

Catherine KEANE

Unraveling Philosophy: Allusion and Program in Juvenal's Fifth Book

This paper argues that the *Satires* of Juvenal's fifth book (13-16) are styled as flawed philosophical treatises. This little-studied book showcases Juvenal's knowledge of – and irreverence toward – the Hellenistic philosophical schools (Anderson 1962, Braund 1988). I will argue that Book 5, beyond exhibiting superficial irreverence toward philosophy, takes as its satiric program the willful *misuse* of philosophy, with each poem misapplying a particular model.

Book 5 opens with a parody of one type of philosophical discourse, the *consolatio* (*Sat.* 13; Braund 1997). The strategy of distorting a philosophical proposition is paradigmatic for the book. *Sat.* 14 at first treats the conventional theme (cf. Ps-Plu. *Lib. Educ.*) of children's impressionability: parents are responsible for displaying (*monstrant*, 3) vices to their offspring. But in mid-poem, Juvenal begins to catalogue human folly, likening it to an entertaining spectacle (*monstro voluptatem egregiam*, 256-257; Corn 1992 notes the verbal echo). The poem becomes a pageant of the sort that the first lines condemn.

Satire 15 narrates an incident of cannibalism in Egypt. In this endeavor, philosophy seems to be the satirist's weapon and his solace, especially in his praise of human fellow-feeling and social cohesion (131-158). As if to signal his dependence on philosophy, Juvenal opens the poem with a near-quotation of Cicero *Tusc.* 5.78 (*Quis nescit & qualia demens Aegyptos portenta colat?* 1-2, followed by a list of Egyptian sacred animals). But while Cicero claims that the Egyptians' "perverted" piety (*pravitas*) leads to great displays of courage, Juvenal seizes upon and develops only the characterization of Egyptian beliefs as perverse. Moreover, while *Tusc.* 5 declares that philosophy is a refuge (*ad [philosophiam] confugimus*, 5.5, Pythagoras' lifestyle being exemplary), *Sat.* 15 dramatizes the *failure* of philosophy to comfort, as it ends with the poet imagining a shocked Pythagoras fleeing from the scene (171-174).

The fragmentary *Sat.* 16, on the benefits of military life, also begins with a question: *Quis numerare queat felicitis praemia & militiae?* (1-2) The extant text methodically surveys the legal perks enjoyed by soldiers. The poem thus misapplies the popular diatribe theme of *mempsimoiria* – which also happens to be Horace's first satiric topic (*Sat.* 1.1.1-12). Horace writes that most people envy one another's careers, a prime example being the merchant who imagines the excitement and rewards of the soldier's life (7-8). While Horace and the diatribists go on to argue that disposition, not profession, determines one's happiness, Juvenal 16 encourages the self-defeating delusion of his addressee-victim. This comic hijacking of the topic with which Horace began his *Sermones* makes an apt conclusion – both self-promoting and self-mocking – to Juvenal's complex, tendentious *oeuvre*.

Juvenal's rich final book, in which literary and philosophical allusions abound, also employs a coherent and innovative "plot" strategy relating to philosophical conventions and texts. This study enhances our understanding of Juvenal's complex use of philosophy as both a model and a foil for his satiric project.