: 'The Epicurean position does not, of course, mean that a person who becomes an Epicurean will abandon spouse or children, nor will he or she necessarily remain unmarried. Rather, if a person has a choice, he or she will not marry or have children. Epicurus himself was unmarried and childless. His close friend Metrodorus was not married, but lived with a woman, Leontion, and had children.' With regard to exceptional circumstances that would permit a sage to marry or raise children, see Brennan 1996: 350 (though Brennan does not, I think, sufficiently take into account the hostility of certain later sources and their readiness to misreport or oversimplify Epicurean positions).

[83] A somewhat surprising passage from Plutarch (*De tranq. an.* 465F–466A) indicates that Epicurus considered a individual's constitution in this regard: οὐδ' Ἐπίκουρος οἴεται δεῖν ἡσυχάζειν, ἀλλὰ τῇ φύσει χρῆσθαι πολιτευομένους καὶ πράσσοντας τὰ κοινὰ τοὺς φιλοτίμους καὶ φιλοδόξους, ὡς μᾶλλον ὑπ' ἀπραγμοσύνης ταράττεσθαι καὶ κακοῦσθαι πεφυκότας, ἂν ὧν ὀρέγονται μὴ τυγχάνωσιν. ἀλλ' ἐκεῖνος μὲν ἄτοπος οὐ τοὺς δυναμένους τὰ κοινὰ πράσσειν προτρεπόμενος ἀλλὰ τοὺς ἡσυχίαν ἄγειν μὴ δυναμένους ('Not even Epicurus thought men who were in love with fame and honour should lead a quiet life, but they should indulge their nature by taking part in politics and public life, on the grounds that they are constitutionally more likely to be disturbed and corrupted by inactivity, if they do not obtain what they want. But he is a fool to encourage to participate in public affairs, not those who are most able, but those who cannot live a quiet life).' On this passage see Wigodsky 1995: 61 n. 18 and Fowler 1989: 126.

[84] In *PHerc.* 1015 col. 36, which belongs to an unidentified book of Philodemus' *On Rhetoric*, Philodemus sharply criticizes those who do not understand the sage's relation to politics: ὁ δὲ [θ]αυμάζ̣ων, εἰ νομοθεσίας ἢ στρατ[η]γίας ἢ πολιτικῆς οἰκον[ο]μίας ὁ σοφὸς ἀλλότριος, οὐδὲν εἶδέ πω τῶν σοφίας ἀγαθῶν, οὐδ' ἀνελογίσατο, τίνων αἴτιον κακῶν ὁ πλησ[ί]ον καὶ τίνων αὐτὸς ἕκαστος αὑτῶι, προσέτι δ' ο[ὐ]δὲ πῶς ἀλλότριος τῶν τοιούτων ὁ σοφὸς ἢ πῶς οὐκ ἀλλότριος διέλαβεν, οὐδὲ διεῖλε, μέχρι τί[νος ὠ]φελεῖσθαι τὰ πλήθη ἐ]ξ[έσ]ται κα[ὶ] κουφίξ[εσθαι . . . . ('But if anyone is surprised that legislation or generalship or political economy does not come naturally to the sage, he has never seen any of the good things proper to wisdom, nor has he reasoned out which bad things one's neighbour is the cause of and which each man is the cause of to himself, and in addition, neither has he grasped in what way these things do not come naturally to the sage and in what way they do come naturally to him, nor has he defined to what extent people can be helped and relieved

Witnesses hostile to Epicureanism seized upon the directive that the sage not be a statesman and twisted it into something it was not, namely, the claim that a political career is never the best choice for anyone, and that the fruits of Epicureanism are forbidden to all who are engaged in statesmanship. The reductive presentations of Epicureanism in Cicero and Plutarch are prime examples of this phenomenon. For both men the Epicurean viewpoint was tantamount to a denial of their own careers and ideals. In a letter to Trebatius, who had just converted to Epicureanism, Cicero asks 'what will the people of Ulubrae do, *if you have decided that one ought not engage in politics*' (*quid fiet porro populo Ulubrano, si statueris* πολιτεύεσθαι *non oportere*?).[85] The implication is that Trebatius' new allegiance to Epicureanism should preclude him from participating in politics even to the extent of being the patron of an insignificant, small town. The first chapters of Cicero's *De republica* offer a similar misdirection. Although it takes wisdom to be a good politician, according to Cicero the Epicureans not only believe that a wise man should not be involved in governing the state but in fact forbid his participation. Given that politics is off limits to an Epicurean, what practical benefit could any politician hope to get from Epicureanism? Subsequent scholarship has almost without demur believed Cicero. Thus we hear of 'Epicurean arguments against participation in politics' instead of 'Epicurean arguments against *the sage's* participation in politics' or simply *recommendations* that one avoid politics.[86] But Cicero's characterization conveniently omits any reference to the explicit claims by Epicureans that a statesman could benefit greatly from philosophy.[87]

