

# Pleasure and social utility - the virtues of being Epicurean

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## VIII

ANTHONY LONG

### PLEASURE AND SOCIAL UTILITY— THE VIRTUES OF BEING EPICUREAN

The essential message of Epicurean ethics—the *raison d'être* of his philosophical enterprise—was encapsulated in ‘the fourfold remedy’ or *tetrapharmakos*: “God presents no fears, death no worries. And while good is readily attain-

\* In writing this paper I have benefited from comments by a good many friends, especially David Sedley and Gregory Vlastos. Full references to the literature referred to in the main text or the notes are given above.

#### Abbreviations and References

*Ep. Men.* = Epicurus, *Letter to Menoecus*

*KD* = Epicurus, *Kyriai Doxai*

*Sent. Vat.* = Epicurean maxims preserved in a Vatican MS

Usener = H. USENER (ed.), *Epicurea* (Leipzig 1887)

ADKINS, A. W. H. *Merit and Responsibility. A Study in Greek Values* (Oxford 1960)

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BOLLACK, J. “Les maximes de l’amitié”, in *Actes du VIII<sup>e</sup> Congrès de l’Assoc. G. Budé*, Paris 1968 (Paris 1969), 221-236

able, evil is readily endurable".<sup>1</sup> Incorporating, as it does, the first four of his so-called *Key doctrines* (κύριαι δόξαι), the fourfold remedy is a cure-all for unhappiness. Repeated and memorized by the Epicurean disciple, it was intended to remind him that supreme happiness was available to him at any time, provided that he wholeheartedly endorse and base his life upon the practical implications of its four propositions. *Prima facie* the fourfold remedy is astonishing in its simplicity, optimism, and complacency. Epicurus, however, had no scruples against using the tactics of the advertizing man in attracting the attentions of his au-

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| PHILIPPSON, R.  | "Die Rechtsphilosophie der Epikureer", in <i>AGPh</i> 23 (1910), 289-337; 433-446                      |
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| SINCLAIR, T. A. | <i>A History of Greek Political Thought</i> (London 1951)  |

<sup>1</sup> Philodemus, *Adversus sophistas*, ed. F. SBORDONE (Napoli 1947), col. 4, 9-14: ἄφοβον ὁ θεός, ἀν[ύ]ποπτον ὁ θάνατος, κ[αί] τὰ γὰρ μὲν εὐκτητ[ον], τὸ δὲ δεινὸν εὐεκκ[αρ]τέρητον.

dience.<sup>2</sup> He was confident that reason and experience would consolidate the truths he believed himself to be providing, once a disciple was willing to join him in examining the foundations of happiness and unhappiness.

Even so, the impression of complacency is harder to dispel. By the ready availability of 'good' Epicurus means sources of pleasurable feelings and equanimity; by the ready endurability of evil he means the brevity of intense pains and the relatively mild disturbance that long pains cause.<sup>3</sup> Underlying the assurances about availability of good and endurability of evil, there appears to be an assumption which is not generally stated in studies of Epicureanism: the material goods which a would-be Epicurean must minimally possess are assumed to be available in his or her environment, and likewise, that environment is assumed to be largely free from the evils which could cause even an Epicurean to fail to achieve a preponderance of pleasure over pain.<sup>4</sup> Notoriously, Epicurus insisted that "bread and water produce the acme of pleasure, when someone who has the need takes them" (*Ep. Men.* 131). As part of his doctrine of 'natural and necessary desires', he argued that we never *need* more than simple foods in order to achieve the greatest pleasure concomitant upon losing the pains of hunger. But a minimum diet is essential to an

<sup>2</sup> See FRISCHER, esp. 49-52; 77-84; 199-282, on 'advertizing' in Epicurean recruitment. Frischer's study is a most searching and original contribution to the social attitudes and organization of Epicureanism, even though some will hesitate, as I do, to accept his very interesting suggestions about the use made of iconography for recruitment purposes.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *KD* 3-4; *Ep. Men.* 130; *Sent. Vat.* 25; 33; *Lucr.* II 1-61.

<sup>4</sup> In the literature I have consulted, GUYAU comes the closest to recognizing Epicurus' concern that his goal of life should be thoroughly realistic: "Pour rendre plus facile l'accès de la fin suprême, il va dégager de plus en plus de tout élément matériel la conception du plaisir" (44). But Guyau limited himself to pointing out the irrelevance to the goal of riches, luxury, honours and political power. Cf. also MÜLLER, 22 ff.



Epicurean, and we may add: minimum clothing, housing, medical care. An Epicurean also needs assurances that he or she will not be molested by wild animals, subjected to the privations and continuous torture, it may be, of a concentration camp, or living in an environment where vandalism, assault, mockery, and other forms of psychological pressure are the order of the day.

Answering to these minimal material needs and absences of external disturbance a ready, and partly effective, answer is available. Epicurus, plainly a man of some wealth in his later years, provided the garden he acquired just outside the city-wall of Athens as a source of food and protection to his immediate followers. Doubtless the other Epicurean communities, which followed the model of the Attic garden, made similar provisions. Thus, we may be encouraged to think, Epicureans were philosophers who completely opted out of city life, founded 'alternative' communities, and had the material wherewithal to live utterly self-sufficient lives, with their spiritual welfare safely secured by the master's teaching.

We know remarkably little, as it happens, about the original Garden, and even less about other Epicurean communities. I am prepared to believe that the Garden symbolized, and up to a point satisfied, the provision of those needs, external to the individual, which Epicurean happiness required. I repeat, however, that minimal subsistence, security, housing and medical care are presuppositions of Epicurean life-styles; and Epicurus himself endorses my point by his insistence upon the ready availability of good and endurance of evil. The effectiveness of his 'fourfold remedy' requires more than an Epicurean Garden, as its external conditions. It needs a neighbouring environment which will tolerate the Epicurean community—if that is what we have in the Garden—and will provide it with any basic materials absent from the Garden that its members

require in order to "live as happily as Zeus" (*Sent. Vat.* 33). The point I am making is just this: primitive man, as Lucretius for instance conceives of him, could not have lived the Epicurean life; the minimal subsistence and security would not have been available.

On the basis of this preamble, I want to raise certain questions concerning the relationship between Epicurean ethics, social and political theory, and anthropology. Was Epicurus simply complacent about or neglectful of the possibility that some people might lack the minimal provisions his ethics requires? Was he content to be parasitical upon the existence of a relatively stable, non-Epicurean community outside the Garden, which made that retreat's existence possible? What, in other words, is his moral assessment of the wider world, and are the prescriptions for happiness that he advances intended to change the lives of whole communities as well as individuals? Did Epicurus think, with John Stuart Mill, that "poverty, in any sense implying suffering, may be completely extinguished by the wisdom of society, combined with the good sense and providence of individuals?"<sup>5</sup> Mill, preceded by Bentham and followed by Sidgwick, regarded Epicurus as a utilitarian precursor. Does Epicurean ethics prove to be compatible with, or does it even concern itself with, 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'?

In approaching these questions, it is essential to recognize the prejudice which informs most ancient, and a good many modern, evaluations of Epicureanism. If we think that direct intervention in political processes and established systems of education or cultural practices are the

<sup>5</sup> John Stuart MILL, *On Liberty*, in *Utilitarianism*, ed. M. WARNOCK (London 1962), 266. For Mill on Epicurus, cf. p. 256: "Those who know anything about the matter are aware that every writer, from Epicurus to Bentham, who maintained the principle of utility, meant by it, not something to be distinguished from pleasure, but pleasure itself, together with exemption from pain."

hallmark of a person's general concern for human well-being, Epicurus fails the test. One of his most famous *dicta* is the injunction to "liberate oneself from everyday affairs and politics" (*Sent. Vat.* 58). He repeatedly stresses the necessity, for a happy life, of disengagement from the populace in general, and of securing freedom from fear of one's neighbours. He implies in a good many places (and Lucretius dwells constantly on the theme) that fame, status, and political power are highly unpromising means to secure the goods that human beings, by their nature, require in order to live free from pain and anxiety. Cyril Bailey refers to "a marked churlishness and a depressing timidity about the [Epicurean] 'wise man's' action . . . an austere and almost cynical devotion to self-interest" (517; 520). Many other upper-class Englishmen, trained in highly competitive private schools, to become scholars of Balliol College and administrators of imperial Britain, will have shared Bailey's reactions. Bailey tries his best to credit Epicurus with 'nobility', but plainly feels the strain of attaching this quality to a philosophy which he finds a "rather arid desert . . . on its social side" (*ibid.*).

What was difficult for Bailey was virtually impossible for pagans such as Cicero and Plutarch or Christians like Lactantius. Profoundly troubled by Epicurus' virtual atheism and certain materialism, these, in their different ways, were all men of affairs, ambitious, involved in the political world. Stoics, to be sure, could agree with Epicurus on the insignificance of material prosperity for human happiness; but the Stoic takes part in politics, unless he is prevented from doing so, and his model of the physical world is a hierarchical political structure, organized and run by Zeus, with human beings in the second rank and other living beings disposed by descending ranks. Stoicism, as the Romans swiftly saw, could be readily accommodated to their native ideals of heroic struggle, patriotism, and self-



sacrifice. A Roman emperor could be a Stoic—but an Epicurean philosopher could not and would not run the world.

