

LUCIDA

INTERVALLA

PRILOZI ODELJENJA ZA
KLASIČNE NAUKE

35
(1/2007)

FILOZOFSKI FAKULTET
U BEOGRADU
2008

Dragana Dimitrijević

References to Epicurus in Cicero's *In Pisonem*

Abstract. The aim of this paper is to shed more light on references to Epicurus in Cicero's oration *In Pisonem* as a part of his rhetorical strategy. Cicero used Roman ethnic biases and ethnical considerations in the portrait of Piso's immoral personality.

Key Words: Cicero, Greek Philosophy, Epicurus, Biases, Rhetorical Strategy.

It has already been observed that there are many links between Cicero's philosophy and his oratory¹. Yet links between the two best preserved and most influential genres of Cicero's work have so far attracted a relatively scant scholarly attention. Investigations of this kind could, on one hand, shed more light on a practical employment of Cicero's, i.e. originally Isocrates' idea of strong links between philosophy and rhetoric², and on the other, show differences in Cicero's representations of various philosophical doctrines and philosophers in his philosophical works and in his orations. Namely, as it is successfully argued by Clarke, the atmosphere of the speeches is largely different from that of Cicero's philosophical works - the spirit of the latter is Greek, and of the former is Roman, one of sentiment and love of tradition³.

One of the problems that is to be explored is the question of Cicero's references to Greek philosophers. This question does deserve special investigation on account of the generic character of Cicero's orations and the many different factors to which Cicero appeals to indicate his opponent's immorality. The aim of this paper is to investigate the ways and reasons for Cicero's use of references to Epicurus in his oration *In Pisonem*. Our study focuses on some well-known passages from this oration which may have not been sufficiently explored. A sociological, psychological and linguistic problem stands at the crux of the discussion:

¹ See Introduction to MacKendrick 1989.

² Hubell 1913: 23-24.

³ Clarke 1956: 18.

the manner in which Cicero used Roman ethnic biases⁴ and ethical considerations. Cicero knew that Romans' picture about Greeks, about philosophy and philosophers, and finally, about Greek philosophers and Epicurus in particular was full of stereotypes and he decided to use them. Namely, the first serious threats to Roman ways of thought came from Greek philosophers a century before Cicero's generation. Cato the Censor and the Senate made attempts to stem Greek philosophers and Greek thought, but without success⁵.

Cicero maintains that his oratory is founded in philosophy and that his orations are full of philosophic maxims⁶. However, the maxims of Cicero's orations derive not so much from his own studies in philosophy as from the conventional morality of the rhetorical schools⁷. Thus it is seldom that we come across in orations any remarks that bear a stamp of philosophical influence. So far as the speeches of Cicero show any philosophical influence it is that of Stoicism, a philosophy whose ideas could be assimilated without great difficulties to the Roman tradition. It went hand in hand with the prevailing tone of the speeches, which was a moral one. When Cicero, addressing Caesar in *Pro Marcello*, claims that generosity and wisdom are not only the highest but the sole goods, one is reminded of Stoic doctrine⁸. Also when in the *Philippicae* he lays down that law is nothing but right reason derived from the divine power, the influence of Stoicism is obvious⁹. But when he refers to Epicureanism¹⁰ he rejects it.

There are direct references to Greek philosophers only in four extant speeches of Cicero. These are the following: the *Pro Murena* (63 BC), *In*

⁴ As Vasaly argues: 'Cultural ethnocentricity provided the orator of ancient Rome – as it has provided orators in every culture – with a familiar topos: "them and us".' See Vasaly 1993: 137.

⁵ In 173 two Epicureans had been expelled from Rome, and in 161 the expulsion of philosophers and rhetoricians took place. See Scullard 1951: 223.

⁶ Cic. *N.D.* 1.6.

⁷ For example, compare Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 75 with *Ad Her.* 2.34, and *Sest.* 47-8 with *Ad Her.* 4.54f.

⁸ Marc. 19.

⁹ Phil. 9.28.

¹⁰ E.g. Red. Sen. 14, beside the *In Pisonem* that is the subject of our investigation.

Pisonem (55 BC), *Pro Scauro* (54 BC) and *Pro Rabirio Postumo* (54 BC). In the orations Cicero refers to the following philosophers: Pythagoras¹¹, Socrates¹², Plato¹³, Aristotle¹⁴, Zeno¹⁵, Epicurus¹⁶ and Diogenes Cynic¹⁷.

