

## ON THE HUMOR OF PALAEPHATUS

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### 1. Palaephatus' Interpretive Principles

- i. The Historicity of Myth: all enduring stories originate from historical fact.
- ii. The Continuity of Nature: anything which does not exist today, did not exist before and will not exist in the future. Alternatively, anything which existed in the past exists now and will exist in the future.

### 2. Palaephatus, *On Incredible Tales* 1. 3-7

εἴ τις οὖν πείθεται τοιοῦτον γενέσθαι  
θηρίον, ἀδύνατον· οὔτε γὰρ ἄλλως αἱ  
φύσεις σύμφωνοι ἵππου καὶ ἀνδρός, οὔτε  
ἢ τροφή ὁμοία, οὔτε διὰ στόματος καὶ  
φάρυγγος ἀνθρωπίου δυνατὸν ἵππου  
τροφὴν διελθεῖν. εἰ δὲ τοιαύτη ἰδέα τότε  
ἦν, καὶ νῦν ἂν ὑπῆρχε.

Even if someone believes that such a beast existed, it is impossible. For the natures of a horse and of a human are certainly not compatible, nor are their foods the same. What a horse eats could not pass through the mouth and throat of a man. And if there ever was such a shape, it would also exist today.

### 3. Palaephatus, *On Incredible Tales* 2. 34-6

ὁ νεανίας ὄρυγμα βαθὺ ποιήσας  
καθεῖρξεν ἑαυτὸν εἰς ἐκεῖνο. ἔνθα ὄντι  
αὐτῷ τὸν μὲν ἄλλον χρόνον  
εἰσεβάλλοντο πρόβατα καὶ αἴγας, καὶ ἔζη  
σιτούμενος· ὁπότε δὲ Μίνως ἀνθρωπον  
ἠβούλετο τιμωρήσασθαι, τούτῳ  
καθειργμένῳ ἐν τῷ οἰκήματι εἰσέπεμπε,  
καὶ οὕτως ἀνηρεῖτο.

The young man dug a deep trench and shut himself inside it. Staying here for the rest of his life, they threw sheep and goats to him and he survived by eating them. And whenever Minos wanted to take vengeance on a person, he sent him into the man who was shut up in his house, and in this way he was executed.

### 4. Palaephatus, *On Incredible Tales* 13. 5-12

ἦν δὲ ἐν τῷ ἄντρῳ εὐνή λέοντος καὶ  
λεαίνης, οἱ δὴ, ἀκούσαντες φωνῆς,  
ἐξελθόντες ἐμπίπτουσι τοῖς περὶ  
Ἀταλάντην καὶ ἀναιροῦσιν αὐτούς. μετὰ  
δὲ χρόνον τοῦ λέοντος καὶ τῆς λεαίνης  
ἐξελθόντων, ἰδόντες τούτους οἱ  
συγκνηγετοῦντες τῷ Μειλανίῳ,  
ἔδοξαν αὐτούς εἰς ταῦτα τὰ ζῶα  
μεταβληθῆναι. εἰσβάλλοντες οὖν εἰς τὴν  
πόλιν διεφήμιζον ὡς οἱ περὶ Ἀταλάντην  
[καὶ Μειλανίωνα] εἰς λέοντας  
μετεβλήθησαν.

But in the cave there was a marriage bed of a lion and a lioness, who, hearing a noise, came out and fell on Atalanta and her companion and killed them. Later, when the lion and the lioness left [the cave], Melanion's hunting companions, seeing them, thought that they had been transformed into these animals. Then, they hurried to the city and made it known that Atalanta and Melanion had been transformed into lions.

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