Apart from upper-class and theoretical impediments to sympathy for Epicurean withdrawal, we have to reckon, as Arthur Adkins has taught us, with the dominance of competitive values in ancient society, or at least its most influential echelons, and the difficulty moralists experienced in promoting the quiet or co-operative excellences to the kind of approval so readily accorded to status, wealth and power. The difficulties Cicero experiences in depreciating *gloria* and condemning the evils its pursuit has caused, while unable to refrain from egregious self-congratulation at his own consular achievements, may illustrate my general point.<sup>6</sup> By apparently advocating withdrawal from established society, by preaching the dangers of political life and insisting upon quietude as the recipe for happiness, Epicurus could not fail to be perceived as indifferent to, if not inimical to, the good of the existing social order. Not a man of action, in the obvious sense, he could scarcely be a philanthropist, someone concerned for human well-being quite generally.

The ancient charge against Epicurus is stated baldly by Lactantius: "Epicurus denies the existence of human society; he says that each person is concerned for himself; that there is no one who loves another except for his own sake".<sup>7</sup> There is a wealth of evidence, some of which I will shortly discuss, to show that Epicurus did not deny the existence of human society; nor does 'exclusively self-concern' pay regard to the kind of pleasures and friendships which inform the fully-developed Epicurean life. Lactantius' statements to contrary, and similar assertions by other

<sup>6</sup> This is particularly evident in the *De officiis*.

<sup>7</sup> Lact. *Inst.* III 17, 42 (Usener 523; 540). Cf. PHILIPPSON, 294; MÜLLER, 35.

ancient writers, are their inference; and his second sentence indicates how this runs. Epicurus, we are to understand, rejects the notion that association in a *polis* is essential to human flourishing, and thereby *implies* that each person is just concerned for himself. Therefore, we are to take it, he must deny the existence of human society *simpliciter*. This inference will only hold if human society requires the entirely disinterested or altruistic as its members. No ancient political theorist ever developed a view of society based upon such utopian premisses. Epicurus' supposedly anti-social leanings were also perceived in statements he is said to have made concerning the desirability of not marrying and of not having children.<sup>8</sup> We do not know the context of these remarks. In the light of his general optimism and philanthropic tone, they provide no basis for supposing him to advocate the rapid cessation of the human race.

Marxists, who have always been attracted to Epicurus, avoid such absurd misinterpretations of his social prescriptions. For Farrington (*The Faith of Epicurus*), the Epicurean Garden resembles the primitive 'city of pigs', described by Socrates in Book II of Plato's *Republic*. The comparison is suggestive; but I know of no evidence that the Garden had either the self-sufficiency or the diversity in trade and complexity of even the primitive Platonic city. Farrington wants to envisage the Epicurean community as a form of society in which the state has already 'withered away'. He writes: "Only the simple form of the State was 'natural', for this was held together by the natural impulse of friendship. The fully-developed State, with its code of laws enforced by external sanctions, was not natural to man" (27). This is to read Epicurus as Rousseau, to whom Farrington likens Epicurus (23). In fact, Epicurus nowhere

<sup>8</sup> Usener 525-526; see FRISCHER, 61-2, for discussion and bibliography.

says or implies that a simple state is more natural than a complex one, nor does he say or imply that a state which enforces its laws by external sanctions is not natural. The Epicurean approach to society is more complex and far more hard-headed than this naive defence of its simplest forms envisages.

Writing to one of the Ptolemies, Epicurus' follower Colotes stated a position we have every reason to think would have been endorsed by any sane member of the school: "Those who drew up laws and customs and established monarchical and other forms of government gave life great security and tranquillity, and banished turmoil; and if anyone should remove these things, we would live a life of beasts, and one man on meeting another will all but devour him."<sup>9</sup>

This passage, by no means isolated as we shall see, is sufficient to refute Farrington. Colotes chooses his terminology with care. Security (*ασφάλεια*), or 'a secure life', is described as 'nature's good' by Epicurus himself—that which people strive after "on the basis of nature's affinity" (*κατὰ τὸ τῆς φύσεως οἰκεῖον*, *KD* 7); and the same point is reinforced in a further maxim where he says that anything which can provide confidence of not being molested by men is "a natural good" (*KD* 6). The positive value of laws, customs and government, provided that they yield the security Colotes claims for them, is thus an inevitable

<sup>9</sup> Plut. *Adv. Col.* 30, 1124 D. This important, but frequently neglected, evidence is handled most irresponsibly by FARRINGTON, 27 f. Unable to credit its positive approach to conventional society, he attaches to it, as if it were the next sentence of Colotes' remarks to Ptolemy, the following: 'λέγειν δεῖ πῶς τις ἄριστα τὸ τῆς φύσεως τέλος συντηρήσει καὶ πῶς τις ἐκὼν εἶναι μὴ πρόσεισιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐπὶ τὰς τῶν πληθῶν ἀρχάς'. In fact this passage (31, 1125 C) is separated from the previous one by two pages of Greek text, and there is not the slightest indication that Plutarch is still quoting Colotes. (Usener includes the latter passage on its own as number 554.) Even the second passage, however, only says that a political career should be approached "reluctantly"—not that it should be avoided in every circumstance.



consequence of their relationship to a good that everyone naturally wants. Notice too that Colotes couples provision of "security and tranquillity" with "removal of turmoil": interpret these, as we may, by 'pleasure and the absence of pain', and we have constitutional government given the firmest sanction possible in Epicureanism: instrumentality in bringing about the one and only goods which are primary, final and intrinsic.

Colotes, anticipating Hobbes, has no illusions about the state of human life if the apparatus of government and law is removed; men will revert to the law of the jungle. Out of deference to Ptolemy perhaps, Colotes may give the impression that Hellenistic society has firmly distanced itself from that danger. Epicurus himself, however, dwells constantly on the need to find the right means of obtaining confidence (*ῥαπσῆν*) of non-interference by hostile people: "Those who had the power to acquire complete confidence of (not being molested) by their neighbours, by having the firmest guarantee of security, thus lived together most pleasurably" (*KD* 40). So I am not suggesting that Epicurus supposed Athens or other Hellenistic states to be fully satisfactory in the security they provided; he almost certainly thought otherwise. What the evidence so far reviewed shows is just this: an Epicurean will value political communities, in so far as they are useful to the stable provision of those things that he regards as supremely worthwhile.<sup>10</sup> A simple society might fail this test, and a complex one could pass it. For reasons yet to be con-

<sup>10</sup> PHILIPPSON was perhaps the first modern scholar to recognize that Epicurus' attitude to society was not one of simple negation: "Epikur und alle seine Anhänger bis auf Philodem glaubten dass nur das Leben im Rechtsstaate dem Weisen die für seine Lebensführung nötige Sicherheit gebe", 297; cf. 302-9. His views on the naturalness of social justice, criticized and refined by MÜLLER, 92-104, have been interestingly amplified by GOLDSCHMIDT. See also NICHOLS, 16; FRISCHER, 40.

sidered, Epicurus will think a city like that which William Penn founded more likely to satisfy basic human needs than modern Detroit. But he does not categorically deny that the head of General Motors or the President of the USA could achieve an Epicurean happiness: "Certain people wanted to become famous and admired, thinking that they would thus acquire security from (being molested) by other men. Consequently, if such people's life was secure, they did obtain nature's good" (*KD* 7).

As we shall see, the Epicurean explanation for the origin of community life and of laws was the utility of these institutions in facilitating people's natural and necessary desires for a secure life. If Epicurus advises his followers to keep their heads down, he has at least three defences against the criticism that such a life-style is politically irresponsible and morally complacent. First, he can argue that his ethical theory provides human beings, who are natural and persistent pleasure-seekers, with the strongest of reasons for the peaceful co-operation which legal systems seek to promote. By living in the Garden he does not contract out of the provisions for mutual security which, as he sees it, are the foundation of the utilitarian justice that any community needs. Secondly, he can argue that contemporary societies, even if they do provide some measure of security for their members, do so inadequately; and that they compound these failings by systems of education, competitive values, religion, and other practices which do great harm to their citizens. Thirdly, he can argue that the Epicurean way of life, which threatens no one in its scrupulous adherence to justice and is positively philanthropic in its cultivation of friendship, provides society with a model of how to live best, at the present stage of human evolution.

In the remainder of this paper I propose to develop this set of arguments from three perspectives or bodies of

material—the basic ethical theory, justice and friendship, and social evolution.

*The basic ethical theory*

The importance of the social context to a just appreciation of Epicurean ethics was clearly perceived by Lucretius. Here is the opening of his sixth book (1-17; 24-26)<sup>11</sup>:

It was Athens of glorious name that first long ago bestowed on feeble mortals the produce of corn, and refurbished life, and established laws. It was Athens too that first bestowed soothing pleasures on life, when she gave birth to a man endowed with such insight, who long ago gave utterance to everything with truthful voice. Dead though he is, his godlike discoveries spread his fame of old and now it reaches to heaven. When he saw that mortals were already supplied with almost everything that need demands for their livelihood, and that their life as far as possible was firm and secure, that men had abundance of power through wealth and social status and fame and took pride in the good name of their sons,

<sup>11</sup> *Primae frugiparos fetus mortalibus aegris  
dididerunt quondam praeclaro nomine Athenae  
et recreaverunt vitam legesque rogarunt,  
et primae dederunt solacia dulcia vitae,  
cum genuere virum tali cum corde repertum,  
omnia veridico qui quondam ex ore profudit;  
cuius et extincti propter divina reperta  
divulgata vetus iam ad caelum gloria fertur.  
nam cum vidit hic ad victum quae flagitat usus  
omnia iam ferme mortalibus esse parata  
et, pro quam possent, vitam consistere tutam,  
divitiis homines et honore et laude potentis  
adfluere atque bona gnatorum excellere fama,  
nec minus esse domi cuiquam tamen anxia corda,  
atque animi ingratis vitam vexare (sine ulla)  
pausa atque infestis cogi saevire querelis,  
intellegit ibi vitium vas officere ipsum...  
veridicis igitur purgavit pectora dictis  
et finem statuit cuppedinis atque timoris  
exposuitque bonum summum quo tendimus omnes...*

yet that at home no one's heart was any less troubled,  
 and that they were constantly wrecking their life despite their  
 intentions, under a compulsion to rage with aggressive com-  
 plaints,  
 he recognized that the flaw was *there*, caused by the utensil  
 itself...  
 And so he purged people's hearts with his truthful words,  
 and established the limits of desire and fear, and  
 laid out the nature of the highest good to which we all  
 strive . . .

