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PATIENT-RELATIVITY AND THE EFFICACY OF EPICUREAN THERAPY

by

MICHAEL J. AUGUSTIN

Under the Direction of Timothy O'Keefe

ABSTRACT

According to Epicurus, philosophy's sole task is to ensure the well-being of the soul. Human souls are often riddled with diseases; the most serious are the fear of the gods and the fear of death. Thus, the Epicureans offered several arguments designed to demonstrate that, for instance, "death is nothing to us," and should therefore not be feared. Since their creation there has been much discussion, both in antiquity and by contemporary philosophers, about these arguments. In this thesis, I argue that Epicurean philosophical arguments are *patient-relative*; they necessarily adapt themselves so as to be therapeutically effective for their intended audience. The end result is that when we evaluate Epicurean philosophical arguments, we must do so in light of the audience for whom they were intended.

INDEX WORDS: Epicurus, Lucretius, Philodemus, Death, Philosophy, Epicureanism, Ancient philosophy

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MICHAEL J. AUGUSTIN

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May 2012

αἰεί μιν φρένας ἀμφὶ κακαὶ τείρουσι μέριμναι,

οὐδ᾽ αὐγὰς προσορῶν τέρπεται ἠελίου

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INTRODUCTION

Studies on whether the arguments propounded by the Epicureans against the fear of death successfully establish that "death is nothing to us" are numerous. Critics sometimes contend that the premises of these arguments do not support adequately the truth of their conclusions. Other times they claim that these arguments overlook obvious counterexamples, which leaves them open to seemingly crushing objections. While this may be the case, it is not a problem for the Epicureans or their arguments. In this thesis I argue that Epicurean philosophical arguments are *patient-relative*; they necessarily adapt themselves so as to be therapeutically effective for their intended audience. Although I shall be chiefly concerned with those arguments marshaled against the fear of death, I intend for my thesis to apply to all Epicurean philosophical arguments.

In Part I, I argue for the patient-relativity thesis by drawing heavily from the treatises of first century Epicurean Philodemus of Gadara. Philodemus' treatises provide valuable insight into the stochastic method of Epicurean psychagogues, and shed light on the τιθέναι πρὸ ὀμμάτων, to-set-before-the-eyes, therapeutic technique. These two aspects of Epicurean psychagogy, alongside the instrumental value of the norms of rational discourse, are sufficient to demonstrate the validity of the patient-relativity thesis. But my thesis is not without controversy, and in Part II I treat at length two concerns. The first is about the "depth" of the medical analogy between philosophical psychagogy and empirical medicine; the second about the instrumental value placed on the norms of rational discourse. In Part III I put the patient-relativity thesis into practice. I first examine three arguments: *Ep. Men.* 124, *DRN* 3.832-42, and *DRN* 3.972-5. I identify their intended audience, and then explain why their creators, Epicurus and Lucretius respectively, chose to deliver their arguments in the way they did, and how that makes them therapeutically effective. I then turn my attention to Philodemus' *On Death*. Here I examine his

treatment of both the fear of death at sea, and the fear of premature death. My discussion is at times more complex in light of Philodemus' insight into the intricacies of his patients' psychologies. The end result is that when we assess the efficacy of the Epicurean's philosophical arguments, we must do so in the light of their intended audience, for whom they were designed.

PART I: The Importance of The Patient in Epicurean Psychagogy

I.1

Most people suffer from painful psychic diseases. According to the Epicureans, these diseases are rooted in vain and empty desires, which in turn are rooted in false beliefs about what is truly good and bad. It is primarily through philosophical argument that these false beliefs are uprooted, and the soul returned to its original, healthy state.

In addition to philosophical argument, the Epicureans have other tools in their "therapeutic toolbox." For instance, at the end of his letter to Menoeceus—a summary of the major Epicurean ethical precepts—Epicurus urges Menoeceus to "practice these and related precepts by yourself, day and night, and with a like-minded friend."[1] From this we may infer that both continual practice of the precepts and one's friends play an important role in a person's therapy. Still, philosophical argument is the psychagogue's primary tool.[2] We might wonder, then, whether philosophical argumentation as practiced by the Epicureans is an effective method for uprooting false beliefs, and consequently removing a person's fears and anxieties. Consider the famous Epicurean dictum:

> Death is nothing to us. For what has been dissolved has no perception, and what has no perception is nothing to us. (*Kyria Doxai* [*KD*] 2)

Even if we grant Epicurus his atomism, and agree with Lucretius that "[a]s soon as a person is wrapped in the peaceful sleep of death...the body suffers no perceptible loss",[3] will this argument succeed in quelling a person's fear and anxiety towards death? Probably not. Some scholars,

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[1] *Ep. Men.* 135. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are the author's own.
[2] For more on the classification of the Epicurean wise man as a "psychagogue" and his practice as "psychagogy," see Glad 1995, 17ff. The Greek word ψυχαγωγέω, from which these two words derive, originally meant "to lead departed souls to the nether world," but by Plato's time had come to mean simply "guidance of the soul" (ibid., 18).
[3] *De Rerum Natura* (*DRN*) 3.211-15. All translations of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* are from Martin Ferguson Smith's Hackett (2001) edition.

such as Thomas Nagel, contend that the argument's premises do not establish the truth of its conclusion.[4] There are many reasons to fear one's death, e.g. it removes the opportunity for experiencing further pleasures.[5] The fact that I will not perceive anything when I am *dead* does little to assuage my fears *now*.

The two most-discussed Epicurean arguments against the fear of death—the "non-perception" (ἀναισθησία) argument and the "non-identity" argument—conclude that death is not bad for anybody.[6] This conclusion has lead many to believe that these arguments are intended to serve as a universal panacea for the fear of death, which leaves them open to the objection that they often fail. However, recent discussions about Philodemus of Gadara, a first century BCE Epicurean whose treatises are our best source for understanding the theories and practices associated with Epicurean psychagogy, indicate that this objection misunderstands the Epicureans' approach.[7] In the ensuing discussion I bring to light three important aspects of Epicurean psychagogy that I argue make their philosophical arguments *patient-relative*; they necessarily adapt themselves so as to be therapeutically effective for their intended audience in light of their psy-

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[4] Nagel 1979, 1 – 10.

[5] In *On Death* Philodemus attempts to treat ten different reasons for fearing death: (1) the fear of premature death (cols. XII – XIX), (2) the fear that one's enemies will prosper when one dies (cols. XIX – XX), (3) the fear that one will die childless (cols. XXII – XXV), (4) the fear that one will die in a foreign country (cols. XXV – XXVI), (5) the fear of not dying in battle (col. XXVIII), (6) the fear that when one dies one's appearance will be poor (col. XXIX), (7) the fear that when one dies one's body will not receive a proper burial (cols. XXX – XXXII), (8) the fear that one will die at sea (col. XXXII), (9) the fear that one will die from unjust condemnation (cols. XXXIII – XXXIV), and (10) the fear that after one dies one will no longer be remembered (cols. XXXV – XXXVII).

[6] These two arguments are often combined in the Epicurean literature (e.g. *DRN* 3.870ff). (For more on this way of classifying the Epicurean's arguments, see Tsouna 2006, 87-8.) The non-perception argument concludes that, because all good and bad depends on perception, and because in death we (i.e., the compound of body and soul atoms) have dispersed (and therefore cannot perceive), death is nothing to us (e.g. *KD* 2 and *Ep. Men.* 124). The non-identity argument, by contrast, concludes that because we are a combination of body and soul atoms, and because in death our body and soul atoms have dispersed and thus we no longer exist, that therefore death is nothing to us (e.g. *Ep. Men.* 125). For other interpretations of the two major Epicurean arguments against the fear of death, see Warren 2004, 17-56 and O'Keefe 2010, 163-73. Readers may be well aware of a third argument, often referred to as the Symmetry Argument. I discuss this argument below, but at present I wish to note that I agree with Warren (2004) who argues that the Symmetry Argument is nothing more than a different presentation of the "non-perception" argument. Recently a fourth argument, called the "cycle of life" argument, has been identified and discussed. For more on this argument see O'Keefe 2003.

[7] For a concise examination of Philodemus' life and works, see Gigante 2002.

chological disposition. One result of their adaptability is, I claim, that whether these arguments achieve their end—successfully treating human passions—is a question that can be answered only when the audience for whom they are intended is taken into account.

I.2

The word "stochastic," from the Greek verb στοχάζομαι, literally means, "to aim or shoot at." However, within Epicurean psychagogy the verb more narrowly means, "to endeavor to make out, to guess, to conjecture."[8] Although many patients recognize the psychagogue as "the one guide of right speech and action" (*De lib. dic.,* 40.6-8), they will not openly confess their vices to him.[9] Thus in order to come to a diagnosis the psychagogue must reason from signs, likely causes, and testimony. Philodemus' epitome *On Frank Criticism*, essentially a compilation of notes from Zeno of Sidon's lectures on the subject,[10] is our chief source of information on this method. The epitome covers a wide range of topics, including how the psychagogue should approach illustrious men (cols. XXIIb – XXIVa), women (cols. XXIb – XXIIb), and old men (cols. XXIVa – XXIVb)—none of whom accept treatment willingly—and in addition provides us with valuable insight into life within an Epicurean community.

Philodemus offers several explanations for why patients are often reluctant to disclose their shortcomings. First, patients may keep their errors hidden out of shame. People care about their reputations, and how others, especially those whom they admire and respect, perceive them. Thus patients will attempt to conceal their vices, wishing to maintain their reputation among their peers and with the psychagogue. They will even go so far as to mimic the psychagogue's

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[8] This more narrow meaning may not be exclusive to Epicureanism. For example, in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle writes, "The man who is without qualification good at deliberating is the man who is capable of aiming (στοχαστικός) in accordance with calculation at the best for man of things attainable by action" (VI.1141^{b}13-14, revised Oxford translation). See also Nussbaum 1986, 53ff.

[9] All translations of Philodemus' *On Frank Criticism* are from Konstan *et al*., 1998. The treatise is commonly referred to by its Latin name, *De libertate dicendi*.

[10] Zeno of Sidon was the scholarch of the Garden during the first century BCE.

behavior by correcting and admonishing others. But because their souls are diseased they will err. And even if the psychagogue were not around to witness his patient erring, other patients will be around, and they will report their observations to the psychagogue.

The extant fragments on the communal practice of "friendly spying" are scant. The following is a short but accurate summary. It was considered not only permissible, but expected that if a patient were concealing his faults, then others would, if they witnessed him err, then inform the psychagogue. Reporting on another's errors was not considered slander (ibid., 50.3: διά[β]ολόν) because each desires that the other obtain correction. Thus an "informer" was seen as "a friend to his friend" (ibid., 50.7-8). A slanderer, by contrast, hopes to receive praise; he acts out of self-interest rather than in the interests of another. What distinguishes an "informer" from a slanderer, then, is the reason *why* he informs the psychagogue of another's errors.

