JAMES WARREN

Introduction

> Philosophy, as long as a drop of blood shall pulse in its world-subduing and absolutely free heart, will never grow tired of answering its adversaries with the cry of Epicurus: 'The truly impious man is not he who denies the gods worshipped by the multitude, but he who affirms of the gods what the multitude believes about them'.
>
> Karl Marx, Foreword to his 1841 Doctoral dissertation[1]

> As you say of yourself, I TOO AM AN EPICUREAN. I consider the genuine (not the imputed) doctrines of Epicurus as containing everything rational in moral philosophy which Greece and Rome have left us.
>
> Thomas Jefferson, Letter to William Short, 31 October 1819

> In addition to removing all hope of help and favours from the gods, as we said, Epicurus blinds the part of our understanding that loves learning and the part of our practical reason that loves honour. He packs them tightly into a narrow vessel and removes any pure pleasure from body and soul. He degrades our nature, as if there were no greater good than the avoidance of evil.
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> Plutarch, *Non posse* 1107C

Epicurean philosophy has always tended to provoke strong reactions. Its account of the universe in terms of the motions and interactions of atoms in the void combines with its account of the good life being the

[1] For a translation with notes of *The Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature with an Appendix*, see the online version at the Karl Marx Internet Archive: www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1841/dr-theses/index.htm.

life of pleasure and freedom from mental pain to form an overall outlook on things which has always generated impassioned responses, whether approving or critical. For some, Epicureanism offers a liberating account of the universe which frees humanity to work out for itself its own natural goals without supernatural authority and influence.[2] For others, and in fact for most ancient commentators, Epicureanism is founded on a dangerous combination of the twin follies of materialism and hedonism, encouraging humanity either to think of itself as too powerful – the ultimate masters of our own destiny and heedless of any divine commands – or else to think of humans merely as beasts like all the other creatures around us, pandering only to our basest physical natures and needs. In particular, the Epicureans' insistence that the gods take no part in and have no care for us and our world has been thought of either as a rallying cry for humanity and philosophy against stifling religious strictures (Marx's view) or as tantamount to atheism and a rejection of the requirements of proper piety and the proper conception of human nature (Plutarch's view).

Of course, neither of these partisan views can do justice to the full range of detailed argument and philosophical interest to be found in Epicurean texts. It is hoped that the various chapters in this volume might serve as a stimulating introduction to the school and an attempt to offer a more rounded appraisal of its philosophical and historical importance together with a sense of the ongoing interpretative controversies and open questions which drive current scholarship. This volume takes its place in a trio of *Cambridge Companions* dealing with the major philosophical movements which can trace their origins to the Hellenistic period of Antiquity.[3] Yet, while these three volumes share a similar approach and will deal with some similar methodological problems, there are some aspects of the study of Epicureanism which mark it out as interestingly different from other areas of research into philosophy of this general period.

[2] For an interesting example of this kind of positive appraisal in modern scholarship see Farrington 1939, who makes Epicureanism into a populist anti-aristocratic movement. See the important review by Momigliano 1941 and the angrily critical review by Guthrie 1940. Farrington's later work is no less enthusiastic: see e.g. the final chapter of Farrington 1967.

[3] For the Stoics see Inwood 2003. For the Hellenistic sceptics see some of the chapters in Bett (forthcoming).

In comparison with students of Stoicism, for example, who need to rely on very fragmentary or second-hand material for information about the earliest phases of the school, those working on Epicureanism have a rich abundance of primary source material written by committed and informed Epicureans. Some complete works by Epicurus himself, the *Letters to Herodotus*, *Pythocles* and *Menoeceus*, have survived through quotation by Diogenes Laërtius in the final book of his *Lives and sayings of the eminent philosophers*. In addition, we have the great Latin hexameter poem *On the nature of things* (*De rerum natura*) by the Epicurean Lucretius. And more and more Epicurean texts in various states of preservation are being edited, re-edited and published. A scholar of Epicureanism has plenty of primary material to work with, even before turning to the various other discussions of Epicureanism found in philosophical and other writers from Antiquity.