In these lines Lucretius looks back on the achievement of Epicurus within a broadly historical perspective.<sup>12</sup> His comments invite us to approach the ethics as the panacea for people's *internal* well-being. He imagines Epicurus as reviewing Athenian culture and society in the guise of someone asking the question: "Why are these people unhappy? Their material needs are satisfied. They have power and wealth and fame. They do not lack external security or stability. Yet *in spite of all this*, they are profoundly unhappy." Hence, Epicurus deduced, the flaw lay with people's minds—the utensil, as Lucretius calls it—the failure to understand the 'limits of desire and fear', and to know the means by which to secure the happiness for which they strove.

There is no need to argue at length for the accuracy of Lucretius' account of Epicurus' philosophical motivation and the causes of people's unhappiness. The poet's hagiography was well founded on words by Epicurus available to ourselves. My particular interest in the Lucretian panegyric is its starting from a highly positive assessment of the external amenities of Hellenistic Athens. This chimes with Colotes' comments on law and government that I mentioned a few minutes ago; and similar points concern-

<sup>12</sup> See FURLEY for an interesting discussion of Lucretius' treatment of human history as viewed before and after Epicurus' revelation.



ing the great benefits conferred by early legislators are made at length in a work by Epicurus' successor, Hermarchus (discussed below, p. 311). The congruence of other Epicureans on this point should encourage us to credit the founder himself with a similar judgement: that is to say, in setting out his ethical theory, he takes it to be self-evident that human beings have reached a level of civilization and technical sophistication more than sufficient to satisfy the external conditions of happiness.<sup>13</sup> By these he will include not just provisions for basic bodily needs but, still more importantly in terms of his great stress upon equanimity, the security which judicial systems and, at a more personal level, friends facilitate. Epicurus' assumptions concerning these external provisions need to be remembered when we read the *Letter to Menoeceus*, his longest surviving ethical manifesto. Too often this is treated as a complete statement of his moral doctrines; in fact, as a comparison with the *Kuriiai Doxai* reveals, it omits any explicit mention of the two principal concepts of Epicurean social theory, the 'contract' which constitutes justice, and friendship. The absence from this letter of any treatment of these matters or of how Menoeceus can be confident of feeding and clothing himself etc. should not be read as evidence of Epicurus' lack of concern about such external necessities in his moral theory. Menoeceus, we must take it, is adequately provided for in these respects; what he needs education and practice in are the *internal* 'elements of happiness'.

That Epicurus is assuming a particular kind of society, in his address to Menoeceus, emerges from the letter itself. The concept of desires which are 'neither natural nor necessary' presupposes familiarity with and accessibility to wealth and luxury. Fear of the gods, we can infer from

<sup>13</sup> Cf. SINCLAIR, 260: "[Epicurus] knew that in the past the progress of civilisation had been helped forward by the active work of wise kings and rulers but... he regarded that work as completed".

Lucretius, is a malady affecting modern rather than primitive man; a contemporary parallel would be fear of nuclear war. Epicurus also assumes that Menoeceus can find a like-minded friend with whom he will need to rehearse the ethical doctrines 'day and night', in order to secure blessedness for himself (*Ep. Men.* 135).

From a philosopher who is reported to have said that "the pleasure of the stomach is the beginning and root of all good"<sup>14</sup> Menoeceus is told that what produces the pleasant life is "sober reasoning" (*Ep. Men.* 132). If Epicurus were advocating hedonism in place of some other ethical doctrine, this would seem austere, to say the least. But Epicurus does not set out to orient people towards pleasure and avoidance of pain. He takes it to be self-evident that these are the unavoidable objectives of all human (and animal) action, what everyone wants as the ingredients of happiness (cf. *Ep. Men.* 128-129; *Cic. Fin.* I 29 f.). The problem he seeks to resolve is the failure of people to get what they *naturally* want and strive after. His ethics, in essence, is a system of educating people in the means by which they can secure a whole lifetime in which pleasurable experience of body and mind predominates over pain. Menoeceus, he assumes, lacks nothing from his external environment to render such a life unattainable. Therefore, if he and other people continue to be unhappy, the impediment must be internal. On Epicurus' diagnosis, the internal impediments can be reduced to two factors—irrational fears, and vain and unlimited desires (ἢ γὰρ διὰ φόβον τις κακαδαίμονεϊ ἢ δι' ἄορίστον καὶ κενὴν ἐπιθυμίαν, Usener 485). Fear of death and fear of the gods, he proposes, can be dispelled by argument. Frustrated desires cause unhappiness owing to a misunderstanding of the limited range of desires we need to satisfy in order to be

<sup>14</sup> Athen. XII 546 f (Usener 409).



happy, the failure to make proper use of the materials available to satisfy the necessary desires, and the false supposition that pleasure or happiness can be increased beyond removal of pain and anxiety.

The two internal impediments to happiness can be overcome by *one* thing—virtue, and in particular, the virtue of prudence, *phronēsis*. Prudence is the essential internal instrument of our acquiring the pleasures that are readily available and of enduring the pains that we cannot avoid. The happy life, as Epicurus conceives of it, needs to be a highly intelligent life—one in which we see the utility for our happiness of applying rational judgement to every source of pleasure or pain that we encounter.

For what produces the pleasant life is not continuous drinking and parties or pederasty or womanizing or the enjoyment of fish and other dishes of an expensive table, but sober reasoning which tracks down the causes of every choice and avoidance, and which banishes the opinions that beset souls with the greatest confusion. Of all this, the beginning and the greatest good is prudence. Therefore prudence is even more precious than philosophy, and it is the natural source of all the remaining virtues: it teaches the impossibility of living pleasurably without living prudently, nobly and justly, <and the impossibility of living prudently, nobly and justly> without living pleasurably. For the virtues are naturally linked with living pleasurably, and living pleasurably is inseparably linked with them. (*Ep. Men.* 132)

The cardinal importance of this thesis is indicated by the inclusion of its last sentences as the fifth *Kuria Doxa*, following the full statement of the 'fourfold remedy'. Notice that Epicurus states the effectiveness of prudence, as the producer of the pleasant life, in an utterly general way. He is not simply advertizing its efficacy as the instrument of day-to-day applications of the hedonistic calculus. What he describes is a mental disposition, a total rational outlook on life, a cast of mind which has insight into the causes

of *every* choice and avoidance, and which banishes the opinions that beset souls in the plural (not just Menoeceus' soul) with the greatest confusion. Moralists frequently contrasted with Epicurus—for instance Plato and Aristotle—would completely endorse his claim that a truly pleasurable life must be a virtuous life, and that a virtuous life cannot fail to be one endowed with pleasure. If Epicurus excludes certain virtues that they count, or interprets some of them differently, he cannot be interpreted otherwise than as saying that constituents of the moral life—as viewed by Greeks generally—are inseparably linked with hedonic happiness.

How, then, are they linked? "I [Epicurus] spit upon the honourable (τὸ καλόν) and those who vainly admire it, when it produces no pleasure" (Athen. XII 547 a). This vivid insistence on the strictly instrumental value of a moral virtue, its subordination and subservience to pleasure, has drawn heavy fire against Epicurus from antiquity to the present day. His liking for shocking phraseology disturbs those who fail to see the complete honesty and significance of his serious commitment to a moral life as the necessary means of happiness. The same point is made in all due solidity by Diogenes of Oenoanda; he is clarifying the difference between Epicurean and Stoic views on virtue:

Now if, my fellow men, the question at issue between these people and ourselves involved examining "what is the means of happiness?", and they wanted to say the virtues, as is in fact true, there would be no need to do anything except to agree with them on the matter (fr. 26 Chilton).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> εἰ μὲν, ὦ ἄνδρες, τὸ μεταξύ τούτων τε καὶ ἡμῶν προβεβλημένον ἐπίσκεψιν εἶχεν 'τί τῆς εὐδαιμονίας ποιητικόν', ἐβούλοντο δ' οὗτοι τὰς ἀρετὰς λέγειν, ὃ δὴ καὶ ἀληθὲς ἐτύγχανεν, οὐδὲν ἄλλ' ἔδει ποιεῖν ἢ τούτοις [συνο]μογνωμονοῦν[τας μὴ] ἔχειν πράγμα[τα]. (col. I, 6 sqq.)

Against the Stoics, Diogenes insists that pleasure is the end of the best lifestyle, with the virtues the means of the end's existence.

