

HORACE'S ARCHYTAS ODE : A RECONSIDERATION

„The tightrope of Horation criticism,“ so A. J. Boyle has recently reminded us, „is difficult to walk, and, if the critic is not to overbalance, he must remain alert at all times to the infinite variety of the poet's moods, to subtle and dramatic shifts in tone, intent and purpose“ (The edict of Venus', *Ramus* II [1973] 163—88 at 181). It is to be hoped that the present paper will succeed in avoiding risk of which he gives warning, despite the fact that it entails walking, Blondin-like, over a critical Niagara. In it will be attempted a reconsideration, admittedly personal, of Horace's 'Archytas Ode' (I.28). It is a poem that has been under-rated, cordially disliked, „dismissed as a chaotic youthful experiment“ (R. G. M. Nisbet and Margaret Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace: Odes Book 1* [Oxford 1971] 319) or merely regarded with puzzled confusion. „Que voir dans cette ode?“, asked F. Villeneuve in the Budé edition, 40 n.2: a question assuredly easier to pose than to answer. Many writers on Horace have virtually ignored the ode, including Eduard Fraenkel, who mentions it only in a footnote,¹ and Steele Commager (*The Odes of Horace: A Critical Study* [Bloomington and London 1962] who discusses only a few lines. Frs Paul V. Callahan and H. Musurillo at the end of their critique of it find the ode „on the whole quite successful“, a tepid enough verdict ('A handful of dust, Horace's Archytas Ode', *CPh* LIX [1964] 262—66 at 266). Gordon Williams, by contrast, terms it „this powerful composition“ (*Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* [Oxford 1968] 183). Nisbet/Hubbard, 319, remark that „the poem is undeniably bizarre in conception, but it is original and imaginative as few other Latin writings.“ L. P. Wilkinson pointed out that „unfortunately the *mise en scène* is rather obscure

¹ *Horace* (Oxford 1957) 74 n. 1, where Fraenkel reveals his acceptance of the view that the ode is a monologue by the spirit of a drowned man. He saw in the structure, viewed on that basis, „a sign of a certain immaturity“, traceable also in *Epode* XVI. That the poem is early and experimental seems highly probable but, as I hope this paper will show, the incoherence which its critics have found in it is attributable to misunderstanding.

to us" (*Horace and his Lyric Poetry* [Cambridge 1946] 110): which is the kernel of the problem.

„Das Gedicht ist verstehbar nur als Dialog“: (Walter Wili, *Horaz und die augusteische Kultur*, Basel 1948, 231). The opinion is a minority one. Most scholars have adopted the view summarized as follows by Nisbet/Hubbard, 317—18: „The poem is a monologue... spoken by the corpse of a drowned man. First the dead man apostrophizes the great Pythagorean, Archytas of Tarentum..., as he lies buried in his grave. Then at 23 he turns to a passing *nauta* and asks for burial himself. The structure of the poem causes perplexity because we do not know till 21 that the speaker is not Horace but a corpse.“ Williams, 183, similarly regards the ode as „a monologue spoken by the ghost of a dead sailor“; he believes that „the address to Archytas is really an address to the tomb of Archytas which is near the place where the sea has cast up his body. So the dead Archytas is the addressee in lines 1—22, the addressee in 23—26 is a sailor who happens to be passing.“

The present writer agrees with the majority in so far as they reject the dialogue theory. Callahan/Musurillo, 264, have provided a brief but adequate exposition of one version of this viewpoint. The first part of the ode is assigned to the poet, „whom we can picture as wandering along the coast not far from the site of Archytas' tomb“. He meditates awhile on this, and then „spies the body of a drowned man who has been washed in by the tide.² Directly, without transition, he imagines the man's shade praying either to him (the poet) or to a passing sailor, for the symbolic funeral rites.“ On this complex, even fantastic, set of assumptions, they wisely comment: „If the theory of the dialogue is accepted, it would seem easier to imagine the poet... and the sailor addressed in the second part as identical.“ Unwilling to do this, they favor the monologue theory as adumbrated above. All in all, the scenario sketched for the dialogue is alarmingly reminiscent of Lewis Carroll's 'The Walrus, and the Carpenter'.

