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PYTHAGORAS'S RULES

My interest lies not in right triangles
nor in their celebrated diagonals as so many
mistakenly assume but in mysticism and the
vagaries of diet. "Imbibe no beans and no
hearts," I strongly advised my followers.
For this and other more radical thoughts
my fellow Samos citizens drove me out.
But on Crotone Island, I found the Greek
students eager for new ways of thought, new
philosophies. "Be the first to break
into a loaf of bread," I taught them.
Those tussles at lunch made me proud. So many
bearded youths locked elbow to elbow, shoving
each other away from the table. Why all this trouble
for a round of baked wheat? Because the essence
of life pours out in those first puffs
of steam. Its yeasty hymen fortifies
even eunuchs against all Augean tasks.

"Let sparrows nest in your roof,"
I suggested also. "For song? For music?"
Diogenes with the hare lip pestered.
"So while you sleep, those angels will ferry
your troubles into the sky, feather your
night journeys. A house without
sparrows resists all beneficent dreams."

Finally, I warned my students, "Never,
ever eat the flesh of your own dog."
Not only because of the aforementioned
caveat against eating hearts, but because
you would devour devotion also,
devotions so rooted and true, that it would
snuff out your life, sparrows and all.