The simple fact that Cicero, as we can judge from his extant speeches, only on a few occasions referred to Greek philosophers, when he was speaking in public, is significant enough. Cicero did not want to take a risk and to employ the names of Greek philosophers more often than he did, for he was probably afraid that it would have not been well-known to his audience. Philosophy was not a subject which was learned in Roman schools and even the main theses of various philosophical doctrines were not well-known to ordinary people. Thus, Cicero probably found it inappropriate to cite Greek examples in front of Romans¹⁸. The question of an audience is of a great importance. None of the orations which include the names of Greek philosophers was delivered to the people, only one in the Senate (the *In Pisonem*), and three orations mentioned above in front of the jurors. It seems that there is strong evidence that Cicero, as any other Roman, would have behaved more reserved in front of members of other classes than among his own class¹⁹. The investigation of Cicero's speeches has shown a strong link between Cicero's stylistic freedom and his audience.

In accordance with the rare use of references to Greek philosophers, the employment of the words 'philosopher' (*philosophus*) and 'philos-

¹¹ Scaur. 5.

¹² Scaur. 4.

¹³ Mur. 63; Scaur. 4, 5; Rab. Post. 23.

¹⁴ Mur. 63.

¹⁵ Mur. 61.

¹⁶ Pis. 20, 37, 59, 69.

¹⁷ Mur. 75.

¹⁸ The same case was with Greek quotations. Namely, Cicero rarely employed poetic quotations in his speeches, and when he did that, he exclusively used quotations from Roman poetry. On the other hand, we know that many Cicero's letters to Atticus were reach in quotations from certain Greek authors.

¹⁹ Adams has argued that Cicero more freely used sexual allusions in his addressing to the senators than to the people. See Adams 1982: 222.

ophy' (*philosophia*), both of Greek origin, is also relatively rare in Cicero's oratory²⁰. It is highly probable that Romans were more familiar with these words than the certain names of Greek philosophers. The word *philosophus* and the word *philosophia* were already a part of the vocabulary of ordinary people. However, it can by no means be regarded as an exception when they had a negative connotation. Of course, Cicero knew it and used it to discredit his opponents. Furthermore, it is probable that in employing these words Cicero was influenced by the same practice of Greek orators. The fourth century Attic oratory could give us a clue. It turned out that only Isocrates had employed the word φιλόσοφος and the word φιλοσοφία. Actually, he had used them rather often in his speeches²¹. Maybe Cicero meant that the employment of these words could be a useful tool in his oratory, and in the same time was aware of the fact that Isocrates employed these words in his orations. On the other hand, none of the great fourth century Attic orators mentioned any Greek philosopher in his extant orations. It should be borne in mind that after Plato's furious attack on sophists, a gap between rhetoric and philosophy became much deeper. In all extant Greek and fragmentary Roman earlier and contemporary oratory we cannot find a model for Cicero's practice of referring to Greek philosophers. Of course, it does not necessarily mean that he did not have one. There is also a possibility that the old Attic comedy, particularly Aristophanes' critique of philosophers, in the first place Socrates, had some influence on Cicero's tactic of using the word *philosophus* and the word *philosophia* with the negative connotations²².

In spite of the opposition, Greek thought had been familiar at Rome from the beginning of the second century BC. After the great systems of Plato and Aristotle two philosophical doctrines endured for centuries and had a profound influence on the Romans. These were Epicureanism and Stoicism. Cicero rejected the first and was much attracted to the second, but he profited from both²³.

²⁰ Cf. Arch. 26; Sest. 23, 110; Pis. 56, 58, 65, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72; Scaur. 4; Phil. 5.13.

²¹ Cf. Isocr. *Ad Demonicum*, 3, 4, 40, 66; *De pace*, 145; *Busiris*, 1, 22, 28, 30, 48, 49, etc.

²² Cf. Aristoph. *Ecclesiazusae*, 571.

²³ In addition there was also the New Academy, whom Cicero often followed, in order to refuse dogmatism.

In many ways Epicurean moralizing approached that of the Stoics. The theoretical difference remained, but the attitude to life was fundamentally the same. Stoics and Epicureans alike condemned avarice, ambition, luxury and desires of various kinds. 'Pleasure', exclaims the Epicurean spokesman in *De Finibus*, 'so far from being a matter of voluptuous and effeminate self-indulgence, is austere, self-controlled, severe'²⁴ Even Cicero when he writes as a moralist in the *Tusculans* is ready to forget polemics and hold up Epicurus as an example of a philosopher free from desires and fears²⁵. However, Cicero's representation of Epicurus and his philosophy is completely different in the *In Pisonem*.