Were it not for Vesuvius, Cicero and Plutarch would have likely had the last word on this subject. Thanks to the rediscovery of the Herculaneum papyri, however, we are now in possession of the philosophical works of Cicero's Epicurean contemporary, Philodemus of Gadara, and his presentation of Epicurean attitudes towards politics provides a stark contrast to Cicero's own. The end of the third book of Philodemus' *On Rhetoric*

en masse (as opposed to individually)') I thank David Blank for the use of his forthcoming text for this passage. For additional references to passages in which Philodemus states that a philosopher should not engage in politics, see Roskam 2007: 108, with n. 76.

[85] *Fam.* 7.12. [86] E.g. Maslowski 1974: 64.

[87] Reinhardt 2005 offers a fascinating study of the reductive and tendentious nature of the very vocabulary Cicero uses to describe the Epicurean theory of atomism. Reinhardt notes in particular how 'the doctrine of pleasure and Cicero's attitude to it exercise an influence even in contexts where there is no connection whatsoever with pleasure. The reason for these "irrational" influences is that the Epicurean tenet that pleasure is the highest good caused such an outrage among traditional Romans and intellectuals of Stoic persuasion that they brought it to bear on each and every Epicurean position' (174).

offers an especially bold statement about politics and philosophy.[88] Speaking of someone who lacks philosophical training but is naturally virtuous, Philodemus asserts that the political faculty is

πολλάκις αἴτιον καὶ συμφορῶν ἀνηκέστων . . . μετὰ μέντοι καλοκαγαθίας λαμβανομένην ταῖς μὲν πόλεσιν ἀγαθὰ πολλὰ συμβάλλεσθαι καὶ μεγάλα, τοῖς δὲ κεκτημένοις ἔστιν ὅτε πλείω τῶν ἐν ἰδιωτείᾳ, πολλάκις δὲ κακὰ πλείω.

often the cause of incurable evils . . . but when taken up with perfect virtue it contributes many and great good things to cities, on the one hand, but to its possessors sometimes greater [*sc.* good] things than what is to be found in private life, and often greater evils.[89]

He goes on to say that although philosophy is certainly not a necessary condition of success as a politician,

καλὸν μὲν οὖν γένοιτ' ἄν, εἰ καὶ φιλοσοφίαι χορεύσειεν ὁ πολειτικός, ἵνα καὶ νεανικώτερως ἀγαθὸς ᾖ, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο λέγομεν, ὅτι φιλοσοφία καὶ κοινῶς προστεθεῖσα πολειτικῇ διαθέσει καὶ κατὰ μέρος ὑποθήκας προσεχεῖς τῇ πολειτικῇ διοικήσει παραδοῦσα διαφορὰν οὐρανομήκη ποήσει πρὸς τὸ κρεῖττον.

it would be a fine thing, to be sure, if the politician were also practised in philosophy, that he might be still more vividly and energetically a good man; and for this reason we [*sc.* Epicureans] say that philosophy, both generally, when it accompanies a personal disposition for politics and when it gives suggestions appropriate for political arrangements, will make an astronomical difference for the better.[90]

The virtuous statesman can 'sometimes' have greater goods (and Philodemus must mean real rather than illusory ones) than those found in private life. More often, however, political activity leads to greater evils. This expression of a political life's unfavourable odds matches what we saw in Lucretius, although Philodemus explicitly mentions at least the possibility of success. But the most striking contrast to the Ciceronian presentation of Epicureanism and politics appears in the final sentence of the latter passage, which affirms that philosophy enables the naturally good statesman to be even better and to do even greater good than he could have otherwise done. Such an affirmation speaks primarily to the hope of good achievements and the consequent pleasure these afford a statesman, but other benefits, including greater personal security, may not be altogether out of the picture. The more a statesman makes his country prosper, the more likely he

[88] On this passage see Roskam 2007: 122–3, but cf. also the observations by Armstrong in ch. 6 of this volume (pp. 119–23).

