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**ΜΑΓΕΙΡΟΣ ΣΟΦΙΣΤΗΣ<sup>1</sup>: THE LEARNED COOK IN  
ATHENAEUS' *DEIPNOSOPHISTAI***

**SUMMARY:** Within the category of “cultural humour” applied by Athenaeus in his *Deipnosophistai*, a special place is assigned to the speeches of stock *mageiroi*, who seek to obtain theoretical knowledge in various disciplines and to apply it to culinary art. By drawing on fragments from Middle and New Comedy of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, Athenaeus creates a specific “canon” of sciences and of “high” arts, which the cook, who pretends to the title of a sage or a philosopher, has to study, consisting of philosophy, geometry, arithmetic, medicine, music, astronomy, architecture and military strategy. The way the author of *Deipnosophistai* casts the *mageiros* as an intellectual can be read as a play on the definition of a sophist. The learned cook, who appears to be a product of the sophistic model of education, based on the mathematical *quadrivium* introduced by Plato, resembles Athenaeus’ characters, who practice some of the very same disciplines he has studied.

**KEYWORDS:** cook, philosopher, parody, Athenaeus, Epicurus, Middle and New Comedy, culinary art, sophist, *quadrivium*, canon of sciences

Among the categories of sympotic humour applied by Athenaeus in his *Deipnosophistai* (or, *The learned banqueters*), thus imparting to it ludic qualities characteristic of the literary symposium of the Imperial

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<sup>1</sup> The title of this paper is intended to allude to the title of Gregory W. Dobrov’s article on the character of the poet cook, Μάγειρος ποιητής (Dobrov 2002).

period,<sup>2</sup> Graham Anderson lists “literary and cultural entertainment, not least that which draws on the now long-established repertoire of previous sympotic literary situations” (Anderson 1995: 319)<sup>3</sup>. Within that category of “cultural humour”, he assigns a special place to “the recurrent series of paradoxes on the idea that philosophers are cooks or gluttons, and that cooks for their part are really philosophers”. The boastful cook (μάγειρος), who, by showcasing his skills in long and witty monologues, pretends to the title of πεπαιδευμένος, that is, a sage or philosopher,<sup>4</sup> appears as a stock character in many of the fragments from Middle and New Comedy of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC quoted in Athenaeus.<sup>5</sup> In these speeches, which testify to the intellectual and linguistic prowess of those master chefs,<sup>6</sup> a comic effect is achieved by juxtaposing a profession widely considered “low”, and “high” ideas. There is a special place among them

<sup>2</sup> The presence of irony and satire in the *Deipnosophistai* is noted by Bartol, Danielewicz 2010: 24. This work by Athenaeus, dating from the late 2<sup>nd</sup> or early 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, continues the tradition of the literary symposium originating with Plato’s *Symposium*, one in which the banquet is but a framework for the presentation of issues more or less related to its circumstances.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Anderson 2005: 175: “Cooks and chefs can now become the centre of attention, and paradox and *paideia* are most ludicrously at variance in the scholarship of cookery.”

<sup>4</sup> I omit in this article the character of the poet cook, who uses the language of the dithyramb or else parodies that of Homer’s epic poems, discussed in detail in the paper by Gregory W. Dobrov (2002). Nesselrath (1990: 257) describes him as follows: “The cook makes his [dramatic] entrance [in Middle Comedy] not only as a culinary specialist, but as a word-wizard (Sprachzauberer) as well”.

<sup>5</sup> Scafuro (2014: 211) points to the change that the character of the cook undergoes in comedy during that time: “Comic cooks in the late fourth century are erudite, though less bombastic than their dithyrambizing, philologizing counterparts earlier in the century.” Cf. Nesselrath 1990: 298-301; Burckhardt 2009: 13: “Wszelako tylko w tak wysoko cywilizowanej epoce i środowisku jak w Atenach IV wieku mogło się zdarzyć, że także kucharz nabierał naukowych lub poetyckich manier, komedia zaś, która z tego powodu szczególnie często go wyśmiewa, poucza nas, jak bardzo szeroko, aż po dolne warstwy społeczeństwa, rozpowszechniła się wówczas postawa pretensji do dystygowanej kultury” [“However, it is only in a time and environment as cultured as 4<sup>th</sup> century Athens that a cook could assume a scholarly or poetic manner, and comedy, which ridicules him for that particularly often, shows us how widely the pretenses of sophistication had spread by then, all the way to the lower social strata”].

