

A SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL AND  
SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF  
EPICURUS' PORTRAIT

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I

By the beginning of the third century B.C., the tradition of Greek philosophy was three centuries old. During this long formative period, two complementary processes can be observed at work: first, the ideological differentiation of philosophy to suit the needs of the major socio-psychological groups in Greece; and, second, the increasing alienation of philosophers from the centers of political power they had once controlled or tried to control. By the turn of the third century, philosophers had become divided up into professional groups competing amongst themselves for students while at the same time suffering the indifference, ridicule, or even persecution of their fellow citizens.

It is no accident that in this rather grim stage of philosophical history, at least one group of philosophers — the Epicureans — created an organization for which there was no analogy in Greek society and that was not merely a sub-culture of factual or figurative outcasts, but an alternative community almost completely independent of its dominant culture and from the economy of the host city-state in which it was located. The main features of this alternative community are these: it was based upon the charismatic leadership of its founder Epicurus, or his successor; the leader's powers were subject to implicit controls since the membership retained the right to own private property. The economy of the community was based on three sources of income: the members' own wealth; the income generated by work on the grounds of the school itself; and, finally, the contributions sent to the school by former members who returned to life in the dominant culture but still felt some residual loyalty to those left behind. Members of the group were united by simulated kinship ties as the children of their master. They were often also related to each other by marriage, since women (and, incidentally, slaves) could be full-fledged members. We know from the will of Epicurus that, uniquely among the philosophical schools, the Epicureans actually lived together on the grounds

of the school, where they engaged not only in study, but also in farming and all the other normal activities of life, including child-rearing.

How an alternative community such as this solves the problem of recruiting new members is interesting to investigate for a practical and theoretical reason. To begin with the practical problem, studies of contemporary alternative communities in the United States have shown that these communities have open to themselves two different recruitment strategies: first, like the Hutterites, they may recruit from within by bringing their children up to become members of their group. Secondly, they may recruit strangers from outside their existing familial and social network if, like the Harmony Hill communards of northern California, they are unwilling to remove their children from the normal schools of the dominant culture.<sup>1</sup> What little evidence we have suggests that the Epicurean community more resembled Harmony Hill than a Hutterite community in that we know of no child of an Epicurean who became a member of the school, whereas we know of many strangers who did become Epicureans. This, admittedly in part *ex silentio*, evidence we may take to imply that the Epicureans depended much more upon finding like-minded strangers for their school than upon creating like-minded children through indoctrination. We have one interesting theoretical statement supporting this hypothesis. According to the first-century B.C. Epicurean Philodemus, Epicurus said that it was a measure of the sage's wisdom that he could effortlessly attract new students to study with himself. This suggests that Epicurus depended more on strangers to validate his claim to be wise than upon the less disinterested offspring of his own followers.

Now, there is one difficulty with recruiting strangers: they are much harder to contact and persuade than are members of one's own social and familial network. A recent article on this subject by Stark and Bainbridge has shown that in the state of Washington in 1976-77, for example, the Mormon church was able to convert 50% of the people contacted in the familial and social networks of its members, but only 0.1% of the total strangers whom its members approached.<sup>2</sup> Granted that the Mormons are not philosophers and that their appeal is much more to the emotions than to the intellect, these results can still, I think, be fairly applied to the Epicurean case to suggest that the Epicureans' decision to recruit strangers made the job of keeping their organization alive much harder than it might otherwise have been. As we will see in a moment, this self-imposed practical difficulty was compounded by a self-imposed theoretical difficulty that made the Epicureans take a passive, not active, approach to recruiting strangers.

The third-century B.C. Peripatetic philosopher Hieronymos said (*apud* Diogenes Laertius 9.112) that philosophers recruited students either by active pursuit or by passive flight. The active approach was, according to Hieronymos, by far the more common. Philosophers attracted new students by speaking in public or by publishing their works. When Crantor went to the Asklepieion in Athens to find a cure for some disease, crowds gathered around him thinking that he was about to found a new school. When Stilpo visited Athens, men flocked to see and hear him. The Cynics normally wandered about and gave harangues in public. Plato occasionally spoke before the general public, as is securely attested for his unsuccessful lecture on the Good. Themistius preserves some stories about philosophical conversions motivated by readings of Plato's dialogues. Axiothea came to Athens from Arcadia after reading the *Republic*. A Corinthian farmer left his farm to study with Plato after reading the *Gorgias*. Zeno of Citium decided to devote himself to philosophy after reading the *Apology*.

