Epicurus' Last Will and Testament

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I: Epicurus to Pythocles: Greetings:

Kleon has brought me your letter in which you show your affection for us and worthily repay us for our concern for you. In it you tried sincerely to rehearse the arguments which have as their aim the life of happiness; and you asked me to send you a concise outline of my reasoning concerning the phenomena of the heavens as a help to keep these doctrines in mind. Elsewhere, you say, you found these matters difficult to remember even though, as you tell us, you study them constantly. (*ad Pyth.* 84)

Pythocles' difficulties with Epicurus' teaching concerning *ta meteora* cannot now be fully appreciated, except perhaps by the student of the considerable fragments of Book XI of his Περὶ Φύσεως. To judge from the language of the *Letter to Pythocles* requests such as those of Pythocles were prompted by a manner of presentation which Epicurus seems to characterize as lacking concision, order, and clarity of outline.

Except for what has survived in Book X of Diogenes Laertius and the *Gnomologium Vaticanum*, Epicurus' philosophy seems a private and esoteric affair. For a great part of his career he seems to have written in and for a small group of fellow philosophers — συμφιλοσοφοῦντες he calls them,[1] and all that has now been recovered of his philosophy from Herculaneum — fragments of his letters and *On Nature* — centers on his private concerns and those of his fellow philosophers. His very language bears the marks of an isolated and esoteric philosophical dialect which was current in Epicurus' garden early in the 3rd century B.C. and understood and spoken there and then, but which is now dead because of its apparent lack of con-

[1] Epicurus himself uses the word only in his last will and testament (D. L. X 16.10—21.11). The term is hardly new with him (cf. Aristotle, *EN* IX 12), but the concentration of compounds in συν in his will and in later Epicurean writings is an indication of the kind of philosophical family he had gathered about him. Later, members of this family (τούς γε [κ]ατὰ τὴν οἰκ[ίαν] ἅπαντας) are distinguished from τῶν ἔξωθεν, *Pap. Herc.* 1232 (Vogliano) fr. 8.6—9. In Philodemus' περὶ Παρρησίας (Olivieri) we hear of οἱ. συσχολάζοντες, I 75.4 and 79.1—4; in his *Rhetoric* (Sudhaus) he speaks of a method of inquiry through question and answer (ὁ συζητητικὸς τρόπος) I. 241. This method is not new with the Epicureans nor distinctive of them, but rather characteristic; cf. *SV* 74.

nection with Greek as it was used and spoken outside of Epicurus' garden[2].

The *On Nature* resembles Epicurus' most esoteric writings — his letters — in that it was meant for only a few and written within a context of familiarity which presupposes much that we shall never recover. It is an esoteric work, written over a long period of time[3]; it reflects not so much Epicurus' attempt to present a coherent and ordered account of the nature of things as his concern for justifying and securing his physiology in terms of the controversies which preceded it and called it into being. To judge from the fragments of its 37 books, Epicurus addressed his most ambitious work to a small circle of disciples and associates. In parts, the *On Nature* seems to record the discussions of Epicurus and his closest associates. Its language is highly technical and its argument presupposes a knowledge of matters known within the circle of the φίλοι, but not outside. Phrases such as [φλεβ]οποαλίαν [ὃ] ἡμεῖς λέγομεν [πόλσι]ν (*Epicuro* [33] 21.4—10) make it plain that Epicurus is addressing his thought to a group with a language of its own — a philosophical dialect known to a few, but not widely current. The very presence of anonymous polemic and sarcasms like τις τ[ῶ]ν δίων (*Epicuro* [24] 43.23) show that the issues around which the *On Nature* revolves were well enough known to those for whom it was meant. They are issues too which were not settled into any organized doc-

[2] Arrighetti's characterization of the language of Epicurus' long treatment of the problem of freedom of thought and action as "veramente un testo da iniziati" (*Epicuro* 570) is accurate for almost all of Epicurus' esoteric writings and reproduces in fact the essentials of Aristophanes' criticism of Epicurus' language as λέξις ἰδιωτάτη (*D.L.* X 13). Usener (*praef.* xlii) and Schmid (*RAC* 5 [1961] cols. 709—711) distinguish between Epicurus' "esoteric" and "exoteric" styles. In their difficulties and design, the *Letters to Herodotus* and *Pythocles* seem to stand halfway between the garden and the outside world. Practically, such a distinction has been borne out in the history of the survival of Epicurus' vast literary activity. The esoteric writings survive by accident in the library of Piso at Herculaneum; the exoteric in Diogenes Laertius.

[3] Like the letters of Epicurus' epistolary, the separate books of *On Nature* were dated by Athenian archon years. Of the 37 rolls which compose this book, subscriptions are preserved for nine and dates for only two. Book XV was written in the archonship of Hegemachus (300/299): Book XXVIII in that of Nicias — "the Nicias who followed Antiphates as archon" (296/295). Such a clarification makes it certain that in their present form the subscriptions of *On Nature* do not go back to Epicurus himself. The dates for these two books seem to be the basis (with Epicurus' establishment in Athens) for Steckel's dating of *On Nature* to ca. 306—292, *RE Supplementband* XI (1968) 588—589.

trine. Often a topic is left in suspense with the promise of a fuller treatment later on in the books that follow[4].

Despite his stern demand for clarity and insistance on using words in their most obvious meaning, Epicurus uses many words which could have had no obvious meaning since they were freshly coined; as Wilamowitz said, he "revels" in new formations[5]. His reader encounters a suprisingly dense concentration of technical terms and highly abstract expressions. Suspended in an involved syntax appear words which are either *hapax legomena*, new to Greek, or new in the sense Epicurus gives them[6]. Epicurus insisted on words being interpreted in their immediate sense (τὸ πρῶτον ἐννόημα, *ad Hdt.* 38.1); but, for the reader outside of Epicurus' circle, what could have been the first notion called up by a term such as ὁ ἐξωστικὸς τρόπος (*Epicuro* [23] 43.3), or a description like "the condition of the nature (of the soul, that is) being unsuspended" (τὸ μὴ αἰωρούμενον τῆς φύσεως, *Epicuro* [31] 17.5)? Οὐσιωδὴς σύγκρισις (*Epicuro* [27] 22.9), it seems, might have evoked the fundamental notion underlying it only for the reader familiar with Aristotle's σύνθετος οὐσία[7].

Like his book *On Nature*, Epicurus' letters, or Πραγματεῖαι as they were known to Philodemus, were written within a closed context of familiarity. When Epicurus writes that a letter is meant κ[αὶ κ]οινῆ[ι κ]αὶ ἰδ[ί]αι (*Epicuro* [52]), he has in mind an audience first of the friend to whom he had written and then the circle of his friends, but not the world at large. In one of his letters preserved in Seneca, he writes to one of his fellow philosophers (*consors studiorum*) that he has only one audience in mind: *haec ego non multis, sed tibi; satis enim magnum alter alteri theatrum sumus* (*Ep.* 7.11).

The initimate nature of Epicurus' thought and friendships becomes clearer from the personal details of his letters and even from

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[4] *Epicuro* [23] 51. 5—9; [24] 45.6—13; [29] 21.1—10. [31], the book on the problem of necessity, appears to have been more self contained to judge from 33.4—10.

[5] "Er schwelgt in Neubildungen", *Gnomon* 5 (1929) 465.

[6] Like Zeno, *advena quidam et ignobilis opifex verborum* (*SVF* I 33—35), Epicurus was attacked for his many new words and styled a barbarian — apparently by Poseidonius (*Us.* 89.18—29); cf. Plutarch, *Against Colotes* 1116 E.

[7] So the term is explained by Schmid in his *Epikurs Kritik der platonischen Elementenlehre* (Leipzig 1936) 18. Epicurus' meaning is quite different from Aristotle's and seems to be an innovation created to describe what Lucretius calls the *maxima membra mundi*.

the treatment of the philosophical questions to which the single books of *On Nature* were devoted. The problems to which Epicurus responds in his letters are in the main personal, but involve in their humble level the larger and lasting concerns of his philosophical thought. In a letter preserved on the wall of the stoa in Oenoanda which Diogenes had inscribed with the gospel of Epicurus, we probably have Epicurus' response to his mother's troubled dreams and fears for her distant son. Epicurus appeals to his doctrine of *eidola* and tells his mother to cheer up: "these apparitions do not bode that we are suffering any evil[8]."

Book XXVIII of the *On Nature* seems to be the record of a discussion between Epicurus and Metrodorus. Despite the somewhat incongruous appeals to Metrodorus (ὦ Μητρόδωρε), it is plain from its fragments that Epicurus composed this book in response to his fellow philosopher's embarrassment in countering the clever arguments and spoiling questions of the Megarians. Here it is the pressure of arguments like that known as ὁ συγκεκαλυμμένος πατήρ that brings Epicurus to reassert his doctrines of thought and language and to provide Metrodorus with a method of argument and criticism which should allow him to go back and face the nettling questions of the Megarians[9]: "We should then rely on these indications and perceive distinctions, and if we follow this procedure in all our arguments we shall not have to look foolish in any particular question" (*Epicuro* [29] 19.26—20.2).