Now Epicurus, as I have said, must be studied with the recognition that, in his opinion, it is pure self-deception to suppose that human beings *can* have any ultimate goal other than their own happiness, construed as pleasure and absence of pain. Bentham and some others have agreed with him; and there are familiar refutations of this claim, which I can pass over here. For my purpose, the central importance of Epicurus is not the factual truth of hedonism as ethics or psychology, but what he makes of hedonism as a moralist, on the understanding that he is utterly convinced of its exceptionless truth for all human agency. Remember that all Greek philosophers, including the Stoics, insist that *eudaimonia*, a life-time of happiness or well-being, is every person's natural objective. In ordinary language and thought, it is extraordinarily difficult to envisage what could be meant by a life-time of happiness or well-being if virtue independently of pleasure is its only essential ingredient. The non-necessity of pleasure to such a life severs the natural tie between happiness and contentment or self-satisfaction, both of which we generally count as forms of pleasure. Such an objection can be brought against Stoic eudaimonism. (It does not of course undermine the ethics of Plato and Aristotle). The point I wish to emphasize is that Epicurus, supported by Diogenes of Oenoanda, goes as far as he consistently can in promoting the necessity of virtue for happiness. He makes it *the* means or instrument of the pleasurable life. More correctly, one should say, the *internal* means or instrument; for he has to assume an external environment capable of providing the materials for satisfaction of natural and necessary desires, and avoidance of unendurable pains.

*Justice and friendship*

No formal analysis or comprehensive list of Epicurean virtues has survived, if there ever were such things.<sup>16</sup> What Epicurus gives us in the *Letter to Menoecus* (and *KD* 5) is simply 'prudence' (φρόνησις), and 'its offshoot virtues.' The latter are seemingly embraced by "living honourably (καλῶς) and justly". That these virtues actually "generate" the pleasurable life (τὸν ἡδὺν γεννᾷ βίον, *Ep. Men.* 132) is a striking claim; among other things, it excludes any perch to the notion, ubiquitous in Greek popular morality, that justice and pleasure are natural antagonists. Epicurus appears to be saying that the only way we can dispose ourselves to the world so as fully to satisfy our natural and necessary desires for pleasure and absence of pain is by a rational plan of life that includes a commitment to "living honourably and justly."

Does this plan and commitment, I want to ask, require the successful pleasure-seeker to have a disposition which includes regard and sympathetic understanding for other people's needs for their happiness? Let me repeat that what 'prudence' is said to launch is removal of the opinions that beset *souls* (in the plural) with confusion (*Ep. Men.* 132). Does this imply that someone endowed with prudence will be naturally interested in removing confusion from other people's souls as well as his own? The text does not require such a reading, but nor does it appear to exclude it. Again, prudence will minimally enable the prudent person to determine his own choices so as to secure happiness for himself. But do we know that the prudent pleasure-seeker's practical reasoning operates without any concern that other people pursue their happiness on a similarly rational foundation?

<sup>16</sup> The rather drab account in Cicero *De finibus* I reads like a second-rate attempt to show what an Epicurean will do with the four cardinal virtues of Stoicism.



We know, I submit, that it cannot. The prudent Epicurean will want his neighbours to share his commitment to justice; i.e. to perceive the utility of the social contract, that what I need for my own happiness can only be assured if I do nothing to frustrate your interest in the same goal for yourself. Epicurean justice is a commitment to the utility of not doing as one would not be done by (cf. *KD* 31-38). Coupled with prudence, it implies recognition of the fact that everyone has good reason to cultivate rationality and justice in his neighbours.<sup>17</sup> But justice, as so construed, will do nothing by itself to generate sympathy or pleasurable sentiments, even though it can be intelligibly advocated as a means of avoiding pain. The Epicurean life also needs to contain a sufficiency of pleasurable experiences, as these are ordinarily understood, to provide the agreeable memories and anticipations which will always suffice to make life more pleasurable than painful.<sup>18</sup> To give Epicurus' own testimony: "I write this to you on that blessed day of my life which was also the last. Strangury and dysentery had set in, with all the extreme intensity of which they are capable. But the joy in my soul at the memory of our past discussions was enough to counterbalance all this" (*D.L.* X 22). If the virtues, as advocated to Menoeceus, are to generate the pleasurable life, under such physically adverse conditions, they need to endow a person with experiences and attitudes that are intensely joyous.

This brings me to consider "living honourably" (*καλῶς*). The expression is phrased too broadly for us to ascertain more than its most general implications for living pleurably, but that should encourage us to interpret it by standard Greek, rather than technical, usage. In its context

<sup>17</sup> For a recent defence of self-interest as the only rational foundation for morality, building upon Glaucon's argument in Plato, *Rep.* II 358 e-359 b, cf. FISHER.

<sup>18</sup> Cic. *Tusc.* V 95-96 (Usener 439).

in the *Letter to Menoecus*, with the reference to virtues, living καλῶς must signify a morally good life. Since Epicurus couples it with living δικάίως, he could be simply adjoining two of the most general standard terms of ethical vocabulary, and saying that the Epicurean life must conform to the popular connotations of these words. But even if he is not referring to justice in its special Epicurean sense (and that is implausible), some point is to be sought in the addition of καλῶς. (For the conjunction of the two terms, cf. Arist. *Pol.* IV 4, 1291 a 41.) Καλῶς is a moral adverb of broader scope than δικάίως; it also invites the reader to find positive qualities in actions—courage, beneficence, nobility—which justice does not invoke. My suggestion is that “living honourably” should be interpreted as the positive recipe for social relations in Epicureanism, and thus be distinguished from the narrowly prudential requirements of justice.<sup>19</sup>

As I pointed out, there is a striking absence of reference to friendship in the *Letter to Menoecus*. Yet its significance for the Epicurean life is repeatedly stressed as paramount in the *Kuriai doxai*, and elsewhere. “Of the things wisdom acquires for the blessedness of life as a whole, far the greatest is the possession of friendship” (*KD* 27). “Friendship dances round the world, announcing to us all that we should wake up and felicitate one another” (*Sent. Vat.* 52). And, of particular resonance for “living honourably”, “The noble (γενναῖος) man is chiefly concerned with wisdom and friendship. Of these the former is a mortal good, but the latter is immortal” (*Sent. Vat.* 78).

A ‘noble’ man is one who lives καλῶς. Such a life, and what it demands according to the plainest meanings of

<sup>19</sup> Outside Epicureanism of course, καλός has a powerful political ring; cf. Aristotle, *EE* I 5, 1216 a 25-27, ὁ μὲν γὰρ πολιτικὸς τῶν καλῶν ἐστὶ πράξεων προαιρετικὸς αὐτῶν χάριν, οἱ δὲ πολλοὶ χρημάτων καὶ πλεονεξίας ἕνεκεν ἄπτονται τοῦ ζῆν οὕτως.



καλῶς, fits Epicurean statements on friendship too well to be accidental. In a list of the wise man's actions we are told that he will never give up a friend, and will sometimes die for him (D.L. X 120-1). This fits the maxim: "For the sake of friendship we should even take risks" (*Sent. Vat.* 28). According to Plutarch, Epicurus said that "though choosing friendship for the sake of pleasure, he takes on the greatest pains on behalf of his friends" (*Adv. Col.* 8,1111 B). According to the Ciceronian account, "Without friendship we are quite unable to secure a joy in life which is steady and lasting, nor can we preserve friendship itself unless we love our friends as much as ourselves. Therefore friendship involves both this [empathy] and the link with pleasure. For we rejoice in our friends' joy as much as in our own, and are equally pained by their distress. The wise man, therefore, will have just the same feelings toward his friend that he has for himself, and he will work as much for his friend's pleasure as he would for his own" (*Fin.* I 67-68). Plutarch, again, reports the thesis that Epicureans regard benefiting as more pleasurable than being benefited.<sup>20</sup>

In all these passages (and there is much more of the same kind) friendship involves attitudes and actions which would naturally be described as noble or honourable. Equally clearly, these attitudes and actions are never dissociated from the pleasure accruing to agent and recipient. I am prepared to conjecture, therefore, that the virtue of "living honourably", and its special contribution to the pleasurable life, is to be best explained (or at least illustrated), by its utility in securing the kind of friendships that do most to promote Epicurean felicity. The virtue itself can be interpreted as a purely instrumental good, in parallel

<sup>20</sup> *Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum* 3, 778 C, and *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum* 15, 1097 A (= Usener 544).

with justice; its proposed link with friendship does not imply the upgrading of beneficence, noble endurance etc. to a *per se* value which ignores the social context or personal relationship of benefactor and benefited. (Nor, however, does it imply that an Epicurean cannot derive pleasure from benefiting strangers.) But, given the kind of relationship that Epicurean friendship prescribes, a conceptual link between 'living virtuously' (i.e. honourably) and friendship is strongly suggested by the following text: "All friendship is a virtue for its own sake; but it originates from (self-) advantage" (*Sent. Vat.* 23).<sup>21</sup> The word for virtue, ἀρετή, is generally emended to αἰρετή, to yield the sense, "choiceworthy for its own sake". It should be noted, however, that though the emendation is easy and makes for a more natural expression, Aristotle sanctions the designation of friendship as "a kind of virtue" (*EN VIII 1, 1, 1155 a 3*).

