

The Consolation of Not-Philosophy in Lucilius and Juvenal

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Panel: “Satiric Takes on Philosophy, Philosophic Takes on Satire”

Outline of Juvenal *Satire 13*:

1-4: (Enigmatic proem) Crime doesn’t pay.

5-33: Calvinus, are you seriously in shock because a debtor took off with your money? I’m embarrassed for you.

33-85: The human race hasn’t taken honesty seriously since the Stone Age. Everybody lies.

86-119: Criminals like your debtor don’t believe in the gods; you look like a fool when you insist that oaths are sacred.

120-173: Let me buck you up with my amateur philosophy. You’re so wrong to grieve over money, when this kind of thing happens all the time – and far worse things happen to lots of people.

174-249: You want revenge, but that’s petty. Anyway, a criminal will never escape his own guilty conscience; he’ll be plagued with visions of eternal punishment. Failing that, he’ll run afoul of the law eventually and face execution or exile. Won’t that be great?

Juv. 13.6-22:

...sed nec
tam tenuis census tibi contigit, ut mediocris
iacturae te mergat onus, nec rara videmus
quae pateris: casus multis hic cognitus ac iam
tritus et e medio fortunae ductus aceruo. 10
ponamus nimios gemitus. flagrantior aequo
non debet dolor esse viri nec volnere maior.
tu quamvis levium minimam exiguamque malorum
particulam vix ferre potes spumantibus ardens
visceribus, sacrum tibi quod non reddat amicus 15
depositum? stupet haec qui iam post terga reliquit
sexaginta annos Fonteio consule natus?
an nihil in melius tot rerum proficis usu?
magna quidem, sacris quae dat praecepta libellis,
victrix fortunae sapientia, ducimus autem 20
hos quoque felices, qui ferre incommoda vitae
nec iactare iugum vita didicere magistra.

...but it’s not as if you have such slender means that the burden of a moderate-sized loss will overwhelm you, nor is what you’re experiencing rare: this misfortune is known to many – really commonplace at this point, and drawn from the middle of fortune’s heap. Let’s abandon this excessive lamentation. A man’s grief shouldn’t burn more intensely than is reasonable, or be greater than the injury. Scarcely able to handle even a tiny little shred of minor misfortune, you’re burning with your guts in a froth, because a friend didn’t return a sum entrusted to him? Can a man born in Fonteius’ consulship, who’s seen sixty years pass by, be shocked at this? Or do you get no profit from so much experience of life? Philosophy is great indeed, the conqueror of fortune who provides her teachings in little books, but we also consider those happy who have learned, with Life as their teacher, to bear life’s difficulties and to resist throwing off the yoke.

Juv. 13.33-35:

...dic, senior bulla dignissime, nescis
quas habeat veneres aliena pecunia? nescis
quem tua simplicitas risum vulgo moveat...

Tell me, old man who ought to be wearing a child’s amulet, don’t you know what pleasure another person’s money brings? Don’t you know what a laugh your naïveté elicits from the crowd...?

Juv. 13.120-123:

accipe quae contra valeat solacia ferre
et qui nec Cynicos nec Stoica dogmata legit
a Cynicis tunica distantia, non Epicurum
suspicit exigui laetum plantaribus horti.

Instead, listen to these words of consolation that can even be offered by someone who’s read neither the Cynics nor the teachings of the Stoics (whose shirts distinguish them from the Cynics), and who doesn’t revere Epicurus, happy with the shoots of his tiny garden.

140-41:

ten, o delicias, extra communia censes
ponendum?

Do you think you should be counted as extraordinary, precious thing?

Lucilius Satires Book 27, Satire 3 in Warmington
[=690-710 Marx]

769. quod si paulisper captare atque observare haec volueris	but if you'd be willing to take up and look at this a little while
770. rem cognoscas simul, et dictis animum attendas postulo	I ask you to investigate this matter with me and train your mind on my words
771. et si, maxime quod spero, mutuum hoc mecum facis	and if, as I especially hope, you return this favor to me
772-3. proferat ergo iamiam vester ordo scelera quae in se admiserit	now at last let your order admit the crimes it has committed
774. quod si observas hominem, qui pro commodo et regno audeat	but if you look at the man, who dares on behalf of his own interest and realm
775. aut quod animum induxit semel et utile omnino putat	or what he's once put his mind to do and thinks entirely useful
776. illo oculi deducunt ipsi atque animum spes illuc rapit	their eyes lure them in this direction, and hope draws their minds there
777. cum sciam nihil esse in vita proprium mortali datum	since I know nothing in life is given to a mortal as his own
778. iam qua tempestate vivo chresin ad me recipio	now, in the age I live in, I take <i>chrēsis</i> ["utility"] to myself
779. re in secunda tollere animos, in mala demittere	to raise spirits in good times, dampen them in bad
780. modo sursum modo deorsum tamquam collus cernui	now up, now back down, like the neck of a stooping man [or a tumbler? (cf. W)]
781. certum est quidquid sit, quasi non sit ferre aequo animo ac fortiter	I've resolved to bear whatever it is patiently and bravely, as if it didn't exist
782. id concedere unum atque in eo dare quo superatur manus	to yield and give way on only that point in which [one's] hand is bested
783. fuimus pernices, aeternum id nobis sperantes fore	we were active/swift, hoping that we would have this forever
784. si non tamen ad te hoc redibit, tu hoc carebis commodo	but if this doesn't come back to you, you'll do without this benefit
785. paulo hoc melius quam mediocre, hoc minus malum quam ut pessimum	a little better than moderate, and less bad than what you'd call the worst [lot?]

786. metuo ut fieri possit; ergo antiquo ab Arciolo excido	I'm afraid it cannot happen; so I fall out with old Archilochus
787. ...primum qua virtute servitute excluserit.	first by which virtue he removed [someone] from slavery
788-89. ῥήσεις ubi, Graeci ubi nunc Socratici carti? "quidquid quaeritis, perimus"	where are the treatises (<i>rheses</i>)? where are the Greek Socratic pages now? Whatever you ask, we're ruined
790. nullo honore, heredis fletu nullo, nullo funere	with no honor, with no weeping of an heir, with no funeral
791. rem, populi salutem fictis versibus Lucilium quibus potest inperit, totumque hoc studiose et sedulo	this thing, the wellbeing of the people, Lucilius imparts to/in verses he's fashioned in the way he can, [and does] this whole thing earnestly and zealously

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