The attractiveness of the first approach is easy to understand, and yet active proselytizing is not always as effective in recruiting as is a more passive method. Precisely by making access to himself difficult and privileged, a philosopher can create an aura of mystery and desirability about himself. To be sure, this will not work if a man has no reputation at all, and even in the best of cases it will probably never attract to a philosopher the two thousand students that Theophrastus drew to his public lectures (Diogenes Laertius 5.37).

Hieronimos exemplifies the second approach by citing Timon, and in another passage in Diogenes Laertius, we learn that Timon's model in this was Pyrrho (Diogenes Laertius 9.63), whom Timon admired, among other reasons, for his ability to find escape from the dull-witted. We know from another fragment of Timon's *Silloi* that one of Pyrrho's students — Philo — imitated his teacher's habit of "staying away from mankind, talking to himself and being at leisure with himself" (Diogenes Laertius 9.69). We also know that Nausiphanes, Epicurus' teacher, was a student of Pyrrho. In the one preserved anecdote of Nausiphanes about his more famous student, we learn that Epicurus often asked Nausiphanes about Pyrrho's way of life, which Epicurus apparently admired as much as did Timon and Philo (Diogenes Laertius 9.64). It should thus not be very surprising to find Epicurus imitating Pyrrho's method of recruitment by flight from mankind.

For Epicurus, recruitment must be passively pursued through flight from mankind because interaction with the world in its present state would endanger the peace of mind, if not the life, of the sage and hence would compromise his claim to wisdom. That Epicurus viewed the stage of history

in which he lived as dangerous and its dominant culture as corrupt is clear not only from the Epicurean version of historical evolution preserved in Lucretius (Book V) and in Colotes (*apud* Plutarch, *Mor.* 1124D), but also from Epicurus' own obsession with "protection from mankind" (KD 6,40) and the "secure life" (KD 7,28). The best form of protection may be achieved through withdrawal from the world (KD 14) into a community of friends (KD 27,28) who study philosophy together (KD 13) and who are united by the "most fixed contract" (KD 40). That Epicurus believed in passive recruitment is clear from the passage in Philodemus cited earlier in which Epicurus is said to have called it a mark of the wise man that he can "effortlessly" attract new students to himself. We know from another fragment of Epicurus that this passive approach ruled out public lecturing as well as even the seemingly innocent practice of publishing books (on lecturing, cf. Diogenes Laertius 10.120). Lest it be thought that Epicurus' approach was so passive as to be non-existent, I hasten to point out that Epicurus was not a selfish hedonist. His own definition of philosophy as psychiatry expelling disease from the mind of mankind (fr. 221 Usener) demanded that he actively think about how he might passively be able to recruit the sick to his healing community.

## II

How would Epicurus have explained why a passive approach to recruitment could work? He would, I think, have given at least two explanations, one rather trivial and based upon the practical success of similar recruiters; the other a good deal more interesting and based upon the Epicurean theory of motivation.

Let me begin with the first explanation. One can easily imagine that Epicurus knew that passive recruiting works if an organization is successful at fulfilling its mission, whatever that mission may be. If the Epicurean theory of how philosophers should live together in a community worked out in practice, Epicurus must have known that this success would "speak for itself" and would reach some potential recruits who happened to hear of it. We do, in fact, know that Epicurus' community struck some non-Epicurean observers as a successful social experiment. One such observer said that "the Epicureans resemble people living in a well-organized state" (Numenius, *apud* Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 14.5.3). An amusing anecdote concerning Arcesilas, the head of the Academy in the third-century, proves that word of this success did get around and bring many converts to study with Epicurus. Asked by a student why many adherents of the different

schools became Epicureans, but no Epicureans ever went over to the other schools, Arcesilas replied, "because a man may become a eunuch, but a eunuch can never become a man" (Diogenes Laertius 4.43).

I do not think that we should minimize the effectiveness of this kind of passive recruitment. It must have been especially useful in attracting the disenchanting philosophers of the other schools who would be willing to become intellectual eunuchs to have the chance to leave the alienation of the philosophical sub-culture for the pleasant life of Epicurus' alternative community. On the other hand, I think that we must expect that Epicurus had some more theoretical reason for entrusting the fate of his whole enterprise to passive recruitment. And I think that we must also expect that he had some more reliable way of spreading the word of his community and message than by simply counting on the gossip of disinterested observers.

I would suggest that for a philosopher like Epicurus for whom practice should reflect theory, the problem of recruitment must have been viewed as a special instance of the general theory of motivation. Recruitment is the process whereby an organization motivates potential new associates to consider joining itself. Since the Epicureans believed that motivations arose through the exercise of free-will, their theory of motivation had the built-in advantage of enabling them to justify a policy of inactive recruitment once they had created the condition in which the right sort of person would spontaneously be motivated to consider joining their school. Let us now look at the general Epicurean theory of motivation and then see how easily it can be applied to the specific case of motivating people to become Epicureans.

