

# VS41 - Thoughts on and translations of VS41

**Post by “Don” of July 5, 2023 at 7:17 AM**

γελᾶν ἅμα δεῖ [one must] καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν καὶ οἰκονομεῖν καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς οἰκειώμασι χρῆσθαι καὶ μηδαμῆ λήγειν τὰς ἐκ τῆς ὀρθῆς φιλοσοφίας φωνὰς ἀφιέντας.

This sounds something like mindfulness! Do all these things while philosophizing. Note that several of the alternate translations below put philosophize first when the first word in Greek is γελᾶν, the infinitive of γελάω "laugh." So the emphasis is on the laughing first. The translations should really be something like: One must laugh and - at the same time - pursue the love wisdom, administer the rest of one's household affairs,...

41. At one and the same time we must philosophize, laugh, and manage our household and other business, while never ceasing to proclaim the words of true philosophy. <http://epicurus.net/en/vatican.html>

41. One must philosophize and at the same time laugh and take care of one's household and use the rest of our personal goods, and never stop proclaiming the utterances of correct philosophy. <https://churchofepicurus.wordpress.com/vatican/>

VS41. We must laugh and philosophize at the same time and do our household duties and employ our other faculties, and never cease proclaiming the sayings of the true philosophy. [https://newepicurean.com/suggested-read...Vatican Sayings](https://newepicurean.com/suggested-read...Vatican_Sayings)

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**Post by “Cassius” of July 5, 2023 at 7:29 AM**

## Quote from Don

The translations should really be something like: One must laugh and - at the same time - pursue the love wisdom, administer the rest of one's household affairs,...

If you start detecting patterns on who seems to follow your literalist interpretations most regularly, please be sure to say so.

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**Post by “Don” of July 5, 2023 at 7:59 AM**

[Quote from Cassius](#)

your literalist interpretations

Are you calling me a fundamentalist?? 😊

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**Post by “Cassius” of July 5, 2023 at 8:50 AM**

[Quote from Don](#)

Are you calling me a fundamentalist?? 😊

If the ancient Epicureans can praisingly and productively call entities who are neither supernatural nor omniscient nor omnipotent (and probably not inherently deathless either) "gods" -

and if the ancient Epicureans can call the normal and natural and pain-free [state of] functioning of the mind and body "pleasure" -

and if the ancient Epicureans can call "virtue" whatever tools lead us to happy living -

then I can easily productively and praisingly call you a "fundamentalist," in the best sense of the word! 😊

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**Post by “Pacatus” of July 5, 2023 at 3:12 PM**

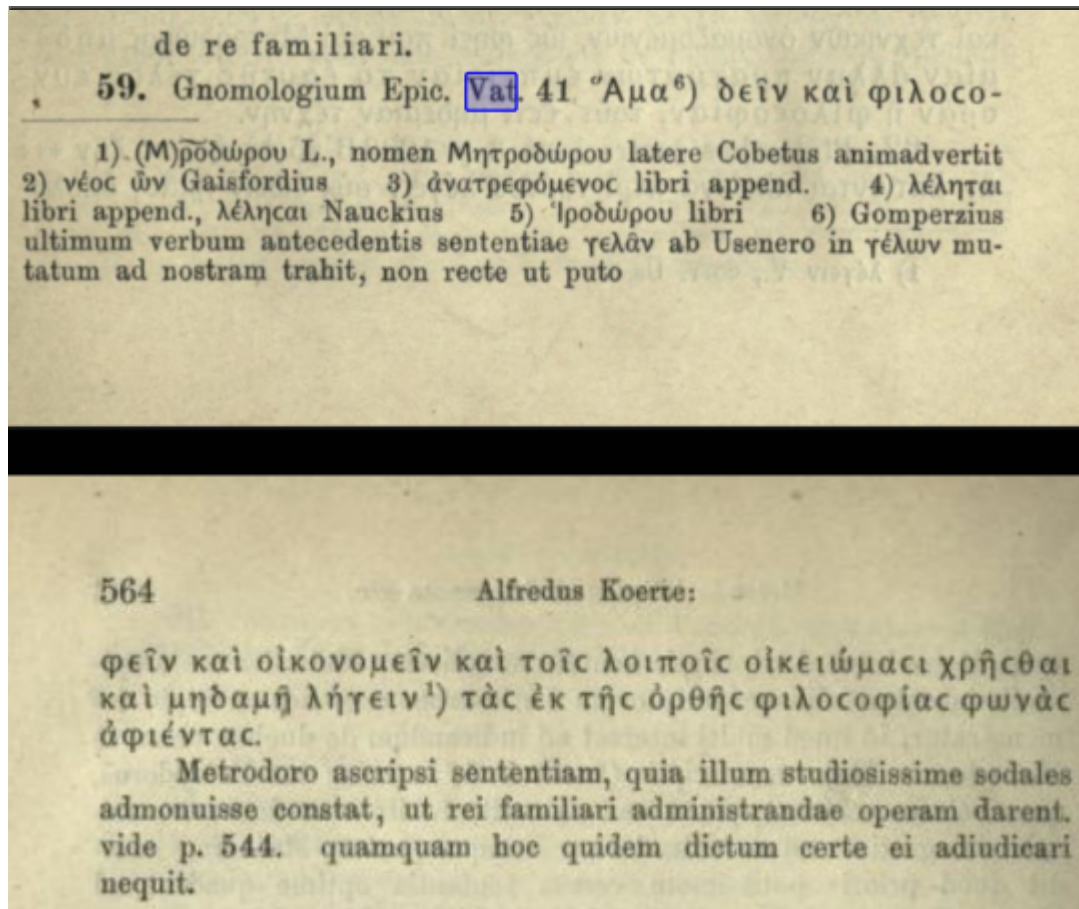
[Quote from Cassius](#)