[89] *Rhet.* 3 cols.14a,26–15a,6 Hammerstaedt. [90] *Rhet.* 3 col. 15a,16–31 Hammerstaedt.

is himself to prosper along with it. It is significant that Philodemus claims here to be speaking as a member of the Epicurean school ('we') rather than giving his own individual opinion.[91]

What did Philodemus, Siro, and other Epicurean sages really think of Piso, Cassius, Pansa and Epicurean statesmen like them? Were they generally regarded as individuals who could benefit from Epicurean wisdom despite having taken the low road of political activity, or were they seen as people whose best choice, given the possibilities before them, was to lead a statesman's life that accorded as much as possible with Epicurean teaching? Whether or not these men had a political disposition would obviously come into consideration.[92] I suggest, however, that the commitments and responsibilities of those who had inherited position would also play a central role in any judgements made about such individuals as well as in the advice given to them.[93] One can easily imagine that withdrawing from, or even refusing to embark upon, a public career would create more disturbances than it would remove for some with hereditary responsibilities towards subjects, family members, connections and clients. Rather than leading to the truest kind of safety, withdrawal under these circumstances might even entail increased risk. The injunction λάθε βιώσας would be rendered absurd in such cases. Heeding it was arguably never, from the day he was born, a possibility for someone like Calpurnius Piso, whose family had before him held the consulship eight times.

Epicureanism's flexibility concerning life choices is also evident in Philodemus' *On Household Management* (*Oeconomicus*), which is itself based on Metrodorus' lost work by the same name. This treatise discusses the various ways someone committed to Epicureanism can earn a living.[94]

[91] In ch. 6 of this volume, David Armstrong makes a compelling case that Philodemus' authority in this portion of the rhetoric is Metrodorus himself.

[92] While I doubt that possessing the relevant *diathesis* alone would have justified a career in politics, see Plut. *De tranq. an.* 465F–466A above in note 83 of this chapter, p. 93. A person's disposition was clearly a serious consideration for Epicurus in this regard, but one detects in the passage an element of likely exaggeration by Plutarch in order to convey the impression that the only people Epicureans encouraged to participate in politics were those hopelessly addicted to glory.

[93] The issue of inherited status has received hardly any attention. Benferhat 2005: 69, refers to it in passing in her discussion of the Epicurean T. Albucius, where in justifying his ascension through the *cursus honorum* she notes: 'Pour le fils d'une famille sénatoriale, parcourir le *cursus honorum* n'était pas spécialement une marque d'ambition, mais le minimum de ce que l'on pouvait attendre de lui: il n'était pas question de se soustraire à ces obligations.' See also Benferhat 2005: 97 and Schofield 2007. Jocelyn 1977: 362, speaks of the pressure exerted upon the sons of senators to enter the Senate, though he provides no supporting textual evidence. Hopkins 1983 suggests that the pressures were not as great as have been supposed.

[94] Cf. Asmis 2004: 164, 'In *On Household Economics*, Philodemus is concerned not only with the occupation of being a wise person, but with the entire range of occupations suitable for persons who

The ideal occupation, naturally, is to teach philosophy among friends, as Epicurus had done. But the best alternative, according to Philodemus, is to be a landowning farmer who dedicates his resources and leisure to enabling a group of friends to do philosophy together. Philodemus here departs from pseudo-Theophrastus and Xenophon, who serve as frequent foils throughout the treatise. Their landowning farmer uses his leisure for politics. Philodemus does not, however, offer blanket disparagements of a political career. Instead, following Metrodorus' lead, he disparages only a certain kind of politician, namely, one who accumulates wealth through military aggrandizement.[95] Such criticism seems courageous when directed at Roman nobility, who were known for occasionally plundering the provinces where they served as governors. More significant for our purposes is the fact that Philodemus concentrates his criticism of the political life on military aggrandizement.[96] As Asmis has suggested, Philodemus' presentation involves some accommodation for his Roman aristocratic audience,[97] but there is no reason to think that he in any way contravenes either Metrodorus or Epicurus.[98] From Philodemus' treatise we are able not only to confirm Epicureanism's flexibility with regard to one's choices in life generally but also to see how someone like Piso in particular was able to combine an occupation that Philodemus heartily endorsed, that of a wealthy landowner who opens his estate to philosophical discussion, with one that he could at least accommodate, a political career. While Piso was certainly no Epicurean sage, his involvement in political life did not prevent Philodemus, on the basis of good Epicurean precedent, from making concessions and offering approval and support to him, and others like him, in accordance with the wisdom of Epicurus.

live philosophically. All of these people are "philosophers" in a broad sense. In the strict sense, as Philodemus points out, a philosopher does not engage in business dealings at all. In a broad sense, a philosopher is anyone who does philosophy, even if he has just a little time for philosophical study.'