According to Epicurus, the single reliable criterion of truth lies in ensuring that our thoughts conform to the objects in the world that give rise to them. Our knowledge of these objects results from the act of perception, which is possible because everything that exists emits an image of itself. That knowledge can be trusted because the images given off by the objects correspond most closely to the things that emit them, and this correspondence is preserved for a long time. Turning now to the receiving end of this process, we find that the images are perceived either by first entering the body through one of the five senses and then by being sent on to the mind; by proceeding directly to the mind; or by being evoked by the mind itself from its store of previously perceived images. Because the images have a certain power arising from their atomic composition, they rearrange the atomic complexes in the mind so that unless something interferes with the completion of the process, the mind becomes impressed with a new structure and content. Once the images have determined the physical ar-

rangement of the mind, they can be said to influence the mental behavior that results from these arrangements. Thus, Lucretius says that the formation of will is always preceded by an imaging of the thing to be willed. For example, before we can decide to walk, the image of walking must strike our mind (Lucretius, 4.881-2). Whether anything interferes with the image's effect on the mind is determined by how the mind experiences the image. If it is experienced as pleasure, the mind naturally wishes to preserve the perception as long as possible and even to become a source of pleasure to itself by imitating the image. On the other hand, if the image is experienced as painful, then the mind naturally suppresses it as quickly as possible. What is therefore crucial in the process of motivation, and what preserves the possibility of free-will, is the subjective disposition of the perceiver's mind to the outside forces acting upon it.

We may apply this general theory of motivation to the particular case of conversion to Epicureanism as follows. Without any effort on his part, the sage is continually emitting images of himself. Some of these images will be received by non-Epicureans, and some of these non-Epicureans will react to the experience of seeing the sage by feeling pleasure. If the pleasure is intense enough — that is, if the person has the right disposition for an Epicurean — then the pleasure will be so intense that the viewer will want to imitate the perception and, by becoming like the Epicurean sage, become a continual source of pleasure to himself.

### III

If these speculations are true, then we should expect the Epicurean wise man to have done everything he could to spread his image so that it could be seen by the masses of sick souls in need of his message of salvation. Here we once again encounter the problem that the sage has retreated from mankind into an alternative community situated far from the people he must reach. At this point, another general theory comes to the rescue of the sage. For Epicurus, there is no distinction to be made between different kinds of images. As one fragment (nr.247 Usener) puts it, "all images are real, for they move." Unlike the Platonists and most other ancient philosophers, the Epicureans were iconophiles, not iconoclasts. Collapsing the distinction between sign and signified, they held the image of a man's image — that is, his portrait — to be every bit as real and valid as his image itself. Since Epicurus' actual image could not escape very far from the place where he lived, and since it could not survive after his death, we would expect Epicurus to have taken steps to propagate his portrait in the public places

frequented by people in need of his help. In view of the gaps in the ancient *testimonia* about how Epicurus recruited, the best test of my reconstruction of his policy is a semiotic and iconological study of his portrait. If, in fact, we can show that Epicurus' portrait was propagated far and wide, and if we can see in it not so much an iconic representation of Epicurus' physique as a symbolic representation of his mission of bringing salvation to mankind, then we will have, I think, the best evidence we are ever likely to possess that my version of the policy of Epicurean recruitment is correct.

#### IV

Let us begin with four interesting literary *testimonia* about Epicurus' portrait. Epicurus said that the wise man will erect portrait statues of others (Diogenes Laertius, 10.120). In the fifth book of Cicero's *De finibus*, Atticus tells Cicero as they walk past the school of Epicurus in Athens, "I could not forget Epicurus, even if I wanted to, since we Epicureans have his portrait not only in our paintings, but also on our cups and rings." Possibly with this passage in mind, or possibly by simply observing Atticus' first-century A.D. Epicurean successors, the Elder Pliny writes at the beginning of Book XXXV of his *Natural History* that the arts have practically died out because so many people have become Epicureans and the Epicureans commission only copies of their master's portrait. Finally, in Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods*, the anti-Epicurean Cotta says, "I myself know Epicureans who venerate every little statuette" (1.85).

