

SERGIO YONA, *Epicurean Ethics in Horace: The Psychology of Satire*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, ix+348 pp., ISBN 978-0-19-878655-9.

In this monograph, Yona stresses that one needs to take Horace's philosophical content seriously, although scholars have not always done so. In terms of methodology, one might infer that Yona performs a 'philosophical new historicism': that is to say, he, largely, fills in the intellectual background of Horace's *Satires*, showing to what degree several of them are sympathetic to Epicureanism and aligned, in terms of philosophical content, with the ethical treatises of Philodemus. The text is more expository than argumentative, however, and this makes the book difficult to evaluate. Moreover, the work is synthetic, and it is regularly hard to recognize where Yona develops original ideas rather than summarizes the scholarly *opinio communis*, since he generally does not signpost where he is developing original argument. Furthermore, one wishes that Yona had received more training in academic writing before embarking on this monograph. For example, the subsections generally do not have introductions or conclusions, wherein Yona might do argumentative signposting.¹ Furthermore, a lack of developed theses within the chapters means that the reader regularly has to do a lot of work sifting through text to deduce argument. Moreover, Yona does not appear to be familiar with the importance of keeping the subject matter of paragraphs aligned with topic sentences, and this makes reading the book unnecessarily laborious.² Nonetheless, this is a substantial monograph that makes an important contribution to studies of Horace and Epicureanism.

The introduction addresses fundamental concerns. Yona considers *persona*-theory and states that "this study argues that Horace portrays [sc. his] poetic persona as consistently and competently engaged with Epicurean ethics throughout the entire collection" (2-3). Furthermore, Yona suggests that Horace constructs both a *persona* that is largely interested in its mental health and a *persona* that believes that therapeutic benefits can be gained through conversation. Having

¹ A one-paragraph conclusion to the book as a whole is ungracefully tacked on to the last subsection of the book.

² For example, on page 143, Yona provides a topic sentence that asserts that Epicurus "maintained that all sense impressions are true and therefore absolutely foundational for the formation of knowledge and ethical decisions." He then notes where evidence can be found for this in the works of Epicurus and Lucretius. He then begins talking about Horace's *Satires* (a new paragraph should begin here, since this is a new topic). He then turns to discuss the phrase *nonne vides* in Lucretius (a new paragraph should begin here, since this is a new topic). He then goes on to mention Alessandro Schiesaro's interpretation of Lucretius' use of *nonne vides* (a new paragraph should begin here, since this is a new topic). He then goes on to discuss the use of *nonne vides* in Vergil's *Georgics* (a new paragraph should begin here, since this is a new topic). He then addresses the use of the imperfect tense in Horace as a nod to the "Epicurean didactic tradition" (a new paragraph should begin here, since this is a new topic). In his concluding sentence to this paragraph, Yona raises the question: "in what manner did Horace's persona's exposure to everyday life inform his understanding of the world around him and, perhaps more importantly, how did this effect the way in which he communicated this knowledge?" Unfortunately, such paragraphs are common throughout the book.

overviewed various theories regarding Horace's intended audience, Yona notes that his study will follow the approach of Benjamin Hicks, who views the list of names at the end of *Satires* 1.10 as referencing Horace's idealized, inner circle of readers, which includes poetic luminaries such as Vergil and Varius. In the second half of the introduction, Yona addresses the history of scholarship related to Horace and Philodemus and positions his own study therein. The first section addresses the manner in which themes that can be found in Horace's *Satires*, such as frank criticism, friendship, and free speech, are paralleled in the treatises of Philodemus. The introduction closes with an overview of the chapters to follow.

In chapter 1, Yona turns to philosophical concerns. He begins by noting the wide engagement that Horace exhibits with philosophical thought, referencing Aristotelian, Stoic, Platonic, and Cynic influence, and he stresses that Horace's most extended philosophical engagement is with the Epicurean school. Herein Yona provides a thesis statement, "It is the purpose of this following investigation to enhance the traditional appreciation of Horace's engagement with Hellenistic philosophy by examining the influence on the *Satires* of Philodemus' ethical views, specifically as they pertain to the administration of wealth, the challenges of distinguishing flattery from genuine friendship, and, closely related to this, the therapeutic application of frank criticism" (16). One notes that there is little argument in this thesis statement, given that the idea of 'enhancement' is vague. Thereafter, Yona provides a bibliographical overview for Philodemus, stressing his important relationship with Piso. An overview of numerous editions of texts by Philodemus is here included; it would have been better to place this material in an appendix, since it does not contain original argument.

