

**Lee PEARCY**

**Epicurus and the Cure of Souls: Observations on Philodemus, *De Pietate***

Columns 53-56 (= *P.Herc.* 1077 fr. 1, 1098 fr. 1, 229 fr. 9) of the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus's *De Pietate*, newly edited by Dirk Obbink (Oxford 1997), provide an unusually rich instance of the dialogue among philosophy, rhetoric, and medicine. In defending Epicurus against the charge of atheism, Philodemus uses language appropriate to medicine, and to regimen in particular, to describe Epicurus's style of life and its therapeutic effects both for himself and his followers. In addition, Philodemus offers an account of the relationship between Epicurus's therapeutic philosophy and the rival art of rhetoric. Epicurus, in this account, appears as a physician of souls whose treatments not only encompass the conventional activities (*energeiai*) of preventative medicine, but also surpass and even nullify the words of sophists and rhetoricians. Paradoxically, Epicurean inactivity and silence prove a more effective therapy for the soul than all the activities and words of his rivals.

Philodemus uses *phylakê*, *diaphylattô*, and related terms with full awareness of their force as technical terms in Greco-Roman medicine. He presents Epicurus not merely as a physician, but as a physician of a particular kind, practicing a medicine that was, in Galenic terms, not prophylactic but "preservative" (*phylaktikon*). Galen refers to Epicureans without naming them in *Thrasylbulus sive utrum medicinae sit an gymnasticae hygieine* 863K, puns on *epikouros*, "assistance," at *Ars Medica* 366K, and in general shows keen awareness of the Epicurean emphasis on preventative medicine for the soul.