[95] Col. 22,17–20; 24–26: ἡμε[ῖς] δὲ [λ]έγωμεν ἀκολοθοῦντες [τὸ] μὲν ο[ἴεσ]θαι πορισμὸν ἄ[ριστο]ν εἶναι τὸν δορίκτητον κα[ὶ χ]ρῆσιν... δοξοκόπων ἀνθρώπων εἶναι κατὰ σοφίαν οὐδετέραν... (tr. Asmis) ('But let us say, following (Metrodorus) that to think that the best procurement and use is by the spear belongs to people who court fame in accordance with neither wisdom...').

[96] Cf. Asmis 2004: 173, 'All political participation is likely to disturb, but using political office to enrich oneself through war is especially bad.... Philodemus appears to be extending a message to Roman aristocrats and others who have broken into their circle: don't pursue the military life, and avoid political intrigue as much as possible by transforming your estates into philosophical havens for friends.' It is worth noting, however, that Philodemus does not criticize warfare in general, but only warfare undertaken for the sake of material gain.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Nor does Asmis herself suggest a contradiction; see, e.g., p. 159: 'Everything Philodemus says [in *On Household Economics*] is compatible with Epicurus' own teachings. But there is a change of emphasis.'

It is no accident that the most direct and proverbial proscriptions against politics attributed to Epicurus are short fragments preserved in secondary sources, and not part of either the *Key Doctrines* or any entirely extant letters.[99] Rather than being intended for general consumption, 'maxims' like λάθε βιώσας and μὴ πολιτεύεσθαι may well have been excerpted from letters addressed to individuals covetous of social connections or status that they lacked.[100] The likely result of such people's eagerness to win renown would be an unhappier life than before.[101] A fragment from Metrodorus preserved by Plutarch contains similar advice to someone concerned about being uneducated: 'Do not be disturbed, because, as you say, you do not know on which side Hector fought, or the first lines of Homer's poem.'[102] Instructions on the subject of political prominence, like those regarding education, must have been situational rather than dogmatic.[103] That is to say, they were not *maxims* at all. Their basic message was that individuals born into obscurity should be grateful for that fact and should not strive for fame or attract unnecessary attention to themselves. The kind of person at whom this message was directed would have been quite opposite to someone who, to borrow a phrase from Cicero, had been 'consul-designate from birth'.[104] The Epicureans had advice for both kinds of people, and a method for evaluating options that promised to maximize happiness whatever the relevant circumstances. There is no suggestion in any surviving source that a person born to the kind of station referred to by Cicero would be expected to go through the tumultuous process of trying to dismantle all of his inherited privileges and responsibilities. Wealth offers a useful analogy to political privilege in this regard. According to *Vatican Sayings* (*VS*) 67, it is the pursuit of wealth, rather than wealth itself, that is likely to imperil one's happiness; wealth obtained by chance may even be used to gain the goodwill of others.

[99] I have been anticipated somewhat in this by this Roskam 2007: 33, who notes the importance of the fact that the saying λάθε βιώσας is not found in the *Key Doctrines*.

[100] It was Usener (1977: lxviii–lxiv) who suggested, for reasons obviously different than my own, that these precepts may have come from letters of Epicurus. Closer to my line of thought here is Roskam 2007: 43.

[101] The ancient evidence regarding the statements 'live unnoticed' and 'do not engage in politics' is surprisingly slender and for the most part late. On λάθε βιώσας see fr. 551 Us.; on μὴ πολιτεύεσθαι, see frr. 8, 9 Us. For a full discussion, see Roskam 2007.

[102] Plut. *Non posse* 1094E.

[103] Cf. Roskam 2007: 36, 'Devoid of any context, it should have been understood as absolute and unqualified advice that has to be followed under all circumstances. This, of course, runs counter to the *calculus*, which implies that the maxim has its exceptions.' See also pp. 40–1, 146.

[104] *Fam.* 4.6.1–2.