<sup>6</sup> The lines revealing the cook’s *alazoneia* would usually feature in a dialogue between him and either a client commissioning him to prepare a feast, or some of his slaves. The issue is dealt with in detail in Dohm 1964: 201 sqq.

for speeches in which cooks declare themselves Epicureans, or followers of a school preaching hedonistic values.<sup>7</sup> Holding up a distorting mirror of comedy to Epicurean teachings, Athenaeus and his cooks point to a connection between pleasure in general and the pleasures of taste<sup>8</sup>. The overview of comic excerpts in which a cook is elevated to the rank of a philosopher, contained in Book 7 of *The learned banqueters*, is prefaced with these words of Epicurus<sup>9</sup>: “For I, at any rate, am unable to conceive of ‘the Good’ if I remove from consideration the pleasure derived from the flavours of food or from sex” (Athen. 7.278f. ).<sup>10</sup>

No wonder then that Athenaeus believes Archestratus<sup>11</sup> “a forerunner of the wise Epicurus on the subject of pleasure” (Ἐπικούρω τῷ σοφῷ τῆς ἡδονῆς); this is the Archestratus who in his gastronomic poem Ἡδονάθεια (*The life of pleasure*) gives advice and recommendations, Hesiod-like and paraenetic in tone, on the right choice of dishes and their ingredients.<sup>12</sup> That “Hesiod or Theognis of gourmands”, as Athenaeus calls Archestratus, emphasizing his mastery of gastronomic poetry (3.101f),<sup>13</sup> is further compared to the cook in *The Foster-brothers*, a play by Damoxenus (fr. 2.1-2 Kassel-Austin = Athen. 3.102a), who, at the onset of his long speech, prides himself on being a follower of the wise Epicurus: “You see that I’m / A student of that wise Epicurus” (Ἐπικούρου δέ με / ὀρθῶ μαθητὴν ὄντα τοῦ σοφοῦ).

Parody references to the doctrine of Epicurus can be found in Greek comic poets on both notional and lexical levels.<sup>14</sup> His words are

<sup>7</sup> As Wilkins (2000: 404) notes, “Philosophy is one of the more *recherché* areas of knowledge to be attempted by a comic *mageiros*”.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Constan 2014: 283: “by invoking Epicurus [...], the cook is aligning himself not just with any philosophical school, but with the one that preached pleasure as the goal of human life”.

<sup>9</sup> Fr. 67 Usener.

<sup>10</sup> All excerpts from the *Deipnosophistai* and the comic poets cited there are in S. D. Olson’s translation.

<sup>11</sup> A poet from Gela in Sicily, representative of the didactic tendencies in gastronomic poetry (ca. mid-4<sup>th</sup> century BC).

<sup>12</sup> Elsewhere, Athenaeus invokes Chrysippus, who calls Archestratus “the predecessor of Epicurus”: Athen. 7.278e-f; cf. 3.104b.

<sup>13</sup> Athen. 7.310a.

<sup>14</sup> Discussed more closely in Gordon 2012: 14-37, in the chapter “The First Lampoons of Epicurus”.

very freely and simplistically interpreted by a comic character in Hegesippus' play (fr. 2.5-6 Kassel-Austin = Athen. 7.279d), who identifies pleasure (ἡδονή), which the Epicureans saw as the source of all goodness and the purpose of life, as well as absence of pain and freedom from cares, with pleasures of the palate (μασᾶσθαι<sup>15</sup>):<sup>16</sup>

There's no greater good than chewing;  
the Good's an attribute of pleasure.

Epicurus seems to find a worthy successor in the cook in Bato's comedy *Benefactors*, who addresses a slave on the hardships of a master chef's life (fr. 4 Kassel-Austin = Athen. 14.662c):

Good for us, Sibyne, that we don't sleep at night  
or even lie down. Instead, a lamp stays lit,  
and there are books in our hands.

