*Amicus Sanus:* Philodemean   
Ethics in Horace’s *Satires* 1 and 4

Just as Persius’ poetry is characterized by its introverted philosophical content and Juvenal’s for its relentless criticism of defunct public figures, scholars have often characterized Horace’s satirical works by their genuine concern for moral reform. While this characterization is wholly appropriate, however, the average reader may justly ask the following question: what gave Horace the authority to pass moral judgment on his contemporaries? Indeed, what qualifications, if any, provided Horace with the level of expertise necessary to examine and remedy the ethical issues described in his *Satires*? The answer, or at least part of the answer, may be intimately associated with the influence of Philodemus of Gadara’s philosophical diatribes, sophisticated treatises which dealt specifically with the effective diagnosis and treatment of moral diseases in accordance with Epicurean doctrines.

Interest in the incorporation of Philodemean therapeutic techniques in Horace’s poetry was somewhat prevalent in the first half of the nineteenth century, as is shown by the DeWitt’s articles (1935, 1939). In recent years, however, the influence of contemporary Hellenistic philosophers—especially Philodemus—on the Augustan poets has received little consideration, although this has come from competent scholars with a clear understanding of both poetry and philosophy (D. Armstrong 2004). And while the role of Philodemean literary theories in Horace was discussed in detail by J. Tait in her seminal dissertation (1941) and, more recently, in essays by Oberhelm and Armstrong (1995) and K. Freudenburg (1993), the presence of Epicurean ethical doctrines in the *Satires* has not been closely evaluated. This study will attempt to begin filling this gap in Horatian scholarship by carefully considering the role of Philodemus’ ethical treatises in *Satires* 1.

Perhaps one of the most revealing examples of the influence of Epicurean ethics on Horace occurs in *Satires* 1.4.104-129. Here the poet describes the pedagogical method his father employed in his upbringing and education, a method which establishes intriguing and noteworthy connections to Philodemean tactics. The importance of understanding what to seek (*petere*) and what to avoid (*fugere*), for example, is a crucial step to happiness for Philodemus and therefore Epicurus. The fact that Horace clearly identifies Philodemus in connection with this method without naming him (1.4.115-116: *sapiens, vitatu quidqwue petitu* | *sit melius, causas reddet tibi*), moreover, is likewise noteworthy. On account of his Epicurean upbringing and education, therefore, Horace considers himself *sanus* (1.4.129) competent enough to pass moral judgment upon his contemporaries. As my study will attempt to show, the method he employs in identifying and curing moral diseases is wholly Philedemean: diagnosis followed by therapy, especially *parrhēsia* (frank speech) and *avocatio* (“placing-before-the-eyes”), both of which were techniques recommended and used by Philodemus himself in his ethical treatises.

Bibliography:

Armstrong, D. “Horace’s *Epistles* 1 and Philodemus.” In *Vergil, Philodemus, and the Augustans*.   
 Edited by David Armstrong et al. Austin: 2004.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. “Introduction.” In *Vergil, Philodemus, and the Augustans*. Edited by David   
 Armstrong et al. Austin: 2004.

DeWitt, N. “Parresiatic Poems of Horace.” *CP* Vol. 30, No. 4 (1935): 312-319.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. “Epicurean Doctrine in Horace.” *CP* Vol. 34, No. 2 (1939): 127-134.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. *Epicurus and His Philosophy*. Minneapolis: 1954.

Freudenburg, K. *The Walking Muse: Horace on the Theory of Satire.* Princeton: 1993.

Oberhelm S. and Armstrong, D. “Satire as Poetry and the Impossibility of Metathesis in   
 Horace’s *Satires*.” In *Philodemus and Poetry.* Edited by Dirk Obbink. Oxford: 1995.

Schroeder, F. M. “Philodemus: *Avocatio* and the Pathos of Distance in Lucretius and Vergil.” In   
 *Vergil, Philodemus, and the Augustans*. Edited by David Armstrong et al. Austin: 2004.

Tait, J. *Philodemus’ Influence on the Latin Poets*. Ann Arbor: 1941.