The invective starts as follows²⁶:

Iamne vides, **belua**, iamne sentis quae sit hominum querela frontis tuae?
Nemo queritur Syrum nescio quem de **grege** noviciorum factum esse
consulem. Non enim nos color iste servilis, non pilosae genae, non dentes
putridi deceperunt: oculi supercilia frons voltus denique totus, qui sermo
quidam tacitus mentis est, hic in fraudem homines impulit, hic eos quibus
eras ignotus decepit fefellit induxit. (*Pis.* 1)

It seems that behind this first passage lies the belief that an individual possesses a permanent set of expressions²⁷. Thus, Piso's danger to the state resists in his ability to change features of his face²⁸. In Roman public sphere the physical appearance of an individual had great importance and it could contribute to an assessment of one's moral character²⁹. Thus, Piso posed a particularly difficult rhetorical problem – his exterior appeared to convey the qualities of a severe Roman. Cicero's primary task was to assert that Piso attempted to conceal from the citizens of Rome his base internal character. Furthermore, the word *belua* and the word *grege*s, beside their connection with the world of animals and slaves, may refer to Epicurus and Epicureans, whom Cicero recalls in the

²⁴ Cic. *Fin.* 1.37.

²⁵ Cic. *Tusc.* 5.88-9.

²⁶ In these quotations from the *In Pisonem* I rely on the text of Nisbet. See R.G.M. Nisbet (ed.), *M. Tulli Ciceronis In L. Calpurnium Pisonem Oratio*, Oxford, 1961. I have placed the name of Epicurus in bold type in the interests of clarity.

²⁷ Cf. Cic. *Leg.* 1.27.

²⁸ Corbeill 1996: 31.

²⁹ Corbeill 1996: 169.

portrait of Piso that follows³⁰. Thus here it functions as a some kind of prologue for the wider treatment of the same idea which will come later in the speech.

The next step in our investigation is the question of position of Cicero's references within the speech. In the *In Pisonem* they are in the middle.

After having quickly dispensed with some matters pertaining to the Piso's governorship in Macedonia (*Pis.* 15-19), Cicero turns emphatically to Piso's personality. The first reference to Epicurus in the *In Pisonem* is the following:

Quod mihi igitur certamen esset huius modi? cum C. Mario scilicet aut cum aliquo pari, an cum altero **barbaro Epicuro**, cum altero Catilinae lanternario consule? (*Pis.* 20)

The 'barbarus Epicurus' is Piso and the 'Catilinae lanternarius' is Gabinius. They were consuls in the year of Cicero's exile and thus responsible for Cicero's misfortune. The adjective 'barbarus' refers to Piso's alleged Gallic ancestry and his lack of 'humanitas'. As it often implies 'non-Greek', it makes an oxymoron with 'Epicurus'.

Next association to Epicurus and his followers is just a passage later. Cicero says:

Quid ego illorum dierum epulas, quid laetitiam et gratulationem tuam, quid cum tuis **sordissimis gregibus** intemperantissimas perpotationes praedicem? quis te illis diebus sobrium, quis agentem aliquid quod esset libero dignum, quis denique in publico vidit? ...hic ... iacebat in **suorum Graecorum** foetore atque vino; quod quidem istius in illis rei publicae luctibus quasi aliquod Lapitharum aut Centaurorum convivium ferebatur; in quo nemo potest dicere utrum iste plus biberit [an vomuerit] an effuderit. (*Pis.* 22)

First, by the words 'sordissimi greges' Cicero explicitly compares Piso and his Epicurean friends with animals. Epicureans were often compared with animals, especially pigs. For example, Horatius says 'Epicuri de grege porcum'³¹. Namely, Epicureans pointed to animals to show that the primary aim of all creatures was ἡδονή. Thus their enemies accused them of putting men on a level with the beasts. Second, the equation of Greek way of life and immorality feeds into popular biases concerning

³⁰ Cic. *Pis.* 22.

³¹ *Epist.* 1.14.16.

the attitude toward non-Romans³². In addition, this passage introduces a network of ideas suggesting that Greek culture, both philosophy and mythology, could serve as the basis of improper behaviour. The behaviour of Piso and his friends provides a counterpoint to the activities of a proper Roman citizen. Cicero and other Roman authors find in the banqueting motif fertile material for invectives³³. It is a common motif that one who frequents the banquet is unaccustomed to daylight³⁴. Furthermore, the allusiveness of the description of banqueting provokes the listeners' imagination and unable them to imagine the details of the event. The orator himself is forced to present it in bare outline, in order not to be associated with the activity. Banqueting themes were frequent in Cicero's oratory, for Roman believed that banquets reflected a Greek or Eastern way of life that would have destroyed old Roman virtues³⁵.

Now, we will turn to the next reference to Epicurus in the speech:

Valebis apud hominem volitantem gloriae cupiditate vir moderatus et constans, apud indoctum eruditus, apud generum soccer. Dices enim, ut es homo factus ad persuadendum, concinnus perfectus politus ex schola: 'quid est, Caesar, quod te supplicationes totiens iam decretae tot dierum tanto opere delectent? in quibus homines errore ducuntur, quas di neglegunt; qui ut noster **divinus** ille dixit **Epicurus**, neque propitii cuiquam esse solent neque irati'. (Pis. 59)

The allusion to Piso's philosophical education demonstrates Cicero's ability to anticipate Piso's evil nature from his noble exterior. Namely, wide education was not always desirable, particularly philosophical education proved to be a two-edged sword – it could undermine, when used wisely, as well as bolster one's authority. Standards of discretion affect the orator's choice of expression. If Cicero had used too much detail in describing Epicurean doctrine, he would have risked losing his own respectability. There is a point to be made before we return to Cicero's text. We have noticed that in the cited chapter Cicero uses the adjective 'divinus' for Epicurus. What could be a reason for this? Is it a

³² Corbeill 1996: 101.

³³ Cf. Cic. *Verr.* 2.5.92-94; *Pis.* 42 ; *Phil.* 2.104-5; *Sal. Cat.* 13.3, etc.

³⁴ Cic. *Fin.* 2.23.

³⁵ Corbeill 1996: 128.

normal employment of the adjective or rather an irony? Nisbet argues that it is a malicious touch³⁶. Namely, Epicureans thought that gods were remote from mankind and in the same time believed that their founder was a god. It was paradoxical and Cicero probably wanted to make fun of it. However, it is also probable that this use of the adjective 'divinus' was meant to make a sharp divide between highly respected Epicurus and his unintelligent and immoral followers, with Piso, as an example.

The last reference to Epicurus in the *In Pisonem* is the following:

Itaque admissarius iste, simul atque audivit voluptatem a **philosopho** tanto opere laudari, nihil expiscatus est: sic suos sensus voluptarios omnis incitavit, sic ad illius hanc orationem adhinnivit, ut non magistrum virtutis sed auctorem libidinis a se illum inventum arbitraretur. **Graecus** primo distinguere et dividere, illa quem ad modum dicerentur; iste, 'claudus' quem ad modum aiunt 'pilam', retinere quod acceperat, testificari, tabellas obsignare velle, **Epicurum** disertum decernere. Et tamen dicit, ut opinor, se nullum bonum intellegere posse demptis corporis voluptatibus. (*Pis.* 69)

In this chapter Cicero explains that Piso made no investigations into Epicurus's real meaning. Thus he did not have a real knowledge about Epicurean philosophy, but rather wrong believes and opinions.

We can easily see that by appealing to Roman stereotypes of Greek philosophers in general, and about Epicurus and Epicureanism in particular, Cicero tries to provoke an animosity toward his opponent. Namely, Piso's concern for Greek philosophy harmonizes well with Roman stereotypes of non-Romans. The power of the orator's rhetoric lies in a clever manipulation of xenophobia. Furthermore, Cicero's references to Epicurus in the *In Pisonem* serve to give a characterization of Piso and his behaviour, and thus to help Cicero to make a schematised picture of his enemy. Thus they work as a tool of schematisation within the speech.

In the conclusion of the speech Cicero describes the effects the speech has had on his opponent. The invective disabled its target and marked him as unfit for human society. The powerful language reduces Piso to a timid and quivering beast³⁷. The cumulative technique used here recalls passages from other Cicero's orations in which he represents all of

³⁶ Nisbet 1974: 121.

³⁷ Cf. Cic. *Vat.* 1.

