

a more emic appreciation of divination as conceived by and practised within a specific culture. But it remains to be seen how philosophical approaches to divination compared with those of poets, historians and other individuals in the Classical world; by listening to a wider range of voices on divination and its epistemological value, we are sure to arrive at an even more developed understanding of how people in ancient Greece and Rome (and beyond) interpreted the practice of divination.

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## EPICURUS ON THE SELF

NÉMETH (A.) *Epicurus on the Self*. Pp. xx + 205. London and New York: Routledge, 2017. Cased, £105. ISBN: 978-1-138-63385-8.  
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In recent years, the concept of the ‘self’ has enjoyed particular attention among scholars of ancient philosophy. N.’s first monograph, an extended version of his doctoral thesis, is a bold and original product of this current enthusiasm. The book contains an introduction, five chapters, an epilogue, an appendix and a short general index.

N.’s intention is to address Epicurus’ views on the self by bringing back to life the ‘relationship between [Epicurus’] conception of the psychological development of living beings and his ethics’ (p. xi). To perform such a substantial task, N. works mainly, though not exclusively, with the Herculeum papyri of Epicurus, *On Nature* 25, edited in 1995 and 1997 by S. Laursen (*PHerc.* 419; 697; 1056; 1191; 1420 and 1634 – see N.’s appendix for the correspondence between his and Laursen’s order of appearance). Given the fragmentary state of the evidence, the analysis is bound to remain tentative, as N. readily admits (p. 10). Overall, his approach to texts is primarily philosophical and only marginally addresses problems of genre, agenda or style. It ought to be mentioned that N. never refers either to T. Dorandi’s edition of Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (2013) or to J.E. Heßler, *Epicur: Brief an Menoikeus. Edition, Übersetzung und Kommentar* (2014).

As one would expect, the introduction focuses heavily on the philosophical category of the self, which N. understands as comprising in Epicurus ‘the essential and accidental qualities of an individual living being based on the person’s particular state of mental and bodily character’ (p. xiii). While N. goes to great lengths to justify its importance for Epicurus’ philosophy (instructively and engagingly so), he explicitly does not deem it necessary to refute the scepticism of some scholars concerning the very existence of the notion of ‘self’ in ancient philosophy (*ibid.*). Not addressing all the pre-existing scholarship is of course both legitimate and inevitable. But one wishes that in this programmatic section N. had dealt somewhat more extensively with important and recent contributions, such as C. Gill’s structured self and his interpretation of psychophysical holism in Epicureanism (*The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* [2006]). Several parts of N.’s enquiry would have benefited from greater engagement with Gill, for example, his discussion of *palingenesis* (pp. 116–19, cf. Gill [2006], pp. 69–70).

The first and longest chapter, 'Self-awareness', is packed with N.'s discussions of some of the thorniest issues in Epicurean epistemology and hermeneutics: *aisthêsis*, *epaisthêsis*, *prolēpsis*, *typoi*, *epilogismos* and the role of memory. Starting from the background of Socratic self-intellection, N. analyses the role played by the Epicurean criteria of truth for self-awareness. *Pathê*, '[t]he strongest candidate for that without which living beings would not be able to sense themselves' (p. 14), are considered first, before N. propounds his interpretation of the Epicurean *prolēpsis*. His understanding of *prolēpsis* as processes of recognition (instead of mental images, for instance) generating *typoi* and thereby unifying and completing the data provided by other criteria is neat, but it inevitably conflicts with some of the evidence he cites (e.g. *prolēpsis* as *doxa orthê* in Diog. Laert. 10.33). Besides, it is not clear why, nor how, such a process, and not the generated *typoi*, can be *enargês* (p. 31), nor what exactly this would mean. Further, N. appears to need an *ad hoc* explanation for his eventual contention – namely that we can form a *prolēpsis* of causes, such as the cause of our actions, i.e. of our responsible selves – when he writes: 'We may conjecture that certain individual actions of human beings are regarded as immediately connected in our experience' (ibid.).

Chapter 2, 'Agency and Atomism', fruitfully tackles another set of difficult issues: the nature of the atomic swerve with respect to the agency and causal efficacy of the self. N.'s wish to escape the infamous dilemma concerning Epicurus' philosophy of mind, that is: choosing between T. O'Keefe's reductionism and D. Sedley's emergentism, leads him to support a non-reductive physicalist interpretation. N. contends that Epicurus favoured what we would call today token monism and causal-type dualism. While N.'s interpretation of the textual evidence is enticing, it remains unclear whether, in accepting an independent causal efficacy of the self, N.'s position is fundamentally different from Sedley's. N. acknowledges the closeness of his interpretation with emergentism, of which it allegedly falls short 'by not attributing non-physical causation to [Epicurus]' (p. 100). However, his speaking of 'fresh beginnings' (p. 144) in the causal chain and agreeing that Epicurus allowed mental events such as volitions to be causally efficacious cast doubts on the existence of a relevant discrepancy between the two views.