What this literary evidence suggests about how assiduously the Epicureans surrounded themselves with portraits of Epicurus is confirmed by the archaeological record.<sup>3</sup> At least six rings of Roman provenance have been found with portraits of Epicurus, and we also have one or possibly two rings depicting Metrodorus. Della Corte reports a wall painting (now vanished) showing Epicurus surrounded by his disciples in the so-called "Scuola di umanità di Potitus" at Pompeii. As yet, no cups with busts of Epicurus have been discovered; however, the famous Boscoreale cup showing the Stoic Zeno mocking Epicurus may well attest the existence of the cups mentioned by Atticus, since the parody presumes a serious model. Most impressive of all is the large number of busts and life-size statues of Epicurus and other Epicurean masters that have been found throughout the Greco-Roman world.

It is of course hazardous to draw conclusions from the sheer numbers of Epicurean images in painting, sculpture, and on rings that happen to have been found to date. New finds may change the statistics, and in any

case, not all of the Epicurean images were necessarily the property of confessed Epicureans. Intriguing nonetheless is the fact that the quantity of Epicurean representations far outweighs that of the other philosophical schools, for none of which any interest in portraiture is attested. The six rings with Epicurus' bust contrast markedly with the two known rings showing Aristotle and even more with the absence of any rings depicting Plato. Equally striking is the fact that more busts survive of Epicurus' successor Hermarchus (21) than of Aristotle (18), a much more famous philosopher. We now possess more life-size statues of Epicurus than of any other ancient philosopher, including Socrates, the most popular philosopher of them all. Again, one does not want to make too much of statistics such as these; however, we would be overly cautious not to point out that the archaeological record certainly does not contradict the ancient literary *testimonia* about the Epicureans' approval of portraits of their masters. My reconstruction of Epicurus' policy on recruitment explains, I think, why portraits were so important to the school. By setting up portraits the Epicureans were able to propagate the moving image of their founder and the other masters without having to violate their stance of withdrawal and passiveness toward the dangerous dominant culture of Greece.

## V

Complementing this quantitative literary and archaeological support of my reconstruction is an important qualitative body of evidence. When we study the iconology of Epicurus' portrait, we can readily see that it is designed not so much to show Epicurus iconically — warts, wrinkles, and all — as to depict in symbolic terms his message of salvation for mankind. The portrait of Epicurus is informed by six simple messages that add up to a complex statement about Epicurus' nature as philosopher, father-figure, healing hero, culture-hero, "great-minded" man, and god. The best proof of my reconstruction of the Epicurean policy on recruitment we can have is the logical inference that a statue embodying so many neatly interwoven messages was intended to be seen by the very people — Epicurus' unenlightened fellow Greeks — whom the Epicureans felt were most in need of their therapeutic philosophy. Before presenting this proof, I should point out its potential importance to Greek art-history as well as to semiotics.

Up to now, Epicurus' portrait — like most Greek portraits — has been studied only synchronically and iconically. Instead of investigating the portrait's relationship to culture-bound and temporally determined

conventions of iconological representation, Greek art-historians have seen in the portrait only signs of Epicurus' kindness, receptivity, sympathy, courage in adversity, and self-satisfaction.<sup>4</sup> These universal and timeless characteristics may well be communicated by the portrait, but by proceeding diachronically, we can, I think, eke out much more information about Epicurus' presentation of himself to his contemporary audience than that. On the semiotic side, recent work by Wendy Steiner on the semiotics of the portrait-genre has sought to make the study of portraiture more interesting by stressing portraiture's indexical, as opposed to iconic, qualities.<sup>5</sup> Without wishing to discount the importance of indexicality in portraiture or of Steiner's contribution, I would, however, hasten to point out that Peirce's classification of portraits as primarily indexical applies only to a photographic portrait (*Coll. Works*, II.147), and not, as Steiner seems to think, to all portraits regardless of medium. I would suggest that my work can serve to show that artistic portraits in the form of visual signs would be characterized by Peirce as primarily symbolic in nature because they are representations that are recognized as such by "the very fact of there being a habit, disposition, or other effective general rule that it will be so interpreted" (*Coll. Works*, IV.447). Of course, given the hierarchical nature of Peirce's system, the fact that the portrait is primarily symbolic means that it also has important iconic and indexical qualities as well. However, recognizing the visual portrait-sign as primarily symbolic does have the important consequence of leading us to expect and emphasize the *conventional* aspects of any given portrait.

