The Popularity of Epicureanism in Elite Late-Republic Roman Society

ABSTRACT

Despite the increasing attention that has been paid by contemporary scholarship to the place of philosophy within elite Roman society, this article argues that the extent of Epicurean affiliation during the Late-Republic has failed to be adequately recognized or narrated. This study assembles numerous literary and epigraphical sources, of both Epicurean and non-Epicurean provenance, to help refine our understanding of the diffusion of the philosophy during this period. Recent papyri finds from Herculaneum are also integrated into the discussion, allowing the notable influence that Epicurean teachers on the Italian peninsula enjoyed to be demonstrated.

I INTRODUCTION

Until its expanding suzerainty led Rome to increasingly brush up against the Greek city states that lay across the Adriatic, Roman society had largely sustained itself without engaging in many of the arts and sciences that formed Hellenistic paideia (culture/education) and, in particular, without that most noetic of Greek exports, philosophy. Pliny's famous depiction of the Roman statesman Cato the Elder's fears over the presence of philosophers in Rome—in case they effected the transfer of Roman aspirations away from the attainment of great deeds in order to become practiced in mere sophistry—highlights the key anxiety that lay behind the traditional Roman antipathy towards the practice.¹ Yet this trepidation largely dissipated: and soon, fluency in philosophical disputations augmented traditional Roman pursuits, and the numerous philosophical schools/centres that dotted the Eastern Mediterranean coast were

¹ Plutarch Cat. Mai. 22-3.
increasingly to be frequented by Roman students.\(^2\) Indeed, it was the Romans' enthusiastic interaction with philosophy that would allow English, as A. A. Long observed, to derive words such as 'virtue', 'substance', 'essence', 'element', 'principle', 'matter', 'form', 'potential', 'accident', etc.\(^3\) Yet, when we consider the specific gradations down which the Roman elite channelled their newly found interest for philosophy, we might first of all think of Stoicism, perhaps recalling that still some of the best-known characters from Roman history were, (at least, credited as being) Stoic adherents—namely Cato, Cicero, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius.\(^4\) Platonic (and Peripatetic) philosophy's continued appeal under Roman suzerainty is also well-known, with our modern-day familiarity with this philosophy again being aided by well-known luminaries, such as Apuleius and Plotinus, and by Platonism's demonstrable influence on writers as diverse in opinions as Philo of Alexandria, Celsus, and Ammonius Saccus.

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\(^2\) D. N. Sedley, 'Roman Philosophy', in D. N. Sedley (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Philosophy*, (2003), 184-210, 186, comments that 'It is difficult to think of a society where members of the upper class were more generally aware of philosophy than seems to have been the case in Imperial Rome'. Tensions between Roman society and philosophy, though, still emerged; for example, the Emperor Domitian twice expelled philosophers from Rome. Dio Cassius *Hist.* 67.13.3-4. G. Woolf, 'Becoming Roman, Staying Greek. Culture, Identity and the Civilizing Process in the Roman East', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* (1994), 120-21, notes that 'Roman responses to Hellenism consisted of a complex and partly incoherent mixture of adoption, adaptation, imitation, rejection and prohibition'. For a useful overview of the varied Roman attitudes to philosophy, see M. B. Trapp, *Philosophy in the Roman Empire: Ethics, Politics and Society*, (2007), 226-57.

\(^3\) A. A. Long, 'Roman Philosophy', in Sedley, op. cit. (n.2), 184-210, at 184.

I would suggest that our reaction towards considering possible Roman interaction with Epicureanism often elicits a markedly different response. For a variety of reasons, referring to 'Roman Epicureanism' can seem to be a peculiar, perhaps even oxymoronic, declaration. Epicureanism lacks those well-known personalities from Roman history who grasp our attention,\(^5\) and its foundational tenets seem to grate against everything we know about the Romans' cherished ideas regarding the worth of pursuing political and social distinction.\(^6\) Furthermore, the lack of Epicurean prominence in later Roman society\(^7\) and the frequent polemical salvos that Imperial writers would issue against its doctrinal formulations tend to confirm the perception that Epicureanism could never have been more than an intellectual curiosity existing on the penumbra of educated Roman society.\(^8\) Rather Stoicism,

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\(^5\) In part, though this lack of awareness is an artificial situation caused by the difficulties in deciphering and translating the works of notable Epicurean scholars from this time, such as Philodemus. See comments at n.39.

\(^6\) In De Otio 3.2, Seneca observes the differences between Epicureanism and Stoicism in relation to this matter, remarking that while 'Epicurus says: "The Sage will not engage in public affairs except in an emergency." Zeno says "He will engage in public affairs unless something prevents him"', trans. Basore, J. W., *Seneca, Moral Essays vol. 2*, Loeb Classical Library (1932), 185: Epicurus ait:

> Non accedet ad rem publicam sapiens, nisi si quid intervenit it; Zenonait:

> 'Accedet ad rem publicam, nisi si quid impedient'.


\(^8\) For example, Y. Bonnefoy, *Roman and European Mythologies* (1992), 108, introduces Epicureanism as being perceived as 'alien' and 'devious' to Roman society and, on 109, claims that Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* was an 'isolated flash of lighting', so that 'the
it can be claimed, was the preferred philosophical orientation of the Late Roman Republic/Early Empire,\(^9\) with Epicureanism perhaps only ever managing to establish itself in second place.\(^{10}\)

However, despite Epicureanism’s later obscurity and the apparent inability of its doctrines to mesh with Roman mores, I will argue that numerous Epicurean pioneers of Epicureanism in Late-Republican Italy managed to turn this seemingly ill-fitted host culture into one of the most receptive and eager audiences in the school’s history, establishing the philosophy as a leading choice of philosophical affiliation for the Roman intelligentsia of the time.\(^{11}\)

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\(^{10}\) e.g. A. Tripolitis, *Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman Age* (2002), 40: ‘Epicureanism never achieved the wide popularity and influence of Stoicism’. At the same time, R. A. Beliotti, *Roman Philosophy and the Good Life* (2009), 114, opines that Epicureanism ‘ran a distant second to Stoicism as the dominant philosophy in the Greco-Roman world for four centuries’.

\(^{11}\) D. N. Sedley, ‘Epicureanism in the Roman Republic’, in J. Warren, op. cit. (n.7), 29-45, at 44, comments that ‘The age of Cicero is remarkable, and probably unique, for the degree of sheer civic respectability that Epicureanism had acquired…. [It] had come to be as widely an unabashedly espoused as any other creed’. See similar comments from Erler, op. cit. (n.3), 48, and from T. D. Hill, *Ambitiosa mors: Suicide and the Self in Roman Thought and Literature* (2004), 73. As well, C. J. Castner, *Prosopography of Roman Epicureans: From the*
The first recorded confluence between the Roman upper class and Epicureanism occurred decades before the philosophy integrated itself into Roman society, in fact just as Rome's attention was beginning to fall upon Greece's borders. In the late 2nd century B.C., a young Roman named Titus Albucius, pre-empting the habit of future Roman aristocratic youths, spent a portion of his adolescence studying philosophy in Athens, where he appears to have become attracted to Epicureanism. Albucius eventually returned to Rome to fulfil a political career, but when his station as propraetor of Sardinia ended in exile, he returned to Athens. Upon his arrival, he appears to have devoted himself to the study of Epicurean philosophy and to have conformed to a life of full obeisance to its strictures. He became, according to Cicero, 'learned' (doctus) and considered himself Greek rather than Roman.