A second reason patients may withhold their shortcomings from the psychagogue is the following. Although the psychagogue surpasses his patients in theoretical argument (ibid., col. XXa.6-7: πρόβλημα λόγιος), they believe themselves to be better in character than him, and better able to perceive what is preferable (ibid., col. XXa.8-12). These patients do not conceal their vices from their peers or the psychagogue, but instead deny that they have any vices at all. Here the psychagogue is less likely to rely on testimony in order to come to a diagnosis. Instead, he relies on their pride and arrogance. Because these patients believe that they are better than the psychagogue, they may reproach him in public. In doing so, their vices are displayed openly.

A third reason for a patient's reluctance to reveal his errors is that he may believe that a particular behavior is not errant but natural, and therefore there is no reason to inform the psychagogue. Philodemus provides the following example: "I deny that I have erred just now, but rather I slipped voluntarily into the ignorance of young people and because of this he thinks that

it is necessary to whip me" (ibid., 86N.5-9). Interestingly enough, Philodemus indicates that there is a ring of truth to this excuse.

Even though the psychagogue possesses perfect reason,[11] he may still fail to make a correct diagnosis. "But in respect both to not attaining perfection and to passing [from] things that can not be permanently defended by a human being, one will slip" (ibid., 56.8-14). According to Philodemus, there are certain things that even perfected human reason cannot defend against. Unfortunately the text breaks off shortly after this (as it does in many places), and so exactly what these "things" are is unclear. But given what is said elsewhere in the epitome the following is a reasonable conjecture.

Because the psychagogue reasons from signs, likely causes, and the testimony of others, it is possible that even with all of this information he will still fail correctly to grasp his patient's condition. And because he does not correctly grasp his patient's condition, he will administer the wrong treatment.[12] We may conclude, then, because a perfectly skilled psychagogue must work with incomplete and imperfect information, he cannot help but sometimes fail to "hit the mark." However, unlike his physician counterpart, who "having made a mistake in the interpretation of the signs, never again purges [the patient] when he is afflicted by another disease" (ibid., 63.7-11), the psychagogue is not so easily deterred. If he should err, this will not stop him from administering another treatment to the same patient.[13]

Though the Epicurean psychagogue's task would be much easier if his patients were willing to openly and forthrightly to reveal their vices, we can see that not all patients fully under-

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[11] While there are multiple tiers within the Epicurean school (students, scholars, professors, etc.), it seems to be the case that only wise men or sages were properly considered psychagogues. For more on Epicurean communal hierarchy, see Glad 1995, 152-60. See also De Witt 1936.

[12] On this point see *De lib. dic*., fr. 57 and col. 19b. See also Tsouna 2001b, 250-51.

[13] Philodemus is not clear about why the psychagogue, but not the physician, will continue to treat his patient, if he has administered wrongly a treatment. Pending further textual evidence, it seems to me that the psychagogue is just stubborn. The relevant fragments are *De lib. dic.*, 63-67.

stand that "there will be no advantage for the one who hides; for not one thing escape[s] notice" (ibid., 41.8-10).[14] (However, exceptions are noted. For example, Polyaenus was a patient who required only little correction before he became perfect (ibid., col. VIb.8-15)). Thus, the psychagogue must reason stochastically from signs, likely causes, and testimony in order to diagnose his patients, and consequently comes to a very acute and personal understanding of his patients' conditions.

I.3

During the first century BCE there was much debate within the Epicurean school about the nature of anger, what role, if any, it should play in a patient's treatment, and how it ought to be treated therapeutically.[15] Philodemus' *On Anger* is our chief source of information on this debate. In this rather sloppy treatise,[16] Philodemus defends a distinction between ὀργή and θυμός, natural anger and irrational anger respectively,[17] contending that the sage is subject to the former but not the latter. For my purposes here, however, the treatise is extremely interesting because it indicates that not all philosophical arguments are designed to treat a patient's diseases directly. Rather, some arguments are designed to help persons recognize the severity of their condition and need for treatment.

In the previous section I discussed several reasons why patients do not often disclose their shortcomings to the psychagogue (thereby requiring him to reason stochastically in order to

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[14] At this point some may sympathize with Momus' criticism of Hephaestus' craft, "that [Hephaestus] had not made windows in [man's] chest, which could be opened to show everyone his desires and thoughts, and whether he was lying or telling the truth" (Lucian 2009, C.D.N. Costa's translation).

[15] For instance, see *De lib. dic.*, frs. 2, 67, and 70.

[16] Several scholars have noted that this treatise's sloppy prose and the frequent anti-climatic endings of sections indicate that the treatise was designed for the Epicurean lecture room where these sorts of imperfections could be corrected on the spot. See Procopé 1998, 174-5 and Tsouna 2007, 195-7 (cf. Sanders 2009, 642-3). In his forthcoming translation of the treatise, David Armstrong draws attention repeatedly to Philodemus' use of anti-climatic endings when making a point. See col. XIII on p. 9 below for an example.

[17] Note that this distinction inverts the "common classification." Both Plato and Aristotle, for instance, identify the spirited part of the soul as θυμός, and speak positively of θυμοειδεῖς, high-spirited, men (*NE* III.8.1116^{b}23ff). See also Tsouna 2007, 198ff.

come to a diagnosis). In addition to those reasons—shame, pride, or denial—it is often the case that patients do not recognize the severity of their condition and how much in need they are of therapy. If the psychagogue hopes to treat successfully his patients' passions he must make them aware of this need, for "the chief cause of their [i.e., false beliefs] removal lies in our observing their greatness and the multitude of evils they posses and bring along with them" (*De Ira*, col. VI.9-12).[18] The psychagogue may accomplish this task through the use of the τιθέναι πρὸ ὀμμάτων, to-set-before-the-eyes, therapeutic technique.

The to-set-before-the-eyes technique works in the following way. The psychagogue describes graphically (ibid., col. III.3: [ἀναγράφ]ων, III.11: γράφουσιν) before the patient's eyes his present condition, and the likely consequences of leaving it untreated, thereby allowing it to grow worse. The following is a mild example.[19]

> And in every way they [i.e., the angry] hurt the victim of their blows least, they themselves maltreat themselves in all ways and because of this become enraged again and, entwined, act like a drunken man. Why is it necessary to say that, without hesitation [μηδ'ἀπ[ω]σμένους], but hastily [ἀλλ'ἐπισφερομένους], they sometimes because of insensateness fall upon wood, into walls, in ditches, or something else? And if, becoming angrier still, just as usual, they will rip out eyes, slit nostrils, or even murder; they meet with likeness from the law and from those who are angry at them, and are exiled from the fatherland? These follow for those whose anger is boundless…. (ibid., col. XIII)

Each application of this technique is tailored to a patient's particular condition. The psychagogue will make use not only of those things that cause his patient to get "puffed up," but also those things he cares deeply about, in order to bring before his eyes the terrifying reality of his present state.

What makes the technique effective is the psychagogue's vivid and graphic description of his prospective patient's current condition. A cold and calculated diagnosis is, in certain situa-

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[18] Although all translations of Philodemus' *De Ira* are my own, I am heavily indebted to David Armstrong, who generously made available to me a draft of his own forthcoming translation. For the Greek text I have used Indelli's 1988 edition.

[19] At *De Ira* col. XXIX, Philodemus writes that each of his examples thus far refer to reasonable and moderate evils, which result from a boundless anger. However, some of his examples are very graphic! Surely he cannot be serious.

tions, ineffective. Sometimes patients are too "puffed up," and as a result their ability to reason has diminished greatly or, like Axiochus, their "suffering is not relieved by ingenuity; it's satisfied only by what can come down to [their] level."[20] And in other cases, patients intentionally deceive themselves. "For even in this case, not taking to heart some things, and others incorrectly ([ο]ὐ καθαρῶς), they themselves do not want to receive treatment" (ibid., col. IV.19-23). Prior to this passage Philodemus is discussing how even though a physician may "talk about…the greatness of the disease, and the sufferings that happen through it," which sometimes fails to move patients, for they convince themselves that their condition is moderate or minor (ibid., col. IV.4-18). The psychagogue must therefore set before his prospective patient's eyes the reality of his current condition as graphically as possible, so as to demonstrate to the prospective patient that his current condition is not moderate or minor, but quite severe.

Contrary to our intuitions, the to-set-before-the-eyes technique is not distinct from philosophical argument, but rather is a species of it. The psychagogue enumerates "everything that is hurting them [i.e., his patients] and the very unpleasant consequences that follow behind to the community, and sometimes even the evils that have hurt their personal affairs" (ibid., col. VII.10-13). In order to bridge the gap between his patient's present condition and its likely consequences the psychagogue will often liken his patient's condition to another's and, once he has described the tragedies that befell that person, conclude that his patient is likely to meet the same fate. Potential analogues include fellow Epicureans, e.g. "Metrodorus tells us how even Timocrates [harmed] the eldest of his brothers Mentorides" (ibid., col. XII.7-8), mythical kings and their children, e.g. "they lash out against their kinsman just as if god-driven in truth…just like Oedi-

[20] pseudo-Plato, *Axiochus*, 369e1-2, translation Jackson P. Hershbell. Even though the *Axiochus* is a pseudo-Platonic dialogue, it is nonetheless appropriate to my discussion here. In the dialogue Socrates makes use of a variety of philosophical arguments in an effort to assuage Axiochus' fear of death. In doing so, the dialogue demonstrates that some philosophical arguments are ineffective for treating some patients. For more on the Axiochus and Socrates' use of various therapeutic arguments, see O'Keefe 2006.

pus' sons" (ibid., col. XIV.4-6), or even the gods themselves, e.g. "[the gods torment the innocent] just as we do, and some [of the gods] avenge themselves [upon the innocent] — as Apollo did upon those who cried 'respect the priest!' and the children of Niobe and Dionysus upon Cadmos for his daughters' blasphemies" (ibid., col. XVI.8-12).[21]

Based on this description of the to-set-before-the-eyes technique, some may claim that, as a species of philosophical argument, it is a fallacious argument because the psychagogue "attacks" a person's character. And therefore, the to-set-before-the-eyes technique is really just an *ad hominem* argument. Such an observation is partially correct. The to-set-before-the-eyes technique is an *ad hominem*. However, in the context of Epicurean psychagogy, the use of such elaborate *ad hominem* arguments may be defended. To consider the psychagogue's use of the to-set-before-the-eyes technique fallacious demonstrates a failure to recognize the way in which comments about a person's character are relevant to the conclusion drawn by the psychagogue.

