

# Recent / New Edition of Diogenes Laertius - And Problems With it!

Post by “Cassius” of January 26, 2020 at 9:58 AM

Martin and I were talking a few minutes ago about Diogenes Laertius and I just discovered that there is a new 2018 translation by someone I have never heard of - Pamela Mensch. Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Lives-Eminent-...s/dp/0190862173>

I don't see an "about the author" section, and this gives me pause that she is leaning heavily on other people, as indicated here. In the following posts, on the other hand, I'll indicate some ways that she might not have leaned heavily enough, because she departs from some well-established versions of key sections:

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Pamela Mensch

Close translation, with all its unsolvable difficulties, is the only method by which most translators can hope to do justice to an author's work. The challenge is to respect, capture, and convey the elements of a writer's style—diction, tone, rhythm, and flow—knowing all the while that compromise in each of these areas is inevitable, and that each compromise, no matter how minute, increases the distance between the reader and the original work. That distance can never be eliminated, which is why all translators are bound to revere their intrepid predecessors, whose efforts become a lasting source of moral support. Thus it is a great pleasure to acknowledge the debt I owe to Robert Drew Hicks, Diogenes' Loeb Classical Library translator, and to the seven translators of the French edition published in 1999 by Livre de Poche. The ingenuity of Richard Goulet deserves special mention.

Two of our consulting editors gave me extensive help with the doctrinal material in Books 7 and 10: A. A. Long elucidated the Stoic doxography, and James Allen the letters of Epicurus. I am beholden to them for their expertise and generosity. Jay Elliott reviewed the entire translation; his responses, always astute, prompted a great many improvements. James Romm reviewed all the biographical passages, offered me an invaluable trove of suggestions, and showed himself willing to discuss and debate them to my heart's content, a gift for friendship being among his foremost. And for her unerring grasp of how to make a sentence fulfill its promise, all honor to Prudence Crowther.

Our translation is based on Tiziano Dorandi's edition of the Greek text, published in 2013 by Cambridge University Press.

## Post by "Cassius" of January 26, 2020 at 10:02 AM

I note no references to DeWitt, but instead to Warren and Okeefe and Rist:



## Post by "Cassius" of January 26, 2020 at 12:14 PM

Also it is disappointing to me to see her take the side of the flat assertion that the wise man will not marry and have children, without even noting any possibility of ambiguity:

injured by them.  
The wise man will not marry and beget children, as Epicurus says in *Problems* and his work *On Nature*. Occasionally, under certain circumstances in his life, he may marry. He will avert himself from certain persons. He will not talk nonsense when drunk, as Epicurus says in his *Symposium*. He will not participate in politics, as he says in the first book of his work *On Life*, or make himself a tyrant, or live like a Cynic (as he says in the second book of his work *On Life*), or be a beggar. But even when he has lost his sight he will not withdraw from life, as he says in that same book. The wise man will also

Here is the Bailey version, which takes the opposite view of the main phrase:

VI. LIFE OF EPICURUS 167  
Sexual intercourse, they say, has never done a man good, and he is lucky if it has not harmed him.  
Moreover, the wise man will marry and have children, as Epicurus says in the *Problems* and in the work on *Nature*. But he will marry according to the circumstances of his life. He will feel shame in the presence of some persons, and certainly will not insult them in his cups, so Epicurus says in the *Symposium*. Nor will he take part in public life, as he says in the first book *On Lives*. Nor will he act

And note also the Inwood and Gerson "Epicurus Reader" version below, which follows Bailey.

## Post by "Cassius" of January 26, 2020 at 12:46 PM

Ok this appears to me to be REALLY troubling.

120<sup>a</sup> He will engage in lawsuits and will leave writings behind him, but will not deliver speeches on public occasions. He will be careful of his possessions and will provide for the future. He will be fond of the country. He will face fortune and never desert a friend. He will be careful of his reputation in so far as to prevent himself from being despised. He will care more than other men for public spectacles. He will erect statues of others, but whether

Here is what appears in the Mensch version: "***He will face his destiny and will not make any possession dear to him.***"

***What in the world??????????***

BOOK 10 : 119–123

ΕΠΙΚΟΥΡΟΣ

EPICURUS

120a experience grief, as Diogenes says in the fifth book of his *Selected Writings*. He will avail himself of the law courts; he will leave behind written works; but he will not deliver eulogies. He<sup>81</sup> will take thought for his property and for the future. He will love the countryside. He will face his destiny and will not make any possession dear to him. He will take thought for his reputation only to the extent that he avoids being looked down upon. He will enjoy himself more than others at state festivals.