Second Century B.C. to the Second Century A.D. (1988), offers an indispensable resource by means of her cataloguing many references to Roman Epicureans. However, although her study is prefaced with a short introduction (xiii-xix), there is a need to analyse more closely the character and extent of the Epicurean presence in the Roman world, especially regarding the flourish of Epicurean activity during the generation of the Late-Republic, and to integrate these sources with numerous non-Epicureans' reflections on the extent of the philosophy's diffusion. Castner's opinion (xv) that political engagement indicates a superficial commitment to Epicureanism on the part of professed Epicurean adherents needs to be re-evaluated in light of new research. See the discussion below at n.112. The work also needs to be updated to include epigraphical sources and to include new material that, as we will see, has emerged from Herculaneum over the past two-and-a-half decades.

Concerning the dubious nature of Plutarch's account of the meeting between Romans and Epicureans during the Pyrrhic war (Pyrrh. 20), see J. G. F. Powell, Cicero the Philosopher: Twelve Papers (1995), 12.

See Pis. 92 and Brut. 131. Brut.

131, De Fin. 1.3.8-9. Tusc.

5.37.108.
His enforced emigration and the cessation of his political career seems to explain his later zeal to accede to Epicurean principles; the philosophy reassuring him that his former life, which he now eschewed, was, in fact, an empty diversion.

The first recorded occurrence of Epicureanism on the Italian mainland though, and indeed one of the first recorded presences of philosophy on the peninsula at all, comes from a couple of fleeting references to two Epicureans philosophers named Alceus and Philiscus, who were (for reasons that are not entirely clear) expelled from Rome in either B.C. 173 or 154. Apart from this brief flicker, sources that might illuminate the history of Epicureanism at this time are frustratingly elusive, but when they re-emerge two to three generations later during the time of the Late-Republic, we find Epicureanism ensconced in a remarkably different situation, with the philosophy apparently having managed to quietly assimilate itself into the heart of elite of Roman society and respectable discourse.

II EPICUREANS IN CICERO'S WRITINGS

Without assembling a list of Roman Epicureans, we still would have been able to deduce their not-inconsequential presence within this generation solely by observing the efforts that their detractors enlisted to counter them. Cicero's perception of the infiltration of Epicureanism into Roman society led him to announce the need to fight 'horse and foot' to counter its teachings, and in his writings we can view the efforts that he expended to serve this purpose. No such campaign, we should remember, was mounted against philosophies

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16 Aul. Gell. 15.11 and Ath. 547. For a discussion on dating this event, see Reale, op. cit. (n.7), 187.

17 De Off. 3.116.

18 As M. Morford, The Roman Philosophers: From the Time of Cato the Censor to the Death of Marcus Aurelius (2002), 99, observes, Cicero responds to Epicurean ethical teachings in the first dialogue of his De Finibus and against its theology in the first book of
that were equally ill equipped to become aligned with traditional Roman and Ciceronian, conceptions of public life such as Cynicism. Cicero himself talks about the large number of ardent Epicureans that surrounded him, observing,

to me the highest good seems to be in the soul, to him in the body; to me in virtue, to him in pleasure. But they're the ones who fight about it and appeal to the loyalty of their neighbours—and indeed there are many who promptly come flying to their side. I'm the one who says that I'm not making a to-do about it; I'll take for done what they have done. For what is at issue here? Is it a question of the Punic War? Even on this matter M. Cato and L. Lentulus, though they had different viewpoints, never made it a contest between themselves.

mihi summum in animo bonum videtur, illi autem in corpore, mihi in virtute, illi in voluptate. Et illi pugnant, et quidem vicinorum fidem implorant; multi autem sunt, qui statim convolent; ego sum is qui dicam me non laborare, actum habiturum, quod egerint. quid enim? de bello Punico agitur? de quo ipso cum aliud M. Catoni, aliud L. Lentulo videretur, nulla inter eos concertatio umquam fuit. hi nimis iracunde agunt.

We do not have to weigh the success of Epicureanism by solely relying only upon Cicero's

his De Natura Deorum.


20 Tusc. III 50-51, trans. E. Adler, Vergil's Empire: Political Thought in the Aeneid (2003), 46. For Cicero's further reflection on the Epicureans' characteristic passion for their beliefs, see De Nat. D. 1.33.93.
pronouncements of its popularity; through a close reading and collating of references to it within his writings, we can witness firsthand its attendance in his life. For example, Cicero refers to Epicurean adherents such as the Roman knight Lucius Saufeius,21 the senator Gaius Velleius,22 the consul C. Vibius Pansa Caetronianus,23 and the equestrian Lucius Saufeius.24

Aside from these examples, we can, perhaps surprisingly, note that some of Cicero's closest friends and confidants had proved receptive to Epicureanism's advance. Indeed, the only notable adversary of Cicero who was inclined towards Epicureanism seems to have been L. Calpurnius Piso.25 Cicero himself acknowledges this unusual constituency of his friends—given his stance against Epicureanism—through his spokesman Lucillius: 'I stand firm against the Epicureans, although I know so many of them and they are such good people and such good friends to each other'.26 Epicureanism's proximity to Cicero is probably best demonstrated by noting that his most famous confidant, T. Pomponius Atticus, was probably one such Epicurean devotee.27 Cicero's letters also disclose several congenial discussions that he held with colleagues regarding their Epicurean inclinations: see for example his teasing of C. Trebatius for becoming an Epicurean during his stay in Caesar's camp28 and his probing of

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21 *Fam.* 15.16, 19, *Att.* 1.3.1, 15.
23 *Att.* 7.1 records his life spent in devotion to Epicureanism.
24 See Cicero's *In Pisonem*. Concerning his Epicureanism, see *Pis* 42.92. Concerning Caesar's possible, but unlikely, Epicurean affiliation, see Caster, op. cit. (n.11), 83-6 and R. A. Beliotti, op. cit. (n.10), 107-09.
26 See *De. Leg.* 1.21; 3.1. For a discussion about his Epicurean beliefs, see Castner, op. cit. (n.11), 58-60.
27 *Fam* 7.12. Regarding this, see Powell, op. cit. (n.12), 28.
Cassius Longinus' Epicurean beliefs.\textsuperscript{29}

Another demonstration of the diffusion and vitality of the Epicurean discourse found within the ranks of educated Roman society of the time is provided when Cicero informs us that:

the topic of the immortal gods was made the subject a very searching and thorough discussion at the house of my friend Gaius Cotta. It was the Latin Festival, and I had come at Cotta's express invitation to pay him a visit. I found him sitting in an alcove, engaged in debate with Gaius Velleius, a member of the Senate, accounted the by Epicureans as their chief Roman adherent at the time.\textsuperscript{30}