A particularly striking aspect of the study of Epicureanism which contributes to its ongoing interest and presents its own set of challenges, is the survival in a variety of different forms of various pieces of textual evidence for Epicurean views. Not only do we have Epicurean texts, such as Epicurus' *Letters* and Lucretius' poem, which were transmitted along with the corpus of ancient literature and thought via the Middle Ages and Renaissance, but we also have Epicurean works which have been preserved in such a way that they survive directly from Antiquity unaffected by the familiar forces which took their toll on many ancient texts. That is not to say, however, that these other works have survived their journey entirely unscathed and their method of preservation requires the use of additional sets of technical skills to generate useful information. This makes the study of Epicureanism rather unusual in ancient philosophy since there is a steady flow of new texts, new readings and new material to be integrated into our overall understanding of the school. I have in mind, of course, two particularly remarkable sets of evidence. First, a library of Epicurean works was preserved by the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79 in the ruined villa of L. Calpurnius Piso just outside Herculaneum and rediscovered in the eighteenth century.[4] These often fragmentary texts, which require considerable care to

[4] For a good introduction to the library and the methods used in deciphering the texts see Gigante 1995 and Sider 2005. The Friends of Herculaneum Society maintains a

unroll, decipher, reconstruct and then interpret, continue to increase our knowledge of Epicureanism both in its earlier Hellenistic phase and also as it developed through to the first century BC and later. Increasingly sophisticated methods of electronic imaging coupled with the best standards of papyrological and philological scholarship have allowed us to make great advances in reading these texts. Otherwise lost works revealed by these methods written by Epicurus himself, as well as by other Epicureans such as Demetrius Lacon, Polystratus and Philodemus, have done a great deal to enhance our knowledge of Epicurean philosophy as well as offer a new perspective on the various methods of scholarship, differences of opinion and range of interests demonstrated by various committed Epicurean writers. The library also allows us a glimpse into the world of a group of Epicureans in the late Roman Republic and early Empire, their interests, what they were reading and, perhaps, what aspects of Epicureanism they were most interested in.

The second peculiar but fortunate survival from Antiquity is the long monumental Epicurean inscription from Oinoanda in Lycia, Asia Minor (modern Turkey), paid for and partly written by a second century AD Epicurean philanthropist, Diogenes. Parts of it survive and the fragments can be pieced together and reconstructed in ways very like those used to put together the Herculanean texts. The combination of close epigraphical work and detailed philological and philosophical analysis has allowed this curious monument once again to enhance our knowledge of Epicureanism in general and also offers a window on the continuation of Epicureanism as a way of life in later Antiquity.[5]

From all this material emerges a philosophical movement and world-view which is in many ways refreshingly unlike the dominant trends of ancient thought. Unlike much of Greek and later philosophy, the Epicureans resolutely resist tracing their origins back to Socrates or to the various Socratic thinkers who came afterwards. The relationship between Epicurus and the two giants of classical

very useful website listing the various works from the library together with a bibliography and a guide to recent editions. (See: www.herculaneum.ox.ac.uk/papyri.html.) *Cronache Ercolanesi*, the journal of the Centro Internazionale per lo Studio dei Papiri Ercolanesi (CISPE see: www.cispegigante.it) contains articles discussing the villa, the history of scholarship on it and its papyri, and the most recent editions of various texts.

[5] For more discussion, see Erler, ch. 3, this volume.

philosophy – Plato and Aristotle – is complicated; there is, for example, good reason to suspect that Epicurus and certainly later Epicureans were relatively avid readers of Plato, at least – but unlike the Stoics and the Academics the Epicureans saw nothing in Plato and Socrates that they wished to claim as their inspiration. Indeed, in the broadest terms the Epicurean view of things is opposed to this alternative tradition in nearly all matters of substantive philosophical importance. The Epicureans saw our world, or *kosmos*, as just one among indefinitely many which are generated and destroyed in the infinite and everlasting universe simply as a result of the unceasing motion of atoms in a void. Our world is not the product of any form of rational design, nor are any of its constituents or inhabitants as they are because of some kind of natural teleology.[6] The Epicureans saw humans, as a consequence, as free to seek their own natural well-being, fitted as a result of natural processes of selection with the faculties of perception and reason which allow them to acquire reliable knowledge of the world about them and with the means to live a good and fulfilling life free from the constraints of any external divine authority. Although Epicureanism was known since the foundation of the school for the combination of a robustly materialist outlook on the world and the promotion of hedonism as the recipe for the good life, both of these characteristics – while obviously true – require careful qualification and consideration. Their materialism is far from brutish or unreflective; their general metaphysical outlook is in fact rather complex. And their hedonism too does not advocate a simple-minded abandon; the Epicurean good life turns out to be a relatively sober affair, founded on the proper understanding of human nature and human needs but with room for both friendship and the enjoyment of intellectual pursuits.

The articles presented here fall into two major groups. The first, comprising the pieces by Diskin Clay, David Sedley, Michael Erler and Catherine Wilson, takes a diachronic view, tracing the history of the school from its roots in Hellenistic Athens, through the Roman Republic and Empire, and on to later Antiquity, the Christian era, and beyond. Epicureanism was a developing philosophy which was able to respond as well as contribute to the developing cultures of Antiquity. Together, these chapters serve as an introduction to the

[6] For an account of ancient teleology and the atomist tradition see Sedley 2007.

major episodes in the school's history, its prominent members and the general atmosphere in which the various surviving Epicurean texts were created, read and discussed. The emphasis here is on the school as a historical movement, its organization and influence.