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**Post by “Cassius” of January 26, 2020 at 12:52 PM**

A more general comment -- this book includes more pictures than I would expect, and fewer footnotes as to textual issues.

And as for this photo, how does she know it is an Epicurean philosopher?



The view of a bronze statue of an Epicurean philosopher on a lamp stand.  
 First century BC. Roman adaptation of a third-century Greek statue.

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### Post by “Cassius” of January 27, 2020 at 9:18 AM

... THE ONE MUST BE BLINDED IF IT HAS NOT HAPPENED.

119. And indeed the wise man will marry and father children, as Epicurus says in his *Problems* and in the *On Nature*. But he will marry [only] when it is indicated by the circumstances of his life at a given time. And some will be diverted from this. Nor indeed will he rant and rave while under the influence of drink, as Epicurus says in his *Symposium*. Nor will he participate in civic life, as he says in book one of *On Ways of Life*. Neither will he be a tyrant or a Cynic, as he says in book two of *On Ways of Life*; nor will he be a beggar. But if he were to be blinded he would go on living, as he says in the same book. And the wise man will feel pain, as Diogenes says in book five of his *Selections*. 120a. And he will serve as a juror, and leave written treatises, though he will not deliver panegyrics. And he will take thought for his possessions and for the future. He will like the countryside. He will resist fate, and will betray none of his friends. He will take thought for good reputation only so far as [to ensure] that he is not held in contempt. He will take more delight in contemplation than other men.

Inwood and

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### Post by “Charles” of January 27, 2020 at 10:03 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

And as for this photo, how does she know it is an Epicurean philosopher?

That definitely looks like Metrodorus, but I've never seen that statue before and she offers no citation below it.

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**Post by “Joshua” of January 27, 2020 at 11:16 AM**

Regarding the statue;

There is a whole 'grammar' in these old statues that can carry meaning that most of us will miss. The crop of hair and beard, the gesture of the arms, the drape of the cloth, the orientation of the hands and fingers, etc. A general will have a different hand position than a philosopher, as an example.

So I don't know anything about this statue, but an expert might be able to infer quite a lot.

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**Post by “Joshua” of January 27, 2020 at 12:12 PM**

More on the statue:

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/ancient-...-lamp-stand/amp>

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection....-A.D.+1&pos=21>

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**Post by “Charles” of January 27, 2020 at 12:52 PM**

Here's a better close-up of its face, with detail.



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**Post by “Cassius” of January 27, 2020 at 1:14 PM**

Hmmm I personally find the description very unpersuasive, but the face may be detailed enough to be recognizable as Hermarchus? I wonder if [Elli](#) agrees with that?

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**Post by “Charles” of January 27, 2020 at 1:26 PM**

I'm at work so I can't quite take the time to inspect every single detail, but I'd start with the clothing, to determine if its a chiton or toga, or any variation of the former. After that, it's onto the sandals, from there its discernible that its either a Greek or Roman figure, and that should narrow it down.

My bets for Roman are: Zeno of Sidon or Philodemus

For Greek: Hermarchus or Polyenus, if not, then Metrodorus based off of the figure alone.

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**Post by “Cassius” of January 27, 2020 at 1:50 PM**

This, from the description, strikes me as more than a little slanderous of the Epicureans, if not of the statue

"By the late first century BC, the Epicurean attainment of pleasure applied mostly to eating and drinking, and the principle of moderation was less significant, as is evident in the proudly displayed fat belly and uninhibited self-satisfied demeanor of this portrait"

EDIT: OK I was at lunch when I typed that and I was far too mild. It's not "more than a little slanderous" it's absolute BS!

So "the Epiurean attainment of pleasure applied mostly to eating and drinking, did it????????? I guess that's why Epicurus churned out all those books on natural philosophy!

Well it/he/she is probably right about "the principle of moderation" being "less significant" because "moderation" is largely BS too! Epicurus teaches focusing on a goal and seeking to attain it, not "moderating" either in goal or in method. Leave the moderation to Aristotle and his "golden mean" BS!