But is the popular monologue theory any more satisfactory? In general it appears to explain the *obscurius* through the *obscurum adhuc*. Why, we may wonder, is this 'drowned man' (for, despite Williams, we do not know that he is a sailor, or indeed anything about him save the fact of his drowning) so concerned about Archytas of Tarentum and the inaccuracy of his particular eschatological beliefs? Because,

² There are, of course, no tides in the Mediterranean: hence Hannibal's surprise when he sees the Atlantic at Gades, Silius, *Punica* III.45ff.

we are informed, he was lying near the tomb of Archytas and (presumably in his post-mortem condition) identified it as such. The answer is specious. If Horace, for any reason, wished to compose an ode about a dead body on a beach reflecting on the untrustworthiness of philosophers, he could have chosen any sea shore in the Mediterranean and any philosopher — if it was one who was buried, or had died (or for that matter lived) near the sea he might have been a first choice but the point is by no means essential to the theme. Nor do we know that Archytas' σῆμα was near Tarentum, as has been often assumed. The problem of the poem's geographical setting will be discussed below. Meanwhile it is enough to say that it is indeed „bizarre“ to envisage a drowned man first addressing Archytas — or, if you will, Archytas' tomb — and then, quite abruptly, breaking off, in mid sentence so to speak, to hail a passing *nauta* with a request for three handfuls of dust.

But there is a third hypothesis. It also assumes that the ode is a monologue. If it be accepted, then the poet (or poet-sailor) strolling on the strand, the philosophizing *naufragus* and the sea-side tomb all disappear at one stroke. This hypothesis is to be found in Porphyryon and pseudo-Acron. That is not necessarily a recommendation, but their opinion is at least worthy of study. Porphyryon comments on the poem (pp. 36—7, Holder): „Haec ode prosopopeia forma est. Inducitur enim corpus naufragi Archyta Tarentini in litus expulsum conqueri de iniuria sui et petere a praetereuntibus sepulturam.“ In short, we are mentally to enclose the whole poem in quotation marks, with the stage direction *Archytas philosophus in naufragio mortuus loquitur*. Callahan/Musurillo, 264, however, dismiss this view „as based on a complete misreading of the poem.“ Their grounds for doing so need to be considered; they may be summarized under three heads:

(1) „But surely,“ they write, „the scholiasts, whatever their source, are mistaken on the interpretation of [lines 1—16]. For Archytas can hardly be addressing himself as *te . . . mensorem* (1—2), you, the measurer of the sands, etc.; nor could he be imagined as saying to himself: „Pythagoras was a great philosopher in your judgment' (*te iudice*, 14). It is almost inconceivable that the wandering shade of Archytas should be thus addressing his own body . . . with the repeated *te . . . te*.“³

³ Callahan/Musurillo, 264, add that „if we are not completely to reject Porphyryon's theory, we may allow that the unburied body of [lines 21—36] is Archytas, but the first part, up to line 20, must be spoken by the poet himself addressing the shipwrecked Archytas“. This is obviously no more satisfactory than other dialogue hypotheses.

(2) Further, they remark, „there is no tradition that Archytas ever [*sic*] perished at sea.“

(3) Even if he did, „it is difficult to imagine the poet as interested in recreating the story of a shipwreck that occurred so many centuries before his own time.“⁴

On this basis, then, the scholiasts' theory is rejected. It is appropriate to present a rebuttal to each of the points in turn.

(1) Far from its being ‚inconceivable‘ that the spirit of Archytas should address his body in the second person, this appears to the present writer to be a strong confirmation of the scholiasts' hypothesis. Self-apostrophe is common in Latin poetry. Under what circumstances could it be more natural than those obtaining in *Odes* I.28? Archytas finds himself dead, alone on an empty beach; his spirit looks at the lifeless corpse and compares what once it was, what a reputation it once enjoyed with the present. The ‚Archytas‘ known for his mathematical expertise, his philosophical speculations has perished. All that now exists is an *umbra* seeking burial. The dramatic structure of the poem hinges on the shift from *te* in 1 to *me* in 21. The ghost, in the midst of his lament, sees a passing *nauta* and appeals for aid. It is a personal plea; it is not ‚Archytas‘ who is speaking but the shade that is all that remains of him. Gone are the pretenses, gone the learning and the convictions; now there is only emptiness, a stark realization that a sage and scholar finds equality with all mankind when once he has died.