Chapter 3, 'Self-narratives', addresses the possibility and modality of moral reform. After introducing Epicurus' contrast between animal and human behaviours (fr. 16, p. 109), N. focuses on the centrality of the rational capacity (*epilogismos*) for our moral responsibility, as it enables us to disconnect the mental states initiating our actions from our original constitution. There is thus a necessary link between the awareness of our causal efficacy and our capacity to reform ourselves as responsible agents. N. arrestingly shows that this link relies on a narrative of ourselves which allows us both to realise our responsibility and to act (or not) according to our beliefs, so that others are actually justified to praise or blame us.

Chapter 4, 'Lucretius' Cosmological Perspective', looks for supporting evidence in Lucretius' *DRN* concerning the role of the swerve and the functioning of animal and human *voluntas*. Based on Lucretius' argumentation, N. favours O'Keefe's understanding of the swerve as an indeterminate, explanatory *archê* of collisions, 'offer[ing] a physics which catered for related ethical concepts' (p. 137). N. further explores the relation between *libera voluntas* and swerve in his close reading of *DRN* 2.251–93, stressing in particular Lucretius' analogy between phenomenal and atomic undetermined motions. The rest of the chapter is dedicated to an analysis of the ancient refutations of determinism and fatalism (based on Cic. *Fat.*) and the problematic role of the swerve in generating uncaused motions.

The last chapter, 'The Pleasures of Friendship', offers an original account of the theoretical background behind the social interactions within the Epicurean community, focusing

mainly on Torquatus' speech in Cicero, *De finibus*, and on Philodemus, *On Frank Criticism*. N. starts with Epicurus' claims (*Ep. Men.* 132) about the inter-entailment of pleasure and virtues, which are understood as mental dispositions stemming from correct evaluations and true beliefs. Virtues are therefore not merely instrumental but rather constitutive of Epicurus' hedonism (fr. 70 and 512 Us. should on this view be taken counterfactually, cf. p. 169 n. 11). N. then investigates the similar inter-entailment of pleasure and friendship suggested by Torquatus in *Fin.* 1.67–8, where it appears that caring for friends as much as for ourselves is a necessary condition of genuine friendship, on which katastematic pleasure ultimately depends (p. 176). N. finally uses Philodemus' treatise to stress that the practice of praising and blaming involved in frank criticism (*parrhêsia*) was a central element of moral reform and self-knowledge in the Epicurean community. N. thus takes it that friends mutually understood each other as 'other selves' who help in reaching *eudaimonia* – the paradigmatic instantiation of such a friend being Epicurus himself (p. 184; one may want to add Seneca [*Ep.* 25.5 = fr. 211 Us.] as supporting evidence).

The epilogue explores the idea of a paradigmatic self that is worthy of emulation through the concept of *homoiôsis theôi*. Although to call *S.V.* 29 'Epicurus' self-referential *apotheôsis*' (p. 192) is slightly excessive, N.'s brief final analysis of Epicurus' godlikeness offers interesting insights into the reasons underlying the more sectarian aspects of the Epicurean community.

N.'s book is a learned attempt to offer a comprehensive account of Epicurus' conception of the self by addressing many of the most intricate issues of his philosophy of mind. As such, it provides us with one of the most significant pieces of scholarship since Laursen's edition of the fragments of *On Nature* 25. However, while the book is bound to feed future scholarly debates, its density and occasional lack of clarity and cohesion will dishearten most non-expert readers, especially among Classicists. Moreover, the study seems to suffer from the breadth of its scope, at times begging for further elaboration. But on the whole, N.'s contribution to our understanding of the self in Epicureanism is unquestionable, original and intriguing.

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## SENTENTIOUS TEXTS ON POPYRI

*Corpus dei papiri filosofici greci e latini (CPF). Testi e lessico nei papiri di cultura greca e latina. Parte II.3: Gnomica.* Pp. 443. Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2017. Paper, €120. ISBN: 978-88-222-6539-5.

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This massive volume is one of those 'outstanding works of scholarship', to quote the definition given by Mike Edwards in *CR* 60.1 (2010), 37, that are the volumes of the *CPF* series. This impressive project, aimed at publishing all the surviving papyri of philosophical interest discovered in Greco-Roman Egypt, started in 1989 and consists of four parts. Part 1 is devoted to known authors and is divided into two nominal volumes, each further subdivided into a plurality of volumes: Vol. 1 deals with individual philosophers (*I filosofi: Accademici – Zeno*), Vol. 2 (*Cultura e filosofia: Galenus – Isocrates*) encompasses authors