The influence of Epicureanism on the development of modern thought before the eighteenth century was exerted without the aid of these new sources of information from Herculaneum and Oinoanda. However, Epicurus' own writings transmitted by Diogenes Laërtius, together with Lucretius' poem and works by non-Epicureans such as Cicero and Plutarch, managed to paint a picture of a materialist and hedonist philosophy which repelled and attracted different kinds of readers. The story of the reception of Epicurean philosophy is not much discussed in this *Companion*, although Catherine Wilson's contribution sets much of the scene for the early modern period. In the main, this is a deliberate decision because much of the story can be found already discussed in some detail in the *Cambridge Companion to Lucretius*, which is in many ways a 'companion' *Companion* to this volume, and also in Catherine Wilson's own larger-scale monograph on the topic.[7] That omission, forgivable I hope, allows more space for a detailed discussion and analysis of ancient Epicureanism and the content of Epicurean philosophy itself.

The second group of contributions focuses to a larger extent on the presentation, analysis and criticism of Epicureanism in terms of its philosophical content, divided into its major subject areas: physics and metaphysics (chapters by Pierre-Marie Morel, Christopher Gill, Tim O'Keefe and Liba Taub), epistemology (Elizabeth Asmis), philosophy of language (Catherine Atherton), aesthetics (David Blank), and ethics and politics (Raphael Woolf, Eric Brown, Voula Tsouna and James Warren). Of course, these discrete areas of interests were all meant to combine to produce a satisfying and systematic whole, and therefore where appropriate the contributors note areas of overlap and interrelation. They also note cases in which the school's attitude may have changed over time or where there are potential disagreements between members of the school.[8] However, the approach in

[7] See Gillespie and Hardie (eds.) 2007 and Wilson 2008. See also Jones 1989.
[8] See, for example, the discussion of the Epicurean justification of friendship in Brown, ch. 10, this volume.

these chapters is generally philosophical: the emphasis is on Epicureanism as a set of arguments and conclusions to which the reader is invited to respond critically. It should be clear that, beyond broad areas of agreement, the interpretation and evaluation of Epicurean philosophy is still in many ways a matter of serious disagreement. This volume therefore makes no excuse for the fact that the respective authors have been asked not to offer a mere survey of the evidence and of different possible views. Rather, each has undertaken to produce what they take to be the best account of a given area of Epicurean thought, sometimes in explicit disagreement with other current interpretations. Also, since some topics of discussion are relevant to more than one chapter, no uniform interpretation has been imposed on what are genuinely disputed subjects. See, for example, the different discussions of the difficult matter of Epicurean *prolēpseis* in the chapters by Asmis and Atherton or the different discussions of the metaphysical relationship between an object's constituent atoms and its various perceptible and causal properties in the chapters by Morel, Gill and O'Keefe. It is hoped that in this way the reader will be introduced not only to what the Epicureans had to say but also to good examples of what current scholarship and research on Epicureanism is like and what its concerns and ongoing controversies are.

The cover image shows part of a mosaic from a Roman villa at Autun, in central France, now in the Musée Rolin. It depicts the Epicurean philosopher Metrodorus contemplating the wisdom of *Vatican Saying* 14, which is repeated around the sitting figure: 'We have been born just the once; it is impossible to be born twice and it is necessary eternally to be no longer. But you, though you are not master of tomorrow, throw away enjoyment. Life is worn out by procrastination and each and every one of us dies without time on our hands.'[9] It seems an appropriate image for the volume for two reasons. First, it is a second- or third-century AD Roman mosaic from France repeating a late fourth- or early third-century BC Greek idea, a good example of the continuity of the ancient tradition of Epicureanism and its reach across ancient Europe and across the span of Antiquity. Second, it is a good example of the characteristically

[9] The text of this *Vatican Saying* is disputed. For further discussion see Warren 2000a: 237 n. 17.

direct and positive pedagogical intent of much of Epicurean philosophy. Its message is clear. Life is indeed short but it can be enjoyed to the full. And for those who are fortunate to be right-minded about what matters, there is no reason not to think that it can be fulfilling and good.

As editor, my thanks go to all the contributors for their work and patience during the volume's rather slow process of coming-to-be. Throughout, Michael Sharp was a helpful and robust commissioning editor for the Press and Sarah Newton was a swift and understanding copy-editor. I would also like to record thanks to the Musée Rolin, for permission to use their photograph for the cover image, and to Martin Ferguson Smith, for permission to reprint his reconstruction of Diogenes of Oinoanda's inscription (Fig. 1, p. 55). Thanks are also due, as always, to Sara Owen, who put up with me as I put the volume together.