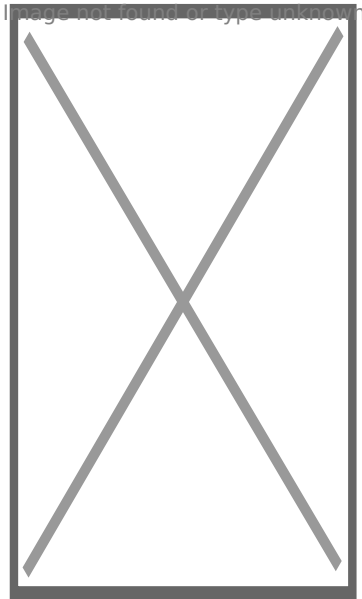
then I can easily productively and praisingly call you a "fundamentalist," in the best sense of the word! 😊

How about a "fundu - mentalist"? 😊

"fundu" in the sense of the English/Indian slang definition here:  
<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/fundu#English> 😎

My crazy-quilt wordplay brain also immediately thought of "fondue mentalist" -- again, in the best sense! 😬 😊





[Metrodori Epicurei Fragmenta collegit scriptoris incerti Epicurei Commentarium moralem, subiecit Alfredus Koerte : Metrodorus, of Lampsacus, d. 277 B.C : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

26

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#### Quote

"I wrote down the opinion of Metrodorus, because it is evident that he had most diligently warned the members to give attention to the management of the family affairs. See p. 544. although this statement certainly cannot be attributed to him."

οὐ μόν[ον ἀφ]θαρτον ἀλλὰ [ἀιδί]αν(?)<sup>1)</sup>. ὁρθῶς [μὲ]ν [λέγουν]<sup>2)</sup>  
καὶ φιλαληθῶ[ς]...