The book ends with an indication of the intimacy of the discussions out of which it grew (τὰ ἐμοί [τε] καὶ Μητροδώρῳ τῷ[δ'ὡμολογ] ημένα) and a cavalier recognition of the diffuse, casual, and inconclusive nature of Epicurus' record of these discussions: [ἱκ]ανῶ[ς] οὖν ἡμῖν ἡδολεσχήσθω ἐπὶ τοῦ παρόντος (*Epicuro* [29] 20.30—21.2).

According to its subscription (or title), Book XXVIII of the *On Nature* was composed during the archonship of Nicias 296/95[10].

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[8] *Epicuro* [65] 21—23.

[9] *Epicuro* [29] 17.16; the argument about the "shrouded father" is identified by Diogenes as an argument of the "sorites" type, developed by Euboulides of Megara, D. L. II 108. The tradition of Epicurus' attempt to counter the *praestigia* of the dialecticians in Cicero's *Academica* II 14.45—16.49 might go back to this book of his *On Nature*. Epicurus also wrote a separate tract against the Megarians (D. L. X 27) and Metrodorus went on to write another against the dialecticians (D. L. X 24).

[10] The subscription reads: [ἐκ τ]ῶν ἀρχαί[ων] | ἐγ[ρ]άφη ἐπὶ Νικίου τοῦ μ[ετ]ὰ 'Α[ντι]φάτην and poses the question of the meaning of the phrase ἐκ τῶν ἀρχαίων.

Epicurus was then 45 and had been established in Athens for just over a decade (since the summer of 306). When he completed the last of the remaining books of the treatise *On Nature* cannot be determined with as much certainty. The only other book whose date is preserved by its subscription is XV which was written in the archonship of Hegemachus (300/299).

If it is no longer possible to reconstruct in detail and year by year the development of Epicurus' thought, the character of a crucial shift in his presentation of his thought can be determined with certainty. This development might well have had antecedents, such as a scrap from a letter to Timocrates (*Epicuro* [84]), which makes its appearance in the *Letter to Herodotus* the more dramatic for their now being lost. This important letter carries no date, which is regretable, since together with Lucretius' poem it affords us our most complete and coherent evidence for Epicurus' physiology. There is only the conjectural assumption suggested by its opening (35.1—3) that it was written after Epicurus' had completed his *On Nature* and some of his longer books and before the *Letter to Pythocles* which looks back to it as ἡ μικρὰ ἐπιτομή (85.7). Between 300/299 and 296/295 Epicurus completed 14 books (XV—XXVIII) of the *On Nature* which leaves 9 books to complete the collection. If Epicurus' pace of writing was even, and probably it was not, the year in which he finished his treatise *On Nature* might be put near to the end of the 290s[11]. But these dates are clearly elastic and can expand or contract. All a history of Epicurus' intellectual career can reasonably indicate is that at some point well on in this career, perhaps some time in the second decade of the third century, perhaps before, Epicurus came to the realization that his positive teaching was difficult to disengage from the polemical context in which it had been formed and refined. Perhaps this realization is commemorated in his saying that the "wise man will be dogmatic" (D.L. X 121b7).

Both the letters to Pythocles and Herodotus register Epicurus' awareness that if his philosophy was to leave its lasting mark on all those who were eager to master it as their means to a life of happiness, he would have to present this teaching in a new and memorable form. The three letters preserved by Diogenes Laertius, the conden-

[11] In his *RE* article (note 3) 583, Steckel dates Pythocles' death to 290. This might afford a fixed point in the chronology of Epicurus' writings, but I have not been able to discover any evidence for this date.

sation of thought which is set out in the epitomes[12], and the Κύριαι Δόξαι, all witness a stage of development initiated with Epicurus' realization that a new form of writing was necessary to make his teaching accessible and permanently useful to those who were willing to master it. His polemical ardor begins to cool, but does not grow cold; one of his epitomes was characteristically a condensation of his tracts against the physicists (*D.L.* X 27).

Cicero used the word *dumeta* to describe Epicurus' polemical style (*N.D.* I 24.68) and Epicurus himself, although he does not speak of thickets, admits that his earlier exposition of his thought on atmosperic phenomena was neither clear in its outline, nor concise, nor easy to remember. How then did he reduce the complex and diffuse thought of his esoteric writings into a σύντομον καὶ εὐπερίγραφον διαλογισμόν? Epicurus must have asked himself this question. Its answer is near at hand, although it has not been sought. He turns to a manner of organization and presentation very much like that of the so-called στοιχειώσεις of the IV century. His *Letter to Herodotus* was the first, and for centuries it remained the closest, philosophical analogue to the *Elements* of a contemporary known as the στοιχειωτής. In his concern to give his doctrine the stamp that would make it memorable, he returns to some of the ὑποθῆκαι of early Greek moral thought. The refinement and organization of his physiology he called a στοιχείωσις — a term first attested in Greek from his *Letter to Herodotus*. In its aims and in its method of securing and systematizing what had been won in the polemic of the earlier treatises, it answers very closely to the requirements for the *stoicheiosis* of geometry as Proclus articulated them for the codification of thought represented in Euclid's *Elements*[13]. In 10 elementary propositions of his *Letter to Herodotus*, Epicurus presented his though on nature in its essentials, clearly, and comprehensively.

In his last will and testament, Epicurus made provisions that his garden be given over to Hermarchus, his fellow philosophers and

[12] None of these epitomes has survived except for the *Letter to Herodotus*. The evidence for the so-called "Great Epitome" comes from the *scholia* embedded in the *Letter to Herodotus*. These reveal that it set out the arguments for at least two of the master propositions of the *Letter to Herodotus*: cf. 39.7; 40.8; 73.6.

[13] *In primum Euclidis Elementorum Commentarii* (Friedlein) 73.25—74.9. The association between Epicurus' *stoicheiosis* and that of Euclid is made by De Witt, *Epicurus and his Philosophy* (Minneapolis 1954) 45, but Proclus' description of the *stoicheioseis* culminating in Euclid makes any claim of a direct influence of Euclid on Epicurus problematic.

successors (*D.L.* X 17). On his death bed he urged his friends to remember his doctrines (μέμνησθε τὰ δόγματα). Well before his death he had made the careful dispositions which would make this possible. The letters and Κύριαι Δόξαι preserved in Diogenes Laertius were written as another kind of final disposition, not that of his few real possessions and obligations, but that of his δόγματα. The *Letter to Pythocles* reflects Epicurus' awareness of the difficulties of his earlier writings. One of Pythocles' main difficulties was that Epicurus' writings on atmospheric phenomena were hard to remember and reconstruct. His word seems to have been δυσμνημόνευτα. Its opposite is εὐμνημόνευτα which Aristotle had defined in his treatise *On Memory* as ὅσα τάξιν τινὰ ἔχει, ὥσπερ τὰ μαθηματικά. Careless writing, by contrast, is hard to memorize: τὰ δὲ φαῦλα χαλεπῶς (*De Mem.* 452a). To make his meteorology accessible to Pythocles, Epicurus attempted to present his thought in an orderly manner. Before, to judge from *On Nature* XI, it had been polemical, diffuse, and discursive.

Of the three letters that to Herodotus is the most explicit on Epicurus' motives for drawing up his philosophical testament. From the opening paragraph it emerges that Epicurus conceived of this *stoicheiosis* or elementary presentation of his physical doctrines as useful to two, or strictly three[14], groups of readers, and that it was designed to make his physiology and the calm which it had as its end accessible to a following larger than the fellow philosophers. To read the letter to refer to two separate and distinct epitomes is to lose sight of its conclusion and worse, of the character and purpose

[14] Bailey followed Giussani in interpreting the epitome referred to in *ad Hdt.* 35.3 as the "Great Epitome", *Epicurus: The Extant Remains* (Oxford 1926) 174. Strictly the first paragraph of the *Letter to Herodotus* speaks of three kinds of reader: those who cannot study in detail the longer works (35.1); those who have made sufficient progress in the study on nature (35.7); and those who have mastered it (36.5); at the end of the letter these two last groups collapse into one (83.8). If Epicurus had two separate epitomes in mind, his Greek should indicate as much. As his letter now stands the two groups for which separate epitomes were meant are not clearly distinguished. καὶ . . . δέ (35.7) makes it clear that Epicurus wrote the *Letter to Herodotus* with two main groups of reader in mind. Giussani's supplement of καὶ δὴ καί, *Studi lucreziani* (Turin 1896) 7, note 7, suggests the awkwardness of his interpretation and has no MS authority. Looking to the end of the letter, its double scope is unmistakable from 82.10—83.13; cf. 37.1. Since Epicurus had a considerable range of readers in mind, the *Letter to Herodotus* is neither esoteric nor exoteric, and its difficulties, like those of the *Letter to Pythocles*, are indicative of the compression necessary to a *stoicheiosis*; Epicurus' word for this is πύκνωμα, *ad Hdt.* 36.9.

of the most critical phase in the development and survival of Epicureanism. I give the beginning of the letter in English since the English translations I have turned to for help fail to convey the precise sense of Epicurus' Greek. This Greek is difficult and symptomatic of its difficulty are a dismaying array of textual difficulties. The passages which stand out in italics represent a decision on how the Greek of the letter might have read. A new and severe edition of this letter — properly entitled *La lettre d'Épicure* — shows how much easier it has been to reject a MS. tradition than to refuse a tradition of scholarship that emends it[15].