(2) We know little about the life of Archytas (cf. Wellman, *Re* II. 600). There is no reason whatsoever why he should not have died by drowning, perhaps on a voyage from Sicily to Greece. If he did, then Horace, who would have known the series of epigrams in the *Palatine Anthology* which deal with the theme of death by drowning,⁵ would have seen an opportunity for reworking it at greater length and in terms that have added pathos and an increased range of poetic possibilities because linked with a famous historical personage. For corpses to address the living was a conventional device in funerary epigram. Here Horace develops it and adds a strikingly new element by combining it with the first section of the poem, in which the ghost reflects, in grim isolation, on the stark realities of death.

⁴ I do not allude to the „transmigration theory“ briefly mentioned and rapidly dismissed by Callahan/Musurillo. It „cannot be logically sustained“, as they rightly declare.

⁵ See *Anthologia Palatina* VII.263–92. Cf. also Charles Segal, 'Death by water: a narrative pattern in Theocritus', *Hermes* CII (1974) 20–38.

(3) There was in fact good reason why Horace should have been attracted by the story of Archytas; on the assumption that he died by drowning, it would in any case have had an intrinsic appeal for a poet deeply concerned with the problem of mortality (cf. Wili, 321—2) and its effect on the value of human endeavors — but there is an added relevance to Horace's background. Porphyryon comments on line 3: „Martinus mons sive promontorium est Apuliae, iuxta quem Archytas sepultus est“ (p. 37, Holder); and on 25—7: „Venusia colonia est inter Lucaniam et Apuliam, patria poetae“ (p. 38). It seems to me that Wilkinson, 110, is perfectly right when he remarks that Horace, wishing to write a poem partly relating to the *locus communis* that even great men have to die, „hit upon Archytas of Tarentum, mathematician, astronomer and friend of Plato, whose grave by the Matine shore in his own Apulia must have been a familiar sight to him.“ We may surmise that Horace, hearing that the corpse of Archytas had been discovered on a particular beach, near which stood his tomb, would naturally have been prompted to meditate on this event and that he finally crystallized his thoughts and feelings in this ode. Those who have sought to place the setting of the poem near Tarentum (as, for example, Nisbet/Hubbard, 322—3)⁶ have merely introduced confusion where none need exist. The setting is, as Porphyryon realized, in Apulia, „the poet's homeland“ and everything in the poem attunes with this belief.⁷

Such are the contentions on which the analysis of the ode which will occupy the rest of this paper will rest. Before details are considered, a translation is appended, in the hope that this will clarify the subsequent argument:

„The trivial boon of a little dust holds back even you, Archytas, near the Matine shoreline: you who were once the Measurer of sea and land and of the countless sands. It makes no difference now that you ventured

⁶ Nisbet/Hubbard suggest that „Archytas is most likely to have been buried near his native city; if his tomb was near the exclusive resort of Tarentum it might be a known landmark to the poet and his readers“. The first statement is surely an unwarrantable assumption. The second — despite the identification of a so-called 'Grave of Archytas' near Tarentum (cf. Pierre Willeumier, *Tarente, des origines à la conquête romaine* [Paris 1939] 548—9) — is guesswork.

⁷ Williams, 184, fairly comments: „Horace's poem... has a further element of unreality. Archytas was a citizen of Tarentum and his grave might be expected to be there or, at any rate, on the gulf of Tarentum. If due weight is to be given to the geographical indications, however, *litus Matinum* (3) and *Illyricis undis* (22) and *Venusinae silvae* (26) all indicate a point on the Apulian coast of the Adriatic“.

to test the halls of heaven, that in your mind, so soon to die, you traveled far and wide through the spherical sky. The father of Pelops also perished, who dined with the gods. So too Tithonus, whisked away into the air. And Minos, who was confided with Jupiter's secrets. Tartarus holds the son of Panthous, sent down for a second time to Orcus. The shield, taken down from the wall, attested his Trojan past — and yet to dark death he surrendered just sinews and skin. He, so you believed, was no second-rate teacher of truths about nature. One night waits for all men. They tread the path of doom but once. The furies assign roles to some in a drama for savage Mars. The sea is greedy for the death of sailors. Pressed together in confusion are corpses of old and young. Callous Proserpina omits no mortal man from her attentions. The swift south wind, companion of setting Orion, overwhelmed me too in Illyrian waves. But, sailor, do not be a miser and begrudge me a speck or two of the wandering sand for my bones and unburied head. Then, whatever threats the east wind makes in Italian waters, may the woods of Venusia be battered but you be safe. May great wealth be bestowed on you by favor of Jupiter and of Neptune, guardian of holy Tarentum: for they can bestow it. Do you not care about cheating me: though it may hereafter injure your innocent children? Rights due, condescending services may await you too one day: I shall not be abandoned, my prayers unavenged. No expiation will absolve you. Whatever your hurry, the delay is a brief one. Speed on your way, when once dust has been thrown on my corpse just three times."

