

# Philodemus - On Frank Speech

Post by "Cassius" of September 16, 2023 at 4:35 PM

Thanks for the link to the paper on "Criticizing Love's Critic."

It gives me the chance to play the role of Don questioning DeWitt! 😊

harsh teachings, that serve the poem's larger instructional purpose.<sup>3</sup> Such "wearing down" by the repetition of blunt truths is, in fact, one key aspect of an Epicurean mode of instruction, *parrhesia*, or "frank criticism," delineated by Lucretius' contemporary, and fellow Epicurean, Philodemus of Gadara in his *Peri parrhesias*.<sup>4</sup> I would submit that when Ovid self-consciously employs the repetition of his own, often harsh teachings on love, coincident with alluding to Lucretian verses like the ones cited here, he calls attention to his own use of a key element of *parrhesia*, that is, of a Lucretian didactic strategy.<sup>5</sup>

I'm glad for anybody to bring up Lucretius or Epicurus in any context, but it makes me a little uneasy to suggest that anyone who uses frank criticism or repetition in any communication is channeling Epicurus.

So I find myself in the position of Don's concerns with some of Dewitt's claims of parallels to or references in Christianity to make too strong a claims that "frank criticism" has an Epicurean trademark on it. 😊 There are too many things that do have Epicurean trademarks on them to jeopardize one's credibility by stretching when a comparison isn't necessary, and I agree with Don that this is a blemish on what I consider to be deWitt's other highly creditable work.

As to frank criticism, if this comparison were easy to establish, then I would have to conclude that when I was much younger I came across many unknowingly Epicurean teachers in my decidedly un-Epicurean schooling.

So the context in this particular is Kalosyni's questioning of Philodemus' possible deviations from Epicurus, I don't see much deviation in Philodemus - as to "frank criticism" I see that as largely common sense and totally consistent with Epicurus' emphasis on clarity and honesty.