Putting matters of punctuation to one side, why should we pardon Persius' guffaw? This particular question seems not to have been raised before. The answer is partly that, but surely not just that, *cachinno* describes an ugly and excessive sort of laughter\(^1\). The more immediate answer should be that the satirist cannot hold in his laughter and that it erupts out of him; such laughter is discordant, and is a breach of manners. I would not agree with Bramble that the broken syntax of verses 8-12 “illustrates his ironic, stuttering diffidence”\(^2\). Rather, the enormities which the satirist observes will not let him maintain a posture of ironic, stuttering diffidence. We must pardon him because his is an illiberal laugh, not the genteel laughter of Horace (Persius 1.116-18)\(^3\). A text of Aristotle will help to clarify the matter (EN 1150b5-12):

> ὁμιλιῶς δ' ἔχει καὶ περὶ ἔγκρατειν καὶ ἄχρασιν. οὐ γὰρ εἰ τὶς ἱσχυρῶν καὶ ὑπερβαλλούσων ἤδονῶν ἤταται ἢ λυπῶν, θεωρεῖται, ἀλλὰ συγγνωμονικῶν εἰ ἀντιτείνων, ὦσπέρ ὁ Θεοδέκτου Φιλοκτῆτης ὑπὸ τοῦ ἔχεως πεπλημμένος ἢ ὁ Καρκινὸν ἐν τῇ Ἀλὸπῃ Κερκών, καὶ ὦσπέρ οἱ κατέχειν πειρόμενοι τὸν γέλωτα ἀθρόον ἐκεχαγχάζουσιν, οὗν συνέπεσε Ξενοφάντῳ...\(^4\)

The parallel is not fortuitous, and for a number of reasons. First, any discussion of the proprieties of humor in satire, epigram, or iambus appeals to the authority of Aristotle; and as Bramble nicely documents in his excursus, Aristotle’s theories of liberal humor lie behind Persius’ disclaimer of malice in the First Satire\(^5\). Second, this particular passage of Aristotle and its immediate context is the subtext of another discussion of the proprieties of comic writing in satire, in Julian’s *Symposium*\(^6\); and it seems to lie behind a comic scene in Lucian, in which the author describes how he could not restrain his laughter when listening to a terrible declamation, a situation parallel to Persius’ complaints throughout this satire concerning comtempible modern literature\(^7\). Third, Aristotle’s description of the laughter of the man who tries to restrain himself fits exactly Persius’ context. So Burnett: “ἀθρόον ἐκεχαγχάζουσιν, ‘pent up laughter breaks out in one great guffaw.’ The word ἀθρόος properly express the sudden taking effect of what has been slowly accumulated”\(^8\). Ramsauer observes that restraint itself augments the laughter of Aristotle’s incontinent man: “ἀθρόον ἐκεχαγχάζουσιν, ut irritus conatus retinendi ipsam vim affectus auxisse potius potius videatur”\(^9\). For this is what happens to Persius throughout the First Satire: his laughter escapes from him, and violently. So Villeneuve and Reckford commenting on this passage\(^10\). Consider also Persius’ attempt to bury his laughter at 1.119 ff; as Bramble

points out, the fact of the publication of the satire shows that the burial is ineffective, and the act of concealment is in vain\textsuperscript{11}). What does come out after labored restraint of laughter is awkward, unpleasant, and likely to offend the ears of the polite\textsuperscript{12}). The satirist tries to keep his silence, but when the effort becomes to great, there bursts forth from him something appalling. We are asked to forgive him for it.

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2) J. C. Bramble, Persius and the Programmatic Satire, A Study in Form and Imagery (Cambridge 1974), 70.
3) The note at 1.8-12 in G. Lee, transl., W. Barr, intr. and comm., The Satires of Persius (Liverpool/Wolfeboro, New Hampshire 1987) associates cachinno with the more aggressive laughter of Juvenal 10.31, rigidì censura cachinno, “the laughter that mocks at human folly associated with Democritus....”
4) Xenophon has is usually identified with the musician of the court of Alexander known from Seneca, De Ira II 2, 6. F. Dirlmeier, transl., comm., Aristoteles, Nikomachische Ethik (Berlin 1969), 490: “Dann wären Theodektes, Karkinos und Xenophon drei Beispiele sozusagen aus dem nächsten Lebenskreis des Aristoteles.”
5) Bramble, 190-204 (“The Disclaimer of Malice”), and 192: “...those whose idea of the amusing is pitiless and malign are excluded from his audience. His own works will not provide scurrilous amusement, their humour not being to the taste of the sordidus—Aristotle’s βουμολόχος—but consisting of instructive assaults on vice.”
7) Pseudologista 7. Lucian, speaking of himself in the third person, describes how he heard a man pretend to improvise on the topic of Pythagoras’ exclusion from the Mysteries. Lucian is άφατος γελωτος, and breaks into laughter, thus interrupting the sophist: ο δε, ουτο τω του λόγω, διων κυκλοφονειν περιομενον δρων άνεκάγχασα μάλα θεον, ο ποιησις ουτος ο έμως. (Parallel cited in Dirlmeier).
8) The Ethics of Aristotle (London 1900) ad loc.; Aspasius, in Eth. Nic., G. Heylbut, ed., (CAG 19.1), 133.15 ff., also sees that it is implied that the laughter has been restrained for a long time: μεγα ρα πολλοι νικαιοειν την γέλωσα τελευτων έτεκαγχασεν, θερ και δελος συμβαίνει. 9) Aristoteles Ethica Nicomachea, ed. et comment. cont. instruxit G. Ramsauer (Lipsiae 1888), ad loc.
10) F. Villeneuve, Essai sur Perse (Paris 1918), 174: “ce n’est pas une expression dans le genre de facti indignatio ursum, c’est un éclat de rire: ’Pardonnez-moi, dit le poète, c’est plus fort que moi...Il n’y a rien à faire! ma rate aime à s’épanouir.’” Kenneth Reckford, “Studies in Persius,” Hermes 90 (1962), 500: “...the truth emerges with a bang. Satire...provides a necessary release for the pent-up feelings of the satirist...” It is interesting that the interlocutor at 1.24-5 speaks of modern poetry in a similar fashion, as the grotes-