However analysed, this poem must retain a certain inescapable obscurity. It is an extension of the funerary genre, in which a riddling style, as Williams, 171 ff., has reminded us, was common. Indeed, the dislocation and ambivalence of much of the ode enhance the effectiveness of the whole within its imaginative contours. A central theme is that of loss of identity, of the alienation which the ghost of Archytas now feels. That Archytas had been in life a mathematician, „merito geometriae peritus, quia Pythagorici omnia numeris constare credunt“, as Porphyryon expresses it (p. 37 Holder) and as the fragments of his work bear witness,⁸ makes the

⁸ For Archytas' mathematical investigations, cf., e.g., W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*. Volume I (Cambridge 1962) 333 ff. Since the publication of E. Frank, *Plato und die sogenannten Pythagoreer* (Halle 1923) some scholars have viewed Archytas and

apparent disorder all the more poignant: it reveals the disintegration of mental powers that followed death and on which, as we shall see, the *umbra* itself comments. Death is the greatest enigma that mankind has to face. There is no solution to it, save in a religious belief. All that can be brought to bear on it amounts to unprovable fantasy. This ode is wrapped in nightmare, in an enshrouding mist of dissolution, of regret, even of anger. The problem of how the spirit adjusts to the loss of the physical body had been a matter of speculation since Homer. Death forces man into illogicality: the pursuit of a vicarious immortality (*exegi monumentum . . .*), the vain regret for passing time and the concomitant desire to seize present opportunities (*eheu fugaces . . . , carpe diem . . .*), the hope or fear of a future life with its possibilities of reward or punishment. Aspiration, guilt, inadequacy, revenge — all can be attached to beliefs about the future, post mortem existence. But the most frightening prospect of all perhaps is that shadowy half-life of which Homer's Achilles gives so memorably tragic a description. Horace's Archytas appears to be in a similar condition: confused, desperate, disillusioned.

Steele Commager, 54—5, has commented perceptively on lines 1—4: „The open sonorities of *o* and *a* yield to narrow *i*'s and *u*'s . . . Measurer of the universe, [Archytas] has his measure taken by a tiny heap of sand, and the reaches of human accomplishment sink into a little, little grave.“ But he, like many other critics, surely errs in finding in the phrase *pulveris exigui . . . parva . . . munera* an illusion to the „specific fact of the tomb.“ Nisbet/Hubbard have rightly stated that *munera* is „often used of the tribute paid to the dead“ (p. 323). The proper construction of the words is given — though with a misleading preamble — as follows by Orelli: „Pulveris exigui parva munera (id est, pulvis ter tibi nudo iniiciendus) adhuc tibi negata (nondum persoluta), umbram tuam hic retinent, adeo ut Acherontem traicere nequeas.“ The verb *cohibere* has the sense of ‚restrain‘, ‚hold back‘ (i.e., prevent from escaping the vicinity of the corpse); Orelli gives two parallels, *Odes* II. 20.8, „nec Stygia cohibebor unda“ and III. 4.80, „trecentae Pirithoum cohibent catenae“; to which may be added *Epist.* II. 1.255, „claustra . . . cohibentia

his contemporaries as the true originators of 'Pythagorean' mathematical philosophy. For a survey of the present state of the 'Pythagorean Question', cf. Walter Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* (trans. E. L. Minar [Cambridge, Mass. 1972]) 1—14; also, Charles H. Hahn, 'Pythagoreanism before Plato', in *The Pre-Socratics: A Collection of Critical Essays* (ed. A. P. D. Mourelatos [Garden City, N. Y. 1974]) 161—85. In this ode Horace is concerned only with the traditional opinion about Archytas as a disciple of Pythagoras.