For the same reasons that the Epicureans made certain allowances with respect to political participation for people of inherited status, I suggest that they would have in almost every case criticized any attempt to use politics as a means of securing positions higher than one's social standing and family connections would normally allow. This kind of ambitious upward social movement would be likely to attract the *invidia* of others and so entail more trouble than it was worth. Men of such ambition may be the intended targets of Lucretius' Sisyphus allegory and of his criticisms in *DRN*'s other passages on politics. This detail alone tells us nothing about his own social status, which has been the subject of much speculation. His distaste for ambitious social climbers may equally have been that of someone looking down from patrician heights or, as with Horace's satires, of an *eques* looking up from below.[105] We do, however, learn something arguably more important: Lucretius' own political perspective, and probably that of other Epicureans in the Late Republic, was deeply conservative. Piso's circle, like no doubt many others of prominent Romans, was united in the belief that outsiders wishing to accede to the ranks of the nobility were precisely the sort of people who should be kept out. In this respect, their Epicureanism was easily allied with aristocratic political ideals, since it gave the nobility a theoretical basis for justifying their own political careers while opposing others' attempts to rise into their own ranks.[106]

Piso's own ascent of the *cursus honorum* would seem in keeping with Epicurean principles, since he was able to win on the first try at every step of the way. He could make the case that his engagement in politics required neither great effort nor ambition on his part. That he may have explicitly tried to do so is suggested by one of Cicero's questions in *In Pisonem* 2.1–2: 'Does he even pride himself before *me* on having obtained all the magistracies at the first attempt?' (*Is mihi etiam gloriabatur se omnis magistratus sine repulsa adsecutum?*).[107] Cicero of course already knew, as did everyone else, that Piso had won every position of the *cursus* without defeat. The context of Piso's statement, what Cicero calls his boast, may have been that he was able to attain them with little sweat, to go back to the Lucretian way of putting it.[108] The relative ease of the journey itself would have constituted a justification for going through the *cursus* while

[105] On Lucretius' origins see Holford-Strevens 2002, which makes a case that Lucretius was not from a noble or patrician family, though he may have been at least Horace's equal in social rank.

[106] Cf. the comment in Asmis 2004 that the orientation of Philodemus' *On Household Economy* is 'blatantly aristocratic in its orientation'. Cf. Momigliano 1941: 151.

[107] The passage that immediately follows, in which Cicero complains of the advantages the nobility enjoyed in political life, is also relevant.

[108] Wiseman 1971: 106, emphasizes the ease with which the *nobilis* could attain offices.

still professing a commitment to Epicureanism, which must otherwise have struck some as disingenuous.[109] Cicero was happy to capitalize on Piso's theme by adding his own twist. For Cicero, the difficulty and self-sacrifice he had experienced served to ratify and ennoble his own career, in contrast to that of the *nobilis*. These same facts must have made Cicero's life paradigmatically undesirable for some Epicureans.[110] His own political theory, borrowed in part from the Stoics, maintained the existence in everyone of an inborn impulse to help the larger community.[111] Epicureans could not have disagreed more. To them, Cicero's political rise implied an underlying ambition for political pre-eminence, and the amount of toil and risk required was neither necessary nor ultimately merited.[112] According to the Epicurean view, if Cicero had to be in politics, he should have stayed back at Arpinum. He may not have been a Sisyphus – that is, a perennial loser who refuses to give up – but he was certainly not to be admired.

There is good reason to believe that Cicero recognized that his own status as a *novus homo* was almost the opposite of the life recommended by the Epicureans, despite their willingness to excuse the political career of a successful *nobilis*. His evocation of the elder Cato's similar career as a *novus homo* can be read in this light:

M. vero Catoni, homini ignoto et novo, quo omnes, qui isdem rebus studemus, quasi exemplari ad industriam virtutemque ducimur, certe licuit Tusculi se in otio delectare salubri et propinquo loco. sed homo demens, ut isti putant, cum cogeret eum necessitas nulla, in his undis et tempestatibus ad summam senectutem maluit iactari quam in illa tranquillitate atque otio iucundissime vivere.

[109] As Griffin 2001: 91 shows, Piso's claim that he never wanted a triumph (*Pis.* 56–7, 63, 92) was framed in Epicurean terms and probably part of a defence of his Epicureanism. New readings in the papyrus of *On the Good King*, col. 36 Dorandi, have revealed that Philodemus there treats the importance of not taking pleasure in the defeat of one's foes, no matter how arrogant and base they are; see Fish 2004. It is also clear from *Pis.* 65 that Piso had attempted to frame a defence of himself in philosophical terms.

[110] Cicero himself may imply as much at *Rep.* 1.4–6, where he states that quietists (apparently including Epicureans) included him in their roster of statesmen who had suffered misfortune, to dissuade people from a career in politics.

[111] E.g. *Rep.* 1.1: *unum hoc definio, tantam esse necessitatem virtutis generi hominum a natura tantumque amorem ad communem salutem defendendam datum, ut ea vis omnia blandimenta voluptatis otique vicerit* ('I make this one assertion: nature has given men such a need for virtue and such a desire to defend the common safety that this force has overcome all the enticements of pleasure and ease'; tr. Zetzel). On this concept, see Asmis 2001.