DISKIN CLAY

1 The Athenian Garden

Fair Quiet, I have found you here.
. . .
Mistaken long, I sought you then
In busie Companies of Men.
Your sacred Plants, if here below,
Only among the Plants will grow.
Society is all but rude,
To this delicious Solitude.

Andrew Marvell, *The Garden*

Epicurus' Garden was once located outside the walls of Athens and its Dipylon Gate. It has come to seem a metaphor for the retiring and non-political character of his philosophy. According to Seneca, who thought that Epicurus secluded himself outside Athens to avoid notice, there was an inscription at the entrance to his suburban garden. It read: 'Stranger, your time will be pleasant here. Here the highest good is pleasure.' (In Seneca's Latin: *hospes hic bene manebis hic summum bonum voluptas est*, *Ep.* 79.15.) Epicurus' Garden would seem to be the prototype of Rabelais' Abbaye de Thélème. The inscription must be an invention, but it stands in pointed contrast to the inscription that led into the garden and groves of Plato's Academy, which was also located outside the walls of Athens: 'Let no one unversed in geometry enter here.' In his move to Athens from the Greek East in 307/306 BC Epicurus acquired this garden located not far from Plato's Academy. The sum seems large: 80 minae (or 8,000 drachmae, DL 10.10), but his sworn enemy Timocrates of Lampsacus claimed that he spent a mina a day on food (DL 10.7). By contrast to Epicurus' Garden, Aristotle's Lyceum was located in a public gymnasium just inside the walls of Athens to the south east. Zeno

established his 'school' of philosophy in the *Stoa Poikilē* adjacent to the political centre of Athens, the Agora.[1]

Evidently Epicurus, who was from the Attic deme of Gargettos (and styled Gargettius),[2] also owned a house and small garden within the walls of Athens in the deme of Melite near the Hill of the Nymphs.[3] But neither garden was ever a *hortus deliciarum*, although the word garden (*kēpos*) became a term of abuse.[4] The austere life of Epicurus and his fellow philosophers attracted the attention of Seneca, but Epicurus never led a life completely removed from the society in which he lived. His association with the powerful is evident in his earlier career in Mytilene on Lesbos and at Lampsacus and his many years in Athens.[5] His injunctions 'Die as if you had never lived' and 'Do not involve yourself in political life' were observed by the minor infractions of Epicurus and his fellow philosophers.

[1] A revealing sketch of the location of the four Hellenistic schools of philosophy by Candace H. Smith is displayed in Long and Sedley 1987: vol. 1, p. 4. This clear picture is now muddled by the expansion of modern Athens and sporadic excavations. For what little is known of the excavations see Dontas 1971.

[2] By Statius in *Silv*. 2.2.113.

[3] Epicurus' garden in Melite was to become the residence of his successor, Hermarchus (DL 10.17). There is a dispute over where the garden of Epicurus was actually located. As did Judeich 1931: 364 and 391, I see no problem in Epicurus, who was a man of some means, having a small urban house and garden (*hortulus*) in Melite (*in ipsa urbe*, Pliny *NH* 19.50) and a suburban garden (*hortus*) as well. Seneca (*Ep*. 33.4) seems to imply that Epicurus' garden was located outside of Athens, and texts of both Cicero (*Fin*. 5.1–5) and Heliodorus (*Aethiopica* 1.16.5) make it clear that the Garden proper was outside the Dipylon Gate and on the road to the Academy. This road followed the course of the Demosiosema or the public burial area of the Keremikos. Along this road the Stoics, Zeno and Chrysippus were given honourable burial (Paus. 1.30.15). Wycherley (1959) argued that Epicurus' house and garden in Melite were located outside the Dipylon Gate, but this implausible hypothesis has been shown wrong by Dontas 1971, Clarke 1973 and Lalonde's recent study (2006).

[4] It seems to be derogatory in Cicero (*ND* 1.93). It is clearly abusive in Heraclitus, *Homeric Problems* 4.2.

[5] Momigliano 1935 makes plausible connections between the early Epicurus and the successors of Alexander of Macedon (Antigonus Monophthalmos, his son Demetrius Poliorcetes and Lysimachus) and in his Athenian phase with the Syrian Mithres, the finance minister of Lysimachus. It is clear that his early associate in his period in Lampsacus, Idomeneus, was involved in the politics of the successors to Alexander of Macedon (Seneca *Ep*. 21.3–4 = fr. 13 Angeli) and Plutarch *Adv. Col*. 1127D.