Ianum"; cf. also Virgil, *Aen.* IX. 738; Ovid, *Metam.* XIV. 224, XV. 346. *Prope litus... Matinum* is to be understood as „near the Matine shoreline“; it implies that the body has recently been washed up and is at the water's edge.⁹ Commager is right to see that in line 1 there is an evocation of infinity and universality. The allusion to „sands that cannot be counted“ not only relates to the present predicament of the corpse (responding with *pulveris exigui* in 3, *vagae... harenae... particulam* 23—5 and *iniecto ter pulvere* 35, thus providing, as Callahan/Musurillo, 263, remark, a „unity of imagery“ in the poem), but equally contains a suggestion of futility and wasted effort, admirably suited to the ghost's perception that his activities in life had been useless.¹⁰ The noun *mensorem* has the flavor of an honorific cognomen: Archytas Mensor has been esteemed for his mathematical talent: but what, as the ghost goes on to ask, was the real value of this reputation? A man who has instructed the world in the arcana of Pythagorean arithmology is now dead; his spirit is left only with a longing for *parva munera*, on which his chance of release depends.

Lines 4—6 again juxtapose the past with the present:

nec quicquam tibi prodest
aeris temptasse domos animoque rotundum
percurrisse polum morituro.

Archytas' interest in astronomy is, according to Nisbet/Hubbard, 324, evidenced by Propertius IV. 1.77: but this passage, in the mouth of Horus, really implies astrology (in so far as the two are distinguishable) and is clearly fanciful (cf. H. E. Butler's edition [London 1905] 337): but it indicates, no doubt, a common opinion about the nature of Archytas' studies: for Pythagoreanism was closely associated with such esoteric arts. Here the *aeris... domos*¹¹ refer to the *domus* (*oikoi*), the zodiacal signs; *rotundum... polum* is the revolving circle of the zodiac as it passes through the twelve fixed *loci* (*topoi*), the *templa* of Manilius (cf. Housman, *Manilius*, II. xxix-xxxi). In short, the words suggest that Archytas had „tested“ (*temptasse*) the art of astrology — and now finds it to have been as vain a pursuit as mathematics. He had run through' or 'scanned' (*percurrisse*) the turning signs — but *animo morituro* (the participle is certainly, as Nisbet/Hubbard, 325, see, to be taken with *animo* and not with *tibi*

⁹ Nence Misenus is found in *litore sicco*, *Aen.* VI. 162.

¹⁰ For *litus* and *harena* as symbols of futility, cf. Ovid, *Trist.* V. 4. 48, 6. 44; Juvenal VII. 49.

¹¹ For Meineke's emendation of *aeris* to *aetherias*, cf. Nisbet/Hubbard, 324.

in 4). The *umbra* has found that, after death, the *animus*, the reasoning faculty, is extinguished.¹² As Archytas was a philosopher, this loss meant the extinction of his essence, of all that had raised him above other men. Whatever has survived, the real Archytas is dead, as are all his theories. Archytas Mensor has joined the great majority: such is the final value of human endeavors, however learned.

The lines which follow topically embody a list of „those men legend credited with approaching to immortality, and ending with the most significant... Archytas' own master, Pythagoras“ (Wilkinson, 111):

occidit et Pelopis genitor, conviva deorum.
Tithonusque remotus in auras,
et Iovis arcanis Minos admissus, habentque
Tartara Panthoiden iterum Orco
demissum, quamvis clipeo Troiana refixo
tempora testatus nihil ultra
nervos atque cutem morti concesserat atrae,
iudice te non sordidus auctor
naturae verique. (7—15)

The mythological allusions have caused unnecessary debate. The central idea is the untruthfulness and absurdity of all such tales in the retrospective view of the ghost. Tantalus, Tithonus, Minos, even the great Pythagoras himself, immortality and all that goes with it, are mere frauds and fancies. Tantalus — *Pelopis genitor conviva deorum* ironically echoes epic *sublimitas* had, according to myth, little reason in the end to be grateful for his intimacy with the gods. Callahan/Musurillo, 265, designate him as „a symbol of brute strength“; Nisbet/Hubbard, 326, comment: „It is curious to find Tantalus in this list of privileged persons who died; as one of the great sinners he usually plays a more monitory role, and the positive horrors of his punishment are stressed.“ This is, however, not really a ‚list of privileged persons‘, except in that it shows that privileges greater than man should expect or desire are liable to turn to dust and ashes. Tantalus is included for the very reason that his supposed felicity ended in torment. He over-reached himself. He symbolizes the