Gomperzi restitutio probabilis non est, vir doctissimus, qua est moderatior, ipse verba εἶναι et θεῶν dubitanter proposuit. nullo modo fieri potuit, ut Metrodorus affirmaret omnes concretiones rerum κατ' ἀριθμὸν indelebiles esse. nam si Epicurus hunc terminum ab Aristotele accepit, id quod certum videtur, omnes fere res singulae κατ' ἀριθμὸν subsistant (cf. Hirzeli quaest. I p. 54 sq.), quas omnes perire Epicurei mordicus contendunt. Hirzelius, qui in prima parte quaestionum de Ciceronis scriptis philosophis p. 46—84 locum obscurum Ciceronis de nat. deor. I, 19, 49 sq. sagacissime explanavit, recte, ut patet, (p. 73 adn. 1) suspicatus est ad interpretandum nostrum locum scholion ad Epicuri primam κυρίαν δόξαν usui esse. quod scholion Usenerum secutus (Ep. p. 71, 8 sqq.) sic lego: ἐν ἀλλοῖς δὲ φησι τοὺς θεοὺς λόγῳ θεωρητοῦς, οὐκ μὲν κατ' ἀριθμὸν ὀρεκτώτας, οὐκ δὲ κατὰ ὁμοειδεῖαν ἐκ τῆς συνεχοῦς ἐπιρρόσει τῶν ὁμοίων εἰδώλων ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἀποτελεσθένους<sup>3)</sup>, ἀνθρωποειδεῖς<sup>4)</sup>. recte, ut mihi quidem videtur, contendit Hirzelius Epicurum duo genera a Cicerone quidem l. l. confusa statuisse, quorum alterum ex Democriti de simulacris doctriam fluxit (v. Hirz. l. l. p. 73 sqq. cf. Ep. Us. fr. 352 p. 237, 28—238, 11). cuius partitionis deorum apud Aetium quoque vestigium extat Aet. I, 7, 34 p. 306 D. (Ep. Us. fr. 355 p. 239, 11) Ἐπικούρου ἀνθρωποειδεῖς μὲν τοὺς θεοὺς λόγῳ δὲ πάντας θεωρητοῦς διὰ τὴν λεπτομέρειαν τῆς τῶν εἰδώλων φύσεως, nam cur additum sit verbum πάντας, nisi Epicurus complura deorum genera distinxit, non video. in nostro Philodemi loco non generaliter de concretionibus agi certum est (v. supra p. 541 sq.), de deorum concretionibus agi ex ipso Philodemi libri titulo conicere licet. patet igitur recte me restituisse καὶ φησιν θεῶν σύγκρισιν τῶν γε | κατ' ἀριθμὸν οὐ μόν[ον ἀφ]θαρτον ἀλλὰ | ἀιδίαν. totum locum sic vertam: „Metrodorus quoque in libro, qui inscribitur de mutatione, talem statuit distinctionem et dicit deorum concretionem, qui quidem ad numerum subsistant, non solum indelebilem sed sempiternam.“ verbum θεῶν bene quadrat ad lacunam, primae litterae θ lunula extat in apographo, item γε et ἀιδίαν lacunas explent. lineolis indicavi, quas litteras singulis versibus tribuam, quia Gomperzius versuum fines non recte terminasse videtur. quanto latius pateat vox ἀιδίος quam ἀφθαρτος docet scriptor Platon. defin. 1 p. 411 A Ἄιδιον τὸ κατὰ πάντα χρόνον καὶ πρότερον ὄν καὶ νῦν μὴ ἐφθαρμένον.

Conicere licet vocabuli συγκρίσεως notionem apud Metrodorum fluctuasse, vide Philod. de sanct. VH<sup>2</sup> II f. 118 p. 134 G. l. 8 κἀν ἐξ ὑπερβά[σεως] τῶν μεταῦ... [τ]ῆ[ν] κατ' ἀριθμὸν [σύν]κρισιν ὅτι

1) ἀλλὰ καὶ θεῶν Gomp. 2) μὲν οὖν σὺν μέντοι Gomp. 3) ἀποτελεσθένων Hirzelius cum codicibus 4) ἀνθρωποειδεῖς Hirzelius, ἀνθρωποειδ... c. cod. Par.

μὲν [τὴν ἐκ τῶν] αὐτῶν καλεῖ[σ]ιν [ὅτι δ]ὲ τὴν ἐκ τῶν [ὁμοίων(?)<sup>1)</sup>], unde cognoscitur Epicureis ab adversariis inconstantiam in usu termini σύγκρισιν κατ' ἀριθμὸν obiectam esse. haud scio an recte vituperati sint Epicurei, nam cum et contenderent deos ex atomis constare (vide Ep. Us. fr. 352 p. 238, 3 sqq., fr. 354 p. 238, 18 cum eis locis, qui in adnotatione ad p. 238, 21 referuntur) et omnes concretiones dissolvi censerent (v. Ep. ep. I, 40, fr. 282 p. 202, 8, Lucr. I, 518 sq.), facere non potuerunt quin ad tuendam deorum aeternitatem alteramutram sententiam arteficiose interpretarentur. de deorum aeternitate enim Epicurum vel discipulos clam adversariis quidquam detraxisse vix erodam (cf. Ep. ep. III, 123, sent. sel. I cum eis locis, quos Usenerus in subsidio interpretationis ad l. l. adnotat).

