

The Vessel Analogy At The Opening of Lucretius Book Six

Post by “Don” of September 13, 2023 at 11:06 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

[Quote from Don](#)

Spurn all delights; any joy that is purchased with pain will be harmful.

Wow that's hard to reconcile with Epicurus. Apparently Horace has to be handled with care and I know I have not taken the time to follow the changes that took place in his views.

Not sure if this helps, but here's the entire letter from whence that line comes from:

[The Project Gutenberg eBook of THE WORKS OF HORACE, by C. Smart, A.M..](#)

EPISTLE II.

TO LOLLIUS.

He prefers Homer to all the philosophers, as a moral writer, and advises an early cultivation of virtue.

While you, great Lollius, declaim at Rome, I at Praeneste have perused over again the writer of the Trojan war; who teaches more clearly, and better than Chrysippus and Crantor, what is honorable, what shameful, what profitable, what not so. If nothing hinders you, hear why I have thus concluded. The story is which, on account of Paris's intrigue, Greece is stated to be wasted in a tedious war with the barbarians, contains the tumults of foolish princes and people. Antenor gives his opinion for cutting off the cause of the war. What does Paris? He can not be brought to comply, [though it be in order] that he may reign safe, and live happy. Nestor labors to compose the differences between Achilles and Agamemnon: love inflames one; rage both in common. The Greeks suffer for what their princes act foolishly. Within the walls of Ilium, and without, enormities are committed by sedition, treachery, injustice, and lust, and rage.

Again, to show what virtue and what wisdom can do, he has propounded Ulysses an instructive pattern: who, having subdued Troy, wisely got an insight into the constitutions and customs of many nations; and, while for himself and his associates he is contriving a return, endured many hardships on the spacious sea, not to be sunk by all the waves of adversity. You are well acquainted with the songs of the Sirens, and Circe's cups: of which, if he had foolishly and

greedily drunk along with his attendants, he had been an ignominious and senseless slave under the command of a prostitute: he had lived a filthy dog, or a hog delighting in mire.

We are a mere number and born to consume the fruits of the earth; like Penelope's suitors, useless drones; like Alcinous' youth, employed above measure in pampering their bodies; whose glory was to sleep till mid-day, and to lull their cares to rest by the sound of the harp. Robbers rise by night, that they may cut men's throats; and will not you awake to save yourself? But, if you will not when you are in health, you will be forced to take exercise when you are in a dropsy; and unless before day you call for a book with a light, unless you brace your mind with study and honest employments, you will be kept awake and tormented with envy or with love. For why do you hasten to remove things that hurt your eyes, but if any thing gnaws your mind, defer the time of curing it from year to year? He has half the deed done, who has made a beginning. Boldly undertake the study of true wisdom: begin it forthwith. He who postpones the hour of living well, like the hind [in the fable], waits till [all the water in] the river be run off: whereas it flows, and will flow, ever rolling on.

Money is sought, and a wife fruitful in bearing children, and wild woodlands are reclaimed by the plow. [To what end all this?] He, that has got a competency, let him wish for no more. Not a house and farm, nor a heap of brass and gold, can remove fevers from the body of their sick master, or cares from his mind. The possessor must be well, if he thinks of enjoying the things which he has accumulated. To him that is a slave to desire or to fear, house and estate do just as much good as paintings to a sore-eyed person, fomentations to the gout, music to ears afflicted with collected matter. Unless the vessel be sweet, whatever you pour into it turns sour. Despise pleasures, pleasure bought with pain is hurtful. The covetous man is ever in want; set a certain limit to your wishes. The envious person wastes at the thriving condition of another: Sicilian tyrants never invented a greater torment than envy. He who will not curb his passion, will wish that undone which his grief and resentment suggested, while he violently plies his revenge with unsated rancor. Rage is a short madness. Rule your passion, which commands, if it do not obey; do you restrain it with a bridle, and with fetters. The groom forms the docile horse, while his neck is yet tender, to go the way which his rider directs him: the young hound, from the time that he barked at the deer's skin in the hall, campaigns it in the woods. Now, while you are young, with an untainted mind imbibe instruction: now apply yourself to the best [masters of morality]. A cask will long preserve the flavor, with which when new it was once impregnated. But if you lag behind, or vigorously push on before, I neither wait for the loiterer, nor strive to overtake those that precede me.