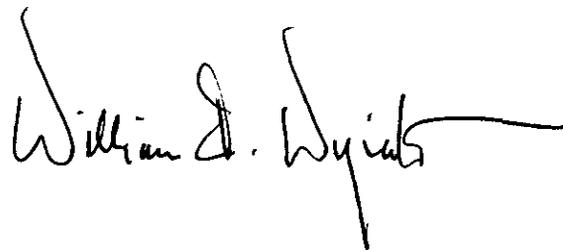


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Virtue and Vice in Juvenal's Satires

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Spring 2004

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William D. Wycislo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Acknowledgments

My sincerest thanks go to Dr. Wycislo, without whose time and effort this project would have never have happened.

Abstract

Juvenal was a satirist who has made his mark on our literature and vernacular ever since his works first gained prominence (Kimball 6). His use of allusion and epic references gave his satires a timeless quality. His satires were more than just social commentary; they were passionate pleas to better his society. Juvenal claimed to give the uncensored truth about the evils that surrounded him (Hight 157). He argued that virtue and vice were replacing one another in the Roman Empire. In order to gain better understanding of his claim, in the following paper, I looked into his moral origins as well as his arguments on virtue and vice before drawing conclusions based on Juvenal, his outlook on society, and his solutions.

Before we can understand how Juvenal chose to praise or condemn individuals and circumstances, we need to understand his moral origins. Much of Juvenal's beliefs come from writings on early Rome and long held Roman traditions. I focused on the writings of Livy, Cicero, and Polybius as well as the importance of concepts such as *pietas* and *fides*. I also examined the different philosophies that influenced Juvenal.

The bulk of the paper deals with virtue and vice replacing one another. This trend is present in three areas: interpersonal relationships, Roman cultural trends, and religious issues. First, Juvenal insisted that a focus on wealth, extravagance, and luxury dissolved the common bonds between citizens (Courtney 231). As a result, traditional, respectful relationships—such as those between patron and client and man and woman—soured into cold and mean displays of power. Second, Juvenal described vice replacing virtue in Roman culture. Juvenal believed that money, foreign influence, and a lack of international competition were the source of the corruption. His satires point out Roman transgressions (especially the aristocratic Roman transgressions) attacking the very foundation of Roman dignity and honor. Juvenal demonstrated that when greed and extravagance combine, people could not be satisfied (Juvenal 231). Finally, Juvenal's satires draw attention to virtue and vice replacing each other in religious issues. Juvenal argued that Romans were using religion to cater to their whims and that non-Roman values were replacing Roman values (Hight 100). Ultimately, Juvenal showed that people used religion as a means to gain what was pleasurable, not what was right and any attention given to religion was done purely for personal gain.

After examining Juvenal's moral foundations and his arguments on virtue and vice, it is important to look into our conceptions of Juvenal, his approach towards his society, and the solutions he proposed. Juvenal's contemporaries rarely spoke of him, (Hight 19) and since Juvenal did not include much biographical information in his satires, it is difficult to gather many details on his life. However, one can determine that Juvenal was a very courageous man because he wrote although it was risky to condemn powerful men—even if not by name—(Hight 9) and he was a very talented writer with the ability to use bad verse for good effect, much like Catullus, and to generate highly vivid imagery (Fergusen xx). In addition, Juvenal had issues with

money. He believed that money was the source of greed, which inevitably corrupted relationships and values.

Whether his focus was money or crooked governors, Juvenal used satire, a uniquely Roman form of expression, to attack any deviations from what he believed to be the normal social order (introduction by Braun, Juvenal 4). While scholars do point out that during Juvenal's time Rome put forward many humanitarian edicts (Ferguson xxiv), I argue that Juvenal's claims that the Rome he lived in was by far the most corrupt and degenerate ever had some validity.

Juvenal concentrated on issues in both the religious and secular spheres. Juvenal's comments on religion were contradictory. He easily mocked the gods, but he praised devote individuals (Hight 33). I argue that Juvenal's attacks on religion took away the basis for the morality that he praised. Many people cannot be good on their own accord; some need an outside reason, whether it is a god or the threat of punishment, in order to maintain good conduct. Juvenal's complaints about the secular sphere of events reveal that he did not understand the economic and social realities of his day (Introduction by Green, Juvenal 26). Instead of integrating himself with his ever-changing world, Juvenal chose to judge his surroundings in oversimplified, archaic moral terms (Courtney 25). Ultimately, I claim that Juvenal pointed out valid concerns but failed to provide pragmatic solutions to these huge issues.

Writing a satire is a deeply personal act. Whether the satire is highly biographical, as with Margaret Cho's performances, or the author leaves out many details from its author's life, such as the case with Juvenal, it is still infused with the passionate hopes, fears, and beliefs of its creator. Juvenal was a satirist who looked about Rome and did not like much of what he saw. Tormented by the marriage of eunuchs, appalling aristocratic women, and former slaves whose wealth gave them an extraordinary social ranking, Juvenal claimed "Why then, it is harder not to be writing satires" (Juvenal 66). Out of Juvenal's indignation rose 16 very angry and very vivid satires that came straight from his heart and into the lives of modern audiences today. The study of these satires is important because they are timeless, they cover relevant material, and they present a unique perspective.

Juvenal's satires are important because they are so timeless. Once Juvenal's satires gained prominence, they never stopped resonating in our literature and vernacular. Authors from Chaucer to Nicolas Boileau, to Montaigne, to Donne, for example, all paid homage to Juvenal in their works. Most educated people are familiar with the phrase *panem et circenses* or the tag *rara avis* (Kimball 6). Juvenal's satires are enduring because he managed to take everyday happenings and tell of them in epic terms. Juvenal wrote of long dead characters and past circumstances so that his readers would not accept his satires as momentary rants on selected individuals or events that would soon end. In Satire IX, for instance, Juvenal could have addressed an *actual* aging playboy from around the time that he published

this satire. However, Juvenal's audience would then have thought that this satire centered only on this man and his patron, instead of the themes of greed and hypocrisy. The audience would have simply focused on the gossip of the moment and then moved on when the information grew stale. Instead, Juvenal wrote through allusion, which allows his audiences to move beyond individual names and places and to see the big picture. If Juvenal wrote only on current events, his satires would not speak so powerfully to audiences in our day. Whether we agree with the focus of Juvenal's ridicule or we are opposed to the application of Juvenal's objections, since the emergence of his works, we have nonetheless never stopped paying attention to him.

Juvenal used his satire as social commentary. Throughout his satires, Juvenal established certain codes which gave validity and revealed the necessity of particular values (Courtney 21). Then Juvenal judged individuals and circumstances that happened around him according to those codes. Publishing satire is much like giving a persuasive speech: "both seek to change their audience's view and halt their complacency on topics." Satire does more than just poke fun at figures, it dissuades its audience "from vice and folly, and [praises]... those whose example deserves to be followed (27). A prostitute in Satire II goes on at length about a prosecutor wearing transparent toga who claims to be protecting the morals of the city. The image the speaker paints is amusing, but her speaking ultimately reveals the hypocrisy that prevails in her society. Juvenal largely described a world in which vice steadily

became a virtue, and virtues became vices. Juvenal used the contrast between early Rome (a time of virtue) and the time of his Rome (a time of vice) to highlight the corruption he saw all around him (19).

Juvenal's works are a valuable subject to study. Highet explains that all human life—from the beginnings of time to this very moment are the potential subjects of satire, but he explains that Juvenal takes this blunt tool and uses it with pin-point accuracy “by asking ‘when was there a richer crop of vices?’” (Juvenal 52). Juvenal felt that satire was real; he believed that it spoke the truth. Juvenal came to the opinion that other forms of literature, like epic or tragedy, were “unrealistic and irrelevant” (Highet 152). While moralists and social commentators have always been all too common, Juvenal had a unique approach for addressing his society's flaws. Juvenal focused on individual symptoms of major problems in order to show just how far problems have gone.

Most people extol the “good old days” and criticize the modern times. This was no different in Juvenal's time. Many during the life of Juvenal believed that society was becoming ever more immoral. Juvenal presented his audience with a clear scope of the problem. Through examples in which patricians volunteered to be gladiators and an empress prostitutes herself, Juvenal's satires reveal not only that society was worsening, but how society was worsening and to what extent. Because the message within the satires transcends individual personalities and circumstances to become timeless pieces within the Western literary tradition, we must treat his

warnings and reservations with equal reverence. Juvenal's satires comment on and warn society in general, whether we live in the first century C.E. or in the year 2004.

Therefore, in order to gain a better understanding of what Juvenal's satires are all about, we will first define Juvenal's moral foundation, second, explore the different ways that he showed virtue and vice replacing one another, and finally draw conclusions based on Juvenal, his approach, and the solutions he proposed.

Before we can understand the practices that Juvenal condemned in his satires, we need to understand his moral foundations. This includes an understanding of early Roman religion and its practices, the effects of Roman religion on its practitioners, and Roman religious commentaries that predated Juvenal.

The Roman author Livy clearly admired early Rome. The study of ancient times was a relief for him from the trials and struggles of his daily life. Livy told of King Numa Pompilius, who used religion to instill morality into the Roman people. Numa invented the story of meeting the goddess Egeria so that he would be justified in creating religious rites. He used these rites in order to give the Roman population something to focus on in times of peace (Moskalew 63). "They became so much absorbed in the cultivation of religion and so deeply imbued with the sense of their religious duties, that the sanctity of an oath had more power to control their lives than the fear of punishment for lawbreaking." Livy goes so far to claim that since Rome was so dedicated to worship "the mere thought of offering her violence seemed to them [her enemies] like sacrilege" (Moskalew 64).

The Romans were religious in that they were very attentive to ceremonies and precision in their worship. Religion was synonymous with *pietas*. However, “*pietas* meant not only dutifulness toward the gods, but also a demonstrative respect” for both one’s family and the state (Hooper 71). Roman authors contributed piety to Rome’s success. This piety and respect for tradition created a strong sense of duty for early Romans. “The young Roman... grew up in a household filled with the memories which tied him to continuing tradition... He was expected to protect the family name and to be equal to its honors”(Hooper 126). Piety and duty motivated the early Romans to respect family traditions and to maintain social norms.

In addition to piety, Romans cared deeply about *fides* (meaning *faith*, but with “broader connotations of credibility and dependability”) as well as honor (Nagle 282-283). Roman society was very paternalistic. This outlook extended beyond each household and into the relationships between friends, upper and lower classes, and even between Rome and her allies. *Fides* was the glue that held these bonds together. *Fides* was a moral and social concept, not legally defined, that guided the actions of Romans. It was a moral responsibility to act in good faith (282). This good conduct was a necessary attribute to honor. Nagle points out that Roman society did not have the honor giving institutions that we have today: universities, corporations, etc. Instead, individuals earned honor through the public activities which benefited the state. In order to gain distinction, Romans needed to have honor more than professional skills or wealth. Honor was necessary for the trust of the Roman people,

and the trust of the Roman people was necessary for the ability to gain office and rule (283). Ultimately, in early Rome, *fides* and honor served as a kind of lubricant to keep social relationships and careers running smoothly.

Ancient thinkers had much to say about Rome's successes and failures. Unlike the Carthaginians and Greeks, as the Greek historian Polybius explained, "[the Romans] followed a strict morality and did not wink at bribery as a means of obtaining office." Polybius correlated Rome's corruption with a decline in religious faith. He claimed, "a scrupulous fear of the gods, is the very thing which keeps the Roman commonwealth together" (Hooper 126). The historian Sallust in his *Conspiracy of Catiline* told of how governmental safeguards, like the mandatory ten-year gap between repeating consulships, were unnecessary for the early Romans. He maintained that in early Rome: "The thirst for glory... was insatiable; as for money; their only ambition was to come by it honorably and spend it openhandedly" (Moskalew 53). Duty to their ancestors also motivated Romans, according to Sallust: 'When they beheld the images of their ancestors, their spirits were violently inflamed to virtue' (*Bellum Iugurthinum* 4.5) (Barton). In effect, morality derived from religion forced the Romans to examine their actions and provided them a reason to excel in their world.

Livy and Cicero concentrated on providing examples or advice that showed the actions behind Rome's successes and failures. Livy wrote with great love and patriotism of the early times of Rome. He provided many examples of both virtuous

and foolish behavior because tales of goodness and deficiencies reveal the consequences of both upright and corrupt actions. Adherence to the morality derived from religion led heroes like Livy's Junius Brutus, who executed his two sons in the name of justice, and Horatius Cocles, who sacrificed his life to defend his city, emerge. Another prominent example of virtue was the story of Cincinnatus, who was famous for his self discipline and restraint while wheedling dictatorial power. Livy declared that Cincinnatus demonstrated "great honors and individual worth are independent of wealth. Indeed, wealth seems insignificant compared to his tremendous strength of character" (Hellenga). Cicero in *De Officiis* even claims:

"For no phase of life, whether public or private, whether in business or in the home, whether one is working on what concerns oneself alone or dealing with another, can be without its moral duty; on the discharge of such duties depends all that is morally right, and on their neglect all that is morally wrong in life."

These men described early Rome as a society in which—whether for religious or philosophical reasons—the Romans were moral self-starters. They generally knew the "correct" plan of action and fulfilled their responsibilities to their state, fellow citizens, and their family.

Juvenal had a salad bar approach towards the philosophy; he chose which elements he liked and passed by those he did not. Juvenal did believe, like the Stoics, that each person must be virtuous through his own personal efforts. From the cynics Juvenal derived a flippant attitude towards myth and traditional Roman religion and formed the mantra of "moral self-help," which left little room for divine interference (Juvenal 38). Furthermore, though an examination of his satires, one could argue,

“his attitude to marriage resembles that of the Cynic,” he has an Epicurean way of forming friendships, and his comments on virtue, courage, and destiny are clearly Stoic. However, one still gets the sense that he held little appreciation for abstract thought. The final philosophic picture Juvenal creates is similar to “series of vivid, static, distorted snapshots” (Juvenal 42). Courtney goes on to argue that Juvenal’s moral judgments are not from “any coherent and rationalized philosophy, but on the code of behavior which the Romans had built up for themselves”(23). In general, Juvenal’s philosophical beliefs are the like the Mediterranean: they are a stew of many different elements and influences.

Now that we understand Juvenal’s moral foundations, we can turn to the application of his views. In his satires Juvenal demonstrated how virtue and vice came to replace one another. We can see this trend in interpersonal relationships, Roman culture, and religion.

First, Juvenal explored how virtue and vice came to replace each other in interpersonal relationships. In this situation, we can see a chain reaction from the relationships centered on duty, honor, and friendship to the increasingly common practice of using people as stepping stones. Juvenal showed vice becoming a virtue through images of greed dissolving common bonds, vice coming to replace traditional Roman values, and finally the complete reversal of cooperation with ruthlessness.

Juvenal focused on the ways greed dissolved the common bond between people. Satires I and V focus heavily on the patron-client relationship. Patrons and

clients were bound together through the moral weight of *fides*. They had certain moral obligations to support on another, but these obligations were not expressly define by law (Nagle 281). Patrons were supposed to supply “legal advice, representation, and, when necessary, political protections.” Clients aided their patrons however possible, usually by the political support and their votes. Also, patrons and clients could not give evidence against each other in court (282). Highet explains that in times past, the link between patron and retainer was somewhat democratic: ‘one was the host, the other was guest, but they were still friends and equal’ (87). However, this relationship had degenerated virtually beyond recognition by Juvenal’s time. In Satire I Juvenal declared, “...now Roman citizens are reduced to scrambling for a little basket of scraps on their patron’s doorstep” (Juvenal 68). Then again in Satire V Juvenal lamented: “Wouldn’t your self-respect be better served if you stuck it out where you are, shivering cold, on a diet of mouldy dog’s bread?” (117). Moreover, Juvenal was not alone in complaining about the ways hosts demeaned their guests. Courtney informs us that not only was this theme found in several epigrams of Martial, but it occurred often within Pliny’s works as well (231). Basically, Juvenal revealed that one of the primary social relationships of Rome going sour. It went from mutual respect and duty to a series of interactions infused with, as Courtney refers to it, “meanness.” Patron-client relationships went from modest meals and comradely to the payment of stipends to strangers who had to identify themselves before receiving their dole.

With the weakening of traditional ties, vice began to replace the values of early Rome. Satire V describes wealth used as a “calculated snub” (Hight 83). “[Virro] does it to make you suffer, for kicks. What farce or pantomime could be a bigger joke than your empty, rumbling belly”(Juvenal 122). Juvenal described Virro enjoying all sorts of wondrous delicacies and luxuries while begrudging his guests even the most meager subsistence. In Satire VII, the wealthy string along the poets and the teachers whose services are in high demand, but they refuse to pay them livable incomes. The wealth begrudge spending money on cultural experiences but freely spend their income on “silly or degrading” pursuits (Hight 109). Juvenal depicted a society in which the rich stigmatize the poor. “Cicero himself wouldn’t get tuppence these days without an enormous ring to flash in court” (Juvenal 168). Consequently, Roman society moved even farther away from patron-client respect (generally rich to poorer) and into two hostile camps. Friendship and mutual favors gave way to forced business arrangements. Even civic duty soured in Juvenal’s satires. In Satire IV, Juvenal presented people relinquishing items to the government, not out of patriotism or a sense of civic duty, but because if they do not give up those items, those items will be taken from them.

“This splendid catch the owner... has earmarked for Rome’s High Priest... since who would dare put up such a fish to auction... the very seashore swarms with narks and informers... all quoting law, to wit, that the fish had strayed from Caesar...” (Juvenal 106).

Within Satire V, clients succumb to the greed that their patrons exude. The clients dine with their patrons—a now demeaning activity—out of greed, the opportunity to

eat another man's food (Highet 83). "He assumes you've been hooked by his kitchen's delectable odours—and not far wrong" (Juvenal 122). Moreover, in Satire VI, Juvenal portrayed women as mirror to the vileness of their society, they reflect all that is wrong with their society, and those few who refuse to indulge in vices were to haughty and proud to live with. He questioned "Why endure such bitch-tyranny when rope's available" (128). Juvenal's satires revealed that in interpersonal relationships traditional values were being pushed aside. Patrons were now cruel to their clients, the poor—no matter how honorable—were shameful because they were poor, and women were vicious, conniving creatures.

In the end, common bonds fell apart, and vileness overcame tradition to the point where extravagance and immorality reigned supreme in interpersonal relationships. Juvenal's first satire describes a place where informers were eminent and a corrupt governor—who was found guilty for his shady activities while in office—kept the money he ciphred from his provinces; "Wealth springs from crime" (67). In Satire II, we see how far Roman society went from a state filled with self-regulating, moral individuals to a place which conquers and corrupts. On the social awakening of the young Armenian nobleman: "No doubt when he returns he will teach his friends the vices of Roman young, and so, the infection will spread throughout the world" (Highet 63). In Satire III, the speaker states that if Scipio (who took Mother Goddess to Rome), Metellus who rescued an image of Minerva from her burning temple, or King Numa himself were to take the stand in court. Romans

would disregard them because they would not be wealthy enough for their taste (Juvenal 91-92). Juvenal explained that Roman society was so degenerate that it focused only on money, not honor. Satire IV exposes highly corrupt men in great power—men such as the informers Catullus Messallinus and Pompeius. They lived in a society which rewarded those who sought out opportunities to disgrace and plunder fellow citizens. This satire shows how powerful vileness breeds weakness in others. “We have seen [the nobles]... as greedy, extravagant, and perverted. Now [Juvenal] shows that they are also cowards” (Hight 82). Greed and extravagance have become so common that an aging male prostitute claims perfect innocence. In Satire IX, an aging playboy “represents himself as all wounded innocence, and shows no trace of moral sensibility about his profession, in which he does not see anything remarkable” (Courtney 425). Even in Satire XIII, Juvenal expresses no surprise or shock that Calvinus was robbed by his own friend. Rather, Juvenal argues that it should be expected: “Your plight, as everyone knows, is by no means rare... by now it’s a cliché” (249). Juvenal detailed the extent to which Rome’s morality had been perverted. His satires reveal a society in which its individuals disregard their tradition of mutual respect and honor for conditions in which they flaunt their power and cruelty over others.

Second, Juvenal showed virtue becoming a vice within Roman culture. What made Rome great was forgotten, and foreign cultures reigned while the old Roman values were pushed aside and ignored. We can see this shift by looking at the

contributing factors, examining the inversions of roles and circumstances, and finally, delving into the final product.

There were three major contributing factors for the degeneracy of Rome: money, foreign influence, and a lack of international competition. Satire I reveals a society so focused on money that aristocrats, rich freedmen, and poor retainers all come begging for their dole. In Satire V, Juvenal described a world in which wealth had driven a “wedge between people who should have been friends, and between classes who were once partners with each other and are now either hateful enemies or masters and slaves” (Hight 88). Juvenal pointed out that it is difficult to earn a living in Rome because there is so much competition from foreigners in Satire III. “There’s no room in this city... for the decent professions: they don’t show any profit” (Juvenal 87). Courtney highlights the helpless situation in which honesty is a handicap to succeed, poverty is so despised that those who are poor have an even greater disadvantage to succeed, and there are so many foreigners that it is practically impossible to make an honorable living (151,152). “He is afraid of being ousted from traditional privileges by immigrants... his nationality should secure him favour... he self-righteously complains that the competition is unfair” (153).

We can see virtue and vice replacing each other in Roman society through the inversions of traditional roles and circumstances. Juvenal frequently satirized the aristocrats of his time. During Satire II, Juvenal focused on them and found them “unworthy of the names they bear, a disgrace to their ancestors and a source of

infection for the simpler world outside Rome, the world which they conquer and corrupt” (Highet 64). With Juvenal’s attachment to *gravitas* and dignity, he especially grates at public acts that he saw as aristocratic immorality, such as the gladiatorial activity and the homosexual marriage mentioned in Satire II (Courtney 122). Juvenal put an added pressure on aristocrats in Satire VIII. “Why on earth should a Fabius, though descended from Hercules, be entitled to any respect... if he’s a greedy numskull and softer than any lambskin” (177). “Instead of saying that aristocratic origins inspire good conduct, he says that they cast a lurid light on wickedness” (Highet 114). Ultimately, Juvenal argued for aristocrats to behave in a manner which brings honor to their family name, unlike Rubellius Blandus in Satire III.

Other factors beyond aristocratic misbehaviors show the inversion of roles and circumstances in Roman society. Satire IV contains a debate over a fish. Domitian’s court was so fearful of him that they spend time on the silly and degrading task of debating exactly how to use a fish. “A summons went out to the Privy Council, each of whom quailed beneath the Emperor’s hatred, whose drawn white faces reflected that great and perilous ‘friendship’” (Juvenal 107). Instead of having a council counsel, the situation required these men to pander the whims of a dreadful man. The satire shows a man with unlimited power using it for bad and silly purposes (Highet 82) and a court filled with *luxuria* and *adulatio* (Courtney 196). Instead of supporting those who provide moral and artistic guidance to society, in Satire VII “our skinflint

millionaires may flatter artistic talent, may load it with compliments... but nothing further” (Juvenal 164). Hypocrisy continues in Satire II in which homosexuals condemn homosexuals for being homosexual. In Satire XII, Juvenal focuses on the rewards the greedy and the vain get when parasites flatter the greedy, vain, and childless wealthy. “If a dying man recovers, he’s properly hooked: he’ll cancel his previous will, and leave all his possessions... to our legacy-hunting friend” (245). Juvenal’s satires show a perverse world in which leaders debate on fish instead of important societal matters, artists are denied proper payments so that the wealthy can buy more luxuries, and flatterers receive rewards for their charades.

Third, after looking at the contributing factors and the inversion of roles and circumstances, we can see the final product of the degeneracy of Roman society. There is now a marked contrast between early Rome and the Rome Juvenal knew. The Romans went from being “masters of the whole western world” to crazily spending money, consuming products, and ruining their power (Hight 53). Satire VI shows that after Rome conquered all her substantial enemies, she changed from “a small primitive state in which work and war kept vice at bay” to a place whose success allowed her inhabitants to open themselves up to “*luxuria* imported from abroad; e.g. drunkenness” (Courtney 255). Satire XI is filled with comparisons between early Rome and Juvenal’s Rome. Juvenal, having claimed that for the early Romans his feast would have been quite luxurious, contrasted his feast to all the excessive festivities going on at the Circus. “Our early Republican troops were rough

diamonds, they hadn't acquired a taste for Greek *objets d'art*" (Juvenal 230). With all the focus on material wealth, he suggests that with gluttony and extravagances increasing exponentially, the greedy no longer had any room for contentment. "But your modern millionaire cannot enjoy his dinner... unless that broad table-top rests on an ivory leopard..." (231). Courtney points out that the average citizens' affections for wealth and admiration of the wealthy were part of an alarming trend for Juvenal. "He is thereby hinting a criticism of the common people of Rome for loving a Lord" (490). Juvenal routinely portrayed clients as slaves and masters as slave owners. The common people's slavish admiration for wealth—no matter how it was gained—was an open invitation for tyranny and abuse.

With all the focus on luxury and material possessions, Juvenal's Rome had become very crime-filled and excessive. In Satire III, Juvenal claimed that poverty "makes men ridiculous" and that "here in Rome we must toe the line of fashion, living beyond our means" (Juvenal 92-93). His society mocked and demeaned the poor so much that practically all Romans pretended to be wealthier than they actually were. Juvenal warned in Satire XI of the dangers of combining greed with extravagance. He argued that Rutilus would soon sign himself up to be a gladiator—a huge disgrace—because his palate ruled both him and his expense account. When greed and extravagance are combined, its users pillage vast amounts of wealth just to spend that wealth on worthless, senseless things, and each new purchase and exploit must be followed by even grander events. It's an "endless spiral away from ordinary

life into the madness of unlimited desire” (Highet 53). In addition, Juvenal claimed that his society was so corrupt that its inhabitants taught vice as though it were a virtue. Juvenal complained in Satire XIV that Roman children are taught to be greedy. “We’re all too willing to model ourselves [for our children] on vice and depravity” (Juvenal 264). Highet stresses that Rome brought its own end through its excesses in greed, wealth, and power. He explains that Juvenal believed “careless education and limitless materialism were ruining his country” (148). In Satire I, vice had grown so much that Juvenal was afraid to write and publish his satire even though Domitian was long dead. “But name an Imperial favourite, and you will soon enough blaze like those human torches” (70). He could not stop himself from thinking that all emperors are like each other. These excesses even traveled into the disciplined world of the military. In Satire XVI, we read about civilians unable to prosecute soldiers for their abuses because of the legal exemptions for soldiers. As a result, the civilians not only take the abuse, but hide their wounds from public view. The Roman army was once a tool of the Roman state; during Juvenal’s time the army was in the process of usurping the state. “This division between soldiers and citizens was to grow ever wider, until the army came to feel it was not an organ of the Roman government but was in effect the Roman government itself” (Nagle 159). The world Juvenal knew was so crime ridden and perverse, that he showed no surprise in Satire XIII when a friend was robbed by his friend. He also used Satire VI, not just to warn about women, but to reveal a society with collapsed family structures and sexual morality

that was once “one of the most puritanical societies of the ancient world” (Hight 100). Juvenal disclosed to his audiences how his society shifted from virtue to vice by exploring the factors contributing to its degeneracy, showing traditional roles becoming inverted, and describing the astonishing excesses and abuses he saw around him.

Third, Juvenal exhibited virtue and vice replacing each other in religion. He follows individuals using religion to suit their own personal indulgences, departing from Roman values for new philosophy, and showing the shamelessness of his age.

The first step in replacing vice with virtue in religion is to use the religion, in quasi-religious ways, to suit one’s personal indulgences. In Satire II, Juvenal told of men wanting to be women so much that they worshiped the Good Goddess and that they did everything but make themselves eunuchs for the Mighty Mother’s sake. “Yet one thing they omit: true Phrygian devotees would by now have slashed away that useless member” (Juvenal 79). Domitian, since he was an emperor, figured that he would be deified after he was dead. However, he did not want to wait, so he made himself a god while he was alive and insisted that his attendants treat him as such (Satire IV). Those around him use ironical language to uphold Domitian’s claim: “[The fish] insisted on being caught” (107). In Satire VI, Juvenal told of debauched women moving away from their traditional roles and “forming a secret society of their own, free from all restraints of family duty or thoughts of virtue” while they became drunk and defiled ceremonies for Chastity and the Bona Dea. Juvenal argued

“the religious ceremonies which had once bound Roman women together for good and now served as an excuse for intrigue” (Hight 100, 101). Juvenal’s satires show that the process of altering replacing vice with virtue in religion starts with using religious practices without reverence and according to one’s whims.

The next step in replacing virtue with vice in Roman religion is to shed the pretense of upholding traditional Roman beliefs and practices and embrace foreign philosophy. In Satire VI, Juvenal described women moving away from their traditional roles “as the profound spiritual maladjustment... [in] Rome... sucked the strength away from men and intensified the passions of her women” (Hight 102). Traditionally, women were under the control of their *paterfamilias* (except for Vestal Virgins and particular freeborn and freedwomen under certain conditions after the time of Augustus) (Kamm 108). However, Juvenal depicted women acting independently of male control, which generally did not happen. While in practice, the *paterfamilias* held council with his family before any major decisions and women played a large role in the policy making of the households, they generally did not move in circles beyond their own family (Nagle 280). In Satire VIII, Juvenal advised Ponticus to reform the way he governs his provinces by following Roman institutions, over ethics or honesty (Courtney 383). “Why trace back the ramifications of your kinship with dusty Pontiffs or Masters of Horse, if your own life is a public disgrace?” (Juvenal 177). Juvenal urged Ponticus to behave well, but Juvenal’s arguments were based on behavioral standards derived from Roman history, not one’s

individual ethics. In Satire XIV, children moved away from their traditional roles of respect of subservience into warped reflections of their parents. The children were so corrupted because their parents taught them greed, an “un-Roman” attribute.

“Money, Juvenal declares, brings no happiness. The love of money breaks up traditional morality—a point which he drives home by one of his favourite contrasts of the degenerate present with the simple life of the yeomen who were the strength of early Rome” (Hight 147). Juvenal’s satires reveal a society in which the lack of religion or morality caused women, the nobility, and children to act in very corrupt, un-Roman ways.

We see vice completely replacing virtue when Juvenal portrayed his subject matter as being shameless in their degeneracy. In his satire on prayer (Satire X), Juvenal pointed out that too many people assume that they are wiser than they really are. As Courtney explains, “Men cannot see what is really got their good” (446). Juvenal illustrated that too many people were focused on gathering what was pleasurable for themselves, not what was right. “A man is dearer to [the gods] than he is to himself. Led helpless by irrational impulse and powerful blind desires...” (Juvenal 216-217). Juvenal claimed, “We live in the world’s ninth age, a period still worse than the age of iron: such evil defies Nature” (250). With all this wickedness running rampant, people were losing faith and fear in their gods. The atheists would assume that there were no gods available to punish them for wrong doings, and the believers would assume that the justice of the gods is so slow that they will probably

never experience their punishment (Highet 142). In the end, the vast number of gods in Roman society just became a long list of deities from which to falsely swear (Courtney 535). With punishment so accepted, Courtney explains, "...religion has been turned upside down and that a good man who ought to be revered is regarded as a portent" (534-535).

Now that we have looked into Juvenal's moral philosophy and his descriptions of virtue turning into vice in ancient Rome, we can finally draw some conclusions based on our conception of Juvenal, his approach to society, and the solutions he proposed.

First, we must analyze our conception of Juvenal. It is difficult to learn much about Juvenal because no one, including Pliny the Younger, who made it a point to name in his letters "every person or event which might appear important to his contemporaries or to posterity," "ever mentions Juvenal during his [Juvenal's] lifetime." Highet theorizes that this fact is due to Juvenal either being very obscure or very offensive (19). Nonetheless, scholars have been able to piece together a broad biography of Juvenal. Juvenal was born c. 55 C.E. in Aquinum, most likely the son of a wealthy Spanish freedman. Evidence suggests that he was an auxiliary cohort who served in Britain. During his younger years, he tried to make a living in Rome through public speaking. Most scholars believe that the emperor Domitian exiled him to Egypt, and that Juvenal was recalled to Rome sometime after Domitian's death. He published his 16 satires between 110 and 130 C.E, and he died c. 140 C.E (Kamm 163).

Whether we know the full details of Juvenal's life or not, the messages within his satires are the information which really matters. Ferguson speculates that our lack of knowledge about historical Juvenal has not dampened the effect of his satires. The satires' moral fervor reach Juvenal's audiences whether the true, historical Juvenal was ever angry and passionate or a detached and relaxed person. Juvenal's writings force us to ask about events and circumstances (xix-xx) both in his time and in our own. In the end, while determining what Juvenal means for oneself, it is important to take his comments with a grain of salt. Courtney cautions that satire is an artistic form, and allowances must be made for any exaggerations that Juvenal made (21).

While theorizing about authors is a useful way to expand one's mind and reach new levels of interpretation, we must remember that we can only recreate so much. Although we cannot speak defiantly on Juvenal's personal life, we can hold to two generalities: he was courageous and talented. Juvenal was courageous because he wrote although he was frightened. "...Juvenal had already suffered for writing satire, or ... he had been so deeply horrified by the corruption of Domitian's reign that he could never, even under a kind emperor, expect anything better" (Hight 55). He was not a bold satirist like Rabelais, Bryon, or Pope. In Juvenal's day, singling out a prominent man was like accusing him in court. Unlike mythological works, satire was "as dangerous as declaring war on crime single-handed" (9). Although Juvenal did not name prominent contemporary men, he was expressly addressing them through his references to past figures and circumstances. As Ferguson claims, "This

was courageous enough. Who is penning anything like the sixteenth satire in our present military dictatorships?" By means of addressing his contemporaries through the dead, Juvenal created his own brand of bravery (xx).

Juvenal's literary efforts made bad writing look good and passages come alive. Juvenal was, what Ferguson called, a "serious writer," after writing 16 satires over a span of 25 years, one would have to be. Much like Catullus, Juvenal was able to use "Bad verse for good effect." Juvenal used digression and disproportion in order to heighten the emotional effect and rhetorical message of his satires (xx). For instance, Juvenal goes on and on in Satire VI about different types of awful women and horrible marriages in order to show his audiences the horror of living in a society with so little concern for love, friendship, and respect in its citizens' relationships. In addition, one of Juvenal's greatest literary gifts was his ability to create highly visual scenes with only a few words (xxi). For example, we can clearly see the fluttering of the perverts' eyelids as they put on their mascara in Satire II. In all, Juvenal had a powerfully original style. His language choices, his ability to make lasting epigrams, and his historical and literary references all made his writings very distinct.

Juvenal devoted a large portion of his life to writing satire. His seventh satire is a testament to the struggle of artists such as himself. While Juvenal's indignation should make the answer clear, it is nevertheless important to question why he wrote satires. One of the constant themes throughout Juvenal's satires was money. Communication theorist Kenneth Burke argues, "Money is per se an alienating device, leading to impersonality and individualism" (316). This statement holds true

for Juvenal's satires. Whenever money is involved, greed shortly follows. The pursuit of money led to the corrosion of relationships and values in Juvenal's society. Romans were breaking away from the norms (being individuals) and interactions began to take on more and more of a business sense (impersonality). The city of Rome dismayed Juvenal. When one's world seems highly illogical or simply crazy, one feels alienated from it. "We use [the term alienation] to designate the state of affairs wherein a man no longer 'owns' his world because, for one reason or another, it seems basically unreasonable" (Burke 216). Burke explains that we can repossess the world by aligning ourselves with a new rationale. Juvenal did not understand the world he saw around him, so he sought solace in writing satire.

Second, Juvenal's satires centered on Roman-ness. He looked at Roman virtue (where he could find it), Roman vice, Roman people, non-Romans who tried to supplant actual Romans, the city of Rome, Roman gods—Roman everything. Juvenal chose a Roman way of promoting the status quo, and he made more than a few comments about his Roman society.

Juvenal wrote about Roman society in a very Roman way. Juvenal's very method of writing was through-and-through Roman. Livy proposed that satires origins were in impromptu combinations of Latin charivari songs and Etruscan ballet ((introduction by Braun), Juvenal 4). Braun described the evolution process of Roman literature including such figures as Ennius, Lucilius, Horace, Varro, Seneca, Vergil, and Ovid. These men modified and experimented with different meters, content focus, and literary expression ((introduction by Braun), Juvenal 9). Most

Latin literature has its roots in the Greek tradition. However, there is no Greek equivalent of Roman satire. Satire evolved in Rome through the efforts of Roman authors. As the Roman critic Quintilian stated, “Satire is completely ours.” Fergusen claims, “even after the Romans had developed the genre, the Greeks never took it up” (xi). Fergusen explains that Juvenal “has his vision of the true traditions of Rome, and [he] attacks all that falls short.” Juvenal attacked any and all flaws that “upset the social order” (Courtney 23). Some examples are when Romans dress like Greeks or convert to Judaism. Whenever Juvenal wrote about non-Romans (such as with the Greek or the Jewish influence on Rome), he did so only to show how much worse things truly were in Rome (xix). Juvenal also attacked those examples of non-conformity that led to the denial of specific obligations and natural customs. He attributes the rise of social problems to renunciation and usurpation of rights; neglect of duties and lack of responsibility; abuse of power and breach of trust” (xxii-xxiii). Juvenal used a satire, a Roman means of expression, to call attention to un-Roman behaviors.

The subject of Juvenal’s satires is Rome, and they describe an incredibly warped and perverse world. Scholars call into question Juvenal’s moral judgments on Rome because they are so radically different from the views expressed by many of his contemporaries. Fergusen states that we can both believe and disagree with the picture Juvenal gave of his world. He points out that the Roman Empire sustained peace in a larger area for a longer period than in any other state in recorded history. He also reminds us that there were many humanitarian efforts in the Roman Empire,

such as Claudius' decree that a sick slave abandoned by his master shall be freed if he survived his illness and Hadrian's "banning the sale of boys and girls for prostitution" and "declaring the murder of a slave a capital crime." Fergusen explains that Juvenal gave such a negative picture because he focused "almost exclusively on Rome," an ancient city which suffered from "inner city" problems. Also, unlike Pliny who speaks of this era warmly, Juvenal did not speak for the haves. Rather, he donned the persona of being powerless (xxiv-xxv). Furthermore, Juvenal's argument that his age was the worst, most depraved age ever did resonate more truly than many others who have used this theme did. Many factors led Juvenal to this opinion. Both Roman civilization and the Roman morality changed radically in the two or three centuries before the time of Juvenal. The Juvenal's society did experience a sudden influx of wealth corrupting individuals and promoting ambition. Juvenal saw despotism reigning in place of a republican government. There were many foreign newcomers in prominent political and social positions in Rome. Finally, the aristocracy was clearly beaten into submission after all the purges and civil wars, and, "taking refuge in hell-raking and political quietism," it did not wish to stand out politically ((Introduction by Green), Juvenal 35). Courtney, in the face of all these factors and perspectives was quite correct when he claimed, "Ultimately, the validity of his comments is limited by the context in which they are given" (34).

Third, we can turn the solutions Juvenal proposed. Juvenal's solutions cover both the religious and secular spheres. In his satires, Juvenal was "generally pretty off-hand about the gods." He made fun of Jupiter's sexual escapades, and he mocked the helplessness of Mars. The only deity he really seemed to respect was

Ceres, whom he believed stood for “the important virtues whose loss he laments: chastity, a disinterested love of mankind, and truth” (Hight 33-34). The result was that Juvenal both praised and ridiculed the old Roman religions. He was too wrapped up with the intellectual skepticism of his day to realize how important religion was to early Roman society (Courtney 25). In the end, Juvenal upheld moral ideals while slashing at the roots of those moral ideals ((Introduction by Green), Juvenal 38).

Juvenal also proposed solutions for the vice in the secular sphere. Juvenal did not have a firm grasp on the realities of the Roman economy in his day. He lauded the simplicity of early Rome, but he never realized that small-scale agrarian nations do not rule the world. As Rome expanded, so did its trade and economic base. Juvenal simply did not understand the worth of any activity beyond small-scale farming. Instead, he criticized trade, practical skills, liberal politics, all facets of change, the economic realities governing his existence (Introduction by Green, Juvenal 26). When commercial activities drew his attention, Juvenal saw “frantic scrambling after quick profits, stupid luxuries, and wheat to keep the rabble quiet.” He would admire the harbor Trajan built at Ostia but would sneer at the men whose labor made the harbor a reality (27). Ferguson details that all the changes Rome had gone through—dramatically expanding its size, taking in more and more non-Romans—helped to alter Rome’s cultural patterns and social structure. Ultimately, “Juvenal in fact fails to integrate himself with a changing world” (xxiii) and therefore he saw things “in the over-simplified moral values of times now obsolete” (Courtney 25). Juvenal simply could not see beyond the world he knew: “Given the fact of

servitude, the feudal relationship is the only tolerable one”(Introduction by Green, Juvenal 30). Juvenal’s simplification of issues and his ignorance of his time led him to the solution that everyone need to just be good, and if correct conduct did not manage to cure those ills, perhaps some god or wonderful man would donate money to a needy person, such as himself (26).

In conclusion, after examining Juvenal’s moral foundation, the different ways that he showed virtue and vice replacing one another, and conclusions based on Juvenal, his approach, and the solutions he proposed, we have learned more about what Juvenal’s satires are about. We live in an era in which we are as frank and direct as Juvenals’ (Fergusen vii). Juvenal was horrified by the very public extravagance and brutality of his society, and he did not hold back much of his distaste. Writing on *quicquid agunt hominess*, Juvenal strove to persuade us that vice, which horrified him so much, was “ugly and rampant” (Courtney 20) in the hopes that he might make his beloved and despised city a little better.

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