[112] At a low point in his career, Cicero speaks candidly to his brother Quintus of his lifelong passion to be at the top: *illud vero quod a puero adamaram,* 'πολλὸν [sic: αἰὲν MSS] ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπείροχος ἔμμεναι ἄλλων' (*Il.* 6.208) *totum occidisse* ('and the deep love I have had since I was a boy, "to be the best by far and to excel all others" is ruined'; *Q. fr.* 3.5.4). An Epicurean would no doubt have viewed this abiding ambition as the real motivation behind Cicero's career, and his theory of an innate desire to help the community as mere pretence.

> Marcus Cato, an unknown man of no pedigree – a man who serves as a model of industry and virtue to all of us who share his goals – could have remained at Tusculum, a healthy spot and not far off, enjoying peace and quiet, but that madman (as some people think), under no compulsion, chose to be tossed in the waves and storms of public life to an advanced old age rather than live a happy life in peace and calm.[113]

As Zetzel points out, Cato's obscure origins (*ignoto et novo*) are 'emphasized because Cato's lack of inherited reputation and family tradition would have made a life of *otium* an acceptable alternative to public service'.[114] Here we have further indication that Cicero was getting the message, whether implicitly or explicitly, from at least some Epicureans that people like Cato and himself were wrongly motivated and had brought unnecessary cares upon themselves. Cicero responded by trivializing and simplifying the Epicureans' arguments. It is a pity that we do not have more replies to these barbed remarks of his. Cassius' brief epistolary response to Cicero's bluster (= *Fam.* 7.19), analysed in full in this volume by David Armstrong, shows that there were standard replies ready.[115] But it is no wonder that Roman Epicureans seem to have been uninterested in detailed, serious correspondence with Cicero about their philosophy.

The fact that Epicureanism did not produce much political theory rankled the sensibilities of Cicero and Plutarch. Both men portrayed this relative silence as evidence that the Epicureans were indifferent to the health of the state,[116] since if their sages cared about good government, they would have produced their own equivalents to Cicero's *De Republica*. But such criticism is spurious. Epicureanism obviously had a strong libertarian bent, and non-involvement in politics was indeed the ideal, but the primary reason Epicurean sages were not given to much political theorizing is simply that they believed that people could flourish under a variety of governments. If there was a preference for monarchy, as many have argued, it is hard to detect in the sources.[117] In all likelihood, what Epicurean philosophers generally supported, when consulted, was the *status quo*. Their chief concern was with the character of political leaders. Virtuous statesmen, they believed, were the key to good government and the greatest contributors to a country's stability, which in turn enabled its people (and themselves) to get on with the business of being happy. This

[113] *Rep.* 1.1 (tr. Zetzel). [114] Zetzel 1995: 96; cf. Cic. *Rep.* 1.10.
[115] For a similar reduction of Epicurean thought in general, including politics, see *Q. Rosc.* 23.
[116] Cic. *Rep.* 1.11; Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1127A.
[117] This is the upshot of Benferhat 2004, on which see Schofield 2007. Westmann 1955 and Salem 1989 both argue for a preference for monarchy.

much, if nothing else, we learn from Philodemus' *On Rhetoric* 3 and *On the Good King*.

In intra-school literature, and sometimes even in writings intended for a more general public, Epicurean philosophers could admittedly look with condescension upon people with political engagements,[118] but the effect of much of this abuse is mitigated when seen in the correct light. Plutarch, for example, reports that Metrodorus reviled certain men as 'Lycurguses and Solons'.[119] An earlier passage, however, describes the specific objects of this ridicule as 'certain sages' carried away with 'the same desires as Lycurgus and Solon'.[120] This earlier reference makes clear that the men in question were philosophers, a group for whom participation in politics was generally forbidden by the Epicureans.[121] Plutarch also complains that Epicureans mentioned statesmen in their writings 'only for the purpose of having a laugh at them and destroying their reputation'.[122] There may be some substance behind this charge, since even the surviving portion of *On the Good King* brings up post-Homeric statesmen, with one or two possible exceptions, only to condemn them.[123] The examples offered of good kings all come from Homer. Nevertheless, the specific rulers that come in for criticism by Epicureans arguably deserve it. While Plutarch expresses his indignation at Epicurean criticism of Epaminondas, for example, the man in fact seems to have possessed few virtues as a leader.[124] It is clear in any case that Roman Epicureans did not condemn all contemporary politicians. The hope Philodemus extends at the end of *On Rhetoric* 3 of a statesman making a great contribution is genuine.

