

VS29 - Interpreting VS29

Post by "Don" of September 15, 2023 at 6:06 AM

Alternative translations:

[Epicurus - Vatican Sayings](#)

29. To speak frankly as I study nature I would prefer to speak in oracles that which is of advantage to all men even though it be understood by none, rather than to conform to popular opinion and thus gain the constant praise that comes from the many.

[Epicurus.info : E-Texts : The Vatican Sayings](#)

29) To be frank, I would prefer as I study nature to speak in revelations about what is of advantage to all men even though it be understood by none, rather than to conform to popular opinion and thus gain the scattered praise that is broadcast by the many.

[Vatican Saying 29 - Epicurus Wiki](#)

Analysis

A laud to frankness, the cardinal Epicurean virtue of parrhesia: it is best to speak of natural matters frankly (i.e. in a manner that is void of any superstition) than to cater to popular beliefs, however false those might be, in order to garner the applause that the multitudes are so ready to confer upon anyone who agrees with their prejudices.

The paradoxical argument is that this, rather anti-populist position the true philosopher ought to assume, ultimately is the one that is indeed beneficial to all people. It is better to speak in a manner that seems "oracular" and might not be understood by many, rather than to take the facile approach of consenting to all sorts of popular misconceptions.

Greek text:

παρρησία γὰρ ἔγωγε χρώμενος φυσιολογῶν χρησµωδεῖν τὰ σµφέροντα πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις
µᾶλλον ἂν βουλοίµην, κἂν µηδεὶς μέλλῃ συνήσειν, ἢ συγκατατιθέµενος ταῖς δόξαις καρποῦσθαι
τὸν πυκνὸν παραπίπτοντα παρὰ τῶν πολλῶν ἔπαινον.