Herodotus, for those who are unable to study in its detail each of my separate treatments of physical matters or to examine with care my more extensive writings, I have prepared an epitome of my philosophy as a whole with an eye to presenting my most general views at least so that they can be properly grasped and remembered. My aim has been to enable my readers to come to their own aid in the most critical matters and on any occasion in so far as they have made progress in the understanding of nature. Those too who have made sufficient progress in the theoretical view of the general truths of nature should memorize the outline of my entire philosophy as I have reduced it to elementary form. For often we stand in need of general concepts, less so of concepts bearing on particular problems. We need to return to these general concepts constantly, but need to memorize only as much as will enable us to form a master conception which can be applied to cases and clear up those problems calling for their particular explanation. This is possible only once the most general scheme of my philosophy has been mastered and memorized.

And even for the student who has mastered the study of nature the ability to summon up rapidly his concepts is of critical importance, and *this is impossible unless* what he knows has been reduced to elementary propositions (στοιχειώματα) and simple formulas[16]. For there can be no adequate condensation of the complete round (περιόδεια) of my general teaching if it fails to encompass in concise formulations the possible explanations of matters of detail as well.

Given then the usefulness of such a method for all those who have gained some experience in the study of nature, *I have drawn up for you* an elementary presention (στοιχείωσιν) of my general doctrines in the form of an epitome. *Since my life has gained its calm in the constant study of nature, I pass on this watchword to you*[17].

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[15] Jean and Mayotte Bollack and Heinz Wismann, *La lettre d'Épicure* (Paris 1971), especially 11—37.

[16] *Even for the student* . . . The text given in *La lettre d'Épicure* preserves the reading of the *Parisinus:* τοῦ τετελεσιουργημένου. which is taken with ἀκριβώματος and translated "precision accomplie". Καί (36.5) remains untranslated. Von der Muehll's emendation τῷ τετελεσιουργημένῳ gives the sense translated above and reiterated in 83.7—10.

This is impossible unless . . . supplying with Diano ⟨τοῦτο ἀδύνατον μὴ πάντων⟩ at 36.7, *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa* 12 (1943) 117.

[17] *I have drawn up for you* . . . reading, with Usener ἐποίησά σοι at 37.5. The last sentence is extremely dubious.

II: This letter has survived precisely because it served the purpose for which it was written. Diogenes Laertius reproduces it, along with the letters to Pythocles and Menoeceus, as Epicurus' condensation of his entire philosophy (ἐν αἷς πᾶσαν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ φιλοσοφίαν ἐπιτέτμηται X 29). As for Epicurus' physiology, Diogenes reports that it was to be found in the 37 books of his *On Nature* and in his letters κατὰ στοιχεῖον — "laid out element by element" (X 30). In the *Letter to Herodotus* there are nine elementary propositions which Epicurus lays down as the foundation for an understanding of nature (45.1—2). Significantly all are translated into the first two books of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, and Lucretius' translation of Epicurus' axiom of change makes it virtually certain that this proposition is also a *stoicheioma* (54.3—6 = II 748—752). If this is one of Epicurus' *stoicheiomata* it counts as the tenth of twelve which he seems to have set out in a book with the title Αἱ Δώδεκα Στοιχειώσεις (44.9 Σ). It is placed among them by the scholiast to the *Letter to Herodotus*[18]. These 10 *stoicheiomata* of the *Letter to Herodotus*, together with the first two remedies of Epicurus' τετραφάρμακος (ΚΔ I and II) they are the only originals in Epicurus' Greek (as much of it as survives) which have been translated into the Latin of the *De Rerum Natura*. Given the terms of Epicurus' last will and testament, it is proper to see Lucretius, and not Hermarchus, as his principal beneficiary.

The ten *stoicheiomata* are:

Letter to Herodotus	*De Rerum Natura*
1. Nothing comes into being out of nothing. 38.8—39.1	I 145—150, 159—160
2. Nothing is reduced to nothing. 39.1—2	I 215—218, 237
3. The universe always was as it is and always will be. 39.2—5	II 294—307; V 359—363
4. The universe is made up of bodies and void. 39.6—40.2	I 418—428

[18] This same *Scholion* connects the Epicurean axiom of change with the nine other *stoicheiomata* set out early in the *Letter to Herodotus*, 44.6—10. The syllogistic form of this axiom is also distinctive and characteristic of Epicurus' manner of presenting the *stoicheiomata*.

5. Bodies are atoms and their compounds.
   40.7—9 I 483—486
6. The universe is infinite.
   41.6—10 I 958—964, 1001
7. Atoms are infinite in number and space extends without limit.
   41.11—42.4 I 1008—1020
8. Atoms of similar shape are infinite in number, but the variety of their shapes is indefinite, not infinite.
   42.10—43.4 II 522—527
9. Atomic motion is constant and of two kinds.
   43.5—44.1 II 95—102 (I 952)
10. Atoms share only three of the characteristics of sensible things: shape, weight, mass.
    54.3—6 II 748—752

Στοιχεῖον (*elementum*) is the basis of the term which Epicurus used to describe the manner in which he presented his physiology to Herodotus. Στοιχείωσις and its product, στοιχειώματα, are terms which were new to Greek (in so far as we know) and first attested in the *Letter to Herodotus*[19]. But the process of reduction, refinement, and simplification which the term *stoicheiosis* describes appears to have been a major trend in the scientific thought of the IV century as it was known to Proclus in the V century A.D. Proclus himself was the author of two *stoicheioseis* — the so-called *Elements of Theology* and the less known Στοιχείωσις Φυσική[20] — apparently the only Greek successor to Epicurus' attempt to reduce his physiology to a number of elementary theoretical propositions (*stoicheiomata*) which interlock in a systematic account of the nature of things. Proclus' introduction to the most influential *stoicheiosis* of the ancient world brings the special terms of Epicurus' letter into their proper focus and sets the most important phase in the deve-

[19] *Ad Hdt.* 37.4. For other *stoicheioseis* see E. R. Dodds, *Proclus: The Elements of Theology* (Oxford 1963) xi and 186 and von Arnim on Hierocles' Στοιχείωσις Ἠθική, *BKT* IV (1906) xiii.

[20] Ed. Helmut Boese, *Die mittelalterliche Übersetzung der* Στοιχείωσις Φυσική *des Proclus* (Berlin 1958).

lopment and transmission of his thought into the context which makes it most readily intelligible.

To begin with the most elementary — the term *stoicheion* itself. Aristotle had made it clear from his analysis of the term (Met. Δ 1014b) that its primitive meaning of the irreducible (or atomic) units out of which compounds are formed and back into which compounds are reduced was capable of extension to the fundamental demonstrations of logic (αἱ πρῶται ἀποδείξεις). By extension then whatever is unitary and small and capable of many applications comes to be called an "element".

Although he seems to have avoided the primitive meaning of the word for the most elementary facts of the physical world (except in his account of his physiology to the young Pythocles), Epicurus did use the term in its wider sense and much as it was defined by Aristotle. In his *Letter to Herodotus* Epicurus describes his definition of velocity as a *stoicheion*. His language makes it plain that he regarded the nine propositions set out earlier in the letter as *stoicheia*: βράδους . . . καὶ τάχους ἀντικοπὴ καὶ οὐκ ἀντικοπὴ ὁμοίωμα λαμβάνει· χρήσιμον δὴ καὶ τοῦτο κατασχεῖν στοιχεῖον (46.9—10; 47.7). καὶ δὴ τοῦτο looks back to the *stoicheiomata* and their usefulness[21].

Στοιχείωμα is a distinctive term in Epicurus and one which survived in the language of his school[22]. It is formed from *stoicheion* and presupposes it. Like Epicurus' many and wonderful abstracts in *-ma*, it described the result or outcome of a process (στοιχείωσις/καταστοιχειοῦσθαι) of reducing a complex mass of doctrine to the elementary simplicity and integrity of its constituent and basic conceptions. A *stoicheioma* is not a *stoicheion*. It is something which has been fashioned into a *stoicheion* and this process of reduction is a *stoicheiosis* (*ad Hdt.* 37.5).

The results of his *stoicheiosis* are described variously by Epicurus: they are ἁπλᾶ στοιχειώματα brought together and refined in simple formulations[23]. Or, as Epicurus stands back to contemplate his *stoicheiosis* at a distance, he sees the outline or map of his entire

[21] Cf. Lucretius I 330—331; *ad Hdt.* 37.1; *ad Pyth.* 85.2; and Philodemus, *Rhetoric* II 288.9—17.

[22] Philodemus, *Rhetoric* I 140.40; I 141.15—18; I 104.29—34 where μέθοδοι and στοιχειώσεις καθολικαί appear together.

