

Juvenal 10.28ff.

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ridebat, quotiens a limine mouerat unum  
protuleratque pedem, flebat contrarius auctor? 30  
sed facilis cuius rigidi censura cachinni:  
mirandum est unde ille oculis suffecerit umor.  
perpetuo risu pulmonem agitare solebat  
Democritus, quamquam non essent urbibus illis  
praetextae, trabeae, fasces, lectica, tribunal. 35  
quid si uidisset praetorem curribus altis  
extantem et medii sublimem puluere circi  
in tunica Iouis et pictae Sarrana ferentem  
ex umeris aulaea togae magnaеque coronae  
tantum orbem, quanto ceruix non sufficit ulla? 40  
quippe tenet sudans hanc publicus et, sibi consul  
ne placeat, curru seruus portatur eodem.

Robinson (1983)

Well then, do you now praise the one philosopher  
Because he laughed, whenever moving from the door  
And tendering forth one foot, the converse Master wept?  
But easy for anyone is censure's rigid guffaw.  
Strange is whence sufficed for the other's eyes that moisture.  
Incessant was the laughter with which Democritus  
Concussed his lungs, although there were in those towns no  
Praetextas, trabeas, fasces, palanquins, tribunals.  
What if he'd seen protrude from a tall triumphal car  
The praetor, borne aloft amid the Circus dust  
In Jove's tunic, and carry from his shoulders Tyrian  
Curtains of embroidered toga and the orb  
Of a great crown, so great no neck for it will suffice?  
It's held by a sweating publicus, and lest the consul  
Fancy himself the slave rides in the same car.

Green (1974)

They had a point – don't you agree? – those two old  
philosophers:  
One of them helpless with laughter whenever he set foot  
Outside his house, the other a weeping fountain.<sup>4</sup>  
The cutting, dismissive sneer comes easily to us all –  
*But wherever did Heraclitus tap such an eye-brimming  
Reservoir of tears?* Democritus' sides shook non-stop,  
Though the cities *he* knew had none of our modern trappings –  
Togas bordered or striped with purple, sedans, the tribunal,  
The rods and axes.<sup>5</sup> Suppose he had seen the praetor  
Borne in his lofty carriage through the midst of the dusty  
Circus, and wearing full ceremonial dress –  
The tunic with palm-leaves, the heavy Tyrian toga  
Draped in great folds round his shoulders; a crown so enormous  
That no neck can bear its weight, and instead it's carried  
By a sweating public slave, who, to stop the Consul  
Getting above himself, rides in the carriage beside him.<sup>6</sup>

Rudd (1991)

In view of that, you may well approve of the two philosophers:  
one of them used to laugh whenever he closed the door  
and stepped into the street; his opposite number would weep. 30  
While harsh censorious laughter is universal and easy,  
one wonders how the other's eyes were supplied with moisture.  
Democritus' sides would shake with gales of incessant laughter,  
although in the towns of his day there were no purple- or scarlet-  
bordered togas to be seen; no rods or litters or platforms.  
What *would* he have made of a praetor standing there in his car,  
lifted high in the air amid the dust of the race-track,  
dressed in the tunic of Jove himself, with a curtain-like toga  
of Tyrian embroidery draped on his shoulders, and a crown so  
40 enormous  
in its circumference that no neck could support its weight;  
in fact it is held by a public slave who sweats with exertion. 4  
(He rides in the same chariot to restrain the official from hybris.)

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Johnson (1755)

50 Once more, *Democritus*, arise on Earth,  
With chearful Wisdom and instructive Mirth,  
See motley Life in modern Trappings dress'd,  
And feed with varied Fools th' eternal Jest:  
Thou who couldst laugh where Want enchain'd Caprice,  
Toil crush'd Conceit, and Man was of a Piece;  
Where Wealth unlov'd without a Mourner dy'd,  
And scarce a Sycophant was fed by Pride;  
Where ne'er was known the Form of mock Debate,  
Or seen a new-made Mayor's unwieldy State;  
60 Where change of Fav'rites made no Change of Laws,  
And Senates heard before they judg'd a Cause;  
How wouldst thou shake at *Britain's* modish Tribe,  
Dart the quick Taunt, and edge the piercing Gibe?  
Attentive Truth and Nature to descry,  
And pierce each Scene with Philosophic Eye.  
To thee were solemn Toys or empty Shew,  
The Robes of Pleasure and the Veils of Woe:  
All aid the Farce, and all thy Mirth maintain,  
Whose Joys are causeless, or whose Griefs are vain.  
Such was the Scorn that fill'd the Sage's Mind,  
70 Renew'd at ev'ry Glance on Humankind;  
How just that Scorn ere yet thy Voice declare,  
Search every State, and canvass ev'ry Pray'r.

Harvey (1693)

Now therefore can you give applause to that  
Which a Wise man laugh'd in derision at?  
At which another Man, as wise as he,  
Wept, when he put his Head abroad to see  
50 The Follies of the Sons of Misery.  
You'l say 'tis easie for a man to laugh,  
But to weep always is more strange by half.  
*Democritus* perpetual Laughter made  
At Foolries in the Towns where he was bred,  
Yet he saw no such Robes and Rods at home,  
Nor other Trinkets, as there are at *Rome*.  
What if he had seen a new chose Magistrate  
One of our chiefest Ministers of State,  
In his Guilt Chariot, and Embroider'd Vest,  
60 A Pageant for the gaping Rabble drest?  
Thus mounted in the middle of the dirt,  
Staring about him to behold the sport,  
With a large Trailing Purple colour'd Gown,  
Which hangs from his much Honour'd shoulders down,  
A Crown so heavy as no head can wear,  
A sweaty fellow do's behind him bear,  
Who, lest the Consul's Thoughts should swell too high,  
In the same Chariot with him rides, to cry,

Mazzaro (1965)

Beware jeweled goblets and those bowls of gold  
and sparkling Setine wines which each may hold,<sup>3</sup>  
and praise the wisdom of that disparate pair<sup>4</sup>  
who daily viewed their lives' absurd careers,  
one laughing while the other always cried. 30  
We know how easy sneering laughs are had.  
Consider, though, that endless store of tears.  
  
Provoked to laugh at fools he'd come upon,  
Democritus could risk without an aide  
wide regions where a soldier never strayed.  
What, now, were he to see our Praetor frown,<sup>5</sup>  
raised high in the middust of circus crowds,  
dressed in Jove's tunic, stitched with golden thread,<sup>6</sup>  
a crown so heavy on his drooping head, 40  
he'd sooner bear the weight of funeral shrouds,  
  
would he not be provoked as well to laugh?  
A slave is needed to support the head.  
Supporting this, what good's a consul's pride?<sup>7</sup>