Philodemus de sanctitate VH<sup>2</sup> II f. 122 p. 137 G vide supra fr. 9 p. 541.

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## Post by “Onenski” of November 1, 2023 at 10:20 PM

Hi, [Don](#) ! Today we were talking about this VS and I shared a philological question with [Cassius](#) , [Joshua](#) , [Kalosyni](#) and Steve.

I have a translation that follows a slightly different version (I think it's only one word) from that used by Bailey, Arrighetti, Long and Sedley, etc. It's this:

### Quote

Γελαῖν ἅμα δεῖν καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν καὶ οἰκονομεῖν καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς οἰκειώμασι χρῆσθαι καὶ μηδαμῆ λέγειν τὰς ἐκ τῆς **ὀργῆς** φιλοσοφίας φωνὰς ἀφιέντας.

This is Alberto Enrique Álvarez' translation (the Spanish guy who wrote a dissertation on the Vatican Sayings):

### Quote

"We must laugh as well as philosophize, manage the house and take care of the rest of our private affairs, and by no means **express angry maxims** when we declare the maxims of philosophy."

And these are some of his comments:

"The sentence has undergone numerous modifications. In our version we have opted, like Bollack, to keep the textual version of the manuscript, since it has a satisfactory sense and syntax, and in the conviction that, in this case, it is possible to keep the transmitted text without variants.

[...]

This version [Bailey's version] recovers the importance of laughter as a vital mark of epicureanism; but, by replacing ὀργῆς ("anger", "wrath") by the adjective ὀρθῆς ("straight"), the axis of opposites laughter / wrath (γελαῖν / ὀργή) that articulates the sentence is lost, and the text is structured in such a way that the main syntactic units do not reflect contents of equal hierarchy. As we interpret it, from the main verb δεῖ ("it is necessary") two infinitives depend at the same syntactic level: γελαῖν ("to laugh") and λήγειν ("to stop"); and, in turn, dependent on γελαῖν ("laugh") and introduced by the preposition/temporal adverb ἅμα ("at the same time") we find φιλοσοφεῖν ("philosophize"), οἰκονομεῖν ("manage the house") and χρῆσθαι ("take care of").

Now, the philosophically relevant doctrine is exhausted in the infinitive group γελᾶν ("to laugh"), while the branch of λήγειν ("to cease") remains practically as an addition that has little to do with the previous clause and by itself possesses little philosophical entity. In the version we offer, the sentence opposes laughter (γελᾶν) to anger and, in general, to violent passions (ὀργή) as philosophical-vital moods."

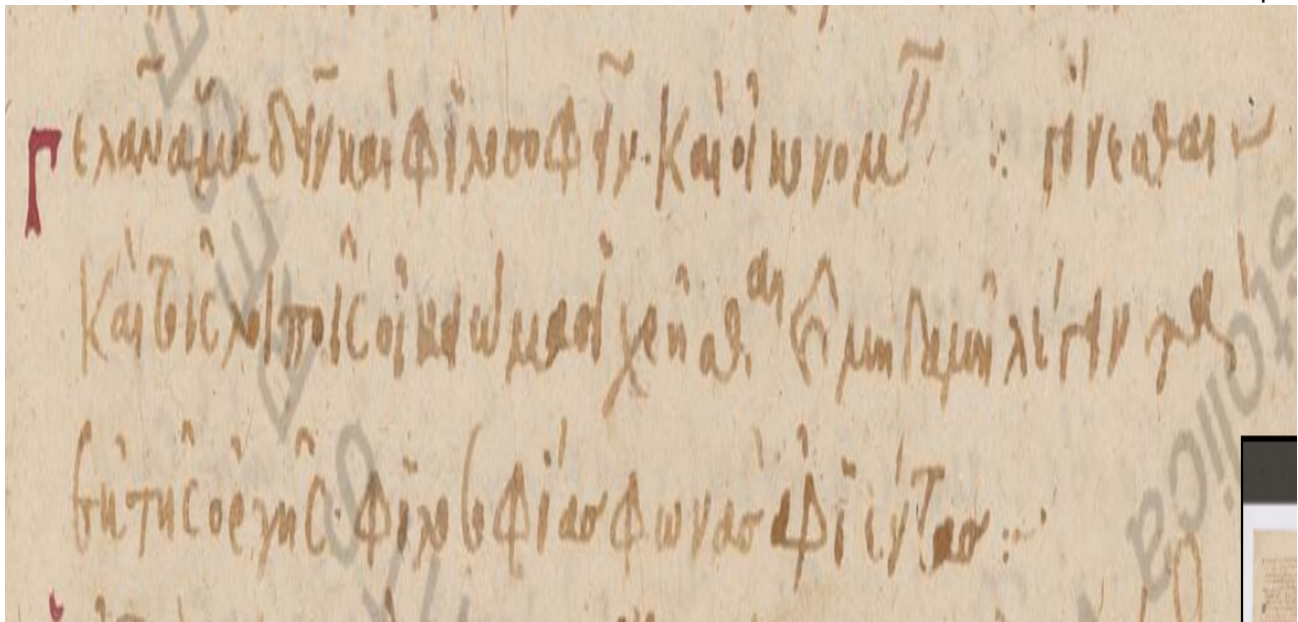
I don't know if his comments or the translation are correct. I think it can be interesting that you tell us your point of view.

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### Post by "Don" of November 2, 2023 at 12:24 AM

I am \*always\* open for digging into these translation questions! Thanks for the opportunity.

First, we return to the manuscript:



[DigiVatLib](#)

And for ease of comparison (differences in transcription underlined):

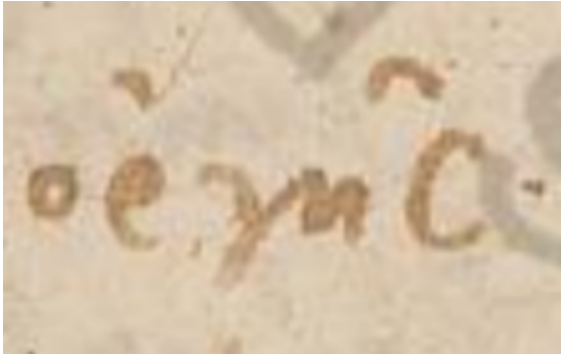
Bailey:

Γελαῖν ἅμα δεῖ καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν καὶ οἰκονομεῖν καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς οἰκειώμασι χρῆσθαι καὶ μηδαμῆ λήγειν τὰς ἐκ τῆς ὀρθῆς φιλοσοφίας φωνὰς ἀφιέντας.

Alberto Enrique Álvarez:

Γελᾶν ἄμα δεῖν καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν καὶ οἰκονομεῖν καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς οἰκειώμασι χρῆσθαι καὶ μηδαμῆ λέγειν τὰς ἐκ τῆς ὀργῆς φιλοσοφίας φωνὰς ἀφιέντας.

You're right! One letter and one word difference. Now, what word is in the manuscript??



Well! Would you look at that! ... ὀργῆς !!! That third letter is \*clearly\* a gamma γ and not a theta θ, but Bailey et al., of course, knew what was in the scribe's mind when he wrote that. Nope! Unless there is a question of what letter is in a manuscript, I am not amenable to the idea of "correcting" texts if a plausible translation can be made from *\*what is actually written\**!

So, I fully agree with Álvarez's transcription. This just continues to confirm to me that we absolutely HAVE TO go back to the manuscripts when they are available. And I like Álvarez's point about the juxtaposition of laughter and anger. Bailey et al. change the word to ορθης (orthes) "right, correct" (as in ortho-dox) to make it easier on themselves, I think. I'm a little unsure about the use of "maxims" in Álvarez's translation, so I'd like to break the manuscript line apart and dig into the grammar briefly...

...καὶ μηδαμῆ λέγειν "and never, ever (strong negation) to say...

