

Complete in Himself, Smooth and Rounded: Self-Sufficiency in Horace's *Sermones* 2.7

1. Outline of *Serm.* 2.7
 - a. Horace permits Davus to speak (1-5)
 - b. Consistent vices are preferable to inconsistent vices (6-20)
 - c. Horace is inconsistent; he praises simple fare until invited to dinner by Maecenas (21-45)
 - d. Horace is a slave to his sexual desires; he (would) repeatedly have affairs with matrons (46-82)
 - e. The wise man is free (83-88)
 - f. Horace is a slave, and his status allows him to indulge his desires whereas Davus cannot (89-111)
 - g. Horace cannot stand to be alone (111-115)
 - h. Horace stops Davus (116-118)

2. *quisnam igitur liber? sapiens sibi qui imperiosus,
quem neque pauperies neque mors neque vincula terrent,
responsare cupidinibus, contemnere honores
fortis, et in se ipso totus, teres atque rotundus,
externi ne quid valeat per leve morari,
in quem manca ruit semper fortuna* (Hor. *Serm.* 2.7.83-88)

So who is free? The sage, who is in command of himself, whom neither poverty nor death nor imprisonment frightens, who is firm enough to resist desires and disregard offices, and is complete in his own self, smooth and rounded, so that nothing external can slow him on account of his polish, and at whom fortune always rushes in vain.

3. *nemo potest non beatissimus esse, qui est totus aptus ex sese, quique in se uno sua ponit omnia* (Cic. *Paradoxa Stoicorum* 2.17)
No one is capable of not being most happy who is completely dependent upon himself and who places all his affairs in himself alone.

4. τῶ δὲ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ ζῶα περιέχειν μέλλοντι ζῶῳ πρόπον ἂν εἶη σχῆμα τὸ περιειληφὸς ἐν αὐτῷ πάντα ὅποσα σχήματα: διὸ καὶ σφαιροειδές, ἐκ μέσου πάντη πρὸς τὰς τελευτὰς ἴσον ἀπέχον, κυκλοτερές αὐτὸ ἐτορνεύσατο, πάντων τελεώτατον ὁμοιότατόν τε αὐτὸ ἑαυτῷ σχημάτων [...] λείον δὲ δὴ κύκλῳ πᾶν ἔξωθεν αὐτὸ ἀπηκριβοῦτο πολλῶν χάριν [...] αὐτὸ γὰρ ἑαυτῷ τροφήν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ φθίσιον παρέχον καὶ πάντα ἐν ἑαυτῷ καὶ ὑφ' ἑαυτοῦ πάσχον καὶ δρῶν ἐκ τέχνης γέγονεν: ἠγήσατο γὰρ αὐτὸ ὁ συνθεὶς αὐτάρκες ὃν ἄμεινον ἔσεσθαι μᾶλλον ἢ προσδεῆς ἄλλων. (Pl. *Tim.* 33b-d)

Now to the animal which was to comprehend all animals, that figure would be suitable which comprehends within itself all other figures. Wherefore he made [the cosmos] in the form of a globe, round as from a lathe, having its extremes in every direction equidistant from the center, the most perfect and the most like itself of all figures [...] This he finished off, making the surface smooth all around for many reasons[...] Of design it was created thus—its own waste providing its own food, and all that it did or suffered taking place in and by itself. For the creator conceived that a being which was self-sufficient would be far more excellent than one which lacked anything. (trans. by Jowett 1961)

5. Xenophanes: Cic., *Luc.* 118.11-14; DL 9.19; cf. Diels-Kranz, A 28, 33, and 36
Parmenides: fr. 8.41-44 (Diels-Kranz, B 8)
Empedocles: Stob., *Ecl.* 1.15, 2 (Diels-Kranz, B 28)
Chrysippus: Plut. *Moralia* 1052d / Antipater and Posidonius: DL 7.140
6. *admirabor eorum tarditatem qui animantem inmortalem et eundem beatum rotundum esse velint, quod ea forma neget ullam esse pulchriorem Plato: at mihi vel cylindri vel quadrati vel conii vel pyramidis videtur*

esse formosior. Quae vero vita tribuitur isti rutundo deo? nempe ut ea celeritate contorqueatur cui par nulla ne cogitari quidem possit; in qua non video ubinam mens constans et vita beata possit insistere. (Cic. ND 1.24)

For the present I shall merely express surprise at the slow-wittedness of those who would have it that a living creature endowed with both immortality and blessedness is spherical in shape, merely because Plato maintains that no shape is more beautiful than the sphere. In my view, the cylinder, the cube, the cone, the pyramid are more beautiful. And what sort of life is assigned to this rotund god? Why, to be spun around at speed the like of which cannot even be imagined; I cannot envisage mental stability or a life of happiness resident in that! (trans. by Walsh 1997)

7. *Hic quam volet Epicurus iocetur, homo non aptissimus ad iocandum minimeque resipiens patriam, et dicat se non posse intellegere qualis sit volubilis et rutundus deus, tamen ex hoc, quod etiam ipse probat, numquam me movebit.* (Cic. ND 2.46)

Epicurus can crack jokes at this if he likes; mind you, the amusing sally is not his forte, for he has not even a pinch of Attic salt. He can say the he cannot envisage what a whirling, tubby god is like, but he will never budge me from this conviction. (trans. by Walsh 1997)

8. *Modo dic nobis, qualem deum istum fieri velis. Ἐπικούρειος θεός non potest esse: οὔτε αὐτὸς πράγμα ἔχει τι οὔτε ἄλλοις παρέχει; Stoicus? Quomodo potest "rotundus" esse, ut ait Varro, "sine capite, sine praeputio"?* (Sen. Apocol. 8)

Just tell us what kind of god you want your protégé to be. He can't be an Epicurean god: such neither has any trouble himself nor gives any to others. A Stoic god? How can he be "rounded", as Varro says, "with no head, with no foreskin"? (trans. by Eden 1984)

9. [...] *adde, quod idem non horam tecum esse potes, non otia recte ponere teque ipsum vitas fugitivus et erro, iam vino quaerens, iam somno fallere curam, frustra: nam comes atra premit sequiturque fugacem* (Hor. Serm. 2.7.111-15)

Add also that you cannot be with yourself for an hour, nor can you employ leisure rightly, but you avoid your own self as a runaway and vagrant, seeking to cheat anxiety—now with wine, now with sleep—but in vain, for the black companion closes in and pursues the one in flight.

10. 'Se contentus est sapiens.' Hoc, mi Lucili, plerique perperam interpretantur: sapientem undique submovent et intra cutem suam cogunt. Distinguendum autem est quid et quatenus vox ista promittat. (Sen. Ep. 9.13)
'The wise man is contained within himself.' My Lucilius, most people interpret this incorrectly. They drive the wise man away from every part of the world and force him under his own skin. But one must discern what this saying means and how far it extends.

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