[23] Simplicius' statement of a like matter is much the same: δῆλον ὅτι τὰ ἁπλᾶ πρὸς στοιχείωσιν ἐπιτήδεια, *In Aristotelis Categorias* (Kalbfleish, Berlin 1907) 13.28. The verb συνάγω might convey Epicurus' care in refining the language of his *stoicheiomata* to its sharpest edge; cf. Diogenes of Arcesilaus, IV 33, and Proclus of Euclid (Friedlein) 74.2.

philosophy as he has reduced it to its simple elements: τὸν τύπον τῆς ὁλῆς πραγματείας τὸν κατεστοιχειωμένον (35.8)[24]. He also speaks of a condensation (πύκνωμα) comprising the unbroken round of his fundamental doctrines (36.9). The term here translated, with some hesitation, as "round" is περιοδεία. It has been taken to describe the flight of the mind to a point where it can gain a vantage over all of nature[25], but it is much more likely that Epicurus used the word as it is used by Aeneas Tacticus for the round or patrol of the strong points of a fortified city. Although he reminded his followers that because of death they inhabited an unwalled city (*SV* 31), Epicurus took great pains to surround his garden with walls to protect these followers from the doubts and turmoils of life. This is the security Epicurus meant to provide by his last will and testament. It is something best described by one of its principal beneficiaries:

> nil dulcius est, bene quam munita tenere
> edita doctrina sapientum templa serena,
> despicere unde queas alios passimque videre
> errare atque viam palantis quaerere vitae.
>
> II 7—10

Each of the terms of Epicurus' philosophical testament requires careful interpretation, but taken massively the first paragraphs of the *Letter to Herodotus* show that Epicurus in ordering, condensing

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[24] The terms τύπος and ὁλοσχερής help Epicurus' reader to a proper understanding of the hypothesis of the letter; so does the adjective εὐπερίγραφος, *ad Pyth.* 84.5. Epicurus is set on making clear his main concepts on nature in their distinctive outlines and avoiding a thicket of particulars. In their sense of outline, matrix, or general impression, both τύπος and ὁλοσχερής are opposed to ἀκρίβεια; cf. Aristotle, *NE* 1104a1—10 and more remotely, Plato, *Republic* 414 A; and Strabo II 1.41: II 1.30. Ἐναποσφραγίζω, a term Epicurus shared with the Stoics, explains τύπος and the physical basis of Epicurus' *stoicheiosis;* cf. *ad Hdt.* 49.2; Lucretius IV 297; and Diano (note 16) 112 and *GCIF* 22 (1941) 9—11 for a more elaborate discussion.

[25] De Witt (note 13) 110 understands Epicurus to describe by περιοδεία what Plato described by περίοδος in *Phaedrus* 247 D, and seems to have some support in sources as diverse as Lucretius and the bishop Dionysius of Alexandria; cf. R. M. Jones in *CP* 21 (1926) 111—113. But against this interpretation of *periodeia* as a tour of the universe is the language of Epicurus himself; cf. *ad Hdt.* 83.10; and *ad Pyth.* 85.6. *Periodeia* is most naturally explained as a round of activity, especially that of a patrol making the rounds of a fortified city; cf. Aeneas Tacticus (Schöne) I iii, xxii, xxvi; and Strabo, IX 3.1; Philodemus, *Rhetoric* I 248; II 53; *Methods of Inference* (Phillip and Estelle De Lacy) XXXV. 6 with note. The *stoicheiomata* are then the stations in the round of Epicurus' physical doctrines.

and refining his earlier thought, fashioned a *stoicheiosis* whose aim is elegantly, if not completely expressed by the requirements Proclus found perfectly fulfilled in Euclid's *Elements*. A passage from Proclus' introduction to the first book of Euclid does not set out all that Epicurus required of his own *stoicheiosis*, but it deserves study for bringing Epicurus closer to his contemporaries, especially the geometers of the IV century who were at work securing and refining the work of their predecessors. Such an alignment might well seem odd, if not bizarre. A Stoic claimed that the Epicureans never stirred up the "learned dust" (*eruditus pulver*) of geometry[26], which goes too far. Such an alignment will not make Epicurus seem a physiologist among geometers. But in his concern for the methodic ordering and presentation of his thought, it does make him a geometer among physiologists.

Proclus' requirements are four. In some points his language is that of Epicurus[27]:

> Such a treatise ought to be free of everything superfluous, for that is a hindrance to learning; the selections chosen must all be coherent and conducive to the end proposed, in order to be of the greatest usefulness for knowledge; it must devote great attention both to clarity and to conciseness, for what lacks these qualities confuses our understanding; it ought to aim at the comprehension of its theorems in a general form, for dividing one's subject too minutely and teaching it by bits make knowledge difficult to attain.

These terms reflect those of the letters to Herodotus and Pythocles and are revealing for the new form Epicurus gave his doctrines to enable them to reach beyond the *kepos*, the fellow philosophers, and the life of Epicurus himself. They reflect not only Epicurus' intentions for his *stoicheiosis*, most of them, but his judgement of the fundamental shortcomings of the earlier and esoteric works in which he had developed his thought. The new form in which he preserved his philosophy survives in three letters (especially the *stoicheiomata* of the *Letter to Herodotus*) and the Κύριαι Δόξαι.

According to Diogenes, it was the custom of the Epicureans to range their logic (κανονικόν) with their physics. Their logic they described as περὶ κριτηρίου καὶ ἀρχῆς and simply στοιχειωτικόν

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[26] Balbus in *N. D.* II 18.48.

[27] The translation of Proclus 73.25—74.9 is that of Glenn Morrow, *Proclus' Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements* (Princeton 1970) 60—61. Heath's translation of τὰ συνάγοντα in 74.2 as "everything that embraces a science and brings it to a point" would bring Euclid's language closer to that of Epicurus, *The Thirteen Books of Euclid's Elements* (New York 1956) I 115; see note 23 above.

(X 30). In antiquity Epicurus was not renowned as a logician. Because of this perhaps it is now fashionable to repeate the venerable opinion that he had a "profound distrust for logic and abstract rules of thought"[28]. It must seem strange then that his logic or 'Kanon' was the portal to his physics and his philosophy as a whole (τὸ κανονικὸν ἐφόδους ἐπὶ τὴν πραγματείαν ἔχει, *D.L.* X 30) and that the master propositions of his physics should reflect a concern for a clear demonstration of their validity. The fundamental truths set out in these propositions are something to which there is no *direct* access or witness in our senses. One of the deepest paradoxes of Epicurus' philosophy is that its most fundamental concepts all refer to τὰ ἄδηλα — matters which lie beyond what our senses can report to us; but matters which are of such enormous importance that they alone can properly explain the sensuous world. The *Letter to Pythocles* seems to refer to these propositions as ὅσα μοναχὴν ἔχει συμφωνίαν τοῖς φαινομένοις (86.5).

Thus the Epicurean manner of speaking of the Kanon as στοιχειωτικόν (that part of philosophy which arrives at elementary principles) and περὶ κριτηρίου καὶ ἀρχῆς finds its explanation and justification in Epicurus' concern for urging his reasoning concerning the fundamental truths of nature in conformity with his tests for truth. Diogenes Laertius reports three such *criteria* for Epicurus: our senses, conceptions or 'anticipations' (προλήψεις), feelings, and adds somewhat oddly that the Epicureans added to these a fourth criterion, what they call αἱ φανταστικαὶ ἐπιβολαὶ τῆς διανοίας[29].

In the *Letter to Herodotus* Epicurus provides an approach to his *stoicheiomata* in laying down as their 'foundation' two fundamental rules of his Kanon[30]. The first asks that words be understood in their immediate and clear significance: ἀνάγκη γὰρ τὸ πρῶτον ἐννόημα καθ' ἕκαστον φθόγγον βλέπεσθαι καὶ μηθὲν ἀποδείξεως προσδεῖ-

[28] The language is that of Cyril Bailey, *The Greek Atomists and Epicurus* (New York 1964) 235, whose characterization is at bottom that of Cicero (*Us.* 243).

[29] Oddly since Epicurus himself speaks of these as in some sense a criterion; *ad Hdt.* 50.4; 51.2; ΚΔ XXIV. The difficult passage from the *Letter to Herodotus* is well translated by David Furley, *Two Studies in the Greek Atomists* (Princeton 1967) 206—207.

[30] Diogenes speaks of Epicurus' Kanon as supplying the ἔφοδοι to his physics (X 30) — a term usually translated by "approach". But the term might come from the language of architecture, like *kanon* itself; cf. *IG*² 2 244.98 and the ἔφοδον τῆς κρίσεως in *Polystrati liber incertus* fr. 3, viii (p. 84) which Vogliano (*Epicuri et Epicureorum Scripta* [Berlin 1928] ad loc.) thinks is a quote from Epicurus. The same architectural metaphor re-emerges both in Sextus (182.18 *Us.*) and Lucretius IV 513—521.

σθαι[31]. This first requirement for philosophical thought provides a point of reference or a court of appeal for all matters of opinion, inquiry, or difficulty. The terms which Epicurus uses for this appeal, ἀνάγω and ἀναγωγή, are familiar from philosophical Greek and have a logical application in Aristotle. But they also possess a legal sense which, given the fundamental metaphors informing Epicurus' language for logical matters, might well be present in his choice of words[32]. The claims and perplexities of philosophical thought are ultimately reducible to the immediate and almost atomic clarity of a word's first significance. This is the appeal which justifies three of Epicurus' *stoicheiomata*.

The second rule laid down in the *Letter to Herodotus* also seems to be applicable to matters of opinion, inquiry or difficulty, but its scope is more narrowly limited to two kinds of things — what Epicurus' calls τὸ προσμένον and τὸ ἄδηλον — objects which are remote but which can become clear on a nearer view, and those objects about which the senses can give no accurate report (38.3—8). These general considerations introduce Epicurus' master propositions, all of which concern τὰ ἄδηλα. The criteria to which Epicurus appeals for a decision on the truth of these fundamental propositions are (1) the immediate notion evoked by a word or 'subject'[33] to it, and (2) the evidence of our senses and the other criteria of truth.