I have elsewhere argued in detail about how I believe Epicurus' portrait statue should be reconstructed from the fragments of the head and torso that survive in numerous Roman copies (fig. 1).<sup>6</sup> It was probably originally erected in a public spot in Athens during the period just before or after Epicurus' death (i.e., 280-250 B.C.). The first indication that the portraitists hired by the Epicureans to sculpt their masters were concerned to create symbolic, not iconic, representations is the fact that Epicurus' statue established the design for what we may call the typological visual sign of the Epicurean sage. We have life-size statues of Epicurus' followers Metrodorus, Hermarchus, Kolotes, and Leontion, and these statues all show their subjects seated on the same high-back, solid-sided throne with lion protomes that Epicurus sits on, and, like Epicurus, his followers are dressed in himations, hold book rolls, and have similar postures and gestures. Moreover, in sculpting the faces of Epicurus' male followers, the artists were so eager to suggest a similarity to Epicurus that the modern art-historical literature is filled with confusions of Epicurus, Metrodorus,

Figure 1.



*(Drawing by Deborah Nourse Lattimore)*

and Hermarchus with each other. Since there is no biological reason why we should expect these unrelated men to resemble each other, we can only conclude that they resemble each other because their artists made them resemble Epicurus, their model of wisdom and happiness. That is, a resemblance that is an annoyance to art-historians treating the portrait simply as an icon is extremely interesting and meaningful once the portrait is approached symbolically.

The Epicurean visual sign could, of course, only exist and be used in this way once Epicurus' portrait had been made and his mission of salvation become well known in the Greek world. In making the crucial portrait of Epicurus, however, the sculptor faced a completely different set of circumstances. Epicurus was not very well known; and there was no typological convention for depicting an Epicurean sage. In dealing with these circumstances, Epicurus' portraitist resorted to the same device of typological allusion that the portraitists of Epicurus' followers were to use. But, instead of alluding to an already existing visual sign of wisdom, the artist had to capture the essence of Epicurus' individual version of philosophy by alluding to and combining into one complex sign six simple and culturally appropriate visual sign-types. He could pull off this complex act of semiotic juggling because he was a master of visual syntax who could fill in details left undetermined by the conventions of one type with the details required by the other types. Thus, the philosopher-type dictated the clothing, coiffure, and book-roll attribute. The father-figure sign determined the pose and gesture of the body. The Asklepiian sign-type inspired the sympathetic expression on the face. The Herculean type governed the proportions of the head. The "great-minded" type dictated many, seemingly trivial physiognomical details (like Epicurus' deepset, oval eyes and his round nose-tip), as well as the presence of lion protomes on his throne, since the Greek physiognomists equated great-mindedness with the lion in this period. And, the god-sign influenced the shape of the throne on which Epicurus is seated. So, it is clear that Epicurus is depicted as a complex sign based on simple signs governing the shape of his head, the expression on his face, his posture, gesture, clothing, attribute, and even the seat on which he sits.

## VI

A detailed examination of the six type-signs and their complex syntax in the portrait would require more space than is at my disposal.

Let me exemplify my analysis of the simple signs alluded to by the portrait by concentrating on two, rather straightforward cases: the Asklepiian expression of Epicurus' face and the divine throne on which Epicurus sits.

In 1975, I was the first to point out the resemblance of the so-called Asklepios of Melos in the British Museum and the head of Epicurus. This observation has in the meantime been independently confirmed by Heiner Protzmann.<sup>7</sup> The point of comparison between these two heads is quite simple: both are portrayed in what I call the affective style whereby the subject shows a sympathetic awareness of an observer imagined to be standing before him. This sympathetic awareness is conveyed by the focus of the eyes in a forward direction, a tilt of the head toward the observer in front, and finally by the large sympathetic furrow running across the subject's brow. It is important to note that Epicurus' resemblance to Asklepios is not limited to this one version of Asklepios and so cannot be dismissed as accidental, or, alternatively, as a result of both works being the product of the same workshop. For example, the head of Asklepios on a statuette from Epidauros (Athens National Museum 265), which was made about the same time as Epicurus' portrait, is clearly also sculpted in the affective style, but it is just as clearly the work of an independent sculptural tradition.

The affective style is appropriate for both Epicurus and Asklepios because both claim to be healing saviors of mankind. Asklepios, the god of medicine, was quite popular in Epicurus' lifetime. Epicurus not only claimed to be a psychiatrist; he also spoke about having a "four-fold prescription" for curing mankind's ills. It is thus not surprising that Epicurus would have had his portraitist represent him as an alternative to Asklepios who offered his troubled contemporaries a different — and, in Epicurean eyes, more important — kind of healing. That Epicurus should appropriate Asklepios' style of presentation is also not surprising; we know from various sources that Epicurus viewed the Asklepiian cult with suspicion or disdain, and the fourth part of the "four-fold prescription" implicitly belittles the god by assuring Epicurus' followers that physical suffering is no bar to the happy life. With the background of the literary sources in mind, we must see Epicurus' Asklepiian aspect as intentionally polemical and a manifestation of what Hugh Duncan termed "the struggle by those in power, or those seeking power, to control symbols that are already powerful."<sup>8</sup>

