
ODE 1.11

This ode to Leuconoe has elements of a serious, philosophical statement of Epicurean values (e.g., it is better not to foresee the future, it is better to endure whatever will be) as well as elements of an attempted seduction of Leuconoe. How one reads this poem will depend in part on how one interprets the role and interests of the speaker. Is he attempting to impart wisdom for its own sake? Or is he developing a rhetorical strategy whose purpose is winning over Leuconoe for himself? The long, yet rapidly moving, greater Asclepiadean line emphasizes the theme of the speed with which time proceeds.

Meter: fifth or greater Asclepiadean

Tu ne quaesieris (scire nefas), quem mihi, quem tibi finem di dederint, Leuconoe, nec Babylonios

- 1 **ne:** with perfect subjunctives, **quaesieris** and **temptaris** in prohibition, or negative command; this construction is equivalent to **noli(te)** plus infinitive
nefas, n., indeclinable, *crime, offense against divine law, sacrilege*
nefas: understand **est**
quem mihi, quem tibi: note the word order, which joins and makes parallel the speaker and his addressee
- 2 **finem:** take with each **quem**
di: alternate form of **dei**, nominative plural
- dederint:** perfect subjunctive in indirect question dependent on **quem finem**
Leuconoe, Leuconoes, f., *Leuconoe*, woman's name, vocative. The name, from Greek **leukos** (clear, bright, white) and **nous** (mind) may suggest equally, "clear-minded" or "empty-minded."
- 2-3 **Babylonios...numeros:** Babylonian numbers; astrological tables predicting the future

**temptaris numeros. ut melius, quidquid erit, pati!
seu pluris hiemes, seu tribuit Iuppiter ultimam,**

**quae nunc oppositis debilitat pumicibus mare
Tyrrhenum: sapias, vina liques et spatio brevi**

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- 3 **temptaris**: syncopated form of **tempta(ve)ris**
ut, interrogative adverb, *how* (exclamatory use, cf. *OLD*, under **ut**, A.2.)
melior, melius, comparative adjective, *better*
ut melius: understand **est**
quidquid erit: direct object of **pati**
- 4 **pluris**: **-is = -es** (accusative plural)
hiems, hiemis, f., *winter, storm*; metonymy for “year;” but the sense of “winter” as a way of reckoning the years is significant for the theme of death that pervades the poem. Cf. Ode 1.9, where winter also leads to thoughts of what to enjoy in the moment.
pluris hiemes: understand **tribuit** (present) or a future form of the verb
tribuo, tribuere, tribui, tributum, *allot, assign*; **tribuit** (present or perfect)
ultimam: understand **hiemem**
- 5 **oppositus, -a, -um**, adj., *placed against, hostile*
- debilito, debilitare, debilitavi, debilitatum**, *weaken*
pumex, pumicis, m., *pumice-stone*
oppositis...pumicibus: note that the stones are what make the sea become weakened, not the reverse
- 6 **Tyrrhenus, -a, -um**, adj., *Tyrrhenian, Etruscan*; **mare Tyrrhenum**, *Tyrrhenian Sea*, the sea lying between the west coast of Italy, and Sardinia, and Sicily; direct object of **debilitat**
sapio, sapere, sapivi, *have taste, be wise*; **sapias** operates on both a sensory and an intellectual level
sapias, liques: jussive subjunctives
vina: plural for singular
liquo, liquare, liquavi, liquatum, *melt, strain*; the Romans strained their wine before drinking it to remove the sediment.
spatium, spatii, n., *space, period of time*
spatio brevi: probably best taken as a causal ablative (because of the brief time [of our lives]) or (because of the brief time [appropriate for our hopes])

**spem longam reseces. dum loquimur, fugerit invida
aetas: carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero.**

- 7 **reseco, resecare, resecai, resectum**,
cut back, prune, restrain
reseces: jussive subjunctive, like **sapias, liques**
fugerit: effective use of the future perfect tense; while the conversation takes place, time "will have fled."
invidus, -a, -um, adj., *envious, jealous*;
invida personifies time; **invida aetas** almost becomes a third party jealous of Leuconoe and the speaker
- 8 **aetas, aetatis, f.**, *time, age*
carpo, carpere, carpsi, carptum,
pluck, seize
carpe diem: this Horatian phrase has become very famous. For poems in English that utilize the **carpe diem** theme, see Marvell's "To his Coy Mistress," and Herrick's "To the Virgins, to make much of Time."
quam minimum: **quam** with the superlative (*as...as possible*); *to the least extent possible*
credulus, -a, -um, adj., *credulous, trustful*; takes dative
posterus, -a, -um, adj., *next, following, future, later*
postero: this adjective does not modify a noun; understand **diei**, (because of **diem** earlier in the line) or, somewhat more humorously, **viro**