With regard to the attitudes and positions of early Epicureans towards politics, we are faced again and again with a fundamental choice: whether to trust the testimony of hostile witnesses such as Plutarch and Cicero or that of the Epicurean Philodemus, whose deliberate use of the first person plural at the end of *On Rhetoric* 3 seems to imply a claim to speak on

[118] This is richly documented by Fowler 1989: 134, though he does not make this distinction with regard to the intended audiences of Epicurean works.

[119] Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1127c: 'It is therefore fitting to burst into the laughter of one truly free at all men and more particularly at these Lycurguses and Solons.'

[120] Ibid., 1127b.

[121] Cf. Westman 1955: 125. Fowler 1989: 213–14, assumes on the basis of the Plutarch passage that the early Epicureans simply despised all politicians.

[122] *Adv. Col.* 1127a.

[123] Those criticized include Cambyses, Nicomedes III and Demetrius Poliorcetes.

[124] See Cawkwell 1972; Buckler 1980; Roy 1994. Epicurus is also said (*Non posse* 1097c) to have disparaged the accomplishments of Themistocles and Miltiades, but one can easily see how these two would have been thought worthy of his harsh judgement. Idomeneus apparently criticized several Athenian statesman in *On Demagogues*; see Fowler 1989: 124.

behalf of the school. Epicureans, he suggests, have always believed that a virtuous man with a good disposition can rule well, and that if he is trained in philosophy, he can rule all the better and make an even greater contribution. Our knowledge of the actual interactions of Epicureans and rulers leads me to conclude that Philodemus is the one deserving our trust. If Epicurus looked upon politicians with a certain contempt in his writings intended for internal consumption, I am quite confident that he was more positive, and no less sincere, in his lost work *On Kingship*, as well as in his personal contacts with politicians who had hereditary commitments. In this respect, I disagree with Oswyn Murray, for whom 'Epicurus's *On Kingship* was clearly a satirical attack on the idea that kings should be seen with philosophers: it was a waste of everyone's time.'[125] The lives and works of subsequent Epicureans would seem to belie this interpretation. The Epicurean Philonides reportedly converted Demetrius I Soter (160–152 BC) to Epicureanism.[126] King Demetrius is said to have made good progress in Epicurean philosophy, and there is no indication that his teacher tried to persuade him to renounce his kingship. On the contrary, it seems that Philonides believed Demetrius could enjoy many of the benefits of Epicureanism in spite of his kingly duties. While our knowledge of Philonides

[125] Murray 2007: 19, which also suggests that 'Epicurus had clearly set out to explode the whole idea of the intellectual at court.' In support of this view, Murray first cites Plutarch: 'The Epicureans write on kingship to persuade us to avoid living with kings' (*Adv. Col.* 1127A). Plutarch's claim may have been inspired by efforts on Epicurus' part not to privilege the relationship between philosopher and ruler, as other schools had, and above all, for the philosopher not to lose his freedom of speech. Murray maintains that the only surviving fragment of *On Kingship* discourages the relationship between king and philosopher; cf. also Fowler 1989: 132. The fragment in question portrays Epicurus as 'not giving a place even at drinking parties to the literary and learned discussions of scholars, but advising even cultured kings to submit to military anecdotes and coarse horse-play at symposia rather than talk about literary and poetic problems' (Plut. *Non posse* 1095C, tr. Murray). Even if Epicurus discouraged literary conversation, it does not follow that he likewise discouraged discussion about politics, philosophy or the character of a good ruler. What I expect he in fact discouraged was discussion (literary or otherwise) that had no practical bearing on the ruler's life. I doubt Philodemus would expect Piso or others like him to follow the arguments in a work like *On Poems*. By contrast, *On the Good King* and portions of Philodemus' *On Rhetoric*, part of which was dedicated to Vibius Pansa, deal with issues directly relevant to ruling.

[126] Murray is of course familiar with this subsequent history, but his trust in Plutarch seems to have led him to see discontinuity within the Epicurean school on these matters. On Philonides, see Erler 1994: 251–5; Benferhat 2005: 48–50. The key passage is from the life of Philonides, fr. 30, 2–4 Gallo: πρὸς τὴ[ν] αἵρεσιν, | Φιλωνίδης αὐτὸ[ν] αἱρετισ|τὴν τῶν λόγων ἐπόησεν ('As for the sect, Philonides made Demetrius into a partisan for their doctrines'). The word choice is important. Demetrius was not turned into a philosopher, but 'a partisan'. There are other precedents for Epicureans advising rulers (for a brief survey, see Warren 2002: 156–7; for an in-depth one, see Benferhat 2004), but the case of Philonides offers the clearest indication of the involvement of specifically Epicurean training. There is large inscriptional evidence that Philonides and his brothers inherited wealth and political position from their father. For the latest survey of his life, see Koch 2005: 62–71. Gera 1999 contains several important improvements to Gallo's text.