The throne upon which Epicurus is shown sitting has a long history in the Mediterranean world and the Near East. Its chief characteristics are its solid sides and high back. In plan, it may be either rectilinear or curvilinear. Protomes, reliefs, volutes, and mouldings may be present as decorative elements. What is interesting about the throne for our purposes

is that, in whatever age or culture it is encountered, it is almost always used exclusively as the seat of divinities or of divine kings.

The earliest example is a statuette (now in Ankara) of a mother-goddess from Çatal Hüyük, a sixth millennium B.C. Anatolian site. Sumerian art offers a great number of art-works showing various gods and divine kings seated on this throne. In Phoenician iconography, it seems to have been Astarte's prerogative alone to sit on it.

In Greece, the pattern for its use is that in the earliest period — how early we cannot say — the throne *per se*, without any particular divinity depicted on it, was considered a sacred object and seat of divine power. Thus, we find scattered throughout the Greek world examples of it that in later times were given mythological aetiologies. Such, for example, is the throne of Pelops on Mt. Sipylos and the thrones of Danaos in the temple of Apollo at Argos, of Midas in Delphi, and of Pittheus in the temple of Artemis Soteira in Troizen. In the Hellenistic age, the throne was regularly used in depictions of many divinities, including Athena, Poseidon, Apollo, and perhaps Dionysus and Asklepios. To this list, we may now add the new god, Epicurus. In calling him a god, we may once again confirm our iconological analysis with the help of Epicurean literary sources, for Epicurus himself said that a person who achieved wisdom could rival Zeus in happiness and that the wise man has enough in common with the gods to enable him to become their friend. Epicurus' followers notoriously went beyond Epicurus' claim of godlikeness and asserted that he was a god, pure and simple. Even for the average Athenian, with no degree in art-history, the message of Epicurus' divinity should have been communicated loud and clear by his throne.

Semioticians have made us sensitive to the interrelationships between word and image, especially in the analysis of advertising.<sup>9</sup> There was at least one word that, by Greek custom, had to be written on Epicurus' portrait — his name. Wendy Steiner has pointed out that portraits must have names inscribed on them "so that a necessary connection between the [*scil.*, name and image] is intensified, as is the portrait's ability to replace or at least stand in for its subject."<sup>10</sup> In this way, an increased amount of information may be conveyed than would be possible through the image alone: Shakespeare's portrait becomes much more moving and meaningful, once we know that it is Shakespeare's. Thus, the normal relationship between a subject's name and image is homonymic, and by means of the name, the portrait registers a gain in significance. This gain is all the more necessary inasmuch as Steiner does not deal with the symbolic nature of the portrait.<sup>11</sup>

One interesting feature of Epicurus' portrait is that his name and image have a rare synonymic relationship. Just as his portrait is a complex symbolic sign indicating that Epicurus is a divine savior, so, too, his name literally means a "helper" or "savior," and, as such, it is associated with healing gods like Apollo and Asklepios. We will never know whether "Epicurus" was Epicurus' given name, or whether — as I suspect, but cannot prove — Epicurus, like many other famous Greeks (cf. e.g., Stesichorus and Theophrastus) changed his *nomen* to make it symbolically more expressive of his *omen*. In any case, the inscription on Epicurus' statue surely gave its viewer some much needed orientation for dealing with the work's potentially confusing appropriation of so many powerful signs of the dominant culture.

## VII

Thus far, we have been examining the relationship between the visual sign of Epicurus' portrait and what that sign signifies, namely the therapeutic philosophy of Epicureanism. A semiotic analysis of the portrait in a Peircean vein would not be complete without a complementary look at the relationship between the sign and the interpretant. An interpretant is "the interpreted sign as well as the interpreting one."<sup>12</sup> It can thus be equated to the psychology of the receiver in information theory.<sup>13</sup> Zeman has recently studied the problem of the aesthetic perception of signs in a way that extends Peircean semiotics into an area never treated in detail by Peirce himself. Zeman's work is helpful because it can help us to begin to understand the effect of an aesthetic sign like Epicurus' portrait on the mind of its viewer. According to Zeman, "the esthetic element in Peirce's theory of the interpretant . . . is . . . seen to emerge in two dimensions. In the first . . . the radically esthetic is what Peirce calls the emotional interpretant; this is the immediacy of experience in perhaps its purest form. But in another direction, the esthetic cuts across the lines of the emotional, the practical, and the intellectual in the form of the *immediate* emotional, energetic, and logical interpretants."<sup>14</sup> It is Zeman's second "direction" of Peircean aesthetics that interests us here, for it suggests that the interpretant of an aesthetic sign reacts not only with a *feeling* of oneness with its sign, but also with thoughts of identification and practical action leading toward assimilation. The aesthetic sign is thus one that fully engages the faculties and makes the receiver feel, think, and act in harmony with itself.