One of the most apparent difficulties of the truths of the catechism of the *Letter to Herodotus* is that they are accessible to the mind, not as it makes inferences from appearances, but by virtue of that *something* (the τι of D.L. X 32.10) which is contributed by reasoning. The *archai*, atoms and void, are unknowable from the senses and radically unlike anything accessible to us from the sensuous world. The senses reveal a world of colors, smells, sounds; a world which is defined by horizons, limits, extremes; and a world in which some things appear at rest. But the elements of Epicurus' teaching reveal *nihil desertum praeter spatium et primordia caeca*.

What is striking about the *stoicheiomata* is the form of demonstration Epicurus gave them. All but two are presented with some kind of demonstration, and nine are isolated from the rest of the letter by Epicurus' statement that taken together they provide an

[31] *Ad Hdt.* 38.1; cf. 73.1—5 and Colotes' *In Lysin*, Crönert *Kolotes und Menedemos* 165: ἀλλὰ μὴν ἥ γε πάντων ἡμῶν ὁμιλία ἦν τηρεῖν τοὺς φθόγγους κατὰ τὸ ἐναργές.

[32] LSJ s. v. ἀναγωγή II 6.

[33] Cicero renders this by *vis subiecta vocibus*, *De Fin.* II 2.6.

adequate foundation for the understanding of the natural world (45.1—2). In the rest of the letter Epicurus is content to legislate his physiology and his doctrines are introduced by phrases such as δεῖ δὲ καὶ νομίζειν[34]. The connection between Epicurus' Kanon and the *stoicheiomata* must then be an intimate one. The language which describes the rules of the Kanon suggests that Epicurus thought of himself as laying down the foundations for all thought concerning the nature of things and establishing for physiology a court of ultimate appeal. The two rules from the Kanon which precede the *stoicheiomata* both make them possible and reveal their form.

The first rule concerns the evidence of language; the second the clear testimony of our senses, feelings, and conceptions. Although Epicurus believed that all discourse and argument are riveted to the senses, sensation itself is a witness for only a few of his fundamental doctrines. The senses testify to the truth of one of the twin propositions of *stoicheioma* 4 — that which resolves the universe into bodies and void: σώματα μὲν γὰρ ὡς ἔστιν αὐτὴ ἡ αἴσθησις ἐπὶ πάντων μαρτυρεῖ. The senses also constitute the ultimate test for any reasoning concerning *ta adela* (39.9—10). The phrase ὥσπερ προεῖπον τὸ πρόσθεν at 39.9 is a clear reference back to the second rule of the Kanon (38.2—7) and makes the connection between his logic and physiology apparent.

The question of the existence of the void is taken up in this same *stoicheioma*, but it is one that *aisthesis* cannot settle directly. But sensation can, by its testimony to motion, decide the case against those who deny the existence of the void. In all the senses are direct witnesses to the following propositions: bodies exist [4]; bodies are in motion [4]; seeds are necessary for generation [1]. Sensation is also the ultimate appeal for the constructions of reasoning, which they can either "corroborate" (ἐπιμαρτυροῦσι) or testify against (ἀντιμαρτυροῦσι) or be neutral to (οὐκ ἀντιμαρτυροῦσι).

This is the genius of the most common form of argument adopted in the *stoicheiomata*. Epicurus cannot show the doubter an atom or a patch of void. But a problem can be formulated in terms of a decision between two rival claims to truth. The false claim can be appealed to the test of experience by a simple manoeuvre. Epicurus converts the conclusion of the true claim (the apodosis he presents

[34] In contrast to ὡς ἄρτι ἀπεδείχθη of 45.2 comes the series of δεῖ δὲ καὶ νομίζειν 49.1, καὶ μὴν καὶ τὴν ὀσμὴν νομιστέον 53.8 and the like.

in his *stoicheiomata*) to the *protasis* of its rival by contraposition. Four of his *stoicheiomata* are demonstrated by this kind of argument (1, 2, 3, 7). The hidden advantage of the contrapositive argument is that Epicurus' own teaching is never put directly to the test of his own criteria. By appealing the claims of rival doctrines to the test of his Kanon he wins his point. His own claims are simple declarative sentences; those of his rivals are presented as if clauses unreal for present time.

All of Epicurus' master propositions have a prehistory in Greek thought, but in the *Letter to Herodotus* they are given a new and distinctive form of demonstration which can be displayed as follows:

P (κενὸν ἔστιν);
for (γὰρ) if not P, then not Q (κίνησις).
But Q;
therefore P.

It is possible to translate this figure into the second undemonstrated argument type of Stoic logic[35]. But such a translation, although it was made later by Philodemus and Sextus, is misleading. To account for the demonstration of *stoicheioma* 4 as "if not P then not Q. Q; therefore P" is to disguise the distinctive form Epicurus gave his demonstrations and to sever at a blow their connection with his Kanon. In his physiology Epicurus does not begin with propositions but with statements. And even in the *stoicheiomata* which represent Epicurus' most dogmatic statement of his physiology he remains polemical. It is the pressure of rival interpretations of reality which helps explain the form of the contrapositive proof. One can either accept the truth of Epicurus' conclusions or the absurdities of their rivals[36]. Or more accurately, one can accept Epicurus' conclusions because of the absurdities of their rivals. The test of the truth of the conclusions following from these rival hypotheses presented as conditions contrary to fact in present time hangs on the simple appeal to the rules for truth laid down in the Kanon. In

[35] Cf. Sextus *adv. Math.* VIII 329 (*Us.* 272). In his note to this passage Usener warns against interpreting the form of this argument as that of Epicurus himself. Cf. Philodemus, *Methods* VIII 26; XI 33; XII 14; XIV 11—25; and XXX 35—XXXI. 36 where Philodemus distinguishes between Stoic ἀναστευή and Epicurean analogy.

[36] In his analysis of Colotes' criticism of Democritus, Phillip De Lacy states the matter well by citing Cotta's characterization of Epicurean argument (*N. D.* I 25.69), "Colotes' First Criticism of Democritus", in *Isonomia: Studien zur Gleichheitsvorstellung im griechischen Denken* (Berlin 1964) 70.

four critical cases the senses refute the conclusions rivalling the *stoicheiomata*. Things do not spring up at random — men from the sea and fish from the skies (*stoicheioma* 1); the world has not been dispersed into the void (7); nor annihilated by the restless wasting of matter (2). This is the genius of Epicurus' manner of presenting his positive doctrine and its connection with his Kanon. He has managed to vindicate his doctrine by putting on trial those of his rivals. It is thus possible to speak of the *stoicheiomata* as ὅσα μοναχὴν ἔχει συμφωνίαν τοῖς φαινομένοις.

Earlier in his career, Epicurus had criticised Plato for failing to show that his elementary bodies were atomic: "why, if he supposed these solids to be atomic, did he fail to give a demonstration that atomic bodies exist[37]?" He goes on to ask "but if these bodies are not atomic, why should anyone think that the remaining things are formed from them; these he (Plato) constructs out of any other kind of thing" (*Epicuro* [27] 26.7—10). These unanswered questions constitute the 'archeology' of the *stoicheiosis* of Epicurus' *Letter to Herodotus*. The *stoicheiomata* have their origin in the demands Epicurus made of earlier physiology. If the survival of the world as we know it was to be guaranteed, elementary matter had to be solid, indissoluble, and unchangeable. Earlier theories of the *stoicheia* were inconceivable simply because they had arrived at elements which were plainly not solid and thus divisible and subject to change. None of the four elements which had been considered *stoicheia* could answer to Epicurus' requirements: "how could one suppose water or air or fire (indivisible), since he cannot even suppose that earth is solid and indissoluble[38]"? What has been called the 'catechism' of the *Letter to Herodotus* was formulated to give the only true answers to the unanswered questions of the *On Nature*.

The solutions to three of the problems of the *On Nature* seem to be syllogistic as they appear in the *Letter to Herodotus*, and are familiar from earlier Greek thought. Ultimately, their form is explained by the first of the rules set down in the beginning of the letter. Although they seem syllogistic in their form, Epicurus would have considered them as immediately evident and the form of his demonstration as no more than a way of revealing their evidence: ἀνάγκη

[37] *Epicuro* [27] 26.3—6, apparently in spite of *Timaeus* 54 D — 56 C: but as Schmid points out, Plato's εἴδη στερεά are not 'atoms' but solids, *Epikurs Kritik* 22.

[38] *Epicuro* [27] 23.1—4; cf. *ad Hdt.* 54.5; 56.7; *Epicuro* [33] 24.1—6; *DO* fr. 5 col. III 9—11; and Lucretius I 665—679; 787—797; 915—920; II 753—756; 826—833; III 513—520.

γὰρ τὸ πρῶτον ἐννόημα καθ' ἕκαστον φθόγγον βλέπεσθαι καὶ μηθὲν ἀποδείξεως προσδεῖσθαι. It is by means of this principle that Epicurus can show that the universe or All is infinite (*stoicheioma* 6); that the All was as it is now and always will be (3); and that atoms have none of the qualities of visible things save shape, weight, and mass.