The to-set-before-the-eyes technique is complex. As outlined above, the psychagogue likens his prospective patient to another. In doing so he pays special attention to his prospective patient's present condition. Indeed, the psychagogue must, to the best of his ability, select an analogue with which the prospective patient can readily identify if the argument is to fulfill its purpose (i.e., bring before a person's eyes the severity of his present condition and need for treatment). If the prospective patient cannot readily perceive the similarities between himself and his analogue, then he will not make the further connection that *he too* will meet with similar consequences if he fails to seek treatment. Now, an *ad hominem* argument attempts to undermine some proposition *p* through attacks on the character of the person who asserts *p*. However, the prospective patient may not be committed to any *p*, e.g. 'I am not in need of therapy.' If the prospective patient has no commitment to *p*, then the psychagogue cannot undermine *p* by commenting

[21] The conjectures (i.e., the bracketed phrases) in this passage are Armstrong's own.

on the patient's character. Some patients may even hold the belief, 'I am in need of therapy,' but lack the motivation necessary to seek therapy. In this case, the psychagogue's use of the to-set-before-the-eyes technique, specifically its vivid and graphic descriptions of the prospective patient's condition, could provide the motivation presently lacking. Most importantly, though, *ad hominem* arguments are regarded as fallacious philosophical arguments because propositions about a person's character are often *irrelevant* to the truth or falsity of *p*. But if the prospective patient does hold some *p*, i.e., 'I am not in need of therapy,' then comments about their character are very relevant to the truth or falsity of that *p*. And therefore, because the propositions used by the psychagogue to demonstrate the severity of his prospective patient's current condition are in fact relevant to whether the prospective patient is in need of therapy, the to-set-before-the-eyes technique is not fallacious, even though it is an *ad hominem*.

In closing, because the purpose of the to-set-before-the-eyes technique is to help prospective patients recognize the severity of their present condition and consequent need for therapy, the psychagogue often describes his prospective patient's current condition in a very vivid and graphic way. The presence of this therapeutic technique demonstrates that Epicurean psychagogy is highly adaptable; it can accommodate any patient's particular condition. Furthermore, it also demonstrates how philosophical arguments are not always designed to treat a patient's condition directly, but rather are sometimes designed to drive a prospective patient to seek treatment.

I.4

The final feature of Epicureanism that I would like to highlight is, I think, an obvious one. In the last section we saw how some philosophical arguments serve specific therapeutic purposes. In addition, we also saw how some of these arguments are capable of adapting themselves to particular patients. This is possible because for the Epicureans the norms of rational

discourse are valuable only instrumentally—only insofar as they contribute to the procurement of pleasure and freedom from pain. In this respect the Epicurean approach to therapy is much like that of the Pyrrhonian Skeptics.[22]

In the final sections of his *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (*PH*), Sextus Empiricus answers the question, "Why do Skeptics sometimes deliberately propound arguments of feeble plausibility?" The answer is simple. Skeptics are philanthropists, and as such endeavor to cure another's diseases, οἴησίν τε καὶ προπέτειαν, self-conceit and rashness, through philosophical argument. And just as the physician will use only as strong a treatment as is needed, so too will the Skeptic use only as rigorous and "weighty" as argument as is needed. Sextus does not elaborate much on what makes an argument "weighty" as opposed to "feeble." However the word πιθανότησιν, which is used several times within the passage, indicates that at least one major factor is an argument's "persuasiveness" or "plausibility." Presumably persons whose ability to assess critically and scrutinize an argument is weak will require only a "feeble" argument, whereas a person whose ability is stronger will require a more "weighty" argument. For the former, then, philanthropic Skeptics will use arguments others regard as "feeble" to cure their patient, "since often a weaker argument is sufficient for them to achieve their purpose."[23]

The Epicurean psychagogue will also use "feeble" arguments with his patients, for an argument's clarity, cogency, and consistency are valuable only insofar as they contribute to a patient's procurement of pleasure and avoidance of pain. In this respect, an argument's clarity, cogency, and consistency occupy the same position within Epicureanism as τό καλόν, the noble,

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[22] However Casey Perin has challenged this view recently. See Perin 2010.

[23] *PH* 281. The point here is that the skeptic suspends judgment as to whether or not his arguments are objectively "weighty" or "feeble." This is a concern held by his critics. Instead, the skeptic concerns himself with picking out those arguments that will be most effective in treating the dogmas that afflict his patient and, presumably, the more skilled a physician is, the better he will be at identifying these arguments. We may surmise that this suspension of judgment applies to philosophical argumentation generally; that is, to many of the arguments within Sextus' own treatises, which have been judged deficient in various ways. I thank Jessica Berry and Tim O'Keefe for bringing this to my attention.

and the virtues. In the words of Epicurus, "One must honour the noble, and the virtues and things like that, *if* they produce pleasure. But if they do not, one must bid them goodbye."[24] We may also recall the opening sections of Epicurus' letter to Pythocles. Here Epicurus writes that even his teachings on meteorological phenomena are valuable only insofar as they contribute to the procurement of pleasure and avoidance of pain. Knowledge of these matters is not intrinsically valuable (*Ep. Pyth.* 85). With the exception of pleasure and pain everything else is, according to the Epicureans, only instrumentally valuable. And so as concerns the norms of rational discourse, they are valuable only insofar as they contribute to curing a patient's disease(s) and ridding him of his false beliefs. And what will be most effective (i.e., valuable) in achieving this end will depend on the patient in question.

I pointed to one example of this in the previous section—the to-set-before-the-eyes therapeutic technique. (In fact, it seems to me that it is this technique in particular that requires a flexible commitment to an argument's clarity, cogency, and so forth.) What is particularly striking is that the psychagogue will not only indulge the prospective patient's delusions (that he is similar to Ares, for instance), but will even use premises that are, for the Epicureans, blatantly false. Above I noted that potential analogues include the gods themselves. Comparing a prospective patient's present condition to that of a god's will be effective in driving the prospective patient to seek therapy only if the prospective patient considers himself sufficiently similar to the god in question, and therefore likely to meet with similar misfortunes should he allow his present condition to remain as is, or grow worse. And recall that the cause of many misfortunes for human beings is their boundless (i.e., vain and empty) desires, supported by false beliefs about what is truly good and bad. But for the Epicureans such reasoning is demonstrably false. The gods cannot, according to Epicurus, capable of suffering misfortune, for the gods are not the sorts of beings

[24] Usener (Us.) 67, trans. Inwood & Gerson.

that can have the requisite false beliefs, which support those vain and empty desires (e.g. greed, lust) that bring about misfortune.[25]

Moreover, the effectiveness of the to-set-before-the-eyes technique lies in its use of vivid imagery. "For which reason, describing pictorially [ἀναγράφων] some things the patient is totally ignorant of, some he has come to forget, some unreckoned of at least with respect to their importance, if nothing else, and others he never contemplated as a whole, and putting all of this in his view he [i.e. the psychagogue] creates a great fright" (*De Ira*, col. IV.5-15). And this may then be contrasted with the therapeutic art of παρρησία. While the to-set-before-the-eyes technique relies on vivid imagery, so that the prospective patient will realize the severity of his present condition, παρρησία relies on, at least when administered to "strong" students, violent language. Thus, towards "those who are exceedingly strong, both by nature [and] because of their progress, {he will criticize} with all passion and <[blame] and>…" (*De lib. dic.*, 10.7-11), and "after these things he will also set both the difficulties that accompany and will be attached to those who are such, <saying> again <and again, 'You are doing [wrong],'" (ibid., 11.4-10). The takeaway here is that, at least in the initial stages of treatment, reasoning itself is insufficient. As a result, the psychagogue is willing to indulge a patient's delusions, make use of premises in conflict with the Epicurean doctrines, and describe graphically before a prospective patient's eyes the severity of his present condition, so that the prospective patient's emotions will allow him to see clearly the severity of his present condition and need for treatment.

In closing, I should like to state clearly an important difference between the Skeptic's "feeble" arguments and Epicurean ones. Whereas the Skeptics will use "feeble" arguments to cure their patients of self-conceit and rashness, the Epicurean will typically use "feeble" arguments to drive persons to seek therapy. Even though there are certainly major dissimilarities be-

[25] On this and related points, see *KD* 1, *Ep. Men.* 123-24, *Ep. Hdt.* 76-7, *DRN* V.146-55, and VI.68-79.

tween the patient and other members of the Epicurean school, mythical kings, and the gods (which might prevent the argument from being persuasive to a critical and scrutinizing mind), the effectiveness of these arguments lies primarily in their use of vivid imagery. Thus, insofar as this technique contributes to the patient's well-being the psychagogue will make use of the norms of rational discourse only as needed.

I.5

Up to now I have been discussing three distinct aspects of Epicurean psychagogy. In this section I tie together these three features using a medical analogy to illustrate the adaptability of Epicurean psychagogy. In doing so, I conclude that when evaluating the efficacy of Epicurean philosophical arguments it is necessary to place them alongside the audience for whom they were intended.

Suppose you have been in a terrible car accident and consequently have suffered a broken leg. An onlooker notified the authorities and now you are on your way to the hospital. Upon arrival your physician can see clearly that your leg is broken—it is very swollen and severely bruised—and will require treatment. However, these observations alone are not enough for your physician to determine what sort of treatment will be most effective. So in an effort to administer the most effective treatment your physician sets out to gather more information.

Your physician may phone the person who saw the crash and ask about any relevant details or speak with the paramedics who brought you in. In addition, he will likely x-ray your leg so as to get a clear image of the break or breaks involved. Once your physician has gathered a sufficient amount of information about your case, he will then prescribe a course of treatment. Here the physician reasons stochastically in order to come to a diagnosis that is suited to his patient, just as the psychagogue does.

If the break in your leg is a relatively minor one, your physician may simply put a cast on it, advise you to stay off your feet for a few weeks, and then to visit the hospital twice a week for a minor regimen of physical therapy. However, if the break in your leg is quite severe, more drastic or invasive measures may be required. For instance, you may have to go into surgery in order to have the break repaired. Here, too, the most effective type of surgery will depend on the particular nature of the break in your leg. A few screws may be required, perhaps even a metal rod. As a result you may be advised to stay off your feet for a few months, and afterwards to visit the hospital five days a week for an intense regimen of physical therapy.

In administering treatment, your physician makes use of certain aspects of medicine only as necessary. If your leg does not require a thorough and intense surgery, you will not be subject to it.[26] Similarly, if you are not immobile for a lengthy period of time, the subsequent physical therapy will be less than for someone who was immobile for a longer period of time. Once again, the physician's and the psychagogue's practices are similar. Just as your physician uses certain aspects of medicine only as necessary, so too does the psychagogue makes use of the norms of rational discourse only as needed in order to treat his patient.