OK as to "fat belly" so maybe that is consistent with Horace after the civil war was over. I will not presume that Horace had a fat belly when he was fighting on the side of Cassius and Brutus, but if he did then he quickly saw how disadvantageous a fat belly can be at times, and he wasn't devoted to it in every situation.

As to his "self-satisfied demeanor" -- NO ONE can hold a candle to the arrogance of a Platonist or a Stoic! If that would be the test and this image is "self-satisfied" then this must be a spitting image Socrates or Plato or Zeno the Stoic!

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### **Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 27, 2020 at 8:19 PM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Also it is disappointing to me to see her take the side of the flat assertion that the wise man will not marry and have children, without even noting any possibility of ambiguity:

Yes. This is very alarming especially to newbies like me who are only beginning to ascertain which are authoritative sources and which are not. I'm not a linguist, but I find it strange that a translation (or transliteration) could have been either affirmative or negative statement. Moreover, I learned many times from several Youtube lectures and series of podcast that Epicurus discourages marriages and even having children since he himself exercised such teaching. I heard it said by some known philosophy figures like Alain De Botton and Dr. Gregory Sadler. But by seeing Bailey's translation for the first time that presents an opposite truth, I feel like I am suffering from cognitive dissonance. Which is true? Is there any other way for newbies like me to determine which translation is correct especially for non-linguists? Is marrying and having children discouraged by Epicurus? I'm not just curious. I'm getting confused as well.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of January 27, 2020 at 8:53 PM**

This reliability issue is a huge issue for me too Mike. I firmly believe that in a case like this, Bailey is the preferred translation. I'm not going to go so far as to say that I respect scholarship in classical matters 100 years ago across-the-board more than I do today, but I get the strong idea that standards in the academy in social sciences have fallen dramatically.

Now sometimes there will be more recent discoveries that can justify a change, but so far as I know there is absolutely no claim whatsoever that anything new was discovered to make the older versions untrustworthy.

This is why I defer to Bailey and even more so to Munro whenever possible - I believe that especially Munro to be much more "in tune" with Lucretius than modern scholars.

Now as to this version, I know I have seen notes saying that this text appears to be corrupted, but at the very least the translators ought to say so rather than leave it unnoted.

Yonge said the opposite of Bailey, here: <https://archive.org/stream/TheLive...e/n477/mode/2up>

Hicks agreed with Yonge, here: <https://archive.org/stream/livesof...ge/644/mode/2up>

Now which is correct? To me the answer has to come from putting yourself in the place of Epicurus and rigorously applying his views from the ground up, with a view of pleasure uncorrupted by Stoicism. I will go on record saying that even though I have no children myself, and even though I am fully aware that raising children can go awfully wrong, from a general perspective the raising of children is something that can be one of the most rewarding things (in terms of pleasure, the only real meaning of "reward") in life, and therefore it is something that Epicurus would never flatly rule out.

Even if we read these "wise man" passages narrowly as if he intended them to apply only to dedicated teachers like himself (which I don't think is likely to be what he intended) it's inconceivable to me that he would lay down a flat rule against marriage.

Much more likely is that marriage, like any other human activity, is something that he would judge entirely by its practical results, as even the Yonge and Hicks versions appear to admit when you read the passage in its entirety and consider the reference to circumstances.

I am being called away so can't write longer right now, but my view is that in general whenever a translator or commentator is pushing the idea that Epicurus held a "bright line" rule against any type of pleasure, that commentator is letting their Stoicism show, because Epicurus has clearly stated that all pleasure is good and therefore desirable, and the choice of whether to engage in any activity is always going to come down to individual circumstances.

So while I do doubt Bailey's support of Epicurus in a significant number of instances - he was very clear that he thought Epicurean ethics were deficient - I think that this is one passage that Bailey's version is to be preferred.

## **Post by “Cassius” of January 27, 2020 at 8:56 PM**

I think there are other threads here on this topic that ought to be linked to this discussion (or we should point to them here in this one) but I know that one of the best arguments for Epicurean marriage is the Will of Epicurus, where he provided for Metrodorus' daughter to be married to a member of the school. This would be inconceivable if Epicurus had been flatly against marriage.

This is probably another time to remember the opening advice from DeWitt's book - to always remember that Epicurus was at the same time one of the most revered and REVILED of the Greek philosophers. And it is the REVILERS who won the culture wars, and who wrote almost all the books and commentaries that are left to us.