¹² If, as I suggest in this paper, the ode has an Epicurean moral, then the specification that the *animus* dies may imply that it is the *anima* that is here envisaged as speaking: on the distinction, cf. J. M. Rist, *Epicurus, An Introduction* (Cambridge 1972) 79—80. The *anima*, separated at death from the body, would of course have been by Epicureans as deprived of all consciousness but, in poetic fantasy, this could be overlooked. But, as I argue below, it is probably better to see the *umbra* as a *simulacrum*, itself not easily distinguishable from the *anima*.

delusive nature of man's yearning for eternal life and for divine attributes. So too does Tithonus: who was granted immortality without the accompaniment of perpetual youth: in short a lingering, agonizing misery. This was his reward for the love of a goddess, for being whisked into the air'. *Remotus* implies his removal from earth, from his natural habitat — which, however it occurs, is indistinguishable from death for mankind. Minos, so the story ran, as well as being an „exemplar of legislative wisdom“ (Callahan/Musurillo, 265), eventually became a judge of the dead; his court was in the Under-world. He too had in fact lost all that had made him a man and a king and was left with a *simulacrum* of his earthly glory. The nature of man is not divine and never can be.

And what of Pythagoras, Archytas' own master? He had claimed to offer proof of the doctrine of metempsychosis by identifying the shield of Euphorbus the Trojan (in a previous life he had been a peacock — later, according to the Romans, he was to be Ennius: Persius, VI. 10—11). Most commentators have found profound irony in Horace's lines (cf. Wilkinson, 111; Nisbet/Hubbard, 318—19 link them with the diatribe tradition). This is partly true: but if we assume the speaker to be Archytas' ghost there is obviously a stronger element of self-irony than of sarcasm at Pythagoras' expense. The story of the identified *clipeus*, as it now appears to the *umbra*, was an absurdity. That it was believed demonstrates the gullibility of the Pythagoreans and their uncritical adulation of the *magister*. They had accepted him as *non sordidus auctor naturae verique*, when he was in truth merely a mortal like themselves, a purveyor of falsehoods, of an erroneous picture of the cosmos and a man's place in it.¹³ Reincarnation is assigned in these lines to the same category as the myths about Tantalus, Tithonus and Minos. Pythagoras' claim to have known *Troiana tempora* should have revealed to a truly rational man the insubstantiality of his whole system. The world of myth, as well as the pseudo-philosophical doctrines generically related to it, is childish fantasy. Pythagoras ended up as mere *nervos atque cutem*, just as his faithful disciple Archytas is now nothing more than a corpse lying on the sand: isolated, deprived of *animus* — but in possession of truth at last. The truth is not comfortable, it does not pander to man's constant attempts at self-aggrandisement but nonetheless it is empirically proved.

¹³ The use of *non sordidus* implies „not at all niggardly“ and so attunes with request in 23—5 that the *nauta* should not be miserly in giving burial. Pythagoras had been generous with meaningless promises. Death reduces man's need to a handful of dust.

Pythagoreanism is contradicted emphatically in 15—20:

sed una manet vox
et calcanda semel via leti.
dant alios Furiae torvo spectacula Marti;
exitio est avidum mare nautis;
mixta senum ac iuvenum densentur funera; nullum
saeva caput Proserpina fugit.

The sentiments are again topical, commonplaces of poetry

and of popular philosophy.¹⁴ The contrast between their tone of simplicity and the complexity of preceding lines is important. N. E. Collinge has classified 17—20 as an example of structural 'overlapping', „belonging to what precedes as much as to what follows“, linking 1—16 to 21—36 (*The Structure of Horace's Odes* [London 1961] 99—100). This is correct. By affirming the truth of these *sententiae* the ghost finally seals its rejection of Pythagoreanism and indeed of all that 'Archytas' had represented; in this way the lines conclude the first section of the ode. But they also lead on to the appeal to the *nauta* which occupies the rest.

Collinge, 114, and others have maintained that there is „an ironical contrast between the fatalism of the first section and the superstition of the second.“ Wilkinson, 114, suggested that „Horace is . . . looking ironically at human inconsistency.“ Both these ideas possess a certain validity, but surely the vital point is that in 21—36 we are presented with an almost naively unsophisticated portrait of the ghost in terms of primitive Greek beliefs about funeral-rites and the post-mortem state of man. The poem, after what is essentially a realistic approach to the human condition in 1—16, moves clearly into the world of fantasy. Here the ghost — previously assessing the true significance of Archytas' life and work — suddenly adopts a tone successively whining (23—5), wheedling (25—29) and threatening (31—4). In other words, it reveals two common irrational attitudes to the surviving dead, first their impotence when compared to living beings and second their power to bless or to harm. The ghost has a belief in the efficacy of burial; he also informs the sailor that neglect of his duty towards the dead will affect his own chances of prosperity (of which the gods are the true donors: 28) and will influence not merely his future but even that of his children (31). The ghost's *preces*, if ignored, will not go unavenged (33); for this sacrilege, no rite of purifi-

¹⁴ Cf. Nisbet/Hubbard, 329. For the theory of Wilamowitz (*Kl. Schriften* II. 249 ff.), largely based on these verses, that Horace was following Simonides, cf. Wilkinson 112—14 and the pertinent criticism of Nisbet/Hubbard, 319.

cation (*piaculum*) will avail. The entire section contains a composite nexus of naive supersitions. We are in the presence of vulgar eschatology, of folk beliefs.

A few further details in this section require elucidation. In 23—5, the emphasis is as in 3—4 on the pettiness of death. Whatever grand schemes and high-flown theories may have occupied man in life, when he has perished his needs are small, in this merely a *particulam harenae*. Sand in itself is a symbol of sterility and of waste. The epithet *vagae* in 23 is no mere decoration: Nisbet/Hubbard, 332, comment: „the corpse does not insist on earth but will be content with sand, even though it may blow away again.“ The inconstant *harena* neatly parallels the uncertainty of human life and the feeble intangibility of the *umbra*. That the great Archytas should have become dependent on the uncertain generosity of an unknown *nauta* is a measure of the deprivation he has suffered. The sentence suitably ends on *dare* and the concept of giving (foreshadowed in *munera*, 4) is continued into 25—9:

sic, quocumque mirabitur Euris
fluctibus Hesperiiis, Venusinae
plectantur silvae te sospite, multaue merces
unde potest tibi defluat aequo
ab Iove Neptunoque sacri custode Tarenti.

The east wind and the stormy sea symbolize the hazards and dangers of a life, which the ghost now envisages as governed by blind chance (cf. *fors et*, 31) or by capricious (and vengeful) deities. The philosopher, now dead and conscious of the falsity of his erstwhile speculations, wishes for the *nauta* profit in abundance, if he performs his duty to the dead: it is a materialistic attitude in one whose mind had formerly been engaged on the contemplation of mathematics and τὰ περὶ οὐρα: it fits the commercial pursuits of the *nauta* but it also reveals that the *umbra* is now aware of the tangible benefits to be derived from worldly wealth while it can still be enjoyed. The designation of Neptune as *sacri custos Tarenti* has a special relevance — and pathos — on the lips of one who was born in Tarentum: in death he glances back to his *patria* and its guardian deity. The words, far from establishing that the ode is to be visualized as set near Tarentum (which contradicts the other topographical allusions), show that it is the *umbra Archytae* which is speaking.

But Archytas had died. The *mentor* is no more. It is not now the infinite grains of sand and the manner of counting them that is of importance. The ghost is concerned

only with three handfuls (*iniecto ter pulvere*, 36). To this traditional figure, known even to the unlearned, have all the computations, all the subtle theorizing of Pythagorean arithmology been reduced. The ironies of the contrast between *numero... carentis harenae mensorem* (1—2) and *iniecto ter pulvere* in the line of the ode, are, if the speaker is throughout the dead Archytas, tragically obvious.

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But what can we say about Horace's intentions in composing this startlingly complex poem? Clearly it was not to vindicate primitive superstitions about the ghosts of the dead or merely to prove the truth of the aphorism *omnis una manet nox*. Surely the ode can be understood only with reference to the beliefs and principles of Epicurus, the arch-enemy of pseudo-mysticism and of *religio*. The Epicurean Horace must have considered the implications of the rise of neo-Pythagoreanism in the late Republic. This ode contains a response to it. Its central message is that, as Epicurus expressed it in his letter to Menoeceus (124 Usener): συνέθιξε δὲ ἐν τῷ νομίζειν μηδὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς εἶναι τὸν θάνατον. ἐπεὶ πᾶν ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακὸν ἐν αἰσθήσει· στερήσεις δὲ ἐστὶν αἰσθήσεως ὁ θάνατος. ἔθεν γνῶσις ὁρθή τοῦ μηθὲν εἶναι πρὸς ἡμᾶς τὸν θάνατον ἀπολαυστὸν ποιεῖ τὸ τῆς ζωῆς θνητόν, οὐκ ἀπειρον προστιθεῖσα χρόνον, ἀλλὰ τὸν τῆς ἀθανασίας ἀφελομένη πόθον.