Finally, after your leg has been put in a cast (with or without surgery), your physician will likely encourage you to follow any instructions he may give you and, once your cast comes off, complete the recommended physical therapy. In doing so, he is sure to inform you of the likely consequences, should you fail to follow his instructions. Such consequences may include prolonged pain and discomfort or reduced mobility once the leg has "healed." If necessary, your

[26] We may also regard it was unethical, or at least imprudent, to subject individuals to procedures unwarranted by their present condition. The Epicureans appear to believe something similar when it comes to the therapeutic art of παρρησία. (They may also believe that it would be unethical, or at least imprudent, to subject individuals to procedures unwarranted by their present condition generally, but at present I cannot find any evidence to support the more general claim.) Patients are to be reproached in accordance with their given capacities for frank criticism. Failure to do so may result in harming, instead of healing, the patient, with the additional possibility of rendering them incurable. I discuss this in greater detail below.

physician may go further, if he knows you on a more personal level. If you like to hike, for instance, he may remind you that failure to follow his recommendations will likely impact your ability to go hiking for long periods of time, or even at all. In this way too, your physician and the psychagogue use similar techniques (i.e., to-set-before-the-eyes).[27]

What all this demonstrates is that the physician adapts his medical knowledge to his patient's condition, thus designing a treatment that is tailored to that patient. The result of this is that when we judge whether or not this type of treatment is effective, we must necessarily consider the particular condition of the patient for whom the treatment was designed. Because the physician's methods are nearly identical to the psychagogue's, it follows that when we judge whether or not the philosophical arguments propounded by the Epicureans to treat human passions are effective we must necessarily consider the particular condition of the patient for whom they were designed.

As I noted at the outset of this paper, some scholars contend that the Epicureans' arguments are intended to serve as a universal panacea against the fear of death. Such an interpretation leaves the Epicureans' arguments open to the objection that they often fail. However, that interpretation is the wrong one, and the interpretation I have argued for here is sufficient for mounting a defense for many of the Epicureans' arguments. Because the Epicurean psychagogue is sensitive to his patient's condition, he will constructs arguments that are designed to be effective for that patient. If a patient is not persuaded by one argument against the fear of death, it does not then follow that the argument is an ineffective argument *per se*. Rather it means that the argument is the wrong sort of argument for that patient given his particular condition.

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[27] Even though the physician's use of the to-set-before-the-eyes technique is less robust and passionate than the psychagogue's typically is, the physician uses a cold and clinical tone because that is what is effective. Thus, the physician's use of moral portraiture is also context-sensitive. I thank Jessica Berry for this observation.

PART II: The Patient-Relativity Thesis Defended

II.1

In the previous chapter I argued that Epicurean philosophical arguments are patient-relative; they necessarily adapt themselves so as to be therapeutically effective for their intended audience. There are two additional matters that require a fuller treatment than those I discussed in the last chapter, giving these matters their due treatment is the central task of this chapter.

In Part I argued that, in the light of certain psychagogic practices and aspects of Epicurean philosophy, the Epicureans tailored their arguments to their intended audience to make them more therapeutically effective. Is there any indication that the converse is true? That is, did the Epicureans think that failure to tailor their arguments to their intended audience would render them not only ineffective, but also potentially damaging? If it can be demonstrated that the Epicureans thought non-tailored arguments would be either therapeutically ineffective, or potentially damaging, then the patient-relativity thesis gains additional support.

Furthermore, we may be concerned about the instrumental value the Epicureans placed on the norms of rational discourse. Because the norms of rational discourse are valued only insofar as they contribute to a patient's recovery, the Epicureans are able to adapt their arguments so as to be therapeutically effective (e.g. motivating persons to seek therapy) for a diverse group of patients. But some may worry, because the norms of rational discourse are valued only instrumentally, whether this leaves open the possibility that the Epicureans would construct philosophical arguments in which these norms are violated outright if they could be shown to be equally effective therapeutically. The presence of such arguments would be at odds with the rest of Epicurean philosophy, and pose a serious difficulty for the patient-relativity thesis.

In the first part of this chapter I deal with the former matter. Returning to Philodemus' *On Frank Criticism*, I give an account of the therapeutic practice of παρρησία. Philodemus indicates that while all instances of frankness are painful for the patient, if a patient receives criticism that is inappropriate, determined by his particular capacity for παρρησία, it may be especially damaging, including the possibility that the patient may become incurable. I explain why παρρησία is necessarily painful, and describe two possible scenarios in which a patient could be harmed through παρρησία. The latter concern occupies the second half of the chapter. Though the norms of rational discourse are valued instrumentally, this does not entail that they may be violated outright during philosophical argumentation. What the Epicureans have to say about justice, which is also of only instrumental value, will prove essential for understanding the instrumental value ascribed to the norms of rational discourse, and their role in Epicurean psychagogy.

II.2

The word παρρησία, "frankness" or "frank criticism," was originally used to refer to the right of any freeborn Athenian male to speak his mind without consequences.[28] But within the context of Epicurean therapy, παρρησία refers jointly to the act of admonishment (*De lib. dic.*, 36.7-8: τὴν νουθέτησιν) and the disposition to be forthcoming and candid, which is cultivated in initiates, and refined in dedicatees, because it contributes to the well-being of the community.[29]

Admonishment is administered, through the stochastic method,[30] when a member of the Epicurean community has erred in his or her conduct. But Philodemus is clear that we "do not do

[28] Glad 1995, 106. In antiquity, παρρησία (frankness) was often contrasted with flattery, and those who were known as "frank counselors" stood in opposition to flatterers (ibid., 37ff). Cf. Sider 2004, 90: "Παρρσηία, that is παν + ῥῆσις, originally was a typically Athenian characteristic (praiseworthy or blameworthy, depending on one's point of view), meaning not necessarily that one did in fact say everything but that the citizen was able to 'say everything'."
[29] For a brief sketch of life within an Epicurean community, see De Witt 1936.
[30] See I.2.

it {i.e., criticize frankly} continually, nor against everyone, nor every chance error, nor {errors} of those whom one should not {criticize} when they are present, nor with merriment, but rather [to take up errors] sympathetically [and not to] scorn [or insult]" (ibid., 81 N.4-12).[31] Admonishment is delivered on an *ad hoc* basis. The Epicureans were aware that an overall attack on a person's character is "unfriendly to {his} security and a foolish harshness" (ibid., 80 N.2-3). For this reason they advocated moderate (ibid., 6.8: μετρίως) reproaches, as Epicurus reproaches Pythocles.[32] And, although frank criticism was practiced by every member of the community,[33] certain "jabs" (ibid., col. VIIa.5: [κατα]φορὰς) were considered inappropriate for anyone but the most senior members of the community (ibid., col. VIIa.6: σοφοῖ[ς]) to inflict.[34]

Παρρησία may be administered in either its "subtle" (ibid., 68.1: ποικίλης) or its "simple" form (both of which admit of varying degrees). The "subtle" form of παρρησία consists of both praise and blame, mixed appropriately for the patient. The "simple" form of παρρησία, on the other hand, is purely blame, and may be delivered through shouting (ibid., 7.7: ἐγκραυγασθῶσ[ι]), should the psychagogue deem it necessary to give way to his anger.[35] Patients may also be criticized in public (i.e., in front of their peers). However, the psychagogue must be careful when delivering public criticism, as it can be very painful. These two general forms of παρρησία most likely correspond to the two types of patients commonly discussed throughout the epitome. Philodemus commonly refers to "weak" (ibid., 7.2: τῶν ἀπαλῶν) patients and "strong" (ibid., 7.6: τοὺς ἰσχυροῦς) patients. "Weak" patients are commonly characterized as

[31] Cf. *De lib. dic.*, cols. Ia-IIb. The presence of curly brackets ({}) in this quotation (and any further quotations from *De libertate dicendi*) indicates that the contents are the translators' (i.e., Konstan, *et al.*) additions or clarifications. For a full list of *sigla* used by Konstan, *et al.* in Philodemus' *De libertate dicendi*, see p. 25 of their edition.
[32] See ibid., fr. 6.
[33] See ibid., fr. 81N.1-4.
[34] For some indication that one's ability to apply παρρησία appropriately stems from one's wisdom, see ibid., col. Vb.
[35] For a brief discussion of παρρησία delivered with "anger-in-combination-with-hatred" and παρρησία delivered with "anger-in-combination-with-blame," see Tsouna 2007, 97-98. See also *De lib. dic.*, fr. 92 N.

highly obedient and insecure in their new philosophic way of life, whereas "strong" patients are stubborn, arrogant, and in some cases resistant to all but the harshest forms of παρρησία. However, patients may also be classified as "strong" if their progression within the Epicurean school has reached a certain point.[36]

Although παρρησία may be administered in either its "subtle" form or "simple" form, and tailored so as to be effective for a particular patient and his or her particular error, each administration is painful to some degree.[37] By criticizing frankly, the psychagogue rouses those harmful passions, irrational emotions, and vices: "[f]lattery, arrogance, irascibility, slander (13.2), envy and malicious joy, a misplaced sense of dignity and shame, vanity, self-conceit and vainglory."[38] Sometimes he will even encounter faults as severe as injustice and impiety.[39] When these passions, emotion, and vices are attacked, patients often become "puffed up" (Ibid., 66.7: ἐκχαυνο[ῦ]σι) as their souls "swell" (Ibid., 67.1: τὴν συνοίδ[η]σι[ν]). As a result the patient is not able to reason clearly, and may even refuse to heed the psychagogue's admonission. In extreme cases, where the patient's soul has become very swollen and παρρησία has not been completely effective, Philodemus urges his reader to turn away from the one who has erred until the swelling has gone down before correcting him again.[40]

Further evidence in favor of each application of παρρησία being painful, especially when vices such as irascibility are roused, can be found in Philodemus' *De Ira*. Philodemus describes the angry man as one who "has the eyes of madmen, and sometimes even sends forth sparks of light, as the greatest of poets seem to have signified, both 'gazing' and looking 'distraught' on

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[36] On this point see Armstrong 2008, 99.
[37] For a different, but not necessarily opposing, explanation of why παρρησία is necessarily painful, see Tsouna 2001b. "The ethical legitimacy of frank speech is secured through the claim that it has its basis in nature. The student feels a 'biting', a discomfort at something he has done, which promts the (natural) desire to confess his action to the teacher or to a classmate" (249). For more on "bites" in Philodemus, see Tsouna 2007, 32-51.
[38] Tsouna 2007, 95.
[39] See *De lib. dic.*, fr. 6 for an instance of the latter.
[40] See ibid., frs. 66 & 67.

those with whom he is angered, and singularly flushed as well in the face, most frequently, but some of them with blood-red face, some with neck tensed and swelling veins and their saliva bitter and salty" (*De Ira*, fr. 6). Further, the angry man suffers "the trembling and shakings of the limbs and paralyses, such as come also upon the epileptic, so that as they relentlessly pursue us our whole life is afflicted, and one takes up the most of its time in the nourishment of misery. How many it has afflicted, it and its consequence, breaking of lungs and pains in the sides and many-a-life-threatening-ill-of-that-sort, you can hear from any physician and observe when you look at them carefully. And they are always so liable to black bile that often [they turn their hearts black]" (ibid., col. IX).