Either way, friendship, for an Epicurean, has a positive value and constitutive connexion with happiness, which needs to be clearly distinguished from that of mere justice. No pleasurable sentiment or intrinsic value pertains to just conduct. But friendship appears to be both a means to pleasure—by the benefits and security it provides—and also a major part of the pleasurable life—in fact, itself a pleasure.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Πᾶσα φιλία δι' ἑαυτὴν ἀρετή [αἰρετή Usener]. ἀρχὴν δ' εἴληφεν ἀπὸ τῆς ὠφελίας. The MS reading is retained by BOLLACK, but RIST attempts (unconvincingly, I think) to give an instrumental sense to δι' ἑαυτὴν αἰρετή, p. 132: "perhaps he [Epicurus] merely means not that it [friendship] is ultimately valuable, ... but that it leads directly and without intermediaries to the acquisition of pleasure". Cf. MÜLLER, 118 ff., for discussion of the supposed "Überwindung des Utilitarismus" in this text.

<sup>22</sup> In trying to understand Epicurus' position on the value of friendship, I have been greatly helped by reading a paper, soon to be published I hope, by Philip Mitsis, which he was kind enough to send me. In the version I read (which should not necessarily be regarded as his final word), Mitsis argues that Epicurus' concept of friendship verges too closely on altruism to be consistent with the

I have been arguing that the complete Epicurean life should be construed as not only self-protective, law-abiding and irenic, but also as actively philanthropic. Friendship, nobly pursued, is taken to be a prime determinant of a life in which pleasure will consistently prevail over pain. This condition of Epicurean happiness is entirely consistent with the basic concepts of his moral system—the limit on natural and necessary desires, the notion that the pleasure ensuing on absence of pain can be varied but not increased, the superiority of mental to corporeal pleasure, and, above all, the importance of recollection and anticipation as factors in

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main concepts and aims of his ethics. He finds a conflict between the Epicurean τέλος, as a pleasurable solipsistic state, to which friendship should contribute only instrumentally, and the apparent valuation of it as intrinsically desirable. Secondly, he argues that the value Epicurus places on friendship imperils the self-sufficiency and invulnerability to fortune that are necessary for lasting equanimity.

These two points are developed with a care and subtlety that cannot be justly summarized here. However, it is important to see that neither objection, in the form I have stated, appears to be decisive. Nowhere, so far as I can see, does Epicurus say that an Epicurean will act for his friends in ways which conflict with his own pleasure or happiness. If he endures great pains, or even gives up his life, for his friends, we are to conclude that he does not sacrifice his happiness in doing so. Moreover, ever since Plato's *Republic* (cf. II 357), philosophers had acknowledged that something could be good both instrumentally and intrinsically. If friendship can be a pleasure, i.e. if the enjoyment of a given action or mental state can consist in the benefiting of or the thought of a friend or of a friend's goods, no problem for a hedonist seems to arise. Why should benefiting a friend not be as clearly pleasurable as listening to music or playing tennis?

The second objection is more subtle, but I think it too lacks cogency. Epicurus says self-sufficiency is "a great good" (*Ep. Men.* 130), but he does not expect the wise man to be completely invulnerable to fortune (cf. *ibid.* 135). He recognizes that people need to come to terms with the loss of their friends (cf. *Sent. Vat.* 66), and he also appears to say that a friend's disloyalty will totally confound the wise man's life (*Sent. Vat.* 66-67). Even if we take this counterfactually, the Epicurean wise man should not be equated with his Stoic counterpart. His lasting happiness does depend upon certain minimum external provisions, a reasonably effective judicial system, and above all, friends. Without friends he would lack not only the best protection against external interference, but also the community that the pleasurable life requires.

securing the continuing dominance of pleasure over pain (cf. n. 18 above). The thesis also accords completely with what we know about Epicurus' life as a philosopher. Evidently he regarded himself as having achieved the happiness he promised to others. The principal source of that happiness, on his own account, was doing and writing and living the kind of philosophy by which, as he put it, "the suffering of the soul could be expelled" (Usener 221). Thus a life devoted to propagating and developing a cure-all for human unhappiness was found to be supremely pleasurable by its own founder.

But, it may be objected, one's friends are not mankind, much less one's fellow-citizens in general. Even if Epicurus' utterly general philanthropy is self-evident, his ethics restricts the scope of that sentiment to friends. It does nothing, the objection will continue, to promote in its adherents their own concern for the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Like so many well-known maxims, the 'greatest happiness principle' is rarely referred back to its original contexts. Mill himself said: "It is a misapprehension of the utilitarian mode of thought, to conceive it as implying that people should fix their minds upon so wide a generality as the world, or society at large; the thoughts of the most virtuous person need not ... travel beyond the particular persons concerned, except so far as it is necessary to assure himself that in benefiting them he is not violating the rights ... of any one else ... the occasions on which any person (except one in a thousand) has it in his power to (sc. multiply happiness) on an extended scale ... are but exceptional" (*On liberty*, p. 270). The honourable life in Epicureanism, or the joint contributions of friendship and justice, are quite consonant with this version of utilitarianism. Some Epicureans who had the power, as they saw it, to multiply happiness on an extended scale, fit Mill's exceptions—Diogenes of Oenoanda conspicuously, who erected



his great inscription, "Since it is right to help posterity (for they too are ours even if they are not yet born)—and besides it is philanthropic to assist strangers who are here" (fr. 2, col. IV, 13 sqq., Chilton).<sup>23</sup>

### *Social Evolution*

If Epicurean ethics, considered purely as theory, anticipates much of Victorian utilitarianism, the resemblances are reinforced when we take account of Epicurean approaches to society and social evolution. Passages in Lucretius and in the strangely neglected work of Hermarchus, Epicurus' successor, indicate that the success of a social system is to be measured entirely by its utility in producing the primary goods that *all* of its members need.

First, the Lucretian account. Primitive people were solitary and brutish, totally occupied with satisfying their basic bodily needs. Pre-social, "they could not have the common good in view, nor did they know how to make mutual use of any customs or laws" (V 958-959, *nec commune bonum poterant spectare neque ullis moribus inter se scibant nec legibus uti*). Here is the totally self-centered human being, paraded by detractors of Epicurean ethics—"taught to apply his strength and live on his own account, just for himself" (V 961, *sponte sua sibi quisque valere et vivere doctus*). With the invention of fire-making and rudimentary tech-

<sup>23</sup> δίκαιο[ν δ' ἐστὶ καὶ] τοῖς μ[εθ' ἡ]μᾶς ἐσομένοις βοηθῆσαι – κακεῖνοι γὰρ εἰσιν ἡμέτεροι καὶ εἰ «μὴ» γεγόνασιν πω – πρὸς δὲ δὴ φιλάνθρωπον καὶ τοῖς παραγεινομένοις ἐπικουρεῖν ξενοῖς. In his commentary on this text (Hull 1971) CHILTON explains Diogenes' philanthropic sentiment as an infiltration of Stoicism (so too MÜLLER, 128 f.). This, though not impossible, is scarcely compelling. Diogenes' philanthropic motivation seems entirely in line with the Epicurean tradition. I am grateful to Arthur Adkins for drawing my attention to Cornelius Nepos, whose life of Atticus exemplifies Epicurean philosophy in action along the lines suggested in this paper: cf. XXV 6 for Atticus' not seeking office, XXV 11, 5, for his helping as many as possible, and especially *sic liberalitate utens nullas inimicitias gessit, quod neque laedebat quemquam neque, si quam iniuriam acceperat, non malebat oblivisci quam ulcisci*.

nology, human beings started to socialize and to live as families. The outcome of this was a "softening" (*mollescere*, 1014) of their physical strength, and, it should be emphasized, of their emotional attitudes.

Then too neighbours began to form friendships, eager not

to harm one another and not to be harmed; and they gained

protection for children and for the female sex, when with babyish words and gestures, they indicated that it is right (*aequum*) for everyone to pity the weak. Yet harmony could not be entirely created; but a good and substantial number preserved their contracts honourably (*caste*).

Otherwise the human race would even then have been totally

destroyed, and reproduction could not have maintained the

generations down to the present day. (V 1019-27) <sup>24</sup>

Lucretius says as plainly as possible that the shift from primitive life to that of family and society involved a fundamental change in human nature. Like their pre-social predecessors, early social people sought the means of their own self-preservation. But the softening of their physical and emotional natures made it impossible to achieve this in a life that was solitary and hostile towards others. Thus "neighbours began to form friendships, eager not to harm

<sup>24</sup> *tunc et amicitiam coeperunt iungere aventes  
finitimi inter se nec laedere nec violari,  
et pueros commendarunt muliebrique saeculum,  
vocibus et gestu cum balbe significarent  
imbecillorum esse aequum misererier omnis.  
nec tamen omnimodis poterat concordia gigni,  
sed bona magnaue pars servabat foedera caste;  
aut genus humanum iam tum foret omne peremptum  
nec potuisset adhuc perducere saecula propago.*



one another and not to be harmed." It is sometimes supposed that Lucretius here conflates friendship and the social contract basis of justice, or that his *amicities* involves none of the connotations of Epicurean *φιλία*. I see no reason for either supposition. Epicurean friendship is as restrictedly prudential in its imagined origins as justice. We do better to suppose that justice, as a social contract institutionalized by laws and punishments, developed as an impersonal extension of implicit agreements embedded in the friendships between neighbours; in other words, that friendship is conceived to be prior to justice. However that may be, Lucretius seems to envisage early social man as conducting his life along lines which broadly accord with the normative principles of Epicurean ethics.