Is the All infinite? *Stoicheioma 6* answers this question by an appeal to the almost atomic clarity of the word πᾶν and the first rule of the Kanon. The same kind of appeal clears up the perplexities of the terms ἄτομα and ἄπειρον. Once we reduce our difficulties to the clarity of our conceptions of πᾶν and ἄπειρον (πάντι ὀνόματι τὸ πρώτως ὑποτεταγμένον ἐναργές ἐστι, *D.L.* X 33.5), we are brought to realize that if anything lay outside of τὸ πᾶν, or if τὸ πᾶν excluded anything, we could no longer speak of it as τὸ πᾶν. This same appeal to the immediate clarity of language works for the question of the atoms. Can they change? According to the axiom of change (*stoicheioma* 10; cf. 4), they cannot. Atoms are atoms; that is, they are solid, indissoluble, and incapable of change. They cannot therefore share those qualities of the visible and sensuous world which are variable[39].

From the language of Epicurus' formulation of the rules of his Kanon it begins to appear that language, as he conceived it, has irreducible kernels or 'atoms' of meaning which resist analysis εἰς τὸ ἄπειρον. An infinite analysis of matter leads to nothing (τὸ μὴ ὄν); of language to κενοί φθόγγοι (*ad. Hdt.* 37.9). In Epicurus' moral thought κενοδοξία (ΚΔ XXX) is the counterpart of κενοί φθόγγοι; as desires can be distinguished according to their objects into those which can be easily satisfied and those which have no real object and can be satisfied only with difficulty (*ad Men.* 130.9), philosophy itself has only two objects: things and mere sounds (*D.L.* X 34.10). It is this clarity of language which Epicurus thought of as the foundation and step course of his philosophy. Epicurus' Kanon provided the *regula prima* for most of the propositions of his *stoicheiosis*. In the case of two of the *stoicheiomata*, 5 and 9, it is not clear that Epicurus has appealed to any principle or rule other than that of his own authority. *Stoicheioma* 5 breaks the word bodies down into its two possible meanings: compounds and the atoms which make them up, but clearly the definition of body does not exist only on

[39] Cf. Philodemus, *Methods* XVIII 4—16 and the telling distinction between ὅροι as Epicurus used them in his physical writings and the ὑπογραφαί or illustrations he used elsewhere (92 *Us.*).

the level of language. *Stoicheioma* 9 concerns motion and is again a simple distinction between two kinds of motion introduced by the assertion that bodies are constantly in motion. Why this must be Epicurus does not say. His theory of effluences requires and explains this proposition, but as it figures in the letter to Herodotus it is laid down as a matter of dogma. In view of its later notoriety it is odd that there is no mention of a third species of — motion the κείνησιν παρενκλιτικὴν-ἢ[ν] Ἐπίκουρος ἐς φῶ[ς] ἤγαγεν — as Diogenes calls it (*DO* fr. 32 [Chilton] col. III 1—10). There is no mention of this "free motion" in what survives of Epicurus, except perhaps for an allusion to it in his *On Nature*[40].

III: It now seems impossible to determine when Epicurus published the collection of his sayings and opinions known for long as the κύριαι Δόξαι — a work which far outdistanced either *On Nature* or the *Letter to Herodotus* in its influence and fame. It is tempting to assign this book to the period of the letters to Herodotus and Pythocles — but only for reasons of a coherence of motives. Like the *Letter to Menoeceus* the Κύριαι Δόξαι cannot be anchored in the chronology of Epicurus' writings, but it is clear that some part of the prehistory of both works lies in *On Nature*. It seems too that the *Letter to Menoeceus* was the source for some at least of the κύριαι Δόξαι. Thus a date for the publication of the Κύριαι Δόξαι is a fact in the history of the development and presentation of Epicurus' thought which is beyond recovery, if not conjecture. But why he brought together and published at least the nucleus of the *doxai* now included in the Κύριαι Δόξαι (and *Gnomologium Vaticanum*) is suggested by the title gave the collection of his *doxai*: they are κύριαι.

More than two centuries after Epicurus' death they were still known as Epicurus' Κύριαι Δόξαι and variously described. Cicero called them *sententiae selectae*; *brevis*; *gravissimae*. *Gravissimae* comes closest to the Greek description of these doctrines as κυριώτατα (p. 68 *Us.*). More admiringly Cicero calls them *quasi maxime ratae*, and with more irony than admiration *quasi oracula sapientiae*. But this is no more than a faint and deformed echo of what Epicurus had said himself (*SV* 29). Clearly its title attracted the attention of the Greeks who knew the book, for it is noticed in most ancient references to it[41].

But Cicero's versions of this title seem inadequate to Epicurus' intentions and inadequate to Epicurus' Greek. Usener adopted Ci-

[40] Arrighetti (p. 575) argues that this is the implication of *Epicuro* [31] 22.13—16.
[41] Collected by Usener, pp. 68—70 and 342.

cero's translation of the title as *sententiae selectae* to head his edition of the *doxai*, because that is what he thought they were. Yet the manner in which better Epicureans than Cicero referred to these *doxai* speaks against this version of the title and the view of the origin of the collection which it suggests. A papyrus from Herculaneum describes the first four of the Κύριαι Δόξαι (which another Epicurean papyrus describes as the τετραφάρμακος) as κυριώτατα and justifies their place at the head of the collection. Wealth, refinement, beauty, and like advantages are things external to us and weigh little in the balance against the most important matters: "for this reason those *doxai* which are most important (τὰ κυριώτατα) are those which are placed at the head of the Κύριαι Δόξαι". And, the papyrus seems to continue, "they might also be called the last (or must perfect) principles[42]." They were in fact so called. As he introduces them as the 'colophon' of his life of Epicurus and of his entire work, Diogenes says that he has used them to conclude his book because they are the beginning of the life of happiness (τέλει χρησάμενοι τῇ τῆς εὐδαιμονίας ἀρχῇ X 138).

The title *Sententiae Selectae* fails to suggest this sense of the adjective and is no more than a notice of Usener's view that the main collection of Epicurus' *doxai* grew up only after his death around a small nucleus of sayings to which Epicurus himself attached great importance (*praef.* xlv). But the so-called τετραφάρμακος does not stand as the frontispiece to the Κύριαι Δόξαι for comprising the most exquisite of all Epicurus' sayings. It is there for comprising τὰ κυριώτατα.

How should this title be translated if not by the current English versions of Selected or Especially Approved or Authorized Sayings? *Master Sayings* (the French *Pensées maîtresses*) seems to answer best to Epicurus' intentions. In Epicurus' surviving writings κυριώτατα is coupled with ὅλα (*ad Hdt.* 82.2) and μέγιστα (ΚΔ XVI), yet just how those things which are general and greatest explain the sense of κυριώτατα is not immediately clear. The root of the notion is visible in the substantive κύριος "master," and later, in the *New Testament*, "lord"[43]. In Epicurus' last will and testament he makes

[42] *Pap. Herc.* 1251 (Schmid) col. xv; p. 68 *Us.*

[43] Aristotle's use of the adjective κύριος in *NE* 1113b30—1114b25 might have influenced Epicurus in his choice of words and certainly explains the moral impulse behind it. Here and elsewhere Aristotle uses the term to describe those things which we have control over and are accordingly responsible for. For a better statement of the connection between Aristotle and Epicurus, see Furley, *Two Studies* 184—195.

his close associate Hermarchus master over the revenues of the garden (κύριον τῶν προσόδων D.L. X 20.1), and in one of the Vatican sayings he reminds the world that no man is master of his tomorrows (*SV* 14). From a root sense of mastery or control the adjective can come to be applied to fear and other disturbances and their empire over the soul and therefore to their crucial importance for human happiness (*ad Hdt.* 81.2). Thus the adjective is understandably ambiguous: it can describe what Epicurus regarded as the fundamental and deep-rooted sources of fear and anguish[44], and at the same time Epicurus' teaching which he designed to dispel these terrors[45]. Such *doxai* are then master thoughts. They were meant to be mastered and to dominate the thoughts and calculations of those seeking freedom from the empire of the fundamental fears of mankind. Indeed, to become free, Epicurus' disciple had to become a slave to the true philosophy (cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 8.7).

Throughout antiquity this little book of *doxai* bore the authority of Epicurus. Lucretius seems to refer to its wisdom and guidance as the *patria praecepta* of his master (III 9—10). Cicero spoke of *oracula sapientiae*, as did Epicurus himself (*SV* 29), and the collection of his sayings discovered in the Vatican entitles them Ἐπικούρου Προσφωνήσεις. It seems that, like the master propositions of his physiology, Epicurus meant his master sayings to be memorized[46]. In fact they were memorized by later Epicureans as a kind of catechism. It is clear that Epicurus was at great pains to formulate these *doxai* in a manner which would make them memorable and free them from the polemical and discursive contexts which had entangled them and padded their precise point. As is the case for the *Letter to Herodotus*, *On Nature* preserves the matrix in which some of the Κύριαι Δόξαι must have been generated. The most distinctive of these are pitted against Democritus' view of necessity and

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[44] The ταραχαί of the soul; *ad Hdt.* 35.5; 78.1; 79.5; and ΚΔ XII.

[45] *Ad Hdt.* 83.11; cf. 36.6; 78.1; 82.2; ΚΔ XII; and Lucretius III 16.