...τὰς .. φιλοσοφίας φωνὰς ἀφιέντας. "the letting loose philosophical sounds"

ἐκ τῆς ὀργῆς "from (or "done by" or "out of") anger"

The "maxim" of Alvarez comes from φωνας:

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, φων-ή](#)

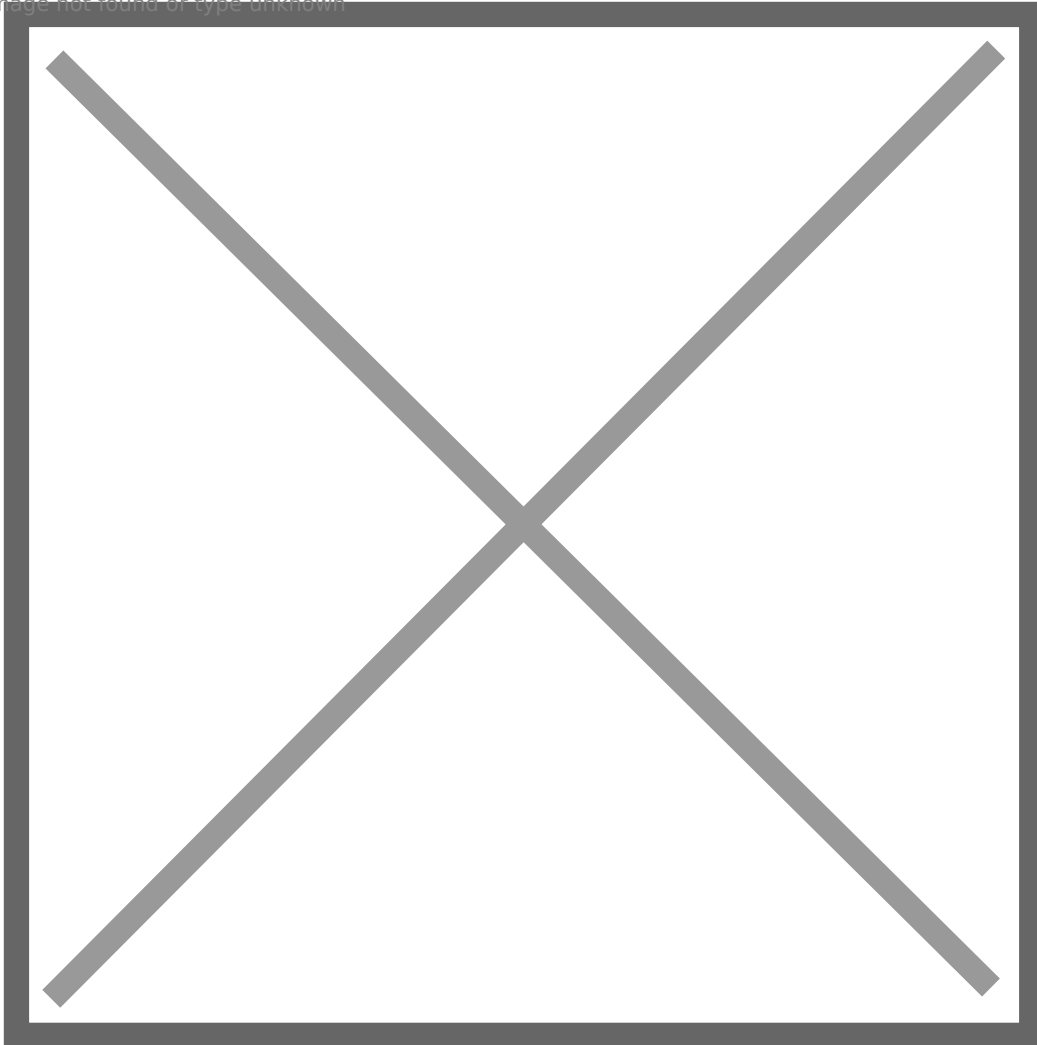
LSJ has:

**III.** *phrase, saying*, "τὴν Σιμωνίδου φ." **Id.Prt. 341b**; "ἡ τοῦ Σωκράτους φ." *Plu.2.106b*, cf. *330f*, etc.; of *formulae*, "στοιχειώματα καὶ φ." *Epicur.Ep.1p.4U.*, cf. *Sent.Vat.41* (= *Metrod. Fr.59*); "αἱ σκεπτικαὶ φ." *S.E.P.1.14*, cf. **Jul.Or.5.162b**, etc.

but I think that citation of Sent. Vat. 41 could be predicated on the orthes of Bailey et al. But really all the word can mean is voice, cry, sound, etc. It's where we get our English "phone, phono-."