As is well known, the Lucretian story of social development beyond this stage is one of technological progress combined with, and helping to cause, fears and desires from which primitive men were free. The tone of his comments on this history or anthropology is sometimes dispassionate, sometimes positive, and often gloomy. He never, however, suggests that we would be better off by returning to primitivism.<sup>25</sup> Equally plainly, he sees much of modern culture as impeding the emergence of happiness by the fears it generates and the misconceptions of what is needed in order to satisfy those desires which are natural and necessary to happiness. The ideal society, we can conjecture, would be one which provided its members with internal and external security, and gave them the means of enjoying the kind of rustic simplicity, in company with friends, that inspires his happiest lines:

<sup>25</sup> Cf. FRISCHER, 39: "This addition of self-consciousness means that the Epicurean sage can retain the advantages of civilization that developed only in later phases of history (e.g. the concepts of justice and divinity, and technology), and can at the same time avoid the dangers and failures that characterize more advanced societies".

And so often, lying in friendly groups on the soft grass near some stream of water under the branches of a tall tree, at no great cost they would give pleasure to their bodies . . . Then were there wont to be jests, and talk, and merry laughter. (V 1392 ff.) (Bailey's translation) <sup>26</sup>

Hermarchus' treatment of social evolution is preserved in a long quotation or summary by Porphyry *De abstinentia* I 7-12.<sup>27</sup> Writing without Lucretius' Roman experience or poetic interests, Hermarchus focuses with great clarity and rigour upon one human institution—punishment for homicide, and its utilitarian grounds. The determining concepts of his analysis are utility (συμφέρον) and the prudence of early legislators and cultural leaders. What motivated these men, he argues, was principally the belief that murder "is not useful to the general structure of human life."<sup>28</sup> They succeeded in convincing some people by educating them in the rationality of this principle, and they established punishments to deter those who were not educable. Hermarchus then argues that observation and remembrance of utility would be sufficient, without laws, to protect public and private interests, if everyone clearly observed what was useful and harmful. "The threat of punishment," he adds, "is addressed to those who fail to take note of utility."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> *Saepe itaque inter se prostrati in gramine molli  
propter aquae vivum sub ramis arboris altae  
non magnis opibus iuncunde corpora habebant...  
tum ioca, tum sermo, tum dulces esse cachinni  
consuerant.*

<sup>27</sup> Even if Porphyry is paraphrasing rather than quoting Hermarchus *verbatim* (cf. K. KROHN, *Der Epikureer Hermarchos* [Berlin diss., 1921], 6-8), Hermarchus can justly be called its author. For further discussion, see PHILIPPSON, 315-19; COLE, 71 ff.; GOLDSCHMIDT, *passim*; MÜLLER, 74 ff.

<sup>28</sup> I 7, 2 τὸ μὴ συμφέρειν εἰς τὴν ὅλην τοῦ βίου σύστασιν.

<sup>29</sup> I 8, 5 ἡ δὲ τῆς ζημίας ἀνάτασις πρὸς τοὺς μὴ προορωμένους τὸ λυσιτελοῦν.

In Hermarchus' analysis, social progress is the result of something analogous to Lucretius' change of human nature; but Hermarchus, with his eye on contemporary civilization, attributes this not to unconscious adaptation to the environment, but to an increase in rationality, generated in the general populace by a few outstanding individuals:

The irrational part of the soul, by various forms of education, has arrived at the present state of civility, as a result of the civilizing devices applied to the irrational motion of desire by those who originally set the masses in order.<sup>30</sup>

These culture heroes, as we may call them, were endowed with prudence (φρόνησις). The principles of utility, to which they drew attention, and their general achievement in curbing other people's irrational desires, are strikingly reminiscent of the good results of 'prudence' that Epicurus indicates to Menoeceus. In discussing that context, I observed that Epicurus' statements could be taken to include the prudent person's interest in removing confusion from other people's souls as well as his own. Hermarchus plainly supposes that prudence is a quality of mind which naturally extends its benefits from the individual to society in general.

His assessment of the utility of good legislation is in line with the positive comments on government and law that Colotes advanced. Both these Epicureans were writing within or shortly after the lifetime of the founder. The much better known work of Lucretius, whose story of social evolution is constantly punctuated by castigation of human folly, very probably reflects a more pessimistic

<sup>30</sup> I 9, 5 τὸ γὰρ ἀνόητον τῆς ψυχῆς ποικίλως παιδαγωγηθὲν ἦλθεν εἰς τὴν καθεστῶσαν ἡμερότητα, προσμηχανωμένων ἐπὶ τῆς ἀλόγου φορᾶς ἐπιθυμίας τιθασεύματα τῶν ἐξ ἀρχῆς τὰ πλήθη διακοσμησάντων.

reaction to social institutions, under the heavy shadows of Roman civic strife. Yet even Lucretius, we should recall, ends book five and begins book six in an accent which commends *usus et impigrae simul experientia mentis* (V 1452), mentions how these taught people *pedetemptim progredientis* (V 1453), and notes the great cultural achievements of Athens.

Did Hermarchus, we must wonder, conclude his account of social evolution with a Lucretian analysis of what the world lacked before the gospel of Epicurus was proclaimed? Sentiment is ruthlessly excluded from our long surviving fragment; we hear nothing about friendship as a civilizing device. It is hardly mere speculation, however, to suppose that for Hermarchus Epicurus is in the line of the earlier culture heroes, men of great talent and prudence, but who lacked his unique insights into human psychology. Remember how Lucretius singles out the Athenian achievement in legislation and material well-being, but only to highlight the leaking utensil, the fears and desires that wreck these advanced people's lives. Hermarchus was doubtless less graphic. But he must have been as anxious as Lucretius to underline the need for Epicurus' philosophy by the people of his time.

### *Conclusion*

The juxtaposition I have attempted between well-known principles of Epicurean ethics and less familiar features of their social philosophy is intended to remove prevalent misconceptions about the Epicurean's inactive political stance and withdrawal into a private world. The Epicurean way of life, I observed, requires an external environment capable of satisfying people's natural and necessary desires for pleasure and freedom from pain. Epi-



curus assumes that they have the accumulated cultural experience, intelligence, and wherewithal to secure food and to organize security by legal systems and other means. To a certain extent his contemporary citizens are already utilitarians, in his perception of their sociology, just as they already pursue the universal objectives of all human beings—pleasure, and avoidance of pain. But competitive values and misconceptions concerning what is fearful or desirable prevent contemporary societies from providing a context in which the pleasurable sentiments and mutual benefits that are essential to our happiness can properly develop. For a life of enduring pleasure, which also *has to be* an “honourable life”, it is not enough to recognize the utility of refraining from mutual injury. Human nature has reached a stage where justice, as so construed, needs to be augmented by the mutual benefits that only friends will have the understanding and sentiment to bestow on one another. Thus the Epicurean is entitled to claim that his philosophy seeks to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number. 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. If these are the Millian ‘number’ whose happiness he directly considers along with his own, he can also say that the Epicurean community is open-ended, and offers itself as a model for the future well-being of society as a whole.

Thirteen years ago, on one of his remarkably enterprising searches at Oenoanda, Martin F. Smith recovered a piece of the great inscription which, in its apparently quite certain text, reads as follows in his translation:

Then truly the life of the gods will pass to men. For all things will be full of justice and mutual love (*philallelia*), and there will come to be no need of fortifications or laws and all the things

which we contrive on account of one another. And with regard to the necessities derived from agriculture . . .<sup>31</sup>

At this point about half of each line of the inscription becomes defective. In Smith's reconstruction, Diogenes proceeded to describe some of the agricultural activities, and to comment on the unavoidable interruptions to philosophy that this provision of the basic natural needs will involve. His supplements are highly plausible, but I will confine comment to the fully preserved section.

Evidently the Epicurean millennium is being described. Farrington would have appreciated this passage, for up to a point it supports the Marxist interpretation excellently. In this future life of felicitous farming and philosophy, the state *has* withered away. But I was not wrong, earlier, to criticize Farrington for regarding states with enforceable legal codes and defences as 'not natural to man.' Diogenes is describing an indeterminate future—when people will *no longer need* the kind of institutional forms of mutual protection they have at present. Universal justice and mutual friendship will render them redundant. But that time, he is saying, is not yet. Human nature, untransformed by Epicureanism, needs the judicial systems and other civilizing devices that Hermarchus acknowledged. What Epicureanism promises is not a return to primitivism, but a society

<sup>31</sup> New Fragment 21, col. I, 4 ff., in *Thirteen New Fragments of Diogenes of Oenoanda*, Denkschrift Österr. Akad. der Wissensch., Philos.-hist. Kl., 117 (Wien 1974), 21-5: τότε ὡς ἀληθῶς ὁ τῶν θεῶν βίος εἰς ἀνθρώπους μεταβήσεται. δικαιοσύνης γὰρ ἔσται μεστὰ πάντα καὶ φιλαλληλίας, καὶ οὐ γενήσεται τειχῶν ἢ νόμων χρεῖα καὶ πάντων ὅσα δι' ἀλλήλους σκευωρούμεθα. περὶ δὲ τῶν ἀπὸ γεωργίας ἀνανκαίων, ὡς οὐκ ἔσομένων ἡμ[...]. On the rare and seemingly late word φιλαλληλία, Smith comments: "Even if the *term* φιλαλληλία was borrowed from the Stoics, that does not necessarily mean that the *idea* originated with them. [...] It is surely indisputable that... φιλαλληλία and φιλανθρωπία were characteristic of the Epicurean community from the beginning". In the rest of his note, with which I wholeheartedly agree, he refers to D.L. X 10, ἡ πρὸς πάντας αὐτοῦ [*sc.* Epicuri] φιλανθρωπία.