[46] This expectation is clear from the letters: *ad Hdt.* 35—37; 45.1—2; 68.3; 82—83; *ad Pyth.* 84—85; cf. 95.4 and 116.4; and *ad Men.* 123.1—2; 127.4; 135.5. Μνημονεύειν can simply mean to bear in mind and not to memorize word for word. But for Epicurus the memorization of his doctrines necessarily preceded their meditation and application ἅμα νοήματι (*ad Hdt.* 83.12). Cotta's unkind remarks on the slavery of Epicurus' followers to his words is perhaps a reflection of the fact that later Epicureans treated his doctrines as young scholars did their morning recitations: *ista enim a vobis quasi dictata redduntur quae Epicurus oscitans halucinatus est, N. D.* I 25.72 with Pease's note and M. L. Clarke, *Higher Education in the Ancient World* (London 1971) 27.

originate (in so far as we can tell) in the polemic of *On Nature* and the book Epicurus devoted to the question of our freedom of thought and action.

One of the arguments Epicurus impresses against the notion of mechanical necessity is elegant, if it is not new. It neatly turns the argument against itself and makes it impossible to live with. In one passage from *On Nature*, Epicurus' formulation of his counter argument is rather loose and, unfortunately, incomplete: "And yet he disputes with someone over this very point as if his adversary refused to improve his opinion on his own account (δ[ι'ἑ]αυτόν). And supposing that he continues to carry on his arguments by appealing to necessity *ad infinitum*, he fails to realize that by the very fact of referring the soundness of his own reasoning to *himself* and the viciousness of the opposing point of view to his opponent, if he does not come to a stopping point in *himself*, but attributes the principle of necessity . . .[47]". The papyrus does not preserve the conclusion of this involved sentence or of Epicurus' argument, but one of the Vatican sayings does:

> He who claims that everything happens 'out of necessity' has no grounds for complaint against the person who denies that everything happens 'out of necessity', for his very denial happens 'out of necessity'. *SV* 40

In another attempt to destroy the grounds of the mechanical necessity which he saw as a part of earlier atomism and its apparent indifference to the freedom of the individual, Epicurus retrenches into the grounds of his own thought — his canons for judgement. Here again it becomes clear that these canons were developed as a test of the truth of propositions and not the means to discovering the propositions themselves: *ambigua secernere, falsa sub specie veri latentia coarguere* (Seneca, *Ep.* 89.11). Epicurus' argument is that the cause or source (ἀρχή) of many of our actions lies in nothing external to us, but in our firm knowledge of certain truths:

> One thing which always depended on us (τὸ ἐξ ἡμῶν) was our realization that if we fail to grasp the rule and principle which allows us to judge all that is inferred from our opinions and foolishly follow the expressions of the many we will lose every basis for discovering the truth. *Epicuro* [31] 31.12—20

Epicurus often returns to the truth of this important realization. But the form of this sentence from his book on freedom of thought and action struck Usener as odd (inasmuch as Epicurus used a fu-

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[47] *Epicuro* [31] 28.6—17; cf. 27.3—9; *DO* fr. 33, col. III 9; *Protagoras* 324 E and Furley, *Two Studies* 187.

ture indicative rather than an infinitive) and thus possibly the relic of a κύρια δόξα formulated before Epicurus put it to use against the εἱμαρμένη of the *physikoi*[48]. But here, as in the case of three of the Κύριαι Δόξαι which reproduce its form and general sense[49], Epicurus is spelling out the consequences of abandoning his criteria in one of the most vivid forms available to him in Greek:

> If you challenge the evidence of all of your senses you will not even be left with a basis to assert which of them is in error by appealing the decision to any of the others. ΚΔ XXIII

What is remarkable about these *doxai* is the dogmatic urgency of the conditional sentences whose conclusions are vivid threats. It was in the fixed and unwavering principles of thought and action, even more than in the *exiguum clinamen* of his theory of motion, that Epicurus discovered a means to asserting and vindicating the freedom of willing and choosing against the mechanical necessity of the *physikoi*. Once a man is in possession of what Lucretius called the *rationes vitae*, neither necessity nor change can overwhelm him. The moral optimism of such a view is not completely foreign to Democritus who is generally seen as the object of Epicurus' attack on the view which returned our actions to *ananke*. Whatever he said about motion, Democritus had said that φρόνησις and εὐξύνετος ὀξυδερκείη are our guides for most things in life[50]. Epicurus knew this saying and sharpened his own thought against it:

> Βραχέα σοφῷ τύχη παρεμπίπτει· τὰ δὲ μέγιστα καὶ κυριώτατα ὁ λογισμὸς διώκηκε καὶ κατὰ τὸν συνεχῆ χρόνον τοῦ βίου διοικεῖ καὶ διοικήσει.
> ΚΔ XVI

Epicurus recorded the results of his own careful reasoning concerning τὰ κυριώτατα in his Κύριαι Δόξαι and the *stoicheiomata* of his *Letter to Herodotus*. These and the στοιχεῖα τοῦ καλῶς ζῆν of the *Letter to Menoeceus* (123.2) were designed to provide the disciple with a point of rest and stability in the confusion of controversy and moral choice and a means to overcoming the fear and uncertainty inspired by the awesome events of nature. For Polystratos who succeeded Hermarchus as the head of Epicurus' garden, the master's kanon (cf. *ad Hdt.* 51.9—11) provided an unshakeable conviction on every occasion it was invoked: ἀσάλευτον ποιεῖ περὶ ἕκαστοῦ

[48] *Praef.* xlv.
[49] ΚΔ XXIV; XXV; cf. XXII where δεῖ replaces εἰ μή, and *SV* 57.
[50] DK 68 B 119.

τὴν πίστιν[51]. The precepts of his master, as he had formulated them in the late disposition of his thought, seem to have been clearly impressed in Lucretius' mind and the tracks in which he set his feet more than two centuries later[52]:

> Te sequor, o Graiae gentis decus, inque
> tuis nunc ficta pedum pono pressis vestigia signis.

And still later, in Asia Minor, the Epicureans proved to be the only witnesses who did not flinch before the strange genius of Alexander of Abonouteichos. As Lucian saw, their γνώμη was ἀδαμαντίνη[53]. Of the others present *temptat enim dubiam mentem.rationis egestas* (Lucretius V 1211).

Epicurus meant his Κύριαι Δόξαι and *stoicheiomata* to be impressed in the minds of his disciples so that they would endure as stable rhythmic movements of soul atoms which could not be confused or drastically altered by the incursion of new *eidola* and impressions from without[54]. These stable *memores motus* which were one of the ends of Epicurus' *stoicheiosis* of his thought provided, as they were stamped in the minds of his disciples, grounds for thought and action which were both free and rational. The principles compressed into Epicurus' letters and Κύριαι Δόξαι represented one of the most compelling cases of τὰ ἐξ ἡμῶν — those things which have their origin within us and lie within our control (cf. *SV* 40). But they could remain fixed in the mind only once they had been mastered with precision. And this was a matter of constant exercise:

> One must laugh and at the same time philosophize and look after his own affairs . . . and never cease to utter the words of the correct philosophy.
> *SV* 41

Given the importance of this inner fortress for freedom from turmoil, it is hardly suprising that Epicurus went to great pains to make this thought περὶ τῶν κυριωτάτων memorable. The discovery of another collection of sayings attributed to Epicurus at the end

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[51] Περὶ ἀλόγου καταφρονήσεως (Wilke) col. IIIb8. Comparable in sense is Epicurus' ἀσύμβλητος ἀρδότης, *ad Hdt.* 83.4; εὐπαγής, *Epicuro* [29] 14.9 and Lucretius' sense of *confirmare* VI 998.

[52] III 3—4 (repeated at V 55—56). The association of Lucretius' *vestigia* with Epicurus' stoicheiomata is the suggestion of Carlo Diano, *Sagezza e poetiche degli antichi* (Vicenza 1968) 77.

[53] Alexander Pseudomantes C 17; Epicurus himself Lucian calls ἄτεγκτος, 25.

[54] *Epicuro* [31] 17—18.6; 26.9—15; *Pap. Herc.* 1251 (Schmid) col. XI 5—11 and Diano in *GCIF* 23 (1942) 23, note 2.

of the last century allowed a better appreciation of the great care he took to refine his thought to its sharpest point and of just how he often gave his thought its fine edge by sharpening it against the ὑποθῆκαι of earlier Greek wisdom literature. Usener saw immediately that the new Vatican saying Κακὸν ἀνάγκη, ἀλλ' οὐδεμία ἀνάγκη ζῆν μετ' ἀνάγκης (*SV* 9) was in fact Epicurus' adaption of the old joke about women attributed to Sousarion[55]:

> Κακὸν γυναῖκες, ἀλλ' ὦ δημόται,
> οὐκ ἔστιν οἰκεῖν οἰκίαν ἄνευ κακοῦ.

Even more instructive and perhaps suprising for Epicurus who had the reputation of never appealing to poetry to support his own views (cf. D.L. X 26.9) is the fact that he turned to the poetry of Solon for his own terse expression of the character of the just and unjust lives. Under ΚΔ XVII (= *SV* 12)

> Ὁ δίκαιος ἀταρακτότατος, ὁ δ' ἄδικος πλείστης ταραχῆς γέμων,

two lines from Solon, known only from Plutarch (*Vita Sol.* 3), can be seen in faint, but unmistakable outline:

> Ἐξ ἀνέμων δὲ θάλασσα ταράσσεται· ἢν δέ τις αὐτὴν
> μὴ κίνῃ, πάντων ἐστὶ δικαιοτάτη.