Because each application of παρρησία is accompanied by at least a slight sting,[41] and at worst great pain of the body and soul, Philodemus emphasizes repeatedly that παρρησία must, in all but the most extreme cases, be delivered from a kind and gentle disposition. Failure to do so could result in a patient's being damaged severely. In addition, because each application of παρρησία is tailored to the patient's condition in the light of a particular error, failing to deliver the appropriate amounts of praise and blame, or foregoing praise altogether, could result in harm to the patient.[42] Both of these scenarios are probable.

As mentioned above, everyone within the community practices the art of παρρησία. However, only the most senior members of the community may reproach certain actions—as the wisest and least likely to err when reasoning stochastically, they are therefore least likely to administer a form of παρρησία that could harm a patient.[43] But, because the psychagogue must reason stochastically with imperfect or incomplete information, he too will sometimes slip and, consequently, harm his patient. In addition, some patients believe they are wiser than the most senior

[41] On this point see, ibid., col. VIIIb.
[42] Cf. Tsouna 2001b, 251.
[43] Tsouna echoes this observation. See ibid., 250-51.

members of the community. Thus, some patients will administer παρρησία where it is not right for them to do so.[44] And this, because they are impure and still susceptible to their own vices, is likely to harm greatly not only the patient receiving criticism, but also the patient who wrongly criticizes. "But when the rebuke comes, they have their pretense exposed, just like those who are compelled to dine together for the sake of politeness, when they <[correct somewhat]> {their fellow diners}" (*De lib. dic.*, col. XVIb.6-13). Finally, Philodemus indicates in one fragment that it is even possible for patients to become "incurable" (ibid., 59.10-11: ἀ[ν]αλθεῖς; cf. 88N.11-12: ἀθεραπεύτου) because of παρρησία.[45]

As Philodemus' discussion of the therapeutic art of παρρησία makes clear, the analogy between philosophical psychagogy and empirical medicine was intended to include the possibility that, should the psychagogue deliver a treatment "harsher" than necessary, he, like his physician counterpart, runs the risk of harming his patient and, in extreme cases, can leave him "incurable." Far from a simple aversion to shock tactics, the Epicureans believed that patients should be supported emotionally during therapy.[46] This principle is perhaps most clearly expressed in the following: "When he is not disappointed in some people, or very vehemently indicating his own annoyance, he will not, as he speaks, forget 'dearest' and 'sweetest' and similar things" (*De lib dic.*, 14.5-10).

II.3

In Part I, I argued that the norms of rational discourse—clarity, cogency, and consistency—are only instrumentally valuable for the Epicureans. Because the norms of rational discourse

[44] See, for instance, *De lib. dic.*, col. XVIa.
[45] See also ibid., fr. 59. The fragment breaks off before we are able to learn why and how παρρησία may cause patients to become incurable. Interestingly enough, Philodemus writes that even though a patient may become "incurable," the psychagogue does not cease to treat him in accordance with his given capacity for παρρησία. Because even the psychagogue may err in his reasoning, he may falsely judge a patient as "incurable" who, contrary to all expectations, seems to heal suddenly. Cf. ibid., frs. 32, 84N, 88N.
[46] Tsouna 2007, 97.

are valued only instrumentally, some may wonder if they may be violated outright during treatment. Would the psychagogue deliver to his patient a fallacious, garbled, and inconsistent argument, if doing so would be effective in correcting the patient's false beliefs?

Consider another object of instrumental value—justice. Epicurus defined justice as something useful in mutual associations.[47] More narrowly, justice is an agreement between parties neither to harm one another nor be harmed. However, justice is also *context-sensitive*; an action is unjust only if it violates an existing agreement between parties. Epicurus states this clearly in *KD* 36: "In general outline justice is the same for everyone; for it was something useful in mutual associations. But with respect to the peculiarities of a region or of other [relevant] causes, it does not follow that the same thing is just for everyone." Relevant causes may include changes in "objective circumstances," as is indicated in *KD* 38.[48] Finally, even though justice is instrumentally valuable and context-sensitive, the Epicureans do not advise committing injustice whenever it may be beneficial.[49] According to Epicurus, because one can never be certain that he will forever escape detection, he will forever live in fear of being found out, which will cause him considerable mental distress. And therefore, because it can never be beneficial to act unjustly, one should never act unjustly.

Here we have a general definition of a concept that is adaptable to a potentially wide range of scenarios. But the range of possible adaptations is at the same time constrained, for, while there are many types of agreements that are useful in mutual associations, there are also many agreements that would not be useful in mutual associations. Indeed, such agreements (or

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[47] See *KD* 31, 33, 36.

[48] "…And if objective circumstances do change the same things which had been just turn out to be no longer useful, then those things were just as long as they were useful for the mutual associations of fellow citizens; but later, when they were not useful, they were no longer just."

[49] See for instance *KD* 34, 35.

lack thereof) would lead to mental distress that would affect the individual until his death. The same structure, I think, applies to the norms of rational discourse.

Epicurus does not define the norms of rational discourse explicitly. And yet, he does not need to. Philosophers and non-philosophers alike understand that there are certain norms that interlocutors ought to conform to when conversing with one another. At the very least, our remarks should be clear, they should be consistent with one another, and, if we dare to advance any position or defend one, it should be done cogently. But we also recognize that our ability to conform to these norms will depend on the idiosyncrasies of the situation we find ourselves in, particularly our interlocutor. Philodemus' discussion of how the psychagogue should use παρρησία on "weak" and "strong" students demonstrates that the Epicureans acknowledged this fact. Now objectively speaking, some conversations may appear clearer and more consistent, while others seem less clear and more inconsistent. Moreover, in some conversations our advancement or defense of a position may be less cogent than in others. But subjectively speaking this will not be the case, for there is a particular manner of conversation that we should assume given the idiosyncrasies of our interlocutor. Let us return to justice for a moment to clarify this point.

If we were to survey a variety of mutual associations between parties, recording those agreements deemed useful, and then set them alongside each other, we would perhaps be inclined to consider some "more just" than others. In doing so, we would be placing ourselves (to some degree) in the relevant situation, judging agreement **A** as useful, and agreement **B** as non-useful. And to some extent our judgments would be correct. For us, agreement **A** would be useful, and therefore just, while agreement **B** would not be useful, and would therefore not be just. But again our judgments about such agreements are only partially correct, because it is we ourselves judging them. If we place ourselves within a particular context, in order to judge whether

or not a set of agreements deemed useful in the mutual association of two parties are in fact useful, we then create a new context *distinct from* the original one. And to judge the original context from the viewpoint of newly created one is misguided. A similar conclusion follows in the case of conversation. If we judge objectively a variety of expressions as more or less clear, more or less consistent, we neglect the context in which such expressions were constructed, and whether or not the construction of those expressions serves some subjective end. So, objectively speaking, it appears as if the norms of rational discourse may be violated to a greater or lesser degree depending upon the interlocutor in question. But, as far as I am concerned, the norms of rational discourse are not violated; the standard to which we can reasonably be expect to conform our statements to them in conversations is adjusted in light of our interlocutor's particular psychological state.

In order to complete this account of the place of the norms of rational discourse within Epicurean philosophy, one final component is required. In the case of justice the Epicureans do not advise that an injustice should ever be committed, because committing an injustice can never benefit a person, for the consequent fear of detection will persist, tormenting him until his death. So, too, the psychagogue, in the course of a patient's therapy, can never deliver an argument that is fallacious, garbled, and inconsistent. The role these norms play in curing a patient's soul is indispensible, and evidence of this fact can be found throughout the extant Epicurean texts. According to Epicurus it is only through the study of natural science that our fears and anxieties about heavenly phenomena, myths, and death can be dissolved (*KD* 11-13). It is only through the use of reason that we can mount a sufficient defense against Chance (*KD* 16). Only reason affords us with the ability to set a limit on our desires (*KD* 30), and to recognize that "unlimited time and limited time contain equal [amounts of] pleasure" (*KD* 19). Such decrees are not unique

to Epicurus. Lucretius too writes, in several places, "this terrifying darkness that enshrouds the mind must be dispelled not by the sun's rays and the dazzling darts of day, but by study of the superficial aspect and underlying principle of nature" (*DRN* 1.146-48). And Philodemus, after concluding his mock diatribe, where he criticizes the Stoics for failing to treat sufficiently a patient's irrational anger, declares, "[And nothing can save you from all this] but the Canonic reasoning (καν[ονικοῦ] λόγου)" (*De Ira*, col. XXXI.9-11).[50] While diatribes constitute an important part of the therapeutic process, in order to conquer anger the patient must also acquire an understanding of the Epicurean canons and the arguments that support them. For the Epicureans, then, the norms of rational discourse are, like the virtues, indispensible from the pleasant life.[51] And thus it is not possible for the psychagogue to deliver fallacious, garbled, and inconsistent arguments to his patients during the course of their therapy.

[50] See also *De Ira*, col. I. Here Philodemus comments on Timasagoras' approach towards the treatment of anger. Philodemus writes, "For if he [i.e., Timasagoras] had rebuked those that *only* censure anger and do little or nothing else about it, like Bion in his *On Anger* and Chrysippus in the 'Therapeutic' book of his treatise *On Emotions*, he would have taken a reasonable position" (*De Ira*, col. I.12-20).

[51] On this point see *KD* 5: "It is impossible to live pleasantly without living prudently, honourably, and justly and impossible to live prudently, honourably, and justly without living pleasantly. And whoever lacks this cannot live pleasantly."

PART III: Patient-Relativity and the Arguments of Epicurus, Lucretius, and Philodemus

III.1

In the previous chapter I discussed at length two concerns surrounding my thesis—the analogy between philosophical psychagogy and empirical medicine, and the relationship between the norms of rational discourse and therapeutic effectiveness. In this chapter I put my thesis into practice. First, I discuss three arguments against the fear of death from Epicurus and Lucretius. Although each argument arrives at the same conclusion (i.e., "death is nothing to us"), it does so in its own way, so as to be therapeutically effective for its intended audience. My discussion of these arguments is focused on who the intended audiences are, why, in light of them, the arguments are constructed the way they are, and how their construction makes them therapeutically effective. Then I turn to the arguments of Philodemus' *On Death*. My discussion of these arguments largely mirrors that of the arguments of Epicurus and Lucretius. However, at times my discussion is more complicated because Philodemus' arguments are more intricate and display a high level of adaptation. My decision to discuss first the arguments of Epicurus and Lucretius, and then the arguments of Philodemus, is motivated by two reasons.

Some of Philodemus' writings are concerned with subjects that had not been examined critically by earlier Epicureans. In addition to composing treatises on conventional subjects, Philodemus also wrote on rhetoric, music, and poetry, including a treatise titled *On the Good King according to Homer*. In the words of one scholar, Philodemus is truly a "'Panaitios des Kepos'—an Epicurean who moderniz[ed] the Epicurean school's discussion topics as Panaetius and Posidonius did those of the Stoa."[52] In arguing that Epicurean philosophical arguments are patient-relative, I have relied heavily on Philodemus' treatises, in particular his *On Frank Criticism* and *On Anger*. Demonstrating that the arguments of Epicurus and Lucretius exhibit this fea-

[52] Armstrong 2008, 89.

ture helps quell, at least to some degree, the worry that patient-relativity applies only to the arguments of Zeno and Philodemus' Epicureanism.