At this point, we can, I think, make some progress beyond Zeman in studying sign-interpretant relations by applying the faculty-typology of

C. G. Jung to the problem of what sort of aesthetic sign — sonic, linguistic, visual, etc. — is attractive and engaging to what sort of interpretant. This problem is too broad to treat here in any detail; instead, I propose to look only at the case of the visual sign as exemplified by Epicurus' portrait. While this limitation may not satisfy theoreticians, I hope to make up for this deficiency by incidentally solving the problem of why the seemingly impractical Epicurean approach to recruitment might actually have worked quite well.

Jung's typology of the faculties involves a pair of attitudes — introversion and extraversion — as well as two pairs of functions — thinking-feeling, and sensation-intuition. In most individuals, one attitude and one function are dominant; the opposite members of the dominant faculties are repressed. One of the remaining two functions is secondary to the dominant function. I have elsewhere analyzed the type most dispositionally suited to the basic Epicurean beliefs in materialism, sensationalism, amorality, and the repression of feeling as the extraverted thinking-sensation type. It was this type that the Epicurean school had to recruit, if its recruitment practices were to realize the crucial organizational goal of selectivity, for attracting other types would inevitably have resulted in internal discord, dissent, and the eventual dissolution of the Epicurean alternative community.<sup>15</sup> Recent work in social psychology suggests that, of all the Jungian psychological types, it was this type of interpretant that would most likely be attracted to a visual sign like Epicurus' portrait.

Extraverted thinking-sensation types are more attuned to their visual sensations than are most other types. For them, thinking, their primary activity, is usually set in motion by the influx of images from the outside world, and their reaction to such images can be highly emotional, especially if they mirror strong biological drives or involve threats or reinforcements to self-identity. A highly emotional, positive reaction can lead to a modification of the viewer's motivational state such that he carries and explores the image for more information and stimulation. The more positive the reaction, the more inclined the viewer will be to transfer his sense of identity to it.

This transference is, of course, temporary, and can become profoundly ingrained in the personality only after a long period of time — only at the stage of what Zeman would call the final logical interpretant. We may call the initial reaction of an interested viewer of an image like Epicurus' statue the state of aesthetic immediacy, as defined by Zeman, or the state of "effectance arousal," which psychologists define as being in a condition in which one feels a need to make sense out of one's environ-

ment because of some disturbing, if interesting, new perception that one has had about it.<sup>16</sup>

The state of high effectance arousal has recently been the subject of a study that, *mutatis mutandis*, can be applied with useful results to our analysis of Epicurus' portrait. In this study, the experimenters induced a high level of effectance arousal in a group of college students who were made to watch a confusing film about which no orienting information was provided.<sup>17</sup> After the film was over, the students were asked to fill out questionnaires revealing whether they wished to seek clarifying information about the film from others whose attitudes conformed to their own, or from others whose attitudes differed. The results showed that the students clearly preferred to seek out the dissimilar strangers because "those most likely to (be able) to provide (information) are people who view the world differently from the subject."<sup>18</sup>

To apply this study to our own, we need simply equate the viewers of the film to the select group of passersby who stopped to examine Epicurus' statue, and the confusing film to the culturally complex signs informing Epicurus' portrait, which might well initially disorient the viewer by comparing Epicurus to so many different cultural prototypes. The reaction of the students in the experiment of wishing to seek out dissimilar strangers for information and orientation is precisely the "immediate energetic" reaction that I suggest occurred when a good potential recruit saw Epicurus' portrait in a public place.