(perhaps a global society, if Diogenes is to be trusted, fr. 25, col. II, Chilton) that has greatly advanced under the guidance of philosophy.

Archaeologists think they have now discovered the location of Epicurus' Garden—it appears to have been situated just north of the Dipylon Gate, some 1000 metres from the city-wall and immediately to the south of the Academy. That location symbolizes the relation of Epicurus to his own society, as I conceive of it—just outside the formal boundary, but sufficiently close to have contact and influence. I have argued that prudence, in Epicurean ethics, secures hedonic felicity in three principal ways. First, it gives the individual the understanding which will enable him so to organize his desires and aversions that he can always acquire sufficient pleasure and tranquillity to counterbalance unavoidable pains. Secondly, it furnishes him with reasons to assent to the general utility of 'natural justice', and thus do nothing to put his own or other people's interests in non-aggression at risk. Thirdly, it trains his sentiments by displaying the intrinsic relationship between self-gratification and friendships which can involve the most active concern for another's happiness. In all of this we can recognize nuclei of ideas associated with even more famous names—Jesus, Marx, and Freud. Epicurus, though much of his thought is firmly rooted in the Greek tradition, was too innovative overall to gain a fair hearing from his intellectual rivals; and the process of rehabilitation is still far from complete.

## DISCUSSION

*M. Dible:* Darf ich zwei kleine sprachliche Bemerkungen machen und dann zu einer weiterreichenden Frage übergehen?

Wenn man den Ausdruck *καλῶς ζῆν* nicht im Sinn philosophischer Terminologie, sondern als umgangssprachliche Formulierung versteht, erübrigt sich die etwas schroffe Unterscheidung von *δικαιοσύνη* und *φιλία*. Colloquialismen aber sind bei Epikur und in der epikureischen Tradition häufig.

Im Fall von *δι' ἑαυτὴν ἀρετὴ* würde ich Useners Emendation bevorzugen, wobei inhaltlich kein grosser Unterschied zwischen beiden Lesungen besteht. Aber *δι' ἑαυτὴν* ist ein Ausdruck mit finaler Bedeutung, den man ungern einfach mit einem Substantiv verbindet. *Καθ' ἑαυτὴν* läge näher.

Nun zur eigentlichen Frage: Zu den Gründen für die verbreitete Feindschaft gegenüber Epikur könnte man auch das Missfallen am Naturbegriff dieser Schule rechnen. Während alle anderen Schulen die objektiv, auch ausserhalb des Menschen existierende Natur insgesamt als die letztinstanzliche, nicht relativierbare Grösse betrachten, aus der die Masstäbe des Sittlichen zu beziehen sind, reduziert Epikur die sittlich bedeutsame Natur auf die Natur des Menschen. Darin liegt aus griechischer Sicht die mangelnde 'Frömmigkeit' Epikurs. In der Tat sind Epikurs Aussagen über die Gesamtnatur auch widersprüchlich: Auf der einen Seite betont er die schlechte natürliche Ausstattung des Menschen, ganz im Gegensatz zu Stoa, und kann deshalb den Ur- oder Naturzustand gerade nicht als goldenes Zeitalter und als Orientierungshilfe menschlicher Bemühungen betrachten. Auf der andern Seite lobt er die Natur, dass sie den Menschen nur mit solchen Bedürfnissen ausgestattet hat, die sich leicht erfüllen lassen. Eine widerspruchsfreie Bewertung der Gesamtnatur findet sich bei Epikur nicht, vielleicht weil ihn nur die Natur des Menschen interessierte. Die Autonomie des Menschen, auch als soziales Phänomen, wird nirgends so wie bei Epikur betont, und



dazu stimmt die Reduktion der Ursachenlehre auf die Faktoren Zufall/freie Entscheidung.

*Mme Decleva Caizzi:* Ritengo persuasivi i risultati ai quali il Professor Long perviene e che la posizione di Epicuro possa anche essere illuminata tenendo presenti gli sviluppi della riflessione su analoghi temi non solo in Platone ed Aristotele, ma anche nei sofisti e nel pensiero politico del V secolo. Penso in particolare ad Antifonte, che tra tutti i sofisti, per quel che sappiamo, era colui che aveva messo l'accento più sul fatto che per l'uomo ciò che conta è avere più piacere possibile e meno dolore possibile e che questo è, come Long dice ottimamente a proposito di Epicuro, un fatto naturale ineludibile. Partendo da questa premessa, Antifonte aveva esaminato la funzione ed il valore della giustizia così come gli uomini l'hanno creata e realizzata storicamente (credo che avrebbe accolto l'analisi di Glaucone sullo scopo che gli uomini si erano posti nel creare la giustizia in *Rep.* II). Tuttavia, valutando in quale misura tale risultato fosse stato conseguito, era giunto ad un totale pessimismo sulla possibilità di riassorbire, salvaguardandolo, l'utile individuale in quello collettivo, ponendosi così in posizione antitetica a quella di Protagora (la concezione della pena che Platone gli attribuisce in *Prot.* 324 a-b rispetto a quella sostenuta da Diodoto in *Tucidide* III 45, 3, in un contesto ricco di reminiscenze antifontee, è in tal senso assolutamente caratteristica). Per quanto sembra di poter oggi comprendere, Antifonte non aveva soluzioni da offrire al problema che non andassero in senso esclusivamente individualistico ed egoistico accentuando così, però, la solitudine del singolo, e rigettandolo continuamente in ciò da cui cerca di sfuggire. Il tema della sofferenza appare in moltissimi frammenti antifontei. In altri termini, malgrado il punto di partenza, che credo Epicuro avrebbe totalmente condiviso, il risultato sembra un totale fallimento; forse anche la consapevolezza del rischio di un esito di questo tipo ha spinto Epicuro nella direzione che è stata qui illustrata.

*M. Gigon:* Die Stellung Epikurs zur Physis lässt sich systematisch recht gut festlegen. Im Bereich des Menschen wirkt eine Physis, deren Leistung man nur eine teleologische nennen kann: «Die Physis hält alles

bereit, was der Mensch braucht, und der Mensch braucht nur einzusehen, dass er nicht mehr braucht als das, was ihm die Physis immer schon bereitgestellt hat.»

So sehr also im Raume des Kosmos das αὐτόματον herrscht und eine Welt zustande bringt, die nur prekär und begrenzt 'lebensfähig' ist, so sehr kann sich der Mensch in seinem Umkreis unter der Fürsorge der Physis geborgen fühlen (vgl. *KD* 15; 468, 469, 471 Usener, u.a.).

*M. Long*: On ζῆν καλῶς καὶ δικαίως (*Ep. Men.* 132), I don't want to say that an ancient reader would instinctively draw a distinction between them, whereby he would associate καλῶς, but not δικαίως, with φιλία. My claim is rather that in Epicureanism justice and friendship are independent concepts. Hence even if we take the two adverbs as a hendiadys, what they jointly imply is a lifestyle that involves much more than the social contract; and the material on friendship I referred to seems to best exemplify what καλῶς ζῆν would involve for an Epicurean.

Δι' ἑαυτὴν ἀρετὴ is certainly much harsher as Greek than δι' ἑαυτὴν αἰρετὴ owing to the omission of any verb. I think, however, it is better to retain the MS reading, perhaps supposing the loss of a word such as νενόμισται.

Professor Dihle is quite right to remind us of the very strong opposition Epicurus incurred for removing teleology, and any basis for ethics, from the workings of non-human nature. I certainly did not mean to imply that his rejection of the traditional values of political ἀρετὴ was the only reason for the unsympathetic treatment so frequently accorded to his ethics. At the same time, as Professor Gigon points out, Epicurus' concept of φύσις and its relevance to human needs is carefully calculated to disarm the criticism of the teleological lobby (cf. *Sent. Vat.* 21). His rigorous criticism of the thesis that moral values can be founded upon cosmic nature seems to me to be one of the most remarkable achievements of Greek philosophy. As for cosmic order, I tried in *Phronesis* 22 (1977) to show how the Epicureans give a mechanistic account of the phenomena that the teleologists used in order to support their own position.

*M. Dible:* Vielleicht kann man einen Text des 5. Jhdts. namhaft machen, der näher als Antiphon, Protagoras oder Plat. *Rep.* II an Epikur heranführt. Ich meine das *Sisyphos*-Fragment, das, wie ich glaube (in *Hermes* 105 [1977], 28 ff.), Euripides, nicht Kritias zuzuschreiben ist. Es steckt voll von philosophischer Terminologie, darf also als Zeugnis der Philosophie des 5. Jhdts. betrachtet werden. Hier ist nicht wie bei Antiphon von einem Gegensatz zwischen natürlichem und gerechtem Verhalten κατὰ νόμον die Rede. Vielmehr wird offenbar die 'Erfindung' der Gesetze für das gerechte Verhalten uneingeschränkt gutgeheissen, und zwar mit durchaus utilitaristischen Argumenten wie bei Protagoras, und nur die Kontrolle ihrer Einhaltung, der geschickten Lüge des klugen Mannes, der die Religion erfand, zugeschrieben.

*M. Kidd:* I have three questions.

The first is for clarification. In your discussion of social evolution, I was not certain whether you thought that the idea of social evolution was new with Epicurus, or whether his particular theory was novel. There surely were earlier evolution theories, as in the Protagoras myth in Plato's dialogue of that name.