In addition, the arguments of Epicurus and Lucretius serve as a helpful stepping-stone between the concept of patient-relativity and its manifestation in the arguments of Philodemus' *On Death*. More interesting than anything else in Philodemus' treatises is his acute understanding of the various harmful emotions, evil dispositions, and vices, and their infinitely many combinations, that bring about physical and mental suffering. Thus Philodemus' arguments, especially in *On Death*, are highly adaptive—they target not only the patient's fear of death in a unique way, but also those false beliefs, and vain and empty desires, that surround and support it. By discussing the arguments of Epicurus and Lucretius first, we are able to witness relatively simple adaptations of an argument, before turning to those complex, highly adaptive arguments of Philodemus.

III.2

At the outset of the thesis I quoted a famous Epicurean dictum for why death is nothing to us:

> Death is nothing to us. For what has been dissolved has no perception, and what has no perception is nothing to us. (*KD* 2)

Although this dictum appears time and again throughout extant Epicurean texts, there are three instances that demonstrate that earlier Epicureans did in fact adapt their arguments for particular audiences.

The first occurrence is found in Epicurus' letter to Menoeceus. Here the dictum appears without much modification:

> Become accustomed to believing death to be nothing to us. Since all good and bad lies in perception, and death is the deprivation of perception. (*Ep. Men.* 124)

Although the letter in which this passage appears is addressed to Menoeceus, Epicurus' intended audience is much broader. As is the case with his letters on physics and meteorological phenomena, addressed to Herodotus and Pythocles respectively, they are not for them alone but many others too.[53] But Epicurus' letters are not for everyone. By this I mean that, as general summaries, the achievement of their purpose, "to facilitate the firm memorization of the most general doctrines, in order that at each and every opportunity they may be able to help themselves in the most important issues" (*Ep. Hdt*. 35), will likely be unsuccessful with non-dedicatees of Epicureanism.

Because these letters are largely summaries of the major subject areas of Epicureanism, Epicurus often gives his reader short and simple arguments designed to demonstrate the truth of various core beliefs. In addition, Epicurus does not so much demonstrate that other, competing views are false as he urges his reader to avoid them altogether, or flat-out condemns them.[54] Moreover, Epicurus' language in each letter is often commanding, e.g. "Do and practice what I constantly told you to do, believing these to be the elements of living well" (*Ep. Men.* 123).[55] These three aspects of Epicurus' letters suggest, I think, that Epicurus' audience is those patients who are already dedicatees of Epicureanism.

That Epicurus' audience is likely present dedicatees of Epicureanism allows him to deliver simple philosophical arguments in a straightforward way. Unlike the arguments of Lucretius, discussed below, Epicurus' arguments can be free of rhetoric and poetic imagery. Indeed, such letters will not provide every detail, or refute all criticisms, for they are for those "who are una-

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[53] *Ep. Pyth.* 85.

[54] For example, "And thunderbolts can be produced in several different ways—just be sure that myths are kept out of it!" (*Ep. Pyth.* 104). For a different, but not necessary conflicting, interpretation, see Sedley 1998.

[55] Cf. *De lib. dic.*, fr. 45: "…we shall admonish others with great confidence, both now and when those {of us} who have become offshoots of our teachers have become eminent. And the encompassing and most important thing is, we shall obey Epicurus, according to whom we have chosen to live…."

ble to work out with precision each and every detail of what we have written on nature and who lack the ability to work through the longer books I [i.e., Epicurus] have composed" (*Ep. Hdt.* 35). His audience recognizes him as "the one guide of right speech and [action]" (*De lib. dic.*, 40.6-8) and does not need to be "convinced" that the soul is mortal, or that all good and bad lies in sense-perception. They already accept as true Epicurus' theories concerning various physical phenomena. What his audience needs, at this point, is to commit firmly to memory those theories in order to achieve peace of mind. And this particular type of packaging is, it seems to me, maximally effective for his intended audience.

The letter to Menoeceus opens and closes with an emphasis on *practice* (122.1: μελλέτω, 13: πράττομεν, 123.1: πρᾶττε καὶ μελέτα, 135.5: μελέτα). It is not enough to hear the arguments that support the central tenets of Epicureanism once. One must rehearse again and again these arguments, committing them firmly to memory. Complicated and intricate arguments, while not impossible to learn and rehearse repeatedly, are simply not as effective as short and concise arguments that conclude the same point. At this point in their therapy, Epicurus' audience requires a treatment that allows them to rehearse time and again those arguments that support the central tenets, committing them firmly to memory, so as to "never be disturbed either when awake or in sleep, and…live as a god among men" (*Ep. Men.* 135). The arguments contained in Epicurus' letter to Menoeceus are ideal for this purpose.

The dictum expressed in *KD* 2 also appears in Lucretius at *DRN* 3.832-42:

> et velut anteacto nil tempore sensimus aegri, ad confligendum venientibus undique Poenis, omnia cum belli trepido concussa tumultu horrida contremuere sub altis aetheris auris, in dubioque fuere utrorum ad regna cadendum omnibus humanis esset terraque marique, sic, ubi non ermius, cum corporis atque animai discidium fuerit, quibus e sumus uniter apti, scilicet haud nobis quicuam, qui non erimus tum, accidere omnino poterit sensumque movere, non si terra mari miscebitur et mare caelo.
>
> And as in time past we felt no distress when the advancing Punic hosts were threatening Rome on every side, when the whole earth, rocked by the terrifying tumult of war, shudderingly quaked

> beneath the coasts of high heaven, while the entire human race was doubtful into whose possession the sovereignty of the land and the sea was destined to fall; so, when we are no more, when body and soul, upon whose union our being depends, are divorced, you may be sure that nothing at all will have the power to affect us or awaken sensation in us, who shall not then exist—not even if the earth be confounded with the sea, and the sea with the sky.

Lucretius' presentation of *KD* 2 is drastically different from Epicurus' in his letter to Menoeceus. It is neither simple nor straightforward, but couched in poetic imagery. Because of this, many commentators have interpreted Lucretius' argument as one related to, but not identical with, the arguments of *Ep. Men.* 124 and *KD* 2. Lucretius' target is not our fear of pain once we are dead, but according to some the fear that we will someday die. In essence, Lucretius' target is our fear of our own mortality. However, this interpretation does not agree with Lucretius' Latin. James Warren has argued, and correctly I think, that the tense of Lucretius' verbs indicate that what we are asked to reflect on is not our present attitude towards our pre-natal non-existence, and then adopt a similar attitude towards our eventual *post-mortem* non-existence. Rather, we are to reflect on that particular moment in history, when we did not yet exist, and recognize that at the time we felt nothing. And therefore when we are dead and no longer exist, "now that the nature of the mind is understood to be mortal" (*DRN* 3.830-31), our *post-mortem* non-existence will be nothing to us because we will not feel anything. Thus, in this passage Lucretius advances the same claim found in *Ep. Men.* 124 and *KD* 2.[56]

Although Lucretius' poem is addressed to Memmius, like Epicurus' letters it too is intended for a broader audience. Gaius Memmius was a notable Roman politician. More important than his social status, though, are his vices; a strong desire for fame, which lead to his being ex-

[56] For Warren's full defense of this view (summarized here) see Warren 2004, pp. 57-68. Warren also notes at the outset of his discussion, "We may in any case be suspicious of the ascription of any major innovations to Lucretius if we accept the general conclusion of Sedley 1998 that Lucretius works solely with Epicurus' *On Nature* as his philosophical source. The overall impression is that Lucretius was reluctant to alter in any significant way Epicurus' own original argumentation" (2004, 57, n. 1).

iled, laziness, and boundless erotic desire.[57] The presence of these character flaws has caused some scholars to question whether Gaius Memmius is the proper addressee of Lucretius' poem. However it is a person with such deep flaws that is most in need of Epicurus' philosophy, and therefore a fitting addressee. But Memmius is not alone. Many people are afflicted with similar diseases—lust, greed, envy, irascibility, and so forth. And so, even though Lucretius addresses Memmius directly, he is also addressing a larger audience composed of Roman men and women who are not yet committed Epicureans.[58]

But Lucretius' audience will not be cured by the succinct arguments found in Epicurus' letters. Those arguments are too blunt and harsh for non-dedicatees of Epicureanism, and Lucretius is readily aware of this fact. "Since this philosophy of ours often appears somewhat off-putting to those who have not experienced it, and most people recoil back from it, I have preferred to expound it to you in harmonious Pierian poetry" (*DRN* 1.945-47). Thus it is not straightforward prose, but pleasing poetry composed in the same meter as the epics of Homer and Hesiod,[59] that is required for those Roman men and women who are put off by Epicurus' philosophy. And although wide awake to the difficulties of illuminating Epicurus' discoveries in Latin verse, largely to due to the inadequacy of the Latin language, Lucretius recognizes his task as too important. For it is only by studying nature, through either prose or poetry (depending on one's present condition), that the terrifying darkness that enshrouds the mind may be dispelled.[60]

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[57] Memmius committed adultery with the wives of two of his political rivals, Marcus and Lucius Lucullus, which further complicated his political career. For more on Memmius and Lucretius' relation to him, see Smith 2001, xiii-viii.
[58] Cf. *DRN* 3.978-1023.
[59] *De Rerum Natura* is written in dactylic hexameter—the same meter in which Homer and Hesiod wrote their epics, the meter used by the philosopher-poets Parmenides and Empedocles, and Hellenistic poets Apollonius and Nicander. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that the meter of Lucretius' poem made it more attractive to its audience, and consequently its arguments more persuasive.
[60] *DRN* 1.137-49.

Returning to *DRN* 3.832-42, then, although Lucretius' audience is Roman men and women who are non-dedicatees of Epicureanism, this does not preclude the possibility that Lucretius relies on their familiarity with of the doctrines of Epicurean atomism and sense-perception in order to demonstrate that "death is nothing to us." In the first two books of *De Rerum Natura*, Lucretius lays out the basic principles of atomism (*DRN* 1.146-634) and describes the great variety of atomic shapes and their effects (*DRN* 2.333-729). Moreover, before arriving at the passage in question, Lucretius spends the beginning of Book III explaining the nature and composition of the soul (*DRN* 3.94-416) and demonstrates that the soul is subject to both birth and death (*DRN* 3.417-829). Having established that death is annihilation,[61] the passage in question uses the Punic Wars in order to demonstrate vividly its consequences. It is an illustration of the fact that death is nothing to us, because death is annihilation. The second Punic War was troubling for the city of Rome. Hannibal's army crossed the Alps and delivered several crushing defeats to the Roman army. As the audience remembers this event they are likely filled with fear, which is heightened by Lucretius' poetic language. But at that time they were unable to perceive anything, for the atoms that compose our body and soul were "strayed and scattered in all directions, far away from sensation" (*DRN* 3.861-62). And when we die those atoms that compose our body and soul will stray and scatter once again, the possibility of perception impossible, and so too that anything can be either good or bad.