Doxai such as these succeeded in impressing themselves in men's minds far abroad from the *kepos* where they originated; the *stoicheiomata* did not, except as they are embedded in the argument of the *De Rerum Natura*. The genius of the Κύριαι Δόξαι is that they succeeded in their purpose by slightly altering, or reforming, the *memores motus* which were established in the minds of many early in the III century B.C.[56].

They continue to be remembered in Rome more than two centuries later. Lucretius translated two of the first and most important in the *De Rerum Natura*[57], and Cicero can ask of the Epicureans who were his contemporaries the rhetorical question: *Quis enim vestrum non edidicit Epicuri* Κυρίας Δόξας? (*Fin.* II 20). His friend and dependent Philo had (*N.D.* I 113), and it is sure that others had too.

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[55] Kock *CAF* I p. 3; *WS* 10 (1888) 180.

[56] The evidence for the memorization of *gnomai* comes mainly from Plato and the orators; *Protagoras* 325 E; *Laws* 732 B 6—7 and D 4—7; 811 A. Nicolaus Bachius, *Solonis Atheniensis carminum quae supersunt* (Bonn 1825) 11, long ago brought together the evidence for the memorization of Solon's poetry and its *gnomai*.

[57] I 44—49 (= II 646—651); III 830—845, especially 838—841.

One example is the first and most important of the remedies of the τετραφάρμακος (ΚΔ I). It was immensely influential and intimately bound up with the first of Epicurus' *stoicheiomata*. It was memorized and appealed to as a part of Epicurus' catechism. Lucretius refers to it as such an article of reason: *nam bene qui didicere deos securum agere aevum* (V 82). All those who had mastered Epicurus' teaching that the gods lead a life without care would refuse to see them at work in the violence of thunder and lightning. A flash of lightning could only come about *sine opera divum*. What is especially interesting about later references to ΚΔ I is its application; it is evoked to be applied to cases — what Epicurus called κατὰ μέρος ἀκριβώματα. Horace can see a flash of lightning but remain unperturbed:

> Namque deos didici securum agere aevum
> nec siquid miri faciat natura deos id
> tristis ex alto caeli demittere tecto.
>
> *Satires* I V 101—103.

Seneca, when he maliciously denies apotheosis to Claudius, appeals to ΚΔ I to show that the dead emperor cannot become an Epicurean god: *modo dic nobis, qualem deum istum fieri velis.* Ἐπικούρειος θεὸς *non potest esse*: οὔτε αὐτὸς πρᾶγμα ἔχει τι οὔτε ἄλλοις παρέχει (*Apocolocyntosis* 8).

One problem with both the Κύριαι Δόξαι and the *Gnomologium Vaticanum* is that some of the sayings of Epicurus are elsewhere attributed to Hermarchus and Metrodorus, even against the strong tendency to refer all Epicurean wisdom to a unique source: *apud istos quidquid dixit Hermarchus, quidquid Metrodorus, ad unum refertur* (Seneca, *Ep.* 33.4). A few of the sayings of the Vatican collection are attributed to Metrodorus by anthologists and a Berlin papyrus shows that *SV* 51 comes from a letter of Metrodorus[58]. In most cases it is difficult if not impossible to discriminate between the sayings of Epicurus and those of his close associates, which is instructive in itself[59]. The confusion over the attribution of certain Epicurean *doxai* would seem to arise from Epicurus' insistence that his friends *memorize* his teachings.

Diocles of Magnesia was taken aback by this insistence, but records the fact: ἐγύμναζε δὲ τοὺς γνωρίμους καὶ διὰ μνήμης ἔχειν τὰ

[58] In this case a letter of Metrodorus to the young Pythocles. But there is no evidence for attributing SV 51 to Metrodorus; as Vogliano saw clearly, it was Epicurus who enunciated the general principle, and his disciple who applied it to cases, *StItal* 13 (1936) 278.

[59] *SV* 10, 30, 31, 36, 47.

ἑαυτοῦ συγγράματα (D.L. X 12). Once memorized and mastered these sayings entered the common domain (cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 12.11). The very difficulty of assigning all of these sayings confidently to Epicurus is in fact a tribute to Epicurus, for it is in itself a testimony to the success of the most important stage of his teaching — that of making it exoteric. Since Epicurus took such care to make his teaching memorable, Körte is right in saying that it is no wonder that Metrodorus should have come to regard his master's thought as his own[60]. This precisely was Epicurus' intention. A token of his success is the fact that his followers came to regard the principles of this teaching as τὰ ἐξ ἡμῶν. At his death Epicurus is said to have urged upon his friends one of the most important provisions of his last will and testament: τοῖς τε φίλοις παραγγείλαντα τῶν δογμάτων μεμνῆσθαι, οὕτω τελευτῆσαι (D.L. X 16). Diogenes was impressed by this scene and offers his own version of Epicurus' last words:

> χαίρετε καὶ μέμνησθε τὰ δόγματα.

When Epicurus died, μνήμη and παραδείγματα were, as they had been for centuries, the major features of Greek education. Schoolmasters attempted to form their pupils by having them memorize and rehearse the ὑποθῆκαι of their ancestors. To my knowledge Epicurus was the first Greek philosopher who demanded that his disciples memorize and constantly rehearse those of his doctrines he considered κυριώτατα[61]. Against the background of the philosophical controversies of his age and its violence and instability (ταραχαί), it is not difficult to see why. The *stoicheiomata* and the Κύριαι Δόξαι were designed to provide Epicurus' disciple with an unshakeable basis for thought and action and to free him from dependence on things external (cf. *SV* 77). To this end Epicurus devoted much care. Thinking of the effect of Epicurus' παράδοσις on later ages, it is tempting to speak of the "Epicurean doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the master[62]." In his moral teaching at least Epicurus was inspired by a certain vigor and genius of ex-

[60] *Metrodori Epicurei Fragmenta* (Leipzig 1890) 540. Diels later called attention to this same source of confusion in the attribution of anonymous Epicurean material, *SSB* 1916 891 (= *Kleine Schriften* 293).

[61] "Epikur ist der erste Europäer, der die Psychagogik durch methodische Beherzigungs-Akte aus Übung des Memorierens entwickelt und in seiner Gemeinde geübt hat", Paul Rabbow, *Seelenführung: Methode der Exerziten in der Antike* (Munich 1954) 130; cf. 127—130; 336—338 and the detailed exposition of Schmid, *RAC* V (1962) 742—745.

[62] As Stokes does in *New Chapters in the History of Greek Literature* (Oxford 1923) 23.

pression: *multae tamen artis*. And art, as Epicurus understood it, was a method of producing what is of advantage to life (*Epicuro* [205]).

Epicurus' art was to have created a number of fast impressions, of constant *memores motus*, in the minds of his disciples. These could not be disturbed or drastically altered by the onset of new and upsetting impressions from the world without. New experience is interpreted and stabilized by reference to these sure anchors: ἡ δὲ ἀταραξία τῷ συνεχῆ μνήμην ἔχειν τῶν ὅλων καὶ κυριωτάτων (*ad Hdt.* 82.1). This is precisely what the *Letter to Herodotus* was designed to provide: οὗτος ὁ λόγος δύνατος, κατασχεθεὶς μετ' ἀκριβείας, ἀσύμβλητον πρὸς τοὺς λοιποὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀδρότητα λήψεσθαι (83.1—5).

Unless Epicurus' doctrine was mastered exactly, it could not serve the end for which it was meant, since it could not be summoned up by reflex (ἅμα νοήματι). These fixed concepts also represent Epicurus' answer to the dangerous doctrine of necessity which Epicurus saw in the *physikoi*. Finally, the principles and origins of thought and action must recede not to *ananke*, but to the principles of truth deeply rooted in the mind. The mastery of Epicurus' teaching concerning τὰ κυριώτατα is that act of will and calculation which would make his disciples free. This is the intent of Epicurus' last will and testament and the reason why he called the little collection of his sayings the Κύριαι Δόξαι.

The inscription Diogenes had inscribed for the benefit of mankind on the walls of a stoa in Oenoanda fully justifies the title of Epicurus' Κύριαι Δόξαι and reveals the intentions of his philosophical testament:

> That which contributes most to our happiness is our disposition over which we are masters (ἡ διάθεσις ἧς ἡμεῖς κύριοι). Service in the army is a hard thing, especially when you are under another's orders. And even if it succeeds, the art of persuasion is filled with heady passion and turmoil. Why then do we pursue the kinds of things which lie in the control of others? Fr. LVII (Chilton)

Some time before this was inscribed, the meaning of κύριος as Epicurus applied it to his *doxai* was expressed by a Stoic in one terse phrase: τοῦ δόξαι δὲ ἢ μὴ δόξαι ἡμεῖς κύριοι καὶ οὐ τὰ ἐκτός (Epictetus I 9. 37)[63].

[63] This paper owes much to the *kepos*-like setting of the Center for Hellenic Studies in Washington DC where it was first elaborated and presented and much to Leo Strauss and Phillip Delacy whose careful readings have helped it in many places where it was obscure or mistaken.