The image of sleepless nights (τὰς νύκτας οὐ καθεύδομεν) spent with a lamp lit (καίεται λύχνος) on studying cookbooks (βιβλίον ἐν

<sup>15</sup> The same verb appears in Damoxenus, fr. 2.62-63 Kassel-Austin: "This is how Epicurus 'condensed' pleasure: he chewed carefully" (Ἐπίκουρος οὕτω κατεπύκνου τὴν ἡδονήν· ἐμασᾶτ' ἐπιμελῶς). Gordon (2012: 32) believes that the fact that the verb μασᾶσθαι appears in both of these texts might indicate a reference to Epicurus: "I take the reference to 'chewing' as another signpost for the lost intertext: the language stands out from its surroundings and signals that something specific (but lost to us) is being quoted, paraphrased, or recycled. The original may have been a text of Epicurus, or perhaps it was a memorable parody".

<sup>16</sup> In his *Letter to Menoeceus*, Epicurus warned the reader not to misinterpret his teachings by looking for pleasure to sensations, including those which accompany the eating of exquisite food (Diog. Laert. 10.131-132): "When we say, then, that pleasure is the end and aim, we do not mean the pleasures of the prodigal or the pleasures of sensuality, as we are understood to do by some through ignorance, prejudice, or wilful misrepresentation. By pleasure we mean the absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul. It is not [...] the enjoyment of the fish and other delicacies of a luxurious table, which produce a pleasant life" (transl. R. D. Hicks). There is an excellent example of this biased conception of Epicurus' hedonism in Bato's comedy *The partner in deception* (fr. 5.7-10 Kassel-Austin), where the *paidagogos* absolves the young man in his care from his inclinations towards heavy drinking thus: "Epicurus, for example, identified the Good / with pleasure, I believe. And you can't get / pleasure from anywhere else; but by living very well / [corrupt] you'll grant me is to the point".

τοῖς χερσὶ) written by famous predecessors<sup>17</sup> appears to be a reference to the picture of Epicurus painted in Epictetus' *Discourses* (*Diatr.* 1.20.9): "why do you light your lamp and labour for us, and write so many books?"<sup>18</sup> (τί δὲ καὶ λύχνον ἄπτεις καὶ πονεῖς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν καὶ τηλικαῦτα βιβλία γράφεις;).<sup>19</sup> Unlike the cook, however, who merely reads, Epicurus actually wrote quite a lot.<sup>20</sup> The cook in Bato's play seems to imitate Epicurus as far as intellectual activity is concerned, and the work the *mageiros* undertakes is a prerequisite to acquiring "scientific" foundations in the several theoretical disciplines which find application in culinary art.<sup>21</sup> We are reminded that a good cook ought to combine manual skill and intellectual prowess<sup>22</sup> by a character in a comic play by Philemon the Younger (fr. 1.6-9 Kassel-Austin = Athen. 7.291e-f):

A man's not a cook just because he comes to  
someone's house carrying a ladle and a butcher's  
knife,  
or because he tosses fish into casserole-dishes.  
There's thought involved in the business.

The aforementioned wisdom (φρόνησις) of which a *mageiros* should be possessed is, according to Epicurus, "the beginning and the greatest good (τὸ μέγιστον ἀγαθόν) [...]. Wherefore prudence is

<sup>17</sup> Here, Bato mentions Sophon, Simonactides of Chios, Tyndaricus of Sicyon and Zopyrinus, all listed among other famous personages by Pollux (*Onomasticon* 6.70).

<sup>18</sup> Transl. G. Long.

<sup>19</sup> Long (2002: 128-141) interprets this passage in the *Discourses* as follows: "Epictetus charges Epicurus with refuting himself by living a life that, instead of concentrating on sensual and self-centred pleasure, confirms the value Epictetus assigns to intelligence and to exercising it philanthropically".

<sup>20</sup> Epicurus' works extended to the impressive volume of three hundred scrolls, which is why he earned himself the epithet πολυγرافώτατος. Only Chrysippus could compete with him.

<sup>21</sup> That desire of the cook to broaden his intellectual horizons, which is so characteristic of late 4<sup>th</sup> century comedy, is noted by Wilkins 2000: 383: "It is claim to thought and theoretical study that characterizes the boastfulness of the later speeches of the stock *mageiros*. The cook seeks always to extend into new areas".