Here is my longest series of notes on this topic: <https://newepicurean.com/love-marriage...e-modern-world/>

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## **Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 27, 2020 at 9:06 PM**

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

This is probably another time to remember the opening advice from DeWitt's book - to always remember that Epicurus was at the same time one of the most revered and REVILED of the Greek philosophers. And it is the REVILERS who won the culture wars, and who wrote almost all the books and commentaries that are left to us.

Well...I think that's the safest way for me to endeavor now. I have started reading it but still at the very beginning part which is the synopsis. Speaking of synopsis, that I think is the method to handle all such contradictions - by going back to the basic map that is crystal clear.

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## **Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 28, 2020 at 5:38 AM**

I am still at a stalemate between these two statements:

The wise man will not marry....Occasionally, under certain circumstances in his life, he may marry.

(absolute but with exception)

Moreover, the wise man will marry and have children....But he will marry according to the circumstances of his life.(relative but with condition)

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### **Post by “Cassius” of January 28, 2020 at 6:24 AM**

Probably if we can find a source that digs into the Greek we can find the source of the ambiguity, but in either case they are saying that circumstances may allow for marriage, plus we can easily feel the pleasures of marriage, so I would think the bottom line even for the Mensch version would be that if you can find a compatible mate and have children, do it --- or else Epicurus was cursing Metrodorus Daughter and a male member of the school - which he certainly was not.

My personal conclusion is that this is a great example about how ones attitude toward Epicurus colors the way one tends to understand his meaning.

If you see Epicurus as a brave liberator who embraces the joys of nature and life then you interpret him one way, but if you see him as a timid hermit fleeing from all pain, you interpret him in quite another.

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### **Post by “Joshua” of January 28, 2020 at 7:07 AM**

There are other threads in which we've discussed this that Mike might find interesting. I don't have time this morning to go find them, but I can briefly outline my own argument:

1. The confusion between translations arises because of a wholly reasonable confusion among the translators over the Greek system of conjunctions. It's interesting that a language capable of such nuances as Ancient Greek also has such a poverty of conjunctions. We have a thread somewhere where I explain this problem in depth.

2. The weight of the biographical evidence suggests to me that the Bailey translation is **less** accurate. It's true that Metrodorus married and had kids. But did Epicurus? Hermarchus? Polyaeus?

3. Whichever translation one prefers, the qualifying clause in the following sentence renders the two translations nearly equivalent logically. Sometimes it is wise to marry; and sometimes it is not.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of January 28, 2020 at 8:00 AM**

I agree with Joshua, although as to his point 2 I think that we have to decide whether Epicurus is talking in this entire section about wise men in general (ordinary people who want to be wise) or figures like himself who are primarily devoted to philosophical revolution. As far as I can tell we don't think that Epicurus was married, but we really have no information that I am aware of about any of the other Epicurean founding leaders, or about self-styled Epicureans later. Probably we'll never know the answer to that but my own expectation would be that most of them were probably married at least at times in their lives, and choosing to remain unmarried on principle was probably the exception. That's just my opinion and expectation of course, but I see no reason to presume that any other Epicurean other than Epicurus himself remained unmarried, and as to Epicurus I admit that only because we have a stronger historical record, while at the same time he was apparently accused of relationships with one or more women of the garden, and of course famously stated that he would not know the good but for the pleasures of sex, etc. But of course what we are really talking about here is not sex, but marriage and children, with the pleasures of sex being universally obvious, while the pleasures of marriage and children are much more contextual.

I would add that even in regard to Lucretius and his section on the perils of romance, there are passages where he refers to "our wives" (at least in some translations) and at the end of book four he talks about the benefits of things that we pursue by habit, which has a pretty clear analogy with long term relationships.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of January 28, 2020 at 8:03 AM**

Let me see if I can post the full article, but in the meantime here is the opening page of one well-researched one, and Mike you'll find the section in red of particular interest -- if Chilton is correct this IS an example of the reworking of the text to fit pre-conceived (negative) stereotypes! Unfortunately, Chilton follows the stereotype himself, and tosses out what the manuscript clearly says!