The last occurrence of the dictum that I will discuss is found at *DRN* 3.972-75:

> respice item quam nil ad nos anteacta vetustas temporis aeterni fuerit, quam nascimur ante. hoc igitur speculum nobis natura futuri temporis exponit post mortem denique nostram.
>
> Look back now and consider how the bygone ages of eternity that elapsed before our birth were nothing to us. Here, then, is a mirror in which nature shows us the time to come after our death.

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[61] Lucretius' remark just prior to the symmetry argument makes this clear: "Death, then, is nothing to us and does not affect us in the least now that the nature of the mind is understood to be mortal" (*DRN* 3.830-31).

Some scholars have also contended that the conclusion of the argument contained within this passage is similar to, but not identical with, that of *KD* 2. Just as with *DRN* 3.832-42, they assert that Lucretius' target here is the fear of mortality and not the fear of death itself. But again, the tenses of the verbs do not square with such an interpretation. Lucretius is not claiming that our pre-natal non-existence *has been* nothing to us, but rather that our pre-natal non-existence *was* nothing to us. Indeed, "if Lucretius wished to make clear that he is talking about it presently being the case that our pre-natal non-existence causes us no distress, then he could have done so easily by writing the present tense of the same verb (*sit*)."[62] Thus, here too the conclusion is the same as that of *KD* 2, *Ep. Men.*124, and *DRN* 3.832-42; that "death is nothing to us."

We may wonder, though, why Lucretius provides his audience with another argument with the same conclusion as the one given just one hundred and thirty lines earlier. The answer is obvious once we remember the purpose of the arguments of Epicurus' letters. The former argument and this latter argument are intended to work alongside one another.[63] *DRN* 3.832-42 is designed by Lucretius to demonstrate the consequences of the fact that death is annihilation. But as was indicated earlier, it is not enough to hear the arguments that support the central tenets of Epicureanism once. The arguments must be rehearsed time and again, the beliefs reinforced through repetition as Epicurus advises. Therefore, instead of leaving his audience with a lengthy passage to recall time and again, Lucretius provides his audience with a simple mental exercise they can perform throughout the day. In this way, Lucretius maintains his commitment to espousing Epicurus' philosophy in the harmonious language of the Muses, and at the same time packages one of Epicureanism's central tenets in such a way as to be effective for his audience.

III.3

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[62] Warren 2004, 66.

[63] Warren 2004, 68, n. 13 notes that Bailey, in his 1947 commentary on Lucretius' poem, writes that this section reinforces the argument given at 3.832ff..

The discussion of some of Epicurus and Lucretius' arguments above demonstrates sufficiently that the patient-relativity thesis applies to the arguments of both Greek and Roman Epicureans. In this final section, I close with an examination of two reasons for fearing death treated by Philodemus in his *On Death*. My discussion mirrors largely that of the previous section—identifying Philodemus' intended audience, explaining why Philodemus addresses them in the manner that he does, and then illuminating how that makes his arguments more therapeutically effective. At times my discussion will be quite complex, for Philodemus displays a more robust understanding of how vices, vicious dispositions, and harmful emotions are interrelated. As a result, when Philodemus attempts to treat his audience's fear of death, he must treat the concomitant beliefs as well.

Philodemus' intended audience in *On Death* differs in an important way from the intended audiences of Lucretius' epic and Epicurus' letters. Perhaps due to Philodemus' interest in, and consequently robust understanding of, human psychology and its complexities, he attempts to treat a wide range of reasons for fearing one's eventual death. In the light of this and other striking features of the treatise—notably its sympathetic tone and surprising concessions—David Armstrong has argued, and I think correctly, that Philodemus' intended audience is a mixed audience consisting of men and women, Epicurean faithful and philosophers from other sects, as well as laypersons.[64]

The fears of death at sea, or of not dying an honorable death on the battlefield, are likely to be held by non-philosophers, whereas the fear of death at unjust condemnation, or of dying before one has progressed far enough in philosophy to attain εὐδαιμονία, are more likely to be held by philosophers of all sects. In addition, Philodemus praises Plato alongside Epicurus (*De Mort*., cols. XXX.37-XXXI.1), commends Socrates, Zeno of Elea, and Anaxarchus (ibid., col.

[64] Armstrong 2004.

XXXV.31-32),[65] and speaks positively of the Homeric hero Palamedes and Alexander's friend Callisthenes (ibid., col. XXXIV.3-4). Finally, at two different places in the treatise Philodemus is unusually liberal. Instead of espousing atomism when combatting the fear of the body losing its beauty and physique in death, he writes,

> …and they disregard (the fact) that all men, including those with as good a physique as Milo, become skeletons in a short period of time, and in the end are dissolved into their elementary particles: and obviously, analogous points to those stated are to be understood also in the case of bad complexion and bad appearance in general. (ibid., col. XXX.1-7)[66]

Instead of mentioning atoms, Philodemus opts for the neutral expression τὰς πρώτας…φύσεις, elementary particles. A similar concession occurs two columns later, where the fear in question is of the body becoming unearthed after death.

> For who is there who, on considering the matter with a clear head, will suppose that it makes the slightest difference, never mind a great one, whether it is above ground or below ground that one is unconscious? Or if in the future as a result of some cause someone's remains are uncovered, (a thing) that we know to have occurred frequently, who will consider the non-existent (man) pitiable? Who would not believe that both those who have been laid out for burial and the unburied will all be dissolved into whatever he considers (to be their) elements? (ibid., col. XXXII.20-30)

Again Philodemus allows his audience to retain some of their currently held beliefs. The most plausible explanation for these and other concessions to the Epicurean doctrine, Philodemus' tone shifting from harsh and unsympathetic to gentle and consoling (discussed below), and the presence of non-Epicurean philosophers and mythical heroes, is that *On Death* is intended for a mixed audience.

The first fear of death I wish to discuss is the fear of death at sea (ibid., cols. XXXII.31 – XXXIII.36). The passage is long, but worth reproducing in full.

> Now it is also foolish to be frightened of death at sea rather than of (death) in a pond or river, and even to be afraid of that (death) rather than of (death) from unmixed wine. For it [too] is wet, and what need is there to argue that it is no worse to be devoured by fishes than by maggots and grubs while covered by the earth, or by fire while lying on the earth, at least when the remnant has no

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[65] Henry writes that Anaxarchus was a fourth-century philosopher who was crushed to death by Nicocreon, the tyrant of Cyprus, in a mortar with iron pestles. See Henry 2009, 83, n. 152 for more information.
[66] All translations of Philodemus' *On Death* are from Henry 2009.

> perception of either the former or the latter? It is also silly to speak in exaggerated fashion of dying "on the high sea" and "the Libyan (sea)": for one must be drowned by <three> or four gulps, which could happen even in a bathtub. And as for the Odysseus who says "thrice blessed and four times are the Danaans who died then in broad Troy in the service of the Atridae: would that I too had died thus, but as it is, I was fated to be captured by a baneful death," surely he was off the mark in considering unfortunate those who have died in sea-battles over their fatherland, like those who would undergo this fate at Artemisium and Salamis and those (who would undergo it) later and after us? For they are no less doing something for future generations to learn about than those (who would undergo this fate) in Plataea <and other land-battles>, since the greater number even of them have become or will become food for birds and dogs. For what need is there to mention those who put to sea out of the love of learning, or the wise men who sail for the sake of friends? On the other hand, it is certainly natural both to criticize and to deem wretched those who spend their whole life on the waves through love of profit, and are sometimes plunged into the sea as a result, but it is their life that is pitiable, not their death, when they do not exist; while for those who sail on essential business, but meet with an adverse fortune, neither (is pitiable), especially as death at sea does not necessarily confer more violent sufferings.

Immediately we notice that Philodemus' tone here is sharp and unsympathetic. Elsewhere Philodemus sympathizes with his audience's φυσικὰ δήγματα, natural pains, caused by certain fears. Some are pained at the thought of dying because they will leave behind someone close to them—parents, children, or a wife—who ἐν συμφοραῖς ἐσομένο[υ]ς, will be in dire straits, or καὶ τ[ῶ]ν ἀν[αγ]καίων ἐλλείψοντας, will lack even necessities (ibid., col. XXV.2-10). Philodemus says this reason produces φυσικώντατον δηγμὸν, a most natural sting, and [δ]α[κ]ρύων προέσεις ἐγείρει τῶι νοῦν ἔχοντ[ι], stirs up emissions of tears in the sensible man. Such sympathy is not surprising when we remember how even Epicurus himself spoke of friendship and those close to us. "Let us share our friends' suffering not with laments but with thoughtful concern" (*VS* 66). But as it concerns the fear of death at sea, Philodemus refers to his audience's pains as κενὸν, foolish or empty (the same adjective used to describe vain and *empty* desires), and μάταιον, silly, accuses them of exaggeration (ibid., col. XXXII.6-7: τὸ πυργοῦν...λέγοντα), and demonstrates why their presently held beliefs are false, repeating time and again that death is annihilation. I suggest that Philodemus uses such a tone for this particular fear because those who hold it are likely laypersons, who have not reflected critically on their beliefs. Thus their beliefs must be dispensed with quickly and forcefully. From the passage we can distinguish five different beliefs that may sup-

port the audience's fear: (1) it is bad to die wet, (2) it is bad to be devoured by fish, (3) it is bad to die by drowning, and sailing the sea increases the chance of drowning, (4) death during a sea-battle is baneful because no one will hear of it, and (5) it is bad to sail the seas seeking to acquire great wealth only to die as a result.[67]

There are two things worth noting about Philodemus' counterarguments to these five beliefs. First, none of them are without response. While it is true that three or four gulps of water are sufficient to drown a person and that this could happen even in a bathtub, this by itself does not refute the claim that an unintended dip in the sea increases the possibility of one's lungs filling with those three or four gulps of water. And yet it is not necessary for Philodemus' counterarguments be airtight, for his aim is to demonstrate κα[τ]αστρέφειν ἐν θαλά[τ]τηι πόνους ἰσχ[υρ]ο[τ]έρους ἐπιφέροντ[ος], "death at sea does not necessarily confer more violent sufferings" (ibid., col. XXXIII.33-36).[68] Recognition of this fact brings us to our second point: the argumentative strategy. Several of the beliefs that support the rationality of the fear of death at sea are in fact extensions of the beliefs that support other fears (e.g. fears associated with death on land). With Pyrrhonist spirit, Philodemus need only provide counterarguments equal in strength to his audience's beliefs, concluding death at sea is as bad *prima facie* as death on land. Then he can turn his attention to undermining those beliefs that support both fears. The preceding seven columns treat fears tied specifically to dying on land: (6) death in a foreign country (cols. XXV.37 – XXVII.14), (7) dying while not performing some deed for future generations to learn about (cols. XXXII.15 – XXIX.26), (8) the fear of losing one's beauty and physique when one

[67] Recall that vain and empty desires rise from false beliefs about what is truly good and bad. So, if a person is afraid to die at sea, then that fear is the result of a vain and empty desire (e.g. the desire to receive a lavish burial), which in turn is supported, perhaps, by either the belief that it is bad to die wet—for it is not part of a lavish burial that one's body should be soaked—or the belief that it is bad to be devoured by fishes—for it is not part of a lavish burial to be devoured by fishes, and as a result one's body severely disfigured.

[68] Philodemus argues for modified versions of this weaker claim elsewhere in *On Death*. On this point see Tsouna 2006, 101-3.

dies (cols. XXIX.27 – XXX.6), (9) the fear that one will not receive a lavish burial (cols. XXX.7 – XXXI.29), (10) or that one will not receive a burial at all (cols. XXXI.30 – XXXII.30). Each of these sections refute precisely those beliefs that also support the fear of death at sea: (10) and (8) with (1) and (2); (7) and (6) with (4); (9) with (5). Thus Philodemus' treatment here need not be thorough or exhaustive, because his approach is systematic. The first task is to demonstrate both that certain reasons for fearing death at sea are foolish, and that there is no reason to suppose dying at sea is *worse than* dying on land. Then the second task is to refute those beliefs common to dying both on land and at sea. Because the preceding seven columns refuted these beliefs, treating the fear of death at sea requires little work. Thus Philodemus can afford to be short and direct, for the reasons that support the fear of death at sea are extensions of those reasons that support other fears.

The second fear of death I wish to discuss is the fear of premature death. Philodemus' treatment of the fear of premature death seems to begin near the top of column XII (the text is quite poor in these early columns), and concludes near the end of column XX. Unlike the fear of death at sea, the fear of premature death is more robust.[69] But like the fear of death at sea, the fear of premature death may be supported by a variety of beliefs: (11) additional time affords us with the opportunity to acquire additional goods, and the absence of this opportunity is bad, (12) a life's "goodness" is determined by its length, and so long lives are necessarily better than short lives, and (13) dying young is intrinsically bad. There is at least one, though possibly there are two additional beliefs, with which Philodemus dealt.[70] He writes near the top of one column,

[69] Warren lists the fear of premature death as one of the four chief fears of death. The other three are (1) the fear of being dead, (2) the fear that one will die, that one's life is going to end, and (4) the fear of the process of dying. See Warren 2004, pp. 1 – 16, and 109 – 159.

[70] In addition to the remark at the beginning of column XVI, column XV seems to deal with a fear related to the body's changing condition. The rest of column XVI seems to continue column XV's theme, but given the few extant lines its topic must be at least slightly different.

"For just this reason, the earlier objection concerning those who are in this particular state while dying is ridiculous" (ibid., col. XVI.7-9). However, the referent of πρότερον ἔνστημα, the earlier objection, is lost. Because the extant text is still badly damaged at this point, I will not reproduce it here. Instead, I will provide a brief summary, and only of the final belief dealt with by Philodemus; (14) it is bad to be "snatched away" (col. XVII.34: [ἐ]ξαρπάζεσθαι) in the midst of one's philosophical training while progress is still possible.

Some of the beliefs that support various fears of death are treated unsympathetically, as we saw with the beliefs supporting the fear of death at sea. At one point Philodemus refers to these types of beliefs collectively as φλεδών, balderdash. Such a tone is not unique to *On Death*. In *On Anger*, for instance, after departing from his mock diatribe to address seriously his audience, Philodemus, expressing his disgust for parents and poets, relatives and philosophers, who fail either to treat θύμος, irrational anger, sufficiently (i.e., the Stoics) or to encourage it (i.e., the Peripatetics), writes, ἀφ[ί]ημ[ι] μὲν ῥήτορας καὶ ποιητάς καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν τοιαύτην γρυμέαν, "I dismiss orators and poets and all such bags of trash" (*De Ira*, col. XXXI.23-25). However, if death is feared because it would remove prematurely the opportunity for further progression in philosophy, it is only φυσικὸν, natural, to be νὺττεσθαι, stung.[71] The contents of *On Death* columns XVII – XIX, where this fear is discussed, are not harsh counterarguments or sarcastic jabs, but sympathetic consolations. The audience is reminded that even their partial progression is

[71] For more on "bites" (also referred to as "stings" or "pricks") in Hellenistic philosophy, in particular Philodemus' conception alongside the Stoic conception, see Tsouna 2007, 44-51. The Epicurean conception may have originated with either Zeno or Philodemus, and certainly seems to have been influenced by the Stoic view. Allowing the wise man to feel such "bites" is consistent with his also having invulnerable tranquility, as such "bites" are self-contained, the result of true judgments about situation, and do not last a long time. Most importantly, they do not undermine the fact that, for instance, death is nothing to us. On a superficial level, Epicurean "bites" seem indistinguishable from Stoic εὐπάθειαι, good states of feeling. However, Epicurean "bites" are importantly different in at least one respect. The Epicurean "bites" are of real emotions, whereas Stoic "bites" are "first movements," part of a pre-emotional state. Moreover, for the Epicurean wise man "bites" will sometimes be severely painful, e.g. when he has been greatly harmed, and as a result is "profoundly alienated and hates" (*De Ira*, col. XLII.2-3). There can be no eupathic analogue for this state, because for the Stoic such a strong reaction is never appropriate.

meaningful; it gives hope to others that they too can progress in philosophy. And although it would be much better for a young man to flourish naturally, that he has tasted some of the fruits of Epicurus' philosophy is still a wonderful thing worthy of gratitude. This life of partial progress is contrasted with the foolish man, who will never acquire a noteworthy good, not even if he should [τ]ὸν Τιθωνοῦ δ[ια]γένητ[αι] χρόνον, "live for as long as time as Tithonus" (*De Mort*., col. XIX.33-34).[72] Indeed, it would be better for the foolish man ἐ[κλιπεῖν ὅ]ταν γέ[νη]ται [τὴν] ταχίστην, "to die in the quickest way when he is born" (ibid., col. XIX.36-37). Philodemus also reassures his audience, "(it is) impossible for a soul capable of receiving a blessed disposition not to be immediately of such a kind as to be ballasted with the noteworthy [goods]; and once it has tasted the [goods] (that proceed) from philosophy, then it is entirely out of the question that it should [not] grasp a wonderful good, so that he departs full of exultation" (ibid., col. XVII.1-9).[73] Finally, the columns contain a few reminders that even though it is presently painful to be aware of the fact that one might very well die while still capable of progressing in philosophy, should this happen there will be no pain, for there will be μηδεμίαν ἶσχεν τῆ[ς] ἐλλείψεω[ς ἐπ]αίσθησιν, "no perception of the deficiency" (ibid., col. XIX.31-33).

Those who fear dying prematurely for *this* reason are not in need of sarcastic and blunt reproaches—their desires are correctly fixed upon what is truly good. And it is natural to wish to live on for a certain amount of time in order to complete one's philosophical training. This desire, according to Philodemus, is συνγ[ε]νικὰς καὶ φυσικὰ[ς], congenital and natural.[74] Thus Philodemus' sympathetic tone and gentle consolations are appropriate for two reasons. First, they

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[72] Tithonus was a mythical Trojan youth who was granted immortality by Zeus, but not eternal youth.
[73] This passage is *prima facie* in tension with a later passage: "[but] now the greatest good has been received by (him), as he has become wise and *lived on for a certain extent of time*; and (now that) the journey (is) in progress (that is) in accordance with its equality and sameness of form, it is appropriate for (this good) to persist to infinity, if it were possible" (col. XIX.3-6, my emphasis). For more on this passage, see Warren 2004, pp. 150-3.
[74] See *On Death*, col. XIV.2-10.

provide his audience with encouragement. Coupled with the story of Pythocles, the famous Epicurean youth who made great progress before the age of eighteen, Philodemus reminds his audience that they too can attain a life worthy of the gods should they obey Epicurus' instructions. Second, the gentle consolations help to further solidify his audience's faith in the power of philosophy. The comparison of the life of partial philosophical progress, which has already enjoyed many worthwhile pleasures, with that of the foolish man, is particularly striking, and emerges again in the treatise's peroration. Such individuals are akin to those addressed by Epicurus in his letters; they have already embarked upon the right path, what they now require is encouragement and those tools (e.g. short and concise arguments they can rehearse with ease) that will help them continue towards a life of peace and contentment.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have argued that the Epicurean approach to psychagogy is a highly adaptable one. The recent availability of the treatises of Philodemus of Gadara serve to demonstrate that Epicurean philosophical arguments are *patient-relative*; they are adapted for their intended audiences in light of their psychological state so as to be therapeutically effective. Once this is clear, it follows that when we judge whether the philosophical arguments offered by the Epicureans against the fear of death, for instance, achieve their end, we must do so in the light of the audience for whom they were intended. Failure to do so will result in not only incorrect judgments about the success or failure of a particular philosophical argument or set of arguments, but also neglects an important aspect of Epicurean psychagogy; the importance of understanding intimately the audience's psychology.

Of course, it is true that most criticisms of the Epicurean's arguments against the fear of death are concerned with their cogency, and not their therapeutic effectiveness. One may certainly approach Epicurean philosophical arguments in this way—throwing them into a vacuum, and evaluating their clarity, consistency, and cogency. But such an approach is not only uninteresting; it is also deeply flawed. As we have seen, the norms of rational discourse, just like everything else outside of pleasure and pain, are valued instrumentally by the Epicureans; only insofar as they contribute to the therapeutic effectiveness of a particular philosophical argument or set of arguments for their intended audience. Thus, to criticize the Epicurean's arguments because they make use of rhetorical or poetic language, or fail to address potential counterexamples that undermine their plausibility, is to impose on them a standard that their creators would have rejected outright.

Philosophy in antiquity was not a purely intellectualist pursuit, but something that everyone could engage in, and should if they desire a life of tranquility. Μήτε νέος τις ὢν μελλέτω φιλοσοφεῖν, μήτε γέρων ὑπάρχων κοπιάτω φιλοσοφῶν. οὔτε γὰρ ἄωρος οὐδείς ἐστιν οὔτε πάρωρος πρὸς τὸ κατὰ ψυχὴν ὑγιαῖνον, "Let no one delay the study of philosophy while young nor weary of it when old. For no one is either too young or too old for the health of the soul" (*Ep. Men.* 122). This message is often lost among contemporary philosophers, and regrettably so. The present discussion has been a small attempt to remind philosophers of what they have forgotten, and to lead them in the right direction.

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