<sup>22</sup> Plato's Socrates in *Gorgias* (465a) perceives cookery differently, denying it the rank of an art (τέχνη) and terming it ἄλογον πρᾶγμα instead.

a more precious thing even than philosophy; from it spring all the other virtues, for it teaches that we cannot lead a life of pleasure which is not also a life of prudence, honour, and justice; nor lead a life of prudence, honour, and justice, which is not also a life of pleasure”.<sup>23</sup>

The need for labour (πονείν) if one is to ascend to the necessary theoretical knowledge is mentioned by the Epicurean cook in Damoxenus’ play (fr. 2.9-11 Kassel-Austin = Athen. 3.102a):

There’s nothing wiser than hard work,  
and anyone who devotes himself to this saying finds  
his business easy.

He further maintains that a master of the culinary art should be familiar not only with Epicurus’ *Canon*, but also Democritus’ atomic theory (fr. 2.12-15 Kassel-Austin = Athen. 3.102b):

So if you ever see a cook who’s uneducated  
and hasn’t read Democritus from beginning to end,  
along with Epicurus’ *Canon* – smear his nose with  
shit and kick him out.

It is not by accident that Democritus’ name comes up here, since he is regarded as a forerunner of Epicureanism. As noted by Pamela Gordon, besides referring explicitly to both Epicurus and Democritus, the author of the fragment includes in it certain elements parodying philosophical language.<sup>24</sup> Further into his speech the cook discusses applying to the culinary art what knowledge one possesses in the discipline of *quaestiones naturales* (such as the seasons), as well as medicine (16-41) and music (42-61).<sup>25</sup> It is possible to notice allusions to

<sup>23</sup> Diog. Laert. 10.132, transl. R. D. Hicks.

<sup>24</sup> Gordon 2012: 24: “Remarkable here is that the joke on Epicurus goes beyond the obvious equation that links Epicureans with food, wine, or sex. Instead, the comic poet delivers a very specific parody of Epicurean vocabulary”. A detailed discussion of Epicurean terminology used in this passage from Damoxenus, as well in Bato’s fr. 5 Kassel-Austin and Hegesippus’ fr. 2 Kassel-Austin follows in Gordon 2012: 25-32.

<sup>25</sup> Dohm (1964: 173-187) sees a mockery of the two arts, here as well as in Sospater’s fr. 1 Kassel-Austin and Nicomachus’ fr. 1 Kassel-Austin, both discussed in this article, where he believes medicine to receive the same treatment. Moreover, he notes that Damoxenus focuses on applying astronomy to medicine. Dohm 1964: 175: “der

the medical treatises of the Hippocratic school collected in the *Corpus Hippocraticum* (ca 440-350 BC) dealing with choosing food which had the right dietary virtues,<sup>26</sup> as well as to the Pythagorean theory of musical harmony (Konstan 2014: 283).

Sometimes the cook is not content to draw on the achievements of his great predecessors. The motif of a cook who himself is in his own opinion a philosopher (καὺτὸς φιλοσοφῶ) and would, like his teacher, Sophon of Acarnania,<sup>27</sup> leave behind some work of his, can be found in a fragment from Anaxippus' play *The man who tried to hide his face* (fr. 1.21-22 Kassel-Austin = Athen. 9.404b):<sup>28</sup>

I'm also a philosopher, and I'm eager to leave behind  
my own original treatises on my line of work.

In the cook's declaration that he will leave behind a new written work (καταλιπεῖν συγγράματα σπεύδων ἑμαυτοῦ καινὰ τῆς τέχνης), Adele C. Scafuro (2014: 211) sees an allusion to the words of Alcidas (4<sup>th</sup> century BC), a pupil of Gorgias, who, emphasizing in his speech *On the Sophists* that improvised speeches were superior to composed ones, still justified the latter with his care to leave behind him

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Dichter sich vielmehr über die erstaunliche Hochschätzung lustig macht, welche die astronomischen Kenntnisse bei den Medizinern genossen". Still, it seems that in all those passages the comic poets only mock the art of cooking rather than its several auxiliary disciplines.