THIS SECTION of Diogenes' life of Epicurus reads as follows in all the manuscripts:

καὶ μὴν καὶ γαμήσειν καὶ τεκνοποιήσειν τὸν σοφὸν ὡς Ἐπίκουρος ἐν ταῖς Διαφοραῖς καὶ ἐν ταῖς Περι φύσεως κατὰ περίστασιν δὲ ποτε βίου γαμήσειν καὶ διατραπησεσθαι τινὰς οὐδε μὴν τήρησειν ἐν μέθῃ φησὶν ὁ Ἐπίκουρος ἐν τῷ Συμποσίῳ

There are many difficulties in this curious passage which Bailey justly describes as "scrappy and incoherent" and it is, I think, true to say that no two editors agree on text and punctuation. The passage is, however, rather important since the first part of it is the only reference we have in the Epicurean corpus to the Master's views on marriage and the begetting of children – a subject which must surely have been treated by a moralist with his views on human happiness.

Let us then begin by considering the passage up to βίου γαμήσειν. As it stands the text asserts positively that the wise man will marry and beget children. But ever since Epicurean studies began in modern times this has been queried, and the great scholar Gassendi felt bound to follow Casaubon in emending καὶ μὴν καὶ to καὶ μὴδὲ, in other words, to print the exact opposite of the MS reading. In more recent times Usener, Bailey, and Diano revert to the MS but Hicks in the Loeb edition agrees with Gassendi. The principal reason for the emendation is clear enough; in the first place it has seemed to many scholars from Casaubon onwards to be impossible to reconcile approval of marriage with Epicurus' own well-attested views on human happiness in general and sex in particular; in the second, all references by later writers to the Epicurean view of marriage agree in depicting the Epicurean as an opponent of wedlock and the family.

The key to a happy life, Epicurus taught, is ἀταραξία, freedom from worry (*Ep.* III, 128), a freedom to be won only by restricting the needs of the present and our hopes for the future, by pursuing self-sufficiency (αὐτάρκεια – *Sent. Vat.* 77), and by refusing to give hostages to fortune (*Sent. Vat.* 47). It would certainly seem more consistent with this attitude

## Post by "Cassius" of January 28, 2020 at 8:14 AM

So in my view while Chilton's conclusion is wrong, his info on what the text really says is helpful, and it is easy to explain why he is so eager to follow Gassendi and emend the text. Why? Here it is! Chilton is a devotee of the "freedom from pain" through a life lived as a minimalist school!!!

Mike this is the never-ending theme. if you think Epicurus was a coward leading the charge to escape all pain, then you will interpret him one way. If you think he was a courageous conqueror leading the charge against false religion in the pursuit of pleasure as nature teaches it, then you interpret him totally differently.

Scratch the surface of any negative portrayal of Epicurus and you'll find this 'absence of pain' / ataraxia analysis. Of course in the eyes of the people making this argument, they think this is a Positive! How do we take sides? How can we logically decide which course of life is correct? The answer isn't found in logic - the answer is found in **feeling!**

But here is Chilton taking the same old minimalist perspective calculated to appeal to the stoic-minded disposition:

of the present and our hopes for the future, by pursuing self-sufficiency (*αὐταρκεία* – *Sent. Vat.* 77), and by refusing to give hostages to fortune (*Sent. Vat.* 47). It would certainly seem more consistent with this attitude

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to recommend abstention from marriage and the responsibilities of fathering a family than to advise assuming them – especially for the σοφός.

It may be admitted that there is evidence that Epicurus himself was very fond of children (though the famous letter to[N]απία may not be his after all); *Sent. Vat.* 61 may be a mild word of praise for the security of family life, and *Sent. Vat.* 62 contains shrewd advice to children on how to keep the peace when parents are annoyed. But *Sent. Vat.* 51 is a bitter attack on sex, and the concluding sentence of it, slightly altered, are the words immediately preceding this present passage: *συνουσίη δέ, φασίν, ὤνησε μὲν οὐδέποτε, ἀγαπητὸν δὲ εἰ μὴ καὶ ἐβλάψε.*

I am aware of another article on this point by Tad Brennan, of King's college, London (he is a Brit so you know where this is going - toward the Stoic view). Brennan follows Gassendi and says the text should be changed to suit his disposition toward Epicurus, but here is the final paragraph, where he admits that even though he agrees that the first sentence should be changed so as to have Epicurus advise against marriage and children generally, he (Brennan) also admits that "nothing in the structure of Epicurean hedonism could justify the blanket prohibition." Too bad he didn't follow that observation in the rest of his article!

teus us.