The first section of the ode demonstrates the essential uselessness of mathematical studies as a means to coming to terms with the problem of life and the fact of death; a view held strongly by Epicurus (cf. J. M. Rist, *Epicurus: An Introduction* [Cambridge 1972] 14—15). Though Epicurus' own opinion on astrology is unknown, we may confidently assert that „it would have been unconditionally condemned as a new form of determinism“ by him, as by later adherents of his doctrines, including Horace (N. W. DeWitt, *Epicurus and his Philosophy* [Minneapolis 1954] 153). The teachings of Pythagoreanism and neo-pythagoreanism — as exemplified by Nigidius Figulus — were regarded as mere hocus-pocus by Epicureans and no guide whatsoever to right conduct and a happy life. Horace accordingly shows the spirit of Archytas admitting its earthly errors and recanting in the face of inescapable truth.

In the section addressed to the *nauta*, the ghost is an awesome embodiment of the frightening and irrational concepts about death inculcated by *religio*. That the spirit of Archytas should, after abandoning Pythagoreanism, revert to primitive superstitions merely reveals the intimate connexion between the two. By espousing such theories as arithmology, metempsychosis and astrology, man, far from

liberating himself from fear of death, is shackling himself to a new form of superstition, every bit as pernicious as the old. Archytas had lived in error: his ghost is still enwrapped in it. It would be no surprise to Epicureans to find that the *umbra* believes in the importance of burial-rites or that it asserts that the gods are able to help or harm mankind. Their teachings alone could free mankind from such gross and implausible assumptions, provide him with the truth about the gods and the self-sufficiency of man.

It was, of course, orthodox Epicurean doctrine that human sensation was terminated at death and that this was all the better reason to seek a 'natural' mode of life, to cultivate the untroubled state of *ataraxia*: „the realization that . . . all pleasure ends at death is not disturbing. After death we can be completely confident that there is nothing to fear“ (Rist, 119). By seeking happiness, ephemeral man can become truly godlike.

The Archytas ode may, therefore, be interpreted as a kind of Epicurean parable. It implies no assent on the part of the poet to the reality of a conscious afterlife any more than it demands it in the reader. Following an established literary tradition and for special dramatic effect, it envisions what would have been the state of Archytas' soul, had it survived and found itself trapped on earth. Indeed, if we wish, we may see in the articulate *umbra* an instance of those *rerum simulacra* described by Lucretius (IV. 31—41):

quae, quasi membranae summo de corpore rerum
dereptae, volitant ultroque citroque per auras,
atque eadem nobis vigilantibus obvia mentis
terrificant atque in somnis, cum saepe figuras
contuimur miras simulacraque luce carentum,
quae nos horrifice languentis saepe sopore
excierunt, ne forte animas Acherunte reamur
effugere, aut umbras inter vivos volitare
neve aliquid nostri post mortem posse relinqui,
cum corpus simul atque animi natura perempta
in sua discessum dederint primordia quaeque.

On this basis it is possible to understand the dream-like (or nightmarish) quality with which the poem is imbued. (As an analogue we may recall Propertius IV. 7, with its description of Cynthia's ghost.)

In fine, we are to understand from the ode that mankind must eschew erroneous doctrines, shun superstitions and come to terms with the fact that every mortal will die. From that perception will spring the beginning of wisdom, a wisdom that Horace preaches often but perhaps never with

greater force and brevity than in *Odes* I.11 which begins with a denunciation of astrology and ends with the Epicurean axiom: „dum loquimur, fugerit invida / aetas: carpe diem quam minimum credula postero“ (7—8). *Odes* I.28 provides a memorable and unique demonstration of the need to obey this exhortation and to adhere to the Epicurean *bios*, the way of freedom, contentment and true joy, to be found in obedience to the observed facts of nature. Reliance on Reason, deified by Pythagoreans and Platonists, leads to a false picture of the cosmos and of man; only the comprehension of truth and, when it is comprehended, acquiescence in it, can save humanity from error and the suffering which ‚rational‘ just as much as ‚irrational‘ error involves. Horace's depiction of the *umbra Archytæ* provides a pathetic and terrifying confirmation of these Epicurean verities.

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