<sup>26</sup> The issue is in particular the subject of the extensive treatise *De dieta*, and the text *De natura hominis*, known as "the explication of the four humours and dietetics". The use of the humoral theory mentioned by Damoxenus (29-30) for cooking is mentioned by Dalby 2003: 96: "the real application of humoral theory to diet [...] was already in evidence in Hippocratic *Regimen* and has been fated to persist for more than two thousand years".

<sup>27</sup> Bato's fr. 4.4 Kassel-Austin ascribes to Sophon the authorship of a cookbook. Sosipater on the other hand (fr 1.14 Kassel-Austin) refers to him as "the founder of the art" (τῆς τέχνης ἀρχηγός).

<sup>28</sup> Bartol remarks that the cook's speech highlights the relationship between the art of cooking and philosophical doctrine: "[...] wzmianka o przynależności mistrzów patelni do poszczególnych szkół gastronomicznych dodatkowo podkreśla jej pokrewieństwo z uprawianiem filozofii" ["Mentioning that masters of the frying pan belong to various schools of gastronomy emphasizes its similarity to the practice of philosophy."] (Bartol, Danielewicz 2011: 559).

a memorial and to gain fame (32): “we are eager to leave behind memorials of ourselves”<sup>29</sup> (ἔτι δὲ καὶ μνημεῖα καταλιπεῖν ἡμῶν αὐτῶν σπουδάζοντες).

Just as his fellow cook in Bato’s play, Anaxippus’ character spends his leisure poring over books (τὸν ὀρθρον ἐν ταῖς χερσὶ ὄψει βιβλία ἔχοντα), which makes him like a philosopher (fr. 1.24-26 Kassel-Austin = Athen. 9.404b-c):

First thing in the morning, you’ll see me with  
books  
in my hands, doing research on my trade;  
I’m no different from Diodorus of Aspendus.

This time the poet says directly that the cook’s lifestyle mirrors that of Diodorus of Aspendus, a Pythagorean philosopher of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. The simile is actually not very flattering in depicting the cook’s dedication to improving his art (τέχνη), since according to Athenaeus (4.163e-f), Diodorus, like the cynics, let his hair and beard grow out and neglected his personal hygiene. The cook in Anaxippus’ play combines culinary skill, which is here presented as a philosophical doctrine, with medicine, and even with psychological knowledge, since he selects dishes based on a person’s way of life (those he would pick for lovers differ from those he would offer philosophers and tax collectors) and age.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, he is also skilled at another, new discipline: the pseudo-science of physiognomy,<sup>31</sup> as he can correctly “diagnose” a banqueter by observing his face<sup>32</sup> (48-49):

<sup>29</sup> Transl. J. V. Muir.

<sup>30</sup> Dalby (2003: 96) draws attention to the fact that cooks in comedy make use in their practice of as yet unnamed sciences: “the most interesting applications of extraneous science to cookery, in these comedy speeches, are of sciences that were yet unnamed: ‘the psychology of the individual’ [...] the art of public relations”.

<sup>31</sup> Galenus (*Anim. mor. corp. temp.* 7) considers Hippocrates the creator of physiognomy, but it was supposedly the Pythagoreans who initiated the discipline. It was the subject of the pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *Physiognomica*, as well as of *De physiognomia* by Polemo of Laodicea, written during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE under the Second Sophistic just as the *Deipnosophistai* was.

<sup>32</sup> See Scafuro 2014: 211: “The final lines of the fragment may be parody of the ‘new’ study of physiognomy”.



When I see your faces, I'll know what each of you  
wants to eat.

The cook's familiarity with issues belonging to various disciplines of human knowledge and his ability to practically apply them to gastronomy make it possible to consider him an intellectual. In a satirical comment on the skills and talents of cooks, Athenaeus especially points out their "scholarliness".<sup>33</sup> And so, he applies the terms "a real intellectual (μέγας σοφιστής) and no less of a bullshitter (εις ἀλαζονείαν) than the physicians" (Athen. 9.377f) to the boastful cook from Sosipater's play *The false accuser* (fr. 1 Kassel-Austin), who believes himself to be one of three "true" masters of the culinary art (μάγειρον ἀληθινόν). In his opinion a perfect cook must not only hone his skills from childhood, but also master them in order to acquire the sciences (8-9, τὰ μαθήματα ἅπανθ' ἐφεξῆς εἰδόθ') of astronomy, architecture and military strategy (16-18), whose application to τέχνης μαγειρικῆς makes up the subject of his discourse later on (25-26).<sup>34</sup> As Sosipater's character says, following the advice of Sicon,<sup>35</sup> considered a forerunner of the art

<sup>33</sup> Towards the end of the Italian Renaissance, Tomaso Garzoni alludes in his encyclopaedic work *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo* to the motif of the "learned" cook so showcased by Athenaeus. The way he was inspired by the Greek literary symposion and referred to *The learned banqueters* was pointed out by McClure 2004: 126-127: "Elaborating on Athenaeus' motif of the learned cook, Garzoni praises those 'in the Academy of dishes' who profess 'to be at one and the same time padroni and lords of all the sciences, because they show themselves to be Rhetoricians exalting proudly the royal banquets that sometimes are made; Poets in describing the pastas of the lords with hyperboles and suitable and apt emphases; Arithmeticians enumerating a multitude of dishes brought to the table', and so on, satirically hailing them as Geometers, Musicians, Logicians, Philosophers, Jurists, Physicians, and Astrologers".

<sup>34</sup> Wilkins 2000, p. 399 notes that two of the disciplines mentioned here as supposedly useful to the culinary practice, namely astronomy (which was part of natural history) and military strategy, were both auxiliary in the study of rhetoric (students of rhetoric were advised to familiarize themselves with them by Cicero and Quintilianus): "While the choice of natural history and military strategy might make sense in the theorizing of the kitchen [...], there is an implication that the cook is supporting his inflated art with science of real importance. Natural history and strategy are areas of knowledge which were also used by the students of rhetoric."

<sup>35</sup> The name Sicon was often given to cooks in Greek comedy.

of cooking (τῆς τέχνης ἀρχηγός), practising skills should be preceded by obtaining theoretical knowledge in the above-mentioned fields (19):

He wanted us to master these subjects before we  
studied our own professions.

It is in a similar way that a character in Nicomachus' *Eilethuia* describes the perfect cook (ὁ μάγειρος ὁ τέλειος) as an expert at many kinds of knowledge, while conversing with a man who would hire him to prepare a feast (fr. 1.11-14 Kassel-Austin = Athen. 7.291a). In that conversation he notes how it is necessary to study the disciplines in question diligently and in depth:

A fully-trained cook's a different master.  
You'd need to master a large number of quite  
significant arts;  
and someone who wants to learn them the right way  
can't  
take them on immediately.

The same character recommends that one should begin their education by studying other arts (ἑτέρας τέχνας), the knowledge of which is necessary for acquiring the theoretical foundations used in cooking (15-16):

[...] and before the  
art  
Of cooking you have to master others.

Other than the astronomy mentioned in Damoxenus' and Sosipater's plays, the command of which is supposed to be applied to observing the seasons, Nicomachus includes painting, geometry, and medicine among a cook's skills. He pays the most attention to the latter, which seems completely justified given the close relationship between medicine and the culinary art at the time.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> In the early stages of its development, gastronomic literature was a subsection of medical literature, in which food was seen as a factor necessary to achieving a balance

Among the characters mentioned by Athenaeus in his discourse on the abilities of cooks there is also the erudite character from Euphro's comedy *The brothers*, whom the author of the *Deipnosophistai* refers to as "a learned and well-educated cook" (9.379c, μάγειρον πολυμαθῆ καὶ εὐπαίδευτον). Taking on the role of an instructor and teacher, he praises the achievements of his pupil Lycus, adducing for comparison the accomplishments of such past masters of the art as Agis of Rhodes, Nereus of Chios, Chariades of Athens, Lamprias, Euthynus, Aphthone-tus and Aristion, whom he considers the successors to the seven sages,<sup>37</sup> ἐπὶ τὰ δεῦτεροι σοφοί (fr. 1.11-12 Kassel-Austin = Athen. 9.379e):

After the famous seven ancient wise men, there  
people  
represent our generation's second group of seven  
sages.

Euphro also sees the learned cook as the "first inventor" in gastronomy. The *mageiros* is serious as he numbers among the πρῶτοι εὐρηταί not only his contemporary above-mentioned seven sages, who are famous as inventors of dishes, but also himself and his student as the inventors of a specific kind of theft.<sup>38</sup>

At times the term σοφιστής, which Athenaeus applies to the master chef from Sosipater's comedy, is clearly derogatory, referring as it does to that character's special skill which makes cookery so similar to sophistry. Thus understood, μαγειρική τέχνη is about "making the unacceptable superficially palatable".<sup>39</sup> In Athenaeus' opinion the title is deserved by the clever cook in Archedicus' play (fr. 2 Kassel-Austin): he is the "sophistic little cook" (σοφιστής μαγειρίσκος) who uses a considerable amount of cheap olive oil to make an elegant dish

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of humours (fluids) and as part of a diet needed for the body to function correctly. In his *Gorgias* (464c-465b), Plato considers the art of cooking a false shadow of medicine.

<sup>37</sup> The seven sages were outstanding politicians, lawgivers and philosophers active in Greece between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. Plato is the first to list them in *Prt.* 343a (as Thales of Miletus, Bias of Priene, Solon, Cleobulus of Lindus, Myso, and Chilo of Sparta), but the list varies from author to author.

<sup>38</sup> Here, Euphro introduces the motif of sacrificial meat stolen from the altar (*bomolochia*), known from Old Comedy; see Wilkins 2000: 88-90, 400-401.

<sup>39</sup> As Gowers (2003: 82) refers to this skill of a cook.

for the banqueters, spending the money thus saved on luxury food for himself. A similar “compliment”, that is, inclusion among σοφισταί, comes up in the lines of a character addressing a cook who talks about the secrets of his art in Alexis’ comedy *Milesians* (fr. 153.14 Kassel-Austin = Athen. 9.379b): “I’m adding the cook to my list of intellectuals”, he says (εἰς τοὺς σοφιστὰς τὸν μάγειρον ἐγγράφω). In this case the cook’s sophistry is that he shifts some of the responsibility for the results of his work onto their consumers, that is the banqueters, who must not arrive at the feast either early or late (1-14).

The way Athenaeus casts a master cook as πεπαιδευμένος can be read as a play on the definition of a sophist, that is, somebody considered an expert in a field. During the early centuries of the Empire the term was used to refer to erudite people, primarily orators and men of letters; all widely learned, just as Athenaeus’ characters are. It is them that the learned cook resembles as he shows off his broad knowledge both of his own art and some others. By drawing freely on the works of comic poets, the author of the *Deipnosophistai* creates a specific “canon” of sciences and of “high” arts, which a master chef has to know. The perfect cook is a product of the sophistic model of education, based on the mathematical *quadrivium* introduced by Plato,<sup>40</sup> which encompasses theoretical understanding of geometry, arithmetic, astronomy and music.<sup>41</sup> However, his theoretical background far exceeds that canon, including also medicine, architecture and strategy.<sup>42</sup> His learned discourses on the μαγειρικὴ τέχνη, of which he is an unsurpassed master due to applying his knowledge of other disciplines, rival the erudite debates held by the banqueters present at Athenaeus’ feast,

<sup>40</sup> See especially book 7 of the *Republic*, and cf. *Prt.* 318e, *Hp. Ma.* 285c-d.

<sup>41</sup> Theoretical knowledge supplemented the formal education provided by sophists in the fields of grammar, rhetoric and dialectic; cf. Jaeger 2001: 404-408. Plato was to adopt the division of mathematics into four μαθήματα introduced by the Pythagoreans, as borne out by a fragment of a lost treatise by Archytas of Tarentum. On that subject see Zhmud 2006: 63-64. The division presented here finds a reflection in *enkyklios paideia*, or the late Hellenistic concept of general education, as well as in the Roman *artes liberales* system; see Clark 2012: 11-54.

<sup>42</sup> Medicine and architecture were added to the seven *artes liberales* by Varro in his *Disciplinae*; Cornelius Celsus (1<sup>st</sup> century CE) on the other hand included strategy and philosophy as well in his encyclopedia *Artes*.

who practice some of the very same disciplines he has studied, namely medicine, philosophy, grammar and music. Just as Athenaeus' *deipnosophistai*, the μάγειρος σοφιστής not only possesses impressive knowledge, but also studies it passionately and willingly shares it with others.

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