This text translates ἀφιέντας as "overlook":

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#### [XX. For Polystratus](#)

<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>be saved by this plea, and might obtain our due reward at your hands. And for the sake of other people also you ought to...  
[www.loebclassics.com](http://www.loebclassics.com)

So, I can get the clunky literalish translation:

"One must laugh and seek wisdom and tend to one's home life and use one's other goods; and never, ever let loose speaking philosophical sayings out of anger."

... or something with that idea.

## Post by “Don” of November 2, 2023 at 12:34 AM

[Onenski](#) I'm not sure if you shared Alvarez's work before or not, but (at the risk of repeating):

[https://repositorio.uam.es/bitstream/handle/10486/672880/alvarez\\_alberto\\_enrique.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=1](https://repositorio.uam.es/bitstream/handle/10486/672880/alvarez_alberto_enrique.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=1)

EL GNOMOLOGIUM VATICANUM Y LA FILOSOFÍA DE EPICURO

Dirigida por:

JOSÉ MARÍA ZAMORA CALVO

ALBERTO ENRIQUE ÁLVAREZ

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## Post by “Onenski” of November 2, 2023 at 12:49 AM

Thank you very much for your answer, Don!

[Quote from Don](#)

I'm not sure if you shared Alvarez's work before or not, but (at the risk of repeating)

I don't remember, I think I shared it only in the chat of one of the zoom meetings. XD

By the way, today [Joshua](#) proposed a possible collection or list of texts about Epicureanism in languages different from English. Possibly Alvarez's thesis can be one of those texts. 😊

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## Post by “Martin” of November 2, 2023 at 5:50 AM

Álvarez' translation neatly resolves most contradictions against the big picture of Epicurus' philosophy, which were described in:

Thread

[VS41 - Translations of VS 41](#)

A: "We must laugh and philosophize at the same time and do our household duties and employ our other faculties, and never

cease proclaiming the sayings of the true philosophy." (as quoted here, on the Epicurean Friends page)

B: "At one and the same time we must philosophize, laugh, and manage our household and other business, while never ceasing to proclaim the words of true philosophy." (as quoted in a post in the FB EP page from June 2017)

C: "One shall laugh and at the same time philosophize,...



Martin

May 21, 2018 at 7:15 AM

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## Post by “Don” of November 2, 2023 at 8:15 AM

Alberto Enrique Álvarez:

Γελᾶν ἄμα δεῖν καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν καὶ οἰκονομεῖν καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς οἰκειώμασι χρῆσθαι καὶ μηδαμῆ λέγειν τὰς ἐκ τῆς ὀργῆς φιλοσοφίας φωνὰς ἀφιέντας.

I'd like to briefly look at the first part of that VS:

Γελᾶν ἄμα δεῖν καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν καὶ οἰκονομεῖν καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς οἰκειώμασι χρῆσθαι...

Using δεῖν, Álvarez's transcription which uses what the manuscript has: δεῖν with a final nu ν.

Using I find it interesting that there are then parallel infinitives:

δεῖν

φιλοσοφεῖν

οἰκονομεῖν

and λέγειν

Γελᾶν is also the infinitive form of γελάω "to laugh"

δεῖν carries the idea of "it behoves one to, it is necessary to, one must" but not necessarily any moral obligation which is carried but χρή which shows up in here with χρῆσθαι

So...

"At the same time, it behoves one to laugh and 'to love and practice wisdom,' and to tend to one's home life and to make proper use of one's other goods; and to never, ever speak philosophical noises vented out of anger."

Demosthenes actually uses a construction similar to [VS41](#):

[Demosthenes, Philippic 2, section 34](#)

ὁρῶ γὰρ ὡς τὰ πόλλ' ἐνίοις οὐκ εἰς τοὺς αἰτίους, ἀλλ' εἰς τοὺς ὑπὸ χεῖρα μάλιστα τὴν ὀργὴν ἀφιέντας.

for I observe that people vent their wrath as a rule, not on those who are to blame, but chiefly on those who are within their reach.

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## Post by "Pacatus" of November 2, 2023 at 7:53 PM

[Onenski](#) and [Don](#) :

This rendering -- clearly based on the Greek text -- is dramatically different from our received English translations (which seem to command continual spouting of philosophical dicta)! And I think [Martin](#) is right in terms of contradictions. All in all, I think, a much more congenial understanding -- as well as, apparently, more true to the original.

Thank you, Fernando! And Don, for your confirmation. 😊 🙌