is somewhat sketchy and uncertain, the message of Philodemus' *On the Good King* is quite clear: the virtuous exercise of power could, at least on the average, provide a ruler with a secure life. This same message is articulated by Torquatus in Cicero's own *De finibus*, and by Cassius in his canny reply to Cicero's disparaging letters.[127] This broad agreement gives good reason for supposing that the theme has its origins in even earlier Epicurean writings, and most likely in Epicurus' *On Kingship* itself. Of course safety is only the starting point for an Epicurean.[128] A political life affords many distractions that could interfere with one's philosophical progress. A newly restored passage of *On the Good King* makes reference to both avoidable and unavoidable disturbances.[129] Philodemus' *On Anger* (*De ira*) and *On Death* (*De morte*) provide confirmation that certain disturbances are unavoidable aspects of the human condition. As with Epicurean ethical theory generally, the goals of Epicurean pronouncements on politics are to distinguish clearly the relevant disturbances that genuinely cannot be avoided from those that can, and to help in mitigating the former and avoiding the latter. More than this is not possible. Not even the best human life is entirely free from disturbance.[130]

[127] See Armstrong, ch. 6 of this volume, pp. 112–13.

[128] *KD* 13: 'There was never any use in securing safety from other men, if the heavens, and what is beneath the earth, and in general what is in infinite space are suspect to us.'

[129] Col. 27,27–9 Dorandi. My new text reads ἵνα̣ [μὴ . .] . . . [τοῖς ἀ]ναγκαίοις ἐπακτο[ὺς προσ]|άγωσι θορύβ̣ους ('in order that . . . they not introduce unnecessary troubles and add them to the unavoidable ones').

[130] On this point see ch. 10 by Kirk Sanders in this volume, pp. 231–4.

CHAPTER 6

Epicurean virtues, Epicurean friendship: Cicero vs the Herculaneum papyri

David Armstrong

Philodemus claims in *On Death* (*De morte*) that Epicureans, 'though unaware through some unavoidable cause that now, and quickly, the paragraph-mark and end of life was approaching, the minute this becomes visible to the eye, can take swiftest survey of it in a manner that is a mystery unspeakable to the uninitiate (ἀρρήτως τοῖς ἀγνοοῦσιν). Because of their having enjoyed everything, and because of the complete lack of perception that they know will engulf them, they breathe their last in such calm as if they had never turned their attention away from death for a moment.'[1]

Similar language of mystery and initiation is frequent in Epicurean ethical discourse. The 'mystery' of friendship is set forth in *VS* 52: 'Friendship dances round the whole civilized world, heralding to us in very deed to awake and call each other blessed' (ἡ φιλία περιχορεύει τὴν οἰκουμένην κηρύττουσα δὴ πᾶσιν ἡμῖν ἐγείρεσθαι ἐπὶ τὸν μακαρισμόν). Cyril Bailey ignores the mystery-initiation language in his note on the passage.[2] A. J. Festugière, however, showed convincingly that '[t]he whole sentence is full of reminiscences of the language peculiar to Greek mysticism'.[3] The 'heralding' is that of the Eleusinian mysteries, which from the very start had hereditary heralds, or Kerykes – as well as that of Hermetic mysticism. 'Awaking' is also a term with mystic connotations, as in the Pauline sentence 'Awake thou that sleepest (ἔγειρε ὁ καθεύδων) and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.'[4] 'Calling each other blessed' (μακαρισμός) evokes the typical greeting between initiates: 'thou art blessed' (μακάριος εἶ). Festugière did not mention περιχορεύει ('dances round about'), but

This chapter was first given as the Clark Lecture in Classics at Brigham Young University in February 2007; I am grateful to the audience's comments there, especially to Richard Lounsbury for reminding me that many ancient sources rank Cassius higher than Brutus. Many thanks for criticism and help with this chapter are also due to participants at the Mackinac conference, especially Jeff Fish, Kirk Sanders and Michael Wigodsky.

[1] Col. 39,15–25. [2] Bailey 1926: 383–4.
[3] Festugière 1955: 46–7 n. 45. On Epicurean mysticism about friendship and the gods, cf. Koch 2005.
[4] *Eph.* 5.14.