My second question arises from Professor Dible's interest in what he called Epicurean eschatology. I see this rather as an expression of Epicurus' utopian Republic. If so perhaps we should not be surprised that Epicurus embarked on such a discussion, because *Republics* were fashionable at the time. There are obvious differences from the structured nature of Plato's *Republic*, but do you think that there may be more points of similarity with Zeno's *Republic*?

The third question concerns what appears to be a statement in the *Letter to Menoecus* (D.L. X 132) on the mutual implication of virtue and pleasure. Virtue is generally thought to be an instrument for the τέλος for Epicurus, rather than a necessary constituent of it. Does this statement raise problems for that view?

*M. Long:* I am grateful for all those observations. In my paper I was not attempting to trace the antecedents of Epicurus' views of justice and social institutions, but your references to Antiphon and Critias help to



illustrate the kind of theories that attracted him; and they also give us useful material with which to compare the effectiveness of his own position. Social evolution was certainly not his invention. It was presumably part of the atomist tradition, as first formulated by Democritus (see T. Cole, *Democritus and the Sources of Greek Anthropology*). The Protagoras myth in Plato's dialogue, though radically different from Epicurus in its postulate of divine agents, seems to belong to the same cultural perspective. What is distinctive about the Epicurean approach is its rigorous insistence on the sufficiency of utility and experience to explain human development.

The suggested comparison with Zeno's *Republic* is interesting because Zeno's ideal society was certainly intended to remove many of the kinds of conventions and institutions which Epicurus also regarded as neither natural nor necessary. I doubt, however, whether Epicurus saw himself as adumbrating anything comparable to such a utopia. He seems to think that even in the world as it exists at present Epicurean wisdom is obtainable, and that there is no need to advocate wholesale reform of Hellenistic society.

On Kidd's third point—the mutual implication of virtue and pleasure—no problems seem to arise for the instrumentalist conception of virtue. If  $p$  implies  $q$ , and  $q$  implies  $p$ , it does not follow that  $p$  is a constituent of  $q$ , or  $q$  a constituent of  $p$ . On the other hand, even though Epicurus stops short of making virtue constitutive of the pleasurable life, he links them together with a closeness that might be illustrated by the mutual implication of, for instance, breathing and living.

*M. Bringmann:* Epikur und seine Schule haben, wie Sie gezeigt haben, der politischen Gemeinschaft durchaus eine bedeutende Rolle für die Sicherung der äusseren Bedingungen des 'guten Lebens' zugeschrieben. Ich frage mich nun, ob nicht unter Umständen aus der epikureischen Lehre die Forderung nach politischer Tätigkeit abzuleiten ist. Ich darf an die  $\text{Κύριαί δόξαι}$  erinnern. Dort wird dargelegt, dass das positive Recht eines Staates, sein Nomos, bei sich wandelnden Verhältnissen nicht mehr dem natürlich Gerechten zu entsprechen braucht. Daraus kann die Forderung einer Anpassung des Nomos abgeleitet werden, und



dies könnte ja durchaus das politische Engagement des Einzelnen notwendig erscheinen lassen. Liess sich also von den Voraussetzungen des epikureischen Systems her nicht auch die Beteiligung an praktischer Politik rechtfertigen ? Und konnten sich nicht der Caesar-Mörder Cassius und die vielen anderen, die Anhänger Epikurs waren und zugleich sich in der Politik engagierten, in Übereinstimmung mit den Lehren des Meisters glauben ?

*M. Long:* On the basis of the Epicurean doctrines of justice and law, the political activities of Cassius etc. could be well justified, as you suggest. How they would be compatible with ἀταραξία, which justice is ultimately intended to promote, is very hard to see!

*M. Couloubaritsis:* Vous avez établi très justement l'intérêt des épicuriens pour l'espace public. En prolongeant votre analyse, on relèvera un rapport intéressant entre Aristote et Epicure, qui pourrait conduire à une aporie importante.

Pour Aristote, si l'amitié régnait, la justice serait inutile. Or il admet, d'une part, une amitié limitée, conforme à la vertu, qui ne dépasse pas le rapport entre deux ou trois personnes et qui trouve son origine dans l'εὔνοια, et, d'autre part, une amitié politique qui est liée à l'ὁμόνοια et à la justice, dans la mesure où elle concerne des intérêts. Tout se passe donc comme si les épicuriens élargissaient le groupe restreint d'amis, en excluant de ce domaine la nécessité d'une justice, et situaient celle-ci (la justice) dans le cadre d'une société ouverte. De ce réaménagement de la conception aristotélicienne de l'amitié et de la justice ressort l'aporie suivante: soit les épicuriens acceptent la possibilité d'une amitié politique qui serait plus fondamentale que la φιλανθρωπία, ce qui les entraînerait à faire confiance au pouvoir public, soit, au contraire, ils refusent un tel concept qui détermine la concorde, et alors se pose la question de savoir quel est leur rapport avec le pouvoir. Bref, les épicuriens acceptent-ils, dans ce dernier cas, du fait d'une défaillance possible dans la concorde et dans la justice sociale, de prendre eux-mêmes le pouvoir?

*M. Long:* Your comparison with Aristotle is interesting, especially since Epicurus acknowledged the complexity of motives to form friend-

ships (Cf. Cicero, *Fin.* I 65-70). As I understand the Epicurean position, friendship entails justice but justice does not entail friendship. Both concepts are founded upon the security from harm that they provide, but friendship unlike justice is also constitutive of pleasure. The Epicureans seem to think that the mutual benefits of justice, as a social contract, are sufficiently perceived by people in general to give Epicureans themselves a reasonable basis for confidence in their relationship to the public domain. But, as Professor Bringmann remarked, Epicurus acknowledged that natural justice and actual legislation may conflict, which could never arise in the case of natural justice vis-à-vis friendship. Hence, in the present imperfect state of society, some Epicureans could certainly suppose that seizing power for themselves might be the only way by which natural justice could be re-established.

*M. Forschner:* Sie haben im Blick auf die Aktualität Epikurs seine praktische Philosophie an die utilitaristische Tradition der Neuzeit angebunden. Dies scheint mir, wenn man sich auf die Telos-Bestimmung beschränkt, naheliegend. Die signifikantesten Gemeinsamkeiten bestehen allerdings zwischen Epikur und Rousseau: beide sehen die Natur des Menschen als etwas an, was sich geschichtlich verändert, beide bestimmen den Naturzustand und den der depravierten Gesellschaft ähnlich; beide sehen das naheliegende Heilmittel einer unglücklichen Lebensform in einem Gemeinschaftsleben mit der Struktur der *φιλία*; beide entwickeln ähnliche politische Perspektiven, etc.

*M. Long:* Professor Forschner is an expert on Rousseau, and so his observation is particularly welcome.

*M. Gigon:* Die Beziehung Epikurs zur Politik lässt sich — in völliger Übereinstimmung mit seiner sonstigen Stellung — an *KD* 6-7 ablesen: wenn und soweit *ἀρχή* und *βασιλεία* zur *ἀσφάλεια* und somit zum *τέλος* einzuführen vermögen, können und sollen sie als ein Mittel auf dem Weg zum *τέλος* benützt und anerkannt werden.

Schliesslich waren nicht weniger als drei persönliche Schüler Epikurs in hohen politischen Ämtern tätig: Leonteus und Idomeneus bei König Lysimachos, Kineas als Berater des Königs Pyrrhos.

*M. Long:* Certainly, *KD* 6-7 do not exclude political power *in principle* as a means of securing the Epicurean τέλος; and I think it is a mistake to delete ἀρχῆς καὶ βασιλείας from *KD* 6 as Usener and Bailey do. But I am inclined to read *KD* 7, the clearer and fuller statement, counterfactually: political power could not be impugned if it actually generated ἀσφάλεια, but *in practice* it fails to achieve this. We should not, however, forget the pupils of Epicurus who you remind us were intimate with Hellenistic kings.

*M. Dible:* Darf ich noch einen weiteren philosophischen Nachtrag liefern? Etwa zur Zeit, in die man die Inschrift des Diogenes von Oenoanda datiert, entstand der *Dialog über die Gesetze der Länder* aus der Schule des Bar Daisan von Edessa. Sein Ziel ist primär, die menschliche Entscheidungsfreiheit zu erweisen (vgl. *Kerygma und Logos. Festschrift für Carl Andresen* [Göttingen 1979], 123 ff.). Aber in der Darlegung findet sich eine merkwürdige Reminiszenz an die enge Verknüpfung von ἡδονή und δικαιοσύνη oder ἀρετή schlechthin, die für Epikur typisch ist: Die menschliche Natur lehrt den Menschen alles, was er zu tun hat. Sich liebevoll und hilfreich verhalten kann auch der Ungebildete, Schwache, Kranke. Alle Gebote rechten Tuns sind in der goldenen Regel beschlossen, und darüber hinaus bedarf es keiner besonderen Belehrung oder Offenbarung. Verhalten wir uns nämlich auf natürliche Weise im Sinn der goldenen Regel, haben wir ein Lustgefühl, verstossen wir dagegen, empfinden wir eine Art von Schmerz. In seiner Theorie der Verursachung hat sich Bardesanes an den Peripatos angelehnt, hier dagegen finden wir einen Nachklang epikureischer Doktrin.

*M. Long:* Your very interesting comments reinforce my impression that Epicurean ideas and influence continued to be strong and widely diffused in later antiquity.