### VIII

I wish to conclude now by relating my work to some general theoretical points recently raised by semioticians. To follow up my analysis of Zeman's Peircean aesthetic, it seems to me that one implication of my work is that Peirce's triadic concept of the interpretant ought to be updated by adding, as a fourth aspect, the concept of the unconscious interpretant to Peirce's list of the emotional, energetic, and logical. For obvious intellectual-historical reasons, Peirce could not take the unconscious into account, and yet no serious twentieth-century psychology of aesthetics would wish to ignore this crucial area of the human mind. I am motivated to suggest this addition not only for disinterested intellectual reasons, but also because my analysis of the unconscious interpretant reacting to Epicurus' visual sign is one thing that I am unable to analyze in terms of current semiotic theory. Briefly, I would suggest that as an aesthetic sign, the portrait of Epicurus interacts with the unconscious interpretant in the

following way: the three messages linking Epicurus to the types of the philosopher, father-figure, and great-minded man all reflect the Jungian archetype of the wise old man, an archetypal sign that heralds the beginning of the individuation crisis, or that stage of psychological development most appropriate to conversion to philosophy in which a subject, having achieved a certain level of social and economic security, turns inward to discover his true self as the unity of his conscious and unconscious. The three messages linking Epicurus to Asklepios, Herakles, and the gods all reflect the Jungian archetype of the god-image, an archetypal sign that symbolizes the numinosity of the end of the individuation process in which the self is fully realized. Both images are not only descriptive of these stages of psychological development, but are, to use Ehrenzweig's term, poe-magogic — that is, once introjected into the unconscious by an aesthetic experience, they function to set in motion the very processes that they represent.<sup>19</sup>

Recent studies of Sol Worth and Eliseo Veron are both, I think, severely qualified by the work I have just presented. Worth's claim that visual signs present information only about the existence, not nature, of their objects can only be true of iconic, not symbolic, visual signs.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, his claim that visual signs cannot predicate negatives is also, I think, disproved by the polemical allusions we have seen operative in Epicurus' portrait. Similarly, Veron's claim<sup>21</sup> that the term "code" is a positivistic bourgeois concept for "social consensus" ignores the possibility of a subversive code of the kind that a symbolic sociological analysis of the polemics in Epicurus' portrait reveals. The purpose of Epicurus' claim to be a better Asklepios — and to be much else, besides — is clearly of a piece with the Epicurean program to convert as many members of the dominant culture as possible to the way of life in Epicurus' alternative community.

Finally, I believe that the pessimism Oleg Grabar has recently expressed about the possibility of a semiotics of the visual sign and Lagopoulos-Ioannidis' pessimism about the self-sufficiency of semiotics as a discipline are not well taken.<sup>22</sup> Ioannidis and Lagopoulos claim that Marxist analysis must supplement a semiotic approach in order that full justice be done to the meaning of a sign; however, as this study has shown, Peircean semiotics already insists on a sociological and psycho-social investigation of sign-object and sign-interpretant relations. As far as Grabar is concerned, I believe I have at least indicated how sign-interpretant relations can be better understood by a Jungian revision of Peircean aesthetics. Such a revision is clearly only a small part of the perfected semiotics of art that Grabar had in mind, but it can at least begin sketching out such an ap-

proach by telling us why certain kinds of signs — visual, verbal, sonic, etc. — are attended to by certain kinds of interpretants.<sup>23</sup>

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> King 1976.75-104.

<sup>2</sup> Stark and Bainbridge 1980.1376-95.

<sup>3</sup> The material upon which the following remarks are based comes from the extremely useful catalogues of Richter 1965 and 1971.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the remarks of Havelock 1971.44, Alscher 1957.144, and Richter 1965. vol. 2.200.

<sup>5</sup> Steiner 1977.111-19.

<sup>6</sup> Frischer 1979.121-54.

<sup>7</sup> Protzmann 1977.177.

<sup>8</sup> Duncan 1968.64.

<sup>9</sup> Cf., e.g., Nöth 1977 and Victoroff 1978.

<sup>10</sup> Steiner 1977.114.

<sup>11</sup> Steiner 1977.114.

<sup>12</sup> Buczyńska-Garewicz 1981.12.

<sup>13</sup> See Fearing 1953.71-88; on the psychological aspect of the term interpretant see Zeman 1977.245.

<sup>14</sup> Zeman 1977.255-56.

<sup>15</sup> See Etzioni 1964.68-70.

<sup>16</sup> The classic article on "effectance" is by White 1959.297-333.

<sup>17</sup> On the experiment, see Russ, Gold, and Stone 1979.481-91.

<sup>18</sup> Russ *et al.* 1979.489.

<sup>19</sup> Ehrenzweig 1967.

<sup>20</sup> Worth 1975.85-108.

<sup>21</sup> Veron 1974.1-10.

<sup>22</sup> Grabar 1979.185-88; Lagopoulos and Ioannidis 1977.75-109.

<sup>23</sup> This article summarizes and recasts in terms of Peircean semiotics Frischer 1982, which contains additional discussion and scholarly documentation of points raised in this article.