Roman society as hostile to his opponent³⁸. Thus the language of *In Pisonem* does more than expose Piso's immorality. It makes Piso the object of all Rome's contempt, a man deprived of the attributes proper to a free Roman citizen. As Corbeill wisely argues, 'Cicero becomes the society's moral spokesperson'³⁹. The orator constructs the network of his statements and assumptions not out of whole cloth but in accordance with prejudices and biases already present in Roman society.

It has much been disputed about the originality of Cicero's thought. Many who admire Cicero as an orator would deny him the name of thinker. However, it is probable that Cicero was among the first, or really the first Roman orator who put the names of Greek philosophers in his speeches and used them as a tool within the framework of his rhetorical strategy.

Bibliographic References

- Adams, J. N. 1982. *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*. Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Clarke, M. L. 1956. *The Roman Mind*. London: Cohen&West.
- Corbeill, A. 1996. *Controlling Laughter: Political Humor in the Late Roman Republic*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Hubell, H. M. 1913. *The Influence of Isocrates on Cicero, Dionysius and Aristides*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- MacKendrick, P. L. 1989. *The Philosophical Books of Cicero*. London: Duckworth.
- Nisbet, R. G. M. 1974. *M. Tulli Ciceronis In L. Calpurnium Pisonem Oratio*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Scullard, H. H. 1951. *Roman Politics 220-150 BC*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Vasaly, A. 1993. *Representations: Images of the World in Ciceronian Oratory*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

³⁸ Cf. Catil. 1.17; Vat. 39.

³⁹ Corbeill 1996: 53.

Резиме

Навођење Епикуровог имена у Цицероновој беседи *In Pisonem*

Питање повезаности Цицеронових филозофских дела и његовог беседништва ретко је заокупљало пажњу истраживача. Један од проблема чије би расветљавање допринело бољем разумевању Цицеронове реторске стратегије и технике јесте навођење имена грчких филозофа у његовим беседама. Наиме, судећи према сачуваним изворима, у Цицероновим беседама следећи грчки филозофи наведени су поименце: Питагора, Сократ, Платон, Аристотел, Зенон, Епикур и Диоген. Имена наведених филозофа налазе се у четири Цицеронове беседе, настале у периоду између 63. и 54. године п.н.е, од којих су три изговорене на суду (*Pro Murena*, *Pro Scauro*, *Pro Rabirio Postumo*), а једна у Сенату (*In Pisonem*). Дакле, ни у једној беседи изговореној пред народом Цицерон, колико знамо, није навео име неког грчког филозофа. Стога, видимо да је беседников језички избор условљен психо- и социо-лингвистичким разлозима. Наиме, није било прикладно разметати се филозофским знањем пред светињом која није готово ништа знала о филозофима и филозофији.

У овом раду истражује се навођење Епикуровог имена у беседи *In Pisonem* изговореној 55. године у Сенату. Ова беседа је, дакле, изговорена пред римском елитом, која је додуше имала основна знања о грчким филозофима, али су она била испреплетана бројним предрасудама. Управо такво стање ствари послужило је Цицерону као погодан материјал за напад на бившег конзула Пизона, поборника епикурејства. Дакле, Цицерон је вешто искористио етничке и културолошке предрасуде Римљане о Грцима и о грчким филозофима, а посебно о Епикуру. На крају, Цицерон приказује Пизона и остале Епикурове присталице као сасвим недостојне свог знаменитог учитеља, неспособне да разумеју, па тиме и следе његова упутства.

Цицерон инвектива против Пизона представља релативно верну слику о томе како је један Римљанин размишљао и говорио о Грцима и грчкој филозофији.

Sadržaj sveske 35 (1/2007)

Od Uredništva	5
ЕЛИЯ МАРИНОВА (ELIA MARINOVA) Palamedes: The Victim and the Hero of Letters	7
DRAGANA DIMITRIJEVIĆ References to Epicurus in Cicero's <i>In Pisonem</i>	19
VESNA DIMOVSKA Teorijski i praktični aspekti ironije kod Cicerona	29
ВИОЛЕТА ГЕРДЖИКОВА (VIOLETA GERJKOVA) Looking (at) Ariadne: Vision and Meaning in Catullus, Ovid and Hofmannsthal	39
VOJIN NEDELJKOVIĆ 'Cure Offered to Rival': IMS 2.228	55
GORANA STEPANIĆ Potresna pjesnička svjedočanstva: Latinsko pjesništvo o dubrovačkom potresu 1667.	59