The evidence of the will thus coheres with our emendation of the text, and with the earlier alteration of Καὶ μὴν to Καὶ μηδέ or Οὐδέ μὴν. All of these passages support the view that Epicurus was on record as advising, in general, against marriage and childrearing. But he also clearly thought that there were exceptions that justified both institutions, at least for certain Epicureans. And he was on record as saying this, too—perhaps in explicit comments in theoretical treatises, but at least through the contents of his will—so that later Epicureans had to incorporate this into their account of the master's views. I think that they were right to do so; nothing in the structure of Epicurean hedonism could justify the blanket prohibition.<sup>19</sup>

TAD BRENNAN  
*King's College, London*

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So he ends up realizing that nothing in the structure of Epicurean hedonism could justify a blanket prohibition on marriage and children, yet he is willing to change the text to put virtually exactly those words in the mouth of Epicurus!

THIS, Mike, is what we are facing, and why we have to dig into the text background ourselves.

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## Post by “Joshua” of January 28, 2020 at 9:07 AM

Of course, an alternative consideration is that the translations are correct and that Diogenes Laertius got something wrong.

I read Frontinus yesterday on *The Aqueducts of Rome*. The early portions of the text are badly preserved; I continue to marvel that we were so lucky with what survived, and above all with Lucretius.

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## Post by “Cassius” of January 28, 2020 at 10:56 AM

### [Quote from JJEIbert](#)

Of course, an alternative consideration is that the translations are correct and that Diogenes Laertius got something wrong.

Yes definitely, it's always a possibility that Laertius got something wrong, and in fact DeWitt argues that that's exactly what happened on why Laertius' comments on preconceptions do not seem to match what Cicero recorded Velleius as saying in "On the Nature of the Gods." And it's

kind of confusing but true that even though Laertius captured much more detail than Cicero did, Cicero is actually much closer in time to Epicurus than was Laertius, so it's probably necessary not to take either one as absolutely right on all issues, but to consider each issues separately.

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### **Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 28, 2020 at 12:00 PM**

#### [Quote from JJElbert](#)

The weight of the biographical evidence suggests to me that the Bailey translation is less accurate.

As far I learned, DeWitt, with similar views as yours, also used the Bailey translation as I read on the bibliography:

"Meanwhile a return to moderation becomes observable in R. D. Hicks' Stoic

and Epicurean (London, 1910), and to this virtue urbanity was added by Cyril Bailey

in his Epicurus and his Greek Atomists (Oxford, 1925 and 1928); but the amplification of fallacy still went on, culminating in the ascription to Epicurus of belief in

"the infallibility of sensation."

Does it affect the credibility of his book *Epicurus and His Philosophy*?

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Mike this is the never-ending theme. if you think Epicurus was a coward leading the charge to escape all pain, then you will interpret him one way. If you think he was a courageous conqueror leading the charge against false religion in the pursuit of pleasure as nature teaches it, then you interpret him totally differently.

That is actually my dilemma since I am still unaware which translation is authoritative. If I resort to DeWitt's interpretation, I am also unaware if the translation he used was authoritative, too.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of January 28, 2020 at 1:02 PM**

Mike as far as I can tell DeWitt did his own personal review of the texts since he was a classical language expert. Bailey was also an expert and did his own translation with extensive notes. I have his full set of detailed notes on his Lucretius translation. Munro also did his own full translation with extensive notes. There are significant differences too in the 1743 edition that I quote from, which differ from the others too.

Therefore when you say -

[Quote from Mike Anyayahan](#)

since I am still unaware which translation is authoritative.

I would say that there IS no single authoritative translation because no one in a position to know for sure has been alive for close to 2000 years. In every case we are going to have to compare the editions with notes and do our own analysis based on all the evidence we have to determine which one we agree with most.

Truly, however, in most cases, the basic position taken in most translations is essentially the same, and even in the case of this marriage issue the texts can be largely reconciled by pointing to the circumstances clause.

Unfortunately this is something we just have to deal with, but I think it's very manageable, especially since we have Lucretius in very good form, and Lucretius' latin is something that is much more accessible to many more of us than is even the Greek.

Does that address your question because I am not quite sure what part you think calls into question DeWitt's credibility.

If you are commenting on DeWitt's quotes on Bailey, there are many references in Bailey's texts as to how much he disagrees with Epicurean positions, so that in itself is a warning flag about Bailey, but when you know his viewpoint you can factor that in. Here, on the marriage issue, he might even think that he was setting Epