

A Recipe for Disaster: Epicureanism in *Satires* 2.4 and 2.8

1.

“Unde et quo Catius?” “non est mihi tempus, aventi ponere signa novis praeceptis, qualia vincent Pythagoran Anytique reum doctumque Platona.” “peccatum fateor, cum te sic tempore laevo interpellarim; sed des veniam bonus, oro.” (2.4.1-5)

H: “Where from and where to, Catius?”

C: “I don’t have time right now, I’m so very eager to write notes on new teachings that will surpass even those of Pythagoras, Socrates and learned Plato.”

H: “I confess I’m at fault for interrupting you at such an awkward moment; I beg you—please forgive me.”

2.

καλῶς δὴ αὐτὰ διάλαβε, καὶ διὰ μνήμης ἔχων ὀξέως αὐτὰ περιόδευε μετὰ τῶν λοιπῶν ὧν ἐν τῇ μικρᾷ ἐπιτομῇ πρὸς Ἡρόδοτον ἀπεστείλαμεν (*Pyth.* 85)

“Grasp well these teachings of mine and, committing them to memory, examine them systematically and carefully along with the other doctrines I have sent to Herodotus in the form of a small summary.”

“quodsi interciderit tibi nunc aliquid, repetes mox, sive est naturae hoc sive artis, mirus utroque.” “quin id erat curae, quo pacto cuncta tenerem utpote res tenuis, tenui sermone peractas.” “ede hominis nomen, simul et, Romanus an hospes.” “ipsa memor praecepta canam, celabitur auctor.” (2.4.6-11)

H: “But if something slipped your mind just now, you’ll soon recover it, whether by nature or skill—either way you are a wonder to behold!”

C: “That’s precisely what I was anxious about: How to retain everything, since it was such a delicate teaching conveyed in such a subtle manner.”

H: “Well, tell me the professor’s name and whether he was a Roman or a foreigner.”

C: “I’ll recite from memory the mystical teachings themselves, but the source’s name will remain a mystery.”

3.

o noctes cenaque deum, quibus ipse meique ante Larem proprium vescor verasque procacis pasco libatis dapibus. prout cuique libido est, siccat inaequalis calices conviva solutus legibus insanis, seu quis capit acria fortis pocula seu modicis uvescit laetius. ergo sermo oritur, non de villis domibusve alienis, nec male necne Lepos saltet; sed, quod magis ad nos pertinet et nescire malum est, agitamus, utrumne divitiis homines an sint virtute beati (2.6.65-74)

“O nights and dinners of the gods! When my friends and I dine before my own Lar and I feed the eager slaves from tasted dishes. The guests drain containers of different sizes—in accordance with each one’s desire—unbound by crazy rules, whether one bravely reaches for the strong stuff or else cheerfully drinks from milder cups. And in this way our conversation arises, but not conversation about other people’s homes or estates, or whether Lepos dances well or not; rather, we discuss that which concerns us more and of which it is

harmful to be ignorant: That is, whether men become happy through riches or virtue...”

4.

“Da, si grave non est,
quae prima iratum ventrem pacaverit esca.”
“in primis Lucanus aper: leni fuit austro
captus, ut aiebat cenae pater: acria circum
rapula, lactucae, radices, qualia lassarum
pervellunt stomachum, siser, allec, faecula Coa.”
(2.8.4-9)

H: “Tell me, if it’s not a burden, what kind of food first appeased your angry stomach?”
F: “First there was a Lucanian boar; it had been caught when the south wind was gently blowing, as the father of the feast kept saying. Surrounding it were piquant turnips, lettuce and radishes, the kinds of things that excite a weary stomach, as well as parsnips, fish sauce and Coan lees.”

5.

“adfertur squillas inter murena natantis
in patina porrecta. sub hoc erus ‘haec gravida’ inquit
‘capta est, deterior post partum carne futura.
his mixtum ius est: oleo, quod prima Venafri
pressit cella; garo de sucis piscis Hiberi;
vino quinquenni, verum citra mare nato,
dum coquitur—cocto Chium sic convenit, ut non
hoc magis ullum aliud—; pipere albo, non sine aceto,
quod Methymnaeam vitio mutaverit uvam.
erucas viridis, inulas ego primus amaras
monstravi incoquere; inlutos Curtillus echinos”
(2.8.42-52)

“A lamprey spread out on a tray and surrounded by swimming shrimp is introduced. At this point the feast’s master said “she was caught while pregnant, since the flesh is poorer afterward (lit. after birth). The sauce is made from these: olive oil, Venafrum’s first press; extract from the juice of Spanish fish; five-year old wine from this side of the sea, poured while on the boil—boiled Chian is so suitable that no other surpasses it—white pepper, some vinegar made from the fermenting of Lesbian grapes. I was first to suggest the incorporation of arugula and bitter elecampane; Curtillus used unwashed sea urchins...”

6.

“heu, Fortuna, quis est crudelior in nos
te deus? ut semper gaudes illudere rebus
humanis!” (2.8.61-3)

“O Fortune, which god is crueller toward us than you? For you always rejoice in your meddling in the human affairs!”

τὴν δὲ τύχην οὐτε θεόν, ὡς οἱ πολλοὶ νομίζουσιν,
ὑπολαμβάνων—οὐθὲν γὰρ ἀτάκτως θεῶ
πράττεται—οὐτε ἀβέβαιον αἰτίαν <οὐκ> οἶεται
μὲν γὰρ ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακὸν ἐκ ταύτης πρὸς τὸ
μακαρίως ζῆν ἀνθρώποις δίδοσθαι, ἀρχὰς μὲντοι
μεγάλων ἀγαθῶν ἢ κακῶν ὑπὸ ταύτης
χορηγεῖσθαι (*Men.* 134-5)

“Understanding that fortune is not a god, as the masses reckon (for nothing disorderly is done by god, and neither is it an unpredictable ‘cause’), for it is not thought that good or evil is granted to humans by it in connection with the blessed life, but only opportunities [lit. beginnings] for great good or evil.”

7.

“deinde secuti
mazonomo pueri magno discerpta ferentes
membra gruvis sparsi sale multo non sine farre,
pinguibus et ficis pastum iecur anseris albae
et leporum avolsos, ut multo suavius, armos,
quam si cum lumbis quis edit. tum pectore adusto

“Then there followed servants carrying on a large trencher a crane’s limbs sprinkled with much salt and some meal, along with the liver of a white goose that had been fed and fattened with figs; also the wings of hares, torn off—because they are tastier that way than if you eat them attached to the loins. Next, we saw

vidimus et merulas poni et sine clune palumbis.”

blackbirds presented with toasted breasts and pigeons without rumps.”

8.

denique avarities et honorum caeca cupido,
quae miseros homines cogunt transcendere fines
iuris et interdum socios scelerum atque ministros
noctes atque dies niti praestante labore
ad summas emergere opes, haec vulnera vitae
non minimam partem mortis formidine aluntur.
(Lucr. 3.59-64)

“Greed and the blind lust for honor, moreover,
which urge wretched men to transcend the
boundaries of justice and sometimes, as
partners in crime, to strive both day and night
with exceeding toil to reach the height of
power—it is the fear of death that in no small
part feeds these weaknesses of life.”

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