Yona next turns to address Epicurus and his economic theory. He notes both that Epicurus encouraged individuals to prepare for the future (while employing the hedonic calculus) and that an appreciation for rural living for the purpose of a philosophical life is a related concern. Thereafter, Yona addresses the teachings of Epicurus regarding livelihood, whereby Epicurus supports the idea that the sage should procure money, if necessary, via philosophical teachings, and Yona notes that Epicurus received patronage from Mithres, the financial advisor of Lysimachus. This is important since it sets up a chain of patronage, in relation to Epicureanism, that will be relevant to Horace's interactions with Maecenas. Furthermore, Yona turns to address Philodemus' theory of wealth acquisition and wealth management, and he observes that the Epicurean sage should follow the hedonic calculus in regard to these concerns (37). Wealth is useful, for it allows one to invest in one's friends and agreeable acquaintances. Yona stresses that the Epicurean sage finds it best to acquire wealth from philosophical conversations and that friendship is based on ethical congruity, and this, for the Epicureans, includes patron-client relationships.

Philodemus, flattery, and frankness are the topics of the next sub-section. Having provided background on the social energies that encouraged flattery toward patrons in the Hellenistic era, Yona addresses the manner in which flatterers

and Epicurean sages could be grouped in the same category, given the Epicurean sage's inclination to receive wealth from powerful patrons. Yona concludes the section with an overview of the manner in which frank criticism needs to be offered relative to the recipient (and in accordance with the hedonic calculus), so as to afford maximal benefit. Yona closes the chapter with a section on the manner in which dispositions can be analyzed via particular behaviors: repeated angry outbursts, for example, as signs, can lead one to deduce that an individual has an irascible disposition. Relatedly, Yona shows how deictic *παραδείγματα/exempla* were used both in the Epicurean school and in Horace's *Satires* for the purpose of education.

We turn to chapter two. In the first section, Yona addresses *Satires* 1.1-3 and notes that the diatribic style, practiced by Cynics, Epicureans, Stoics, and others, in its Epicurean manifestation, is noteworthy for its goal of therapy, which may be provided via frank criticism. Yona observes that Horace incorporates sharp diatribe as a form of 'Cynic flare'. Yona also considers the manner in which Philodemus endorses the hedonic calculus in life generally and in relation to economic concerns specifically. Thereafter, he overviews several passages where we can see this advice at play in *Satires* 1.1 (e.g., 32-8, 'on the ant', 41-3, 'on the miser'). The section ends addressing the extremes of poverty and avarice: Yona helpfully overviews the differences between Epicurean and Cynic views on poverty and asserts that Horace's *persona* can be seen to sympathize with the Epicurean view of poverty (98-9); and he notes that Horace's *persona* throws scorn on avarice (e.g., *S.* 1.1.86).

The final section of chapter 2 addresses 'Epicurean frankness' in *Satires* 1.1-3. In relation to *Satires* 1.1 and avarice, Yona observes that Horace's *persona* provides harsh criticism for recalcitrant individuals who are not respondent to the frank criticism that they have received (*S.* 1.1.62, 80-5). Thereafter, Yona turns to *Satires* 1.2 and addresses the theme of sexuality. Building on Lefèvre, Yona observes the importance of the hedonic calculus for Horace's *persona* and discusses several vivid passages (e.g., *S.* 1.2.41-4). Herein, Yona addresses the importance of 'vivid pictorial imagery' that may be used, in Epicurean discourse, for its didactic value. Furthermore, *Satires* 1.2.127-31 comes to the foreground for discussion. Yona concludes, "By 'placing before the eyes' of his audience the formidable consequences of sexual excess...the poet draws a fitting conclusion to his riotously candid, though simultaneously therapeutic, criticism of Roman intemperance" (119).

The first half of the second chapter addresses avarice and miserliness in *Satires* 1.1. Yona starts out by providing an overview of the style of diatribe, addressing its employment by Cynics, Stoics, and Epicureans. Thereafter, he overviews: *S.* 1.1.4-12, with its *mempsimoiria*, 'blaming of one's fortune', theme; *S.* 1.1.28-32, on the topic of 'irrational' wealth acquisition; *S.* 1.1.32-8, with its 'industrious ant'; *S.* 1.1.8-40 and 41-3, with ruminations on avarice. His method in these sections is

to put Horace's text side by side with Epicurean texts to show similarities between them.

The chapter ends with a section on Epicurean 'frank criticism' in *Satires* 1.1-3. Yona notes that Horace, like the Epicureans, employs medical imagery, since the purpose of 'frank criticism' was healing, within the Epicurean school. In a discussion of *Satires* 1.2, Yona observes that Horace exhorts one to follow the hedonic calculus in romantic relationships, and he asserts that Horace employs vivid, 'pictorial imagery' in relation to adultery (*S.* 1.2.38, 127-31) to "deter his audience from a similar fate" (113). Herein Yona develops a section wherein he considers Horace's engagement (*S.* 1.2.120-3) with Philodemus' poetry (*Epigr.* 22) and concludes that it is "reasonable to view his approach as an imitation of the Epicurean's philosophically correct yet entertaining epigrams" (117). While concluding the chapter discussing *Satires* 1.3, Yona, again, notes Horace's "fondness for disarming self-deprecation" (123) and turns to a discussion of anger in relation to Stoicism and Epicureanism.

We turn to chapter three: "Horace's Epicurean Moral Credentials in *Satires* 1.4 and 1.6." Yona begins by addressing Horace's depiction of his father in relation to the tradition of New Comedy, particularly that of Terence. Yona suggests that we should also read Plautus' *Three Coins* (301-4, 313-17) as an important intertext for Horace's depiction of his relationship with his father, given thematic and lexical similarities between the passages. Yona avers that Horace constructs his father as a home-grown advisor on ethics so that Horace's *persona* need not seem overly philosophical in terms of ethical training. But Yona goes on to complicate this reading by noting that Horace's text also subtly overlaps with the Epicureans' concern for sense impressions in relation to knowledge formation (142-3), the Epicureans' use of clear language for philosophical discussion (146-8 [touched on again at 174-5]), and the application of the hedonic calculus in moral deliberations (151). Thereafter, Yona thoughtfully finds further similarities between Horace's *persona* and Epicureanism. These include: an ability to live contentedly with one's lot (153) and reflection on the manner in which skillful moral choices can lead to 'health' (154-5). How exactly Yona accounts for the similarities between Horace's *persona*'s father's home-grown philosophy and Epicureanism remains unexplored, however.

The second half of chapter three includes sections on "Horace's Father and Frank Criticism," "Epicurean Patronage in *Satires* 1.6," and "Epicurean Frankness in *Satires* 1.6." In the first section, Yona notes that "[Horace's] father's pedagogical use of frankness" reflects Epicurean tradition, as witnessed in Philodemus' *On Frank Criticism* and that Horace (*S.* 1.5.44) extols the value of friendship in a manner reminiscent of Epicureans. In the following section, Yona considers Horace's depiction of his relationship with Maecenas in Epicurean terms. Yona observes that Horace refers to Maecenas with language of endearment, that such practice was common in the Epicurean school among friends, and that "it is also a relationship that involves many of the characteristics of Epicurean patronage,

including the peaceful withdrawal from politics, an intimate bond between client and receptive patron, and, as Epicurus stipulates, the exchange of benefits for advice from an ethical expert or sage” (171). Yona closes the section by considering Horace’s “Epicurean Day” passage in *S.* 1.6 (110-28) and notes that Horace depicts himself as being in line with Philodemian economic theory, such that Horace is always happy to acquire more wealth, as long as the acquisition does not cause more pain than pleasure. In the final section, Yona addresses Horace’s self-depiction in terms of his relationship with Maecenas in *Satires* 1.6. Yona asserts that “Horace does not portray himself as an obsequious flatterer” (188); rather, Horace offers ‘candor’ “for the sake of his audience’s moral benefit” (189).

In Chapter 4, Yona focuses on *Satires* 1.9, 2.5, and 2.6. He begins by discussing the ‘toady’ in *Satires* 1.9 in relation to Epicurean theory on flattery, suggesting that the toady can be profitably read in relation to Philodemus’ ethical treatises, particularly in relation to the concept of ‘vice.’ In the following section, Yona reads the Ulysses of *Satires* 2.5 in relation to Philodemus’ treatment of flattery and patronage (213). The passage includes a rich discussion of Ulysses’ adulatory speech in relation to Philodemus’ thoughts on flattery and a rich discussion of the flatterer’s hostility toward potentially rival heirs. In the concluding section on *Satires* 2.6, Yona addresses Horace’s depiction of himself in relation to Maecenas and to the Sabine estate and observes that Horace’s acceptance of the farm is congruent with Epicurean economic theory, particularly that of Philodemus, which encourages individuals ever to accept wealth, provided that it comes in accord with the hedonic calculus. Yona also provides thoughtful discussion of the manner in which Horace portrays his life in agreeable Epicurean terms in the poem (e.g., *S.* 2.6.71-6).

In the final chapter, Yona addresses *Satires* 2.2, 2.3, and 2.7. With regard to *Satires* 2.2, he suggests that it is best to take Ofellus as being exemplary of Epicureanism rather than of Cynicism or Stoicism, although others have argued otherwise. To make his argument, Yona offers numerous valuable parallels. Thereafter, Yona provides a summary overview of *Satires* 2.3, while contrasting Damasippus’ Stoic rant with Epicurean frank criticism. In the final section of the book, Yona suggests that “Aside from both *Satires* 2.3 and 2.7 being merciless Stoic invectives that fail in terms of literary aesthetics and their usefulness for moral correction, both also involve direct and personal criticism of Horace” (279); they ‘fail in terms of literary aesthetics’ because they do not offer Callimachean brevity, and the Stoic criticism (especially in 2.3) is harsh such that it does not compare favorably with the Epicurean practice of frank criticism.

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