\textit{Quod cum saepe alias tum maxime animaduerti cum apud C. Cottam familiarem meum accurate sane et diligenter de dis immortalibus disputatum est. Nam cum feriis Latinis ad eum ipsius rogatu arcessituque uenissem, offendi eum sedentem in exedra et cum C. Velleio senatore disputantem, ad quem tum Epicurei primas ex notris hominibus deferebant.}

In another section of Cicero's writings, we find an often-overlooked detail: that Patro, who would eventually become head of the Epicurean school at Athens, spent time in Rome,

\textsuperscript{29} See \textit{Fam} 15.18.1. See L. Canfora, \textit{Julius Caesar: The Life and Times of the People's Dictator} (2007), 300. The example of Epicureans who fought on the Republican side, such as Torquatus, demonstrates that allegiance to Epicureanism managed to transcend the political divide. Plutarch also informs us, in \textit{Brut}. 12 and in \textit{Cat. Min.} 65, 73, that a certain Stallius, who fought on the side of the Republican cause and was a close friend of Brutus and Cato, was a disciple of Epicurean philosophy.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{De Nat D.} 1.15, trans. H. Rackham, \textit{De Natura Deorum, Loeb Classical Library} 268 (1933), 17.
meeting with members of the Roman elite. Of him, Cicero records,

I have all manner of ties with Patro the Epicurean, except that in philosophy I strongly disagree with him. But in the early days in Rome I was one of those whose acquaintance he particularly cultivated.\(^3\) 

_Cum Patrone Epicurio mihi omnia sunt, nisi quod in philosophia vehementer ab eo dissentio. Sed et initio Romae, cum te quoque et tuos omnis observabat._

Cicero's praise for the character of Epicurean adherents known to him does not stop with Patro. Indeed, despite Cicero's numerous polemical excursions against the philosophy, his capacity to issue unqualified praise towards the erudition and character of Epicurean individuals known to him is surprisingly gracious. In his _De Finibus_, he compliments his chosen spokesman/interlocutor for Epicureanism, L. Manlius Torquatus—a praetor who fell under the Pompeian cause in African in 46 B.C.—as being 'a man of profound learning'.\(^3\)  

While in a discussion with L. Papirius Paetus, Cicero makes remarks about their Epicurean acquaintance, M. Fabius Gallus, that:

_Truly I love this man, not only because of his very high degree of honesty and unusual propriety, but also because I am accustomed to use his excellent work in these disputes which I have with your drinking partners the Epicureans._\(^3\)


\(^{32}\) _De Fin._ 1.5.13: _hominem omni doctrina erudito._

\(^{33}\) _Fam_ 7.26, trans. Castner, op. cit. (n.11), 34. In _Tusc._ III.50, Cicero furthermore claims that 'indeed the Epicureans, those best of men—for no group is less malicious', trans. Adler, op. cit. (n.20), 45: _Et queruntur quidam Epicurei, viri optimi—nam nullum_
Cum M. Fadio, quod scire te arbitror, mihi summus usus est valdeque eum diligo cum propter summam probitatem eius ac singularem modestiam, tum quod in iis controversiis, quas habeo cum tub combibonibus Epicuri<s>. That these compliments, as well as similar statements of praise for the Epicurean scholars Philodemus and Lucretius (see below), could be issued from such a caustic critic of the philosophy surely indicates the success of the philosophy in drawing to itself an admirable class of adherents.

III EPICUREANISM IN CAMPANIA

Cicero's association with Paetus and his circle of friends appears to have also provided him with an amusing anecdote, which he later relays, regarding a lecture on Epicureanism that took place in Campania. According to Cicero, the unnamed Epicurean scholar allowed time afterwards for questions to be asked by the audience. Paetus responded not by articulating an intellectual query as the lecturer had anticipated but by asking who was to take the scholar to dinner.34 While this scene offers us further insight into the manner through which Epicureanism might have dispersed and commended itself to the educated elite of Roman society, the question depicted by Cicero perhaps also highlights the sometimes lax attitude that Romans could display towards engaging with the complexities of philosophy.35 But more important for our immediate purpose is to note the lecture's setting in

34 Fam. 9.25.2.
35 Fam 9.26.1. Paetus' devotion to Epicureanism, though, might be apparent given that he is one of the few Late-Republican Roman elites known to us to whom we cannot assign a political career, so Castner, op. cit. (n.11), 43, argues that '[t]he lack of career date indicates
Campania, for this links it with a noticeable concentration of references that allude to the presence of Epicureanism within the region. It was in Campanian where, as John D'Arms has noted, both the Epicureans Fabius and Cassius owned farms or villas, and we note that a tomb in Neapolis dating back to the 1st century B.C. (a source that is curiously absent from most modern discussions on Roman Epicureanism) reveals the presence of another Epicurean resident in the area:

Gaius Stallius Hauranus watches this place
a member of the Epicurean chorus that flourishes in joy.

Stallius Gaius has sedes Hauranus tuetur,
ex Epicureio gaudivigente choro.

While this source provides us with another named Roman adherent of Epicureanism, its relevance to our study further becomes apparent when we note that Stallius had previously only been known through his business and euergetistical efforts, and not his intellectual ones. So once again, we see that while many Romans were sincere in their pronouncement of adherence to Epicureanism—for Stallius, this was a defining identity—their philosophy is that Paetus may have practiced a sincere Epicurean withdrawal from politics'.

usually found playing an ancillary role to their expectations of social/political advancement. Epicureanism in Campania, though, is distinguishable not only through the coalescing of its adherents in the area but through the scholarly reflection on this philosophy that seems to have found its provenance within the region.

The most notable Epicurean scholar in Campania was Philodemus (ca. 100-40/35 B.C.). His writings represent the most thorough explication of Epicurean philosophy that classical antiquity has bequeathed to us. His works submitting for discussion, by means of the rubric of Epicurean thought, topics as diffuse in nature as music, history, philosophy, and rhetoric. Yet until the late 18th century, apart from the inclusion of 38 of his epigrams in Meleager's *Greek Anthology*, his writings had been presumed lost to posterity. Privation of access to Philodemus' reflections, positioned as they were to be discharged during the period of Epicureanism's successful integration into Roman society, would have been a particularly frustrating lacunae for our study and its concerns. However, the volcanic eruption from Mt. Vesuvius in A.D.79, which buried the town of Herculaneum and the imposing villa that lay on its northwest border, fortuitously effected the preservation of a cache of Philodemus' works. For the over two-and-a-half centuries after Philodemus' writings were found contained within the villa's literary possessions, they have, with varying degrees of success, been slowly deciphered and reinstated to legibility. Yet it has only been in recent years that many of the key texts within Philodemus' corpus of works have been translated, and many sections and fragments are still awaiting publication. This protracted arrival of Philodemus' works to wider scholarship is being aided through the efforts


40 Regarding the villa and an overview of the history of academic investigation into it, see the recent selection of articles published in M. Zarmakoupi (ed.), *The Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum* (2010).

41 See D. Sider, 'The Books of the Villa of the Papyri', in Zarmakoupi, op. cit. (n.42), 115-128.
writings has resulted, somewhat understandably, in their being overshadowed by the
prominence of many more established and successfully dispersed works by other classical
writers. But while Philodemus' works are of continuing importance for aiding our
comprehension of the doctrinal composition of Epicureanism, our present use of them will
focus upon their potential for illuminating the presence of Epicureanism within educated
Roman society at the time and for uncovering the part that Philodemus might have played in
either broadening or sustaining the school's appeal.

However, before we turn to consider his writings, it should be noted that the
familiarity of Philodemus to the senatorial class of his day is suggested to us through Cicero's
decision to use him as a character in his *In Pisonem (Against Piso)* in order to act as a foil
with which to attack Philodemus' associate, the senator L. Calpurnius Piso. The familiarity is
also suggested by means of Cicero's declaration to his senatorial colleagues regarding the

of the Philodemus Project, based at the UCLA classical studies department. For an overview
of the project at its inception, see R. Janko, 'Introducing the Philodemus Translation Project:
Reconstructing the *On Poems*', in A. Bülow-Jacobsen (ed), *Proceedings of the 20th International
Congress of Papyrologists* (1994), 367-81, at 367. For a recent list of English translations of
Philodemus' works, see D. Sider *The Library of The Villa Dei Papiri at Herculaneum* (2005), 96-
97. Sections of Philodemus' works have also recently been made available in French in J.
Pigeaud, and D. Delattre, *Les Épicuriens* (2010). For more about the continuing
translations/studies of the papyri from Herculaneum, see the journal *Cronache Ercolanesi,
which is currently in its 40th volume.

In the mid-1990s, R. Janko, op. cit. (n.41), bemoaned that 'this important figure in the
history of philosophy and literary theory remains largely unknown to scholars in these fields;
his writings form the largest corpus of Greek philosophy never translated into English'. See

In Piso. 68-72,74.
broad dissemination of Philodemus' epigrams. Yet, I propose, aside from the apparent success of his poetry, that most of the evidence we can assemble concerning Philodemus' influence during his lifetime comes from his ability to induce and maintain relationships with Romans of particular repute. That his talents were sufficiently polished to impress members of elite Roman society is demonstrated when Cicero diverts the text of his *In Pisonem* to extol Philodemus' virtues, exclaiming,

now the Greek of whom I speak is polished not only in philosophy but also in other accomplishments which Epicureans are said commonly to neglect; he furthermore composes poetry so witty, neat, and elegant, that nothing could be cleverer.

*Est autem hic de quo loquor non philosophia solum, sed etiam ceteris studiis quae fere ceteros Epicureos neglegere dicunt perpolitus; poema porro facit ita festivum, ita concinnum, ita elegans, nihil ut fieri possit argutius.*

While during his consideration of Epicurean tenets in his *De Finibus* (*On Moral Ends*), Cicero cites Philodemus and his colleague Siro as being the contemporary authorities on

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44 *In Pis* 71: 'I would read you a copious selection from these (they have been often read and listened to before)', trans. Sider, 229: *ex quibus multa a multis et lecta et audita recitarem.*

45 This is a facet of Philodemus' life that has gone unarticulated in scholarly reconstructions of his life. Regarding the relatively small literary impact that Philodemus' works seem to have made, see G. Roskam, *Live Unnoticed: On the Vicissitudes of an Epicurean Doctrine*, (2007) 101-02.

46 *In Pis* 70. trans. Sider, op. cit. (n.41), 229.
Epicurean philosophy and claims they are his ‘excellent and learned friends’. Apart from this designation of friendship, a personal connection between Cicero and Philodemus is also indicated by Cicero's reference to meeting alone with Philodemus and from the information that he discloses regarding Philodemus' convivial demeanour.

However, the most notable associate of Philodemus appears to have been Piso. Apart from Cicero's portrayal of their relationship, the two men's connection with each other can be ascertained by noting that one of Philodemus' epigrams was dedicated to Piso and, as revealed in the mid-1990s, that his On the Good King According to Homer was also apparently issued to the senator. This would surely have been a relationship of particular note for Philodemus, for he was not just associating himself with someone of senatorial rank but with one of the Late Republic's most prominent politicians. Piso's career included obtaining the office of proconsul of Macedonia in 57-55 B.C. and achieving the foremost political position in the Roman Republic when he was elected as a consul of Rome in 58 B.C. Furthermore, Cicero's decision to employ his rhetorical and polemical skills to bear against Piso in the production of Cicero's near 10,000 word salvo In Pisonem indicates that Piso possessed enough latent political acumen and influence to make him a potentially dangerous opponent.

47 De Fin 2.119, quum optimos viros, tum doctissimos hominess.
48 In Pis 68: 'to tell the truth, I have found him to be a very gentlemanly fellow, at any rate as long as he is in other company than Piso's, or is by himself', trans. Sider, op. cit. (n.39), 228: vere ut dicam- sic enim cognovi- humanus, sed tamdiu quam diu aut cum aliis est aut ipse secum.
opponent. Yet Piso is probably most often introduced to modern readers not through any narration of his political achievements but by his rather noteworthy position of being the third, and final, father-in-law to Julius Caesar—itself another indication of his political standing.

Before the Herculaneum papyri provided us with the opportunity to broaden our understanding of Philodemus and his activities, the concentration of references that linked Philodemus to Piso (Cicero's lavish description in In Pisonem 68-72, 74 and Sider Ep. 27) seemed to indicate to scholars that Philodemus was in a relationship of dependency upon Piso, and this has often been interpreted as suggesting that Philodemus was Piso's client or house philosopher. Yet it must be recognized that despite the large volume of Philodemus' works that have emerged from Herculaneum, they have so far neglected to supply evidence supporting this supposed relationship dynamic. Aside from a solitary reference in On the Good King, Piso fails to be mentioned, or alluded to, in any of the forty-four papyri rolls that are considered to have Philodemian authorship. While this certainly does not negate the possibility that Philodemus was in a relationship of sustained dependency upon Piso, it does serve to dilute the foundation upon which this hypothesis has been built. Yet, while some scholars have raised cautions concerning the presumed strength of the hypothesis, and have even challenged the interpretation of the sources upon which its conclusions have been premised, contemporary narrations of Philodemus' relationship with Piso have continued to...
be expressed in a manner that is indistinguishable from the theory's original articulation.\textsuperscript{55}

I suggest that the Herculaneum papyri's most forceful challenge to the standard presentation of Philodemus' life is the disclosure that they make regarding Philodemus' connections with other distinguished and talented Romans.\textsuperscript{56} Perhaps the most important of these disclosures to have emerged is that concerning his association with C. Vibius Pansa.

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agrees that 'these two treatises (Cicero \textit{In Pis.} 68-72,74, and Philodemus \textit{Sider Ep.} 27) are at present too fragmentary a state to reveal much about the relationship between author and dedicatee', while J. I. Porter, 'Hearing Voices: The Herculaneum Papyri and Classical Scholarship' in V. C. Gardner Coates and L. Seydl, \textit{Antiquity Recovered: the Legacy of Pompeii and Herculaneum}, 95-114, at 98-100, issues a particularly wounding critique of the prevailing theory. At the same time, P. De Lacy, 'Review of Mario Capasso Manuale di Papirologia Ercolanese', \textit{American Journal of Philology} 114.1 (1993), 179-80, also trenchantly argues against its strength; and, in particular, critiques the assumption that \textit{In Pisonem} provides an accurate narration of their relationship, as does Sider, op. cit. (n. 39) 124-25. While Sider, op. cit. (n.41b) 83, and P. A. Rosenmeyer, \textit{Ancient Epistolary Fictions: The Letter in Greek Literature} (2001), 106, both argue that Philodemus' invitation to Piso (Sider \textit{Ep.} 27) was not an acknowledgement of Piso's patronage but rather an appeal for it.\textsuperscript{55} See D'Arms, op. cit. (n.36), 66; C. E. Glad, \textit{Paul and Philodemus: Adaptability in Epicurean and Early Christian Psychagogy} (1997), 103; D. Obbink, 'All Gods are True Gods in Epicurus', in D. Frede, A. Laks (eds), \textit{Traditions of Theology: Studies in Hellenistic Theology: Its Background and Aftermath} (2001), 183-223, at 187; and A. Kamm, \textit{Julius Caesar: A Life} (2006), 54.

\textsuperscript{56} For example, D. Armstrong, 'Epicurean Virtues, Epicurean Friendship', in J. Fish and K. R. Sanders (eds) \textit{Epicurus and the Epicurean Tradition} (2011), 105-28, at 119, observes in passing that 'it has taken a long time to incorporate Philodemus' addressees into the discussion of his work and views. It is therefore not surprising that little attention has yet been directed towards Pansa.'
Caetronianus. While we have already noted Cicero’s comments about Pansa’s Epicurean orientation,
nothing before has linked him with Philodemus. However, their connection was revealed in the mid-1990s when Tiziano Dorandi established that Pansa was the dedicatee of Philodemus’ Rhetoric Book IV. This again would likely have been a relationship of particular importance for Philodemus—for once more he was linking himself with a prominent politician, with Pansa’s political career including attaining the rank of tribune in 51 B.C. and consul in 43 B.C. His ability to link himself with two high-ranking politicians of the Late-Republican age (three, if we include Cicero) functions to underscore Philodemus’ talents in establishing links with influential members of Roman society, but it surely also highlights his exertion in seeking out these contacts and his desire to provide them with detailed philosophical deliberations.

We also have evidence that Philodemus’ nexus of interested pupils/friends extended to include talented Romans whose status fell outside of the narrow ranks of the Roman senate. In P.Herc 1082 fr. 12, we find Philodemus addressing two Romans, named Quintilius and L. Varius Rufus. Little is known of Quintilius other than that he held an equestrian rank, but Varius (ca. 70-15 B.C.) seems to have enjoyed a particularly fecund and praised literary career. He was the author of a no-longer-extant didactic poem entitled ‘De Moret’ (‘On Death’), which apparently distilled Epicurean teaching through Latin prose. A well, it

57 Fam 15.19.2, noted above.
60 See Castner, op. cit. (n.11), 62.
61 See Macr. 6.1.39-40 and Quint. Inst. 6.3.78.
is claimed that he, along with Plotius Tucca, helped to edit the *Aeneid* after Vergil's death.\(^{62}\) But he seems to have achieved most renown during his lifetime through his (again, no-longer-extant) *Thyestes*, a tragedy for which he won both praise and a pecuniary prize from the Emperor Augustus as well as acclaim from Quintilian.\(^{63}\)

But while this text offers us a vital insight into Philodemus' larger circle of associates, the highly lacunose fragment that holds Quintilius and Varius' names, as Alfred Körte pointed out in 1890,\(^ {64}\) appears to continue to address two other recipients whose names are no longer legible/extant. Körte speculates that they might have belonged to Vergil and Horace, but apart from a recurring classical tradition claiming that some of Vergil's youth had been spent under the supervision of the Epicurean scholar Siro,\(^ {65}\) there was little evidence to corroborate this proposal; on its own merits, the argument could only ever have held tentative authority. Yet almost exactly a hundred years after the publication of Körte's proposal, the Italian scholars Marcello Gigante and Mario Capasso gained access to some papyri—which had been sent to Paris in 1802 as a gift for the Emperor Napoleon—that were to partially validate Körte's suggestion. In one section of those papyri, Gigante and Capasso were able to decipher Philodemus' address to Plotius, Varius, Vergil, and Quintilius,\(^ {66}\) confirming that


\(^{64}\) A. Körte, 'Augusteer bei Philodem', *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 4 (1890), 172-77. See the discussion in M. Gigante, 'Vergil and Philodemus', in Armstrong, op. cit. (n.50), 85-100, at 85.

\(^{65}\) *Servius ad Ecl.* 6.13 and Donatus Auctus, *Vita Verg.*, 79. See also *Catal* 5.8-10, quoted below.

\(^{66}\) *P.Herc.* Paris 2.279a: ὤ Πύλωτι καλ
Vergil was an associate of Philodemus and meaning, as Gigante later reflected, that 'what until a few years ago was only clever conjecture has become a splendid reality'. Yet while Horace's name has yet to emerge from the carbonized remains of the Herculaneum papyri (although we do have evidence that suggests that Horace might have known Philodemus), the other named addressee, Plotius, should not be needlessly overlooked. The lack of modern recognition of Plotius' name is regrettable, given that his influence is still undoubtedly felt today through his editing of Vergil's *Aeneid*. So apart from expanding our knowledge of how far Philodemus' influence had reached, Plotius' name adds further weight to the pattern we can now recognize concerning Philodemus' choice of dedicating works to Romans of particular importance or of promising scholastic talent.

However, it is also noteworthy that Philodemus discloses information about connections that he maintained with members of the broader intellectual world of the time. For example, Philodemus tells us of his acquaintance with Thribran, a pupil of Panaetius (the head of the Stoic school at Athens) and claims another of his students, Apollonius of Ptolemais, as his friend.

Another Epicurean scholar who was located in Campania was Siro. The overlapping...
of location and occupation between Philodemus and Siro, and Cicero' decision to link them together in De Fin 2.119 as the contemporary authorities of Epicureanism, has long been taken by scholars to imply that the two men must have been familiar with each other. Yet it was not until a fragment of papyrus from Herculaneum was deciphered wherein Philodemus refers directly to Siro, and also states his connection to Naples, that their connection could be stated confidently. Still, finding a suitable adjective to describe their relationship is taxing, especially as it is plausible that their friendship might only ever have materialized as infrequent meetings or exchanges of ideas. But if we accept the strong classical tradition that links Siro to Vergil and Varius, the now-known associates of Philodemus, then at least a portion of the two men's circles of friends/pupils must have been demonstrably interwoven. Moreover, depending upon the ultimate authorship behind the Catalepton, which is of disputed but possible Vergilian authorship, we might be in possession of two first-hand accounts by Vergil regarding his connection with Siro:

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73 The ultimate authorship seems unlikely to be resolved anytime soon, but both D. Armstrong, 'Introduction' in Armstrong, op. cit., (n.50), 1-4, at 2, and A. Wallace, Virgil's Schoolboys (2008), 99, claim that there is increasing scholarly support for their authenticity. The writings appear to have been assumed to be authentic since at least the 1st century C.E.— e.g. see Suetonius Vita Vergili 18.
we spread our sails for the ports of happiness,
Seeking a cargo of Siro's learned sayings,
And shall free our life from every care.\textsuperscript{74}

\textit{nons ad beatos vela mittimus portus}
\textit{magni petentes docta dicta Sironis},
\textit{vitamque ab omni vindicabimus cura.}

Little villa, once Siro's, and you, o tiny field,
The true and perfect riches of such a master…\textsuperscript{75}

\textit{Villula, quae Sironis eras, et pauper agelle,}
\textit{verum illi domino tu quoque divitiae.}

Furthermore, though we are more constrained in our ability to delineate the character and 
substance of Siro's role in comparison to his colleague Philodemus, the recurrent references in 
the few sources that we do have which allude to his scholarly role suggest that he was of 
notable academic ability and repute. Both through his evident standing as a scholarly 
proponent of Epicureanism (as witnessed through Cicero's evaluation of his status) and from 
the direct attention/tuition that he appears to have provided potential Roman adherents, it 
seems that Siro deserves a place alongside Philodemus in our account of Epicureanism's 
successful distribution throughout Roman Italy.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{74} Catal. 5.8-19, trans. Armstrong, op. cit. (n.50), 2.
\textsuperscript{75} Catal. 8.1-2, trans. Armstrong op. cit. (n.50), 2.
\textsuperscript{76} This was a mission that the late 4\textsuperscript{th} / early 5\textsuperscript{th} century author of the \textit{Vitae Vergilianae} 
described when he commented, in VT 98, that ‘Then mighty Rome herself, Maro, brought you to 
Siro as a teacher and joined her nobles to you in friendship’, trans. Lake, J., 'Vita Philargyrii II', 
in J. M. Ziolkowski, and M. C. J. Putnam, \textit{The Virgilian Tradition: The First Fifteen Hundred}}
Evidence for another Epicurean scholar who settled in the region emerges from the writings of Suetonius, which describe a certain M. Pompilius Andronicus, who was:

a native of Syria, [and] because of his devotion to the Epicurean sect was considered somewhat indolent in his work as a grammarian and not qualified to conduct a school. Therefore, realizing that he was held in less esteem at Rome, not only than Antonius Gniphos, but than others of even less ability, he moved to Cumae, where he led a life of leisure and wrote many books. But he was so poor and needy that he was forced to sell that admirable little works of his, "Criticisms of the Annals of Ennius" to someone or other for sixteen thousand sesterces.\(^{77}\)

If we accept Suetonius' account as accurate, then we have evidence, though rarely acknowledged, of another Epicurean scholar who was operating during the lifetime of Philodemus and Siro\(^ {78}\) and confirmation concerning the gravitation of Epicureans scholars to the region of Campania. Suetonius' description of Pompilius' relocation being necessitated

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\(^{78}\) Concerning the dates of his career, see Caster, op. cit. (n.11), 56.
by the shunning of his talents in Rome is, I suggest, constructed by Suetonius reading his familiarity with the later repudiation of Epicureanism in Roman society back to explain Pompilius' move. While, at first glance, Pompilius' move does seem to be inexplicable given the disparity in size between Rome and Cumae, the evidence we have collected makes Pompilius' move comprehensible. It was to the Campanian region, where the Epicurean scholars Philodemus and Siro had based themselves, that a succession of educated Roman adolescents are recorded as having travelled in order to receive instruction in Epicureanism and where Roman aristocrats vied with each other to invite Epicurean lecturers out for a meal. Cumae would have provided Pompilius with one of the most viable places for his works to have gained an appreciative audience—regardless of whether this was an opportunity that he continually managed to exploit.

IV OTHER EPICUREAN SCHOLARS

While we have already assembled a notable list of Epicurean scholarly exponents who operated within the Italian peninsula, we have the opportunity to supplement this list further. The most notable addition is T. Lucretius Carus. Until the re-emergence and slow

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79 As further support, C. Conors, 'Imperial Space and Time: the Literature of Leisure', in O. Taplin (ed) Literature in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A New Perspective, (2000), 492-518, at 499, notes that 'the space most closely associated with elite Roman leisure [inclusive of their more academic endeavours] is not at Rome at all, but in luxurious villas dotted along the bay of Naples'.

80 D'Arms, op. cit. (n.36), 67, interprets Pompilius' financial difficulties as being due to his inability to find a benefactor to continually support him. Regarding this concern/reality for Roman writers, see the brief discussion in S. H. Braund, Beyond Anger: a Study of Juvenal's Third Book of Satires (1998), 46.
deciphering of Philodemus’ writings, Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura* (‘On the Nature of Things’), a didactic poem that outlines Epicurean teachings over the course of 7,400 Latin verses, seems to have provided scholars with their most important resource for understanding the doctrinal composition of classical Epicureanism.\(^8\) Aside from the poem’s detailed description of Epicurean tenets, Lucretius’ work is also notable because it represents one of the earliest known efforts to place philosophical deliberation within the confines of the Latin language, which, at the time of the poem’s construction, contained little of the semantic flexibility required to easily translate philosophical concepts. However, despite the challenges faced by this pioneering effort,\(^2\) through the *De Rerum Natura* Lucretius managed to produce one of Roman antiquity’s greatest literary masterpieces, with the poem often being credited along with Vergil’s work for its literary sophistication and finesse.\(^8\) Cicero, his contemporary, would comment that it contains ‘flashes of genius’,\(^4\) but it is perhaps Ovid who issued the most generous praise for Lucretius’ efforts when he opined that ‘the sublime verses of Lucretius will not perish until the final day gives the earth over to destruction’.\(^5\)


\(^2\) In *DRN* 1.136-145, Lucretius describes the struggle that he faced trying to translate Epicurean philosophy into Latin.


\(^5\) Q. Fr. 2.10: lumina ingeni.

Yet, however much the virtues of the work commended themselves to gain our attention, the author behind it, Lucretius (ca. 99-55 B.C.), remains something of a mystery to us. Indeed, almost all that we know about his background, character, and motives, can be established only through inferences drawn from the text of his masterpiece. Several times he refers to his Roman heritage, referring, for example, to Rome as his patria (fatherland) and calling Latin 'our ancestral language'. His acquaintance with Greek and Roman literature, coupled with his facility in fine-tuning Latin, indicates that he received an education characteristic of that which was given to members of the leisured Roman classes of the time. Further testimony of his elite Roman consanguinity can be found in the poem's punctuated allusions to the lifestyle and experiences of elite Romans. Lucretius does, for example, make references to attending races and the theatre and describes with some colour the boredom that can lead one to restlessly move from a city residence to the retreat of a villa in the country and then shortly back again. As W. Y. Sellar commented, the author who is depicted behind the poem's prose is 'a man living in easy circumstances, and of one, who,

**use of Lucretius, see the extensive discussion in P. R. Hardie, Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium (1986), 157-240. We should note that Cicero's brother was also familiar with Lucretius work and commended it to Cicero: Q. Fr. 2.10.**

86  *DRN* 1.41.


88  M. Gale, *Myth and Poetry in Lucretius* (1994), 89 states that 'he was clearly a member of the ruling class' and highlights Lucretius' detailed description of the leisured elites' lifestyle in *DRN* 4.1121-1139. See also the discussion in M. Gale, *Lucretius and the Didactic Epic* (2001), 22.


90  *DRN* 3.1060-67. Rouse and Smith, op. cit. (n.89), xiv-xv.
though repelled by it, was yet familiar with the life of pleasure and luxury\textsuperscript{91}.

However, in addition to providing an eminent example of scholarly Roman interaction with Epicureanism, Lucretius’ work is also pertinent to our study due to its explicit purpose of inducing its Latin speaking readers to give their intellectual assent to Epicurean philosophy. The poem is replete with evidence for his missionary intention,\textsuperscript{92} but it is a concern that is most unequivocally stated when Lucretius compares the function of his poem to that of a physician coating the rim of a cup of medicine with honey to make its contents palatable for those who must swallow its contents.\textsuperscript{93} Finishing this extended simile, Lucretius comments,

\begin{quote}
I wanted to expound our reasoning to you in sweet-speaking Pierian song and to touch it, so to speak, with the sweet honey of the Muses, in hopes that perhaps I might be able to hold your mind in our verses with such reasoning until you fully perceive the whole nature of things and fully feel the advantage.\textsuperscript{94}
\end{quote}

\textit{volui tibi suaviloquenti carmine Pierio rationem exponere nostram et quasi musaeo dulci contingere melle; si tibi forte animum tali ratione tenere versibus in nostris possem, dum perspicis omnen naturam rerum qua constet completa figura.}

\textsuperscript{91} Y. W. Sellar, \textit{The Roman Poets of the Republic} (1892), 288, cited in Rouse and Smith, op. cit. (n.89), xi.

\textsuperscript{92} Concerning Lucretius’ missionary intentions, see G. Müller, ‘The Conclusions of the Six Books of Lucretius’ in Gale, op. cit. (n.81), 234-255, at 234, as well as J. D. Minyard, \textit{Lucretius and the Late Republic: An Essay in Roman Intellectual History} (1985), 69, but see especially E. Adler, op. cit. (n.20), 53-76.

\textsuperscript{93} \textit{DRN} 4.11-25.

\textsuperscript{94} \textit{DRN} 4.19-25, trans. Adler, op. cit. (n.20), 54.
But apart from Lucretius' use of the Latin language and his coating of Epicurean teachings in poetry, his repeated recourse to directly engage with his readers is a notable feature of the work. He consistently addresses his work's readers, pre-empting their objections and urging them to remain focused upon, and reactive to, the arguments unfolding before them. For example, Lucretius interposes his detailing of Epicurean doctrine with statements such as 'but you say...', 'now do you see...', 'listen now', 'now you must of necessity confess that...', and 'I beg you apply your mind'. The frequency of such appeals tends to give readers the impression that they are not so much reading a dispassionate academic discourse, as much as, page after page, being pursued by an ardent evangelist who is zealously trying to gain their compliance. In any case, his work provides us with an outstanding example of the scholarly attention that Roman Epicureans could devote to their philosophy and of their effort to make it an attractive philosophical proposition to their colleagues.

Alongside Lucretius, we can cite two other examples of Epicureans proponents who dedicated themselves to setting down Epicurean teachings via Latin discourse. One such proponent was Catius Insuber (d. 45 B.C.), who apparently issued four books on Epicurean philosophy under the title *De Rerum Natura et de Summo Bono* (*On the Nature of the Universe and the Highest Good*). Though his writings are no longer extant, they are referenced by Cicero and are cited as works with which Catius expects his friend Cassius and his circle of Epicureans associates to be familiar. But Cicero, from whom we have now grown accustomed to hearing compliments from regarding his Epicurean opponents, here criticizes Catius' work and twice taunts his employment of the word *spectrum* (spectre)—

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95 Gale, op. cit. (n.88b), 23: 'it has been estimated that Lucretius addresses us, on average, once every seventeen lines'.
96 *DRN* 1.803; 2.62, 885, 286, 1023; 5.556.
97 In *Fam.* 15.16.1, where Cicero records Catius' recent death. See
99
neologism apparently of Catius' creation. But despite the apparent crudeness that lies behind some of Catius' attempts to translate Epicurean concepts into Latin, his writings appear to have obtained at least some repute and popularity. In particular, Cicero's familiarity with the work and his expectation that Cassius and his group of friends would be acquainted with its contents provides evidence of their dispersal throughout circles of educated Roman readers. Quintilian, who offers (as far as I am aware) the only other reference to Catius' works, furthermore commends his writings to his readers as being a profitable exposition of Epicurean teachings, though Quintilian, significantly, qualifies his recommendation by noting that the work is lacking in weight. Quintilian's advice would seem to confirm our dual understanding of Catius' efforts. That his work was recommended by Quintillian shows its continuing distribution and reputation even over a hundred years later, but the proviso that Quintilian offers confirms that there existed some weakness concerning his work's contents, probably relating to Catius' attempt to translate philosophical disputations into Latin.

The other addition to our collection of Latin exponents of Epicureanism is Egnatius Insuber. His name indicates that his family was either of Samnite origin or that he belonged

100 Fam. 15.16 and Fam 15.19.3. D. N. Sedley, Lucretius and the Transformation of Greek Wisdom (2003), 39, comments, 'I have no idea what connotations it conveyed to a Roman ear, but Cicero and Cassius seem to have found them comic'. D. R. Shackelton Bailey, Epistulae ad Familiares vol. 2 (2004), 379, observes that instead of 'spectrum', 'Lucretius uses simulacrum or imago for διπλογός; Cicero imago'.

101 Inst. Orat. 10.1.124: Epicureis levis quidem, sed non iniucundus tamen auctor est Catius.

102 It is also probable that the portrait of Catius—which Pliny informs us (Ep. iv.28.1) the Roman consul Herennius Severus (fl. 141) wished to install in his library—was that of Catius Insuber: see Shackelton Bailey, op. cit. (n.100), 379, and I. Marchesi, The Art of Pliny's Letters: A Poetics of Allusion in the Private Correspondence (2008), 204, n.94.
to a family of Roman citizens who emigrated to Spain and then returned—a theory supported by Catullus’ jibes at Egnatius’ Spanish habits. The lack of his works’ preservation to any meaningful extent makes understanding Egnatius’ activities and scholarship difficult, but a reference by Cicero to his works in *Orat* 161 permits us to place his activities sometime before 46 B.C. His writings are presently only extant in two fragments, but they share the same aim of Lucretius’ works: to explicate Epicurean doctrines through Latin prose. Indeed, his writings even share the same title as Lucretius’ work, being called *De Rerum Natura*.

V WHY WAS ROMAN EPICUREANISM SUCCESSFUL?

As we have seen, Epicureanism could count upon (at the very least) voiced support from of a strong base of elite Roman adherents, and their presence is all the more revealing when we compare this with our inability to cite similarly large followings of rival philosophies. The


104 Catullus *Carm.* 37.


106 D. Obbink, *Paradosis and Survival* (1999), 123, suggests that the authority gained by Lucretius’ work might have led to the phrase ‘de rerum natura’ becoming the standardised title for similar literary efforts, a possibility highlighted by the similar title that was issued regarding Catius Insuber’s work, as noted above.

107 D. N. Sedley, ‘The School, from Zeno to Arius Didymus’, in B. Inwood (ed), *The
diffusion of Epicureanism throughout Roman society at this time can be further demonstrated by noting the example of Asclepiades (129/124-40 B.C.), a physician from Bithynia who introduced a form of medicine to Rome that was dependent upon Epicurean atomism and materialism.\textsuperscript{108}

After presenting this evidence, we are perhaps in a position to be more sympathetic to one particular declaration from Cicero, who, through metonymy, bemoans the contemporary popularity of Epicureanism vis-à-vis Stoicism:

Others have opined that, the life of honor ought to be combined with the life of pleasure, glibly yoking together a pair that are sure to kick each other out of the traces. While those who say, 'No, the way to glory leads straight through the land of toil and self-sacrifice,' hear their words resound in almost empty lecture-halls.\textsuperscript{109}

\textit{itaque alii voluptatis causa omnia sapientes facere dixerunt, neque ab hac orationis turpitudine eruditi homines refugerunt; alii cum voluptate dignitatemconiungendum}

putaverunt, ut res maxime inter se repugnantis dicendi faculitate coniungerent; illud unum derectum iter ad laudem cum labore qui probaverunt, prope soli iam in scholis sunt relict.

But why was this most apolitical of philosophies successful in attracting members gathered from one of antiquities' most engaged and politically aspiring groups? Some scholars have tried to explain the philosophy's success by connecting it with the larger political narrative of the time. Proponents of this view argue that the political wars and proscriptions that scarred the last two generations of the Republic allowed the anti-political dogma of Epicureanism resonate with the zeitgeist of the age.110 This often-briefly-stated solution seems to both neatly explain the remarkable success of Roman Epicureanism as well as explain its chronological variance, revealing why the appeal of Epicurean allegiance waned once Roman society bedded down into the Principate. However, the danger with answers that seem to provide such comprehensive and obvious resolutions is that they often fail to prompt scholars to further evaluate or deliberate regarding the validity of these hypotheses. In this instance, this is unfortunate because once a catalogue of Roman Epicureans from the Late Republic has been assembled, the theory's proposed explanatory power starts to look less and less tenable. While some Romans doubtlessly were attracted to Epicureanism because of its apolitical stance—and in this regard, we note that Atticus and Paetus did not have political careers that we can point to—this was not the prevailing characteristic of Roman Epicureanism devotees. Remarkably, most of the Roman Epicureans we know of, and from whose existence we can judge the success of the philosophy, were active politicians or were entrepreneurs engaged in the politics of euergetism. Indeed, much of the evidence from Cicero's writings in fact comes from, or references, Epicureans who

were in dialogue about their philosophical orientation while they were stationed in army
camps fighting in one of antiquity's most politically decisive wars. From what we can tell, it
seems that members of educated elite Roman society were not Epicureans because of the
philosophy's strictures against political life; rather, they were Epicureans in spite of it, a
fact that before had been taken to imply they were particularly lax in their compliance with
their supposed Epicurean beliefs.

Others, meanwhile, have suggested that Epicureanism's ability to reduce its key
teachings into simple, codified tenets would have had special appeal to Romans of this
generation. Cicero's writings again provide an important source of reflection upon this

111 It is significant in this regard to note Josephus' (A.D. 37-100) comments in A. J. 19.1.32
about the Epicurean senator during the time of Caligula who 'had gone through nearly all
magistracies' but who 'in other respects was an Epicurean and therefore was one who practised a
Books XVI-XVII*, Loeb Classical Library (1963), 231: καὶ Ἰονὰρ Πομπήιος συγκλητικός μεν,
ἀναρρήτους δὲ διεληλυθὼς σχεδὸν νὰπίσας Ἑπικούρειος δὲ ἄλλως καὶ δι' ἀυτὸ ἀπρόσμονος
ἐπιτηδευτήκειν.

112 Both Roskam, op. cit. (n.45) passim, as well as J. Fish, 'Not all Politicians are
Sisyphus: What Roman Epicureans Were Taught About Politics', in Fish and Sanders, op. cit.
(n.56), argue for the understood flexibility of the Epicurean prohibition on engaging in
political activity.

113 J. Scarborough, 'Roman Medicine to Galen', *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Romischen
Welt* 37.1 (1993), 3-48, at 27, opines that it was 'probable that Roman intellectuals in the Late
Republic were much more inclined to be interested in Epicurean-style philosophy, evinced by
Lucretius' magnificent poem "De rerum natura" (before 55 B.C.), than in sophistries of
Stoicism—in spite of Cicero's loudly-voiced exception'. As well, Morford, op. cit. (n.18), 99,
comments that 'the doctrines of this school seemed easier to grasp than some of the nuanced
renderings of their competitors; and Epicurean prescriptions were less demanding than
(though no proponent of this view, to my knowledge, has appealed to this passage for support) when he directly links the familiarity of Epicureanism among the public with the simplicity of its message:

Now, Epicurus, in my view, does not set out to avoid speaking plainly and directly. Nor is his subject difficult, like the physicist's, or technical, like the mathematician's. Rather it is a clear and straightforward topic, widely familiar to the public.\textsuperscript{114}

\textit{Epicurus autem, ut opinor, nec non vult, si possit, plane et aperte loqui, nec de re obscura, ut physici, aut artificiosa, ut mathematici, sed de illustri et facili et iam in vulgus pervagata loquitur.}

However, another factor that should be integrated into any understanding of the success of Roman Epicureanism is a more pragmatic one: that the Romans reacted most positively towards a philosophy that ardently tried to obtain their allegiance. In part, this component of Epicureanism's success has been obscured by the lack of attention spent on collating the sources that would reveal this phenomenon (with concentration usually only given to Philodemus and Lucretius and occasionally Siro). But the legitimacy of this proposal is surely demonstrated when we consider the number of Epicurean proponents who are recorded as devoting themselves to explicating Epicureanism on Roman soil, from one the first recorded presences of philosophers on the Italian peninsula—the exiled Epicureans Alceus and Philscus—to the Epicurean scholars Philodemus, Siro, Pompilius, and Catius, as well as the didactic poets Lucretius,
Egnatius, and Varius. This coterie of Italian-based Epicurean exponents is remarkable. Through their concentrated presence and their fecund production of literature, both in Greek and Latin, it seems that they shared a compulsion to spread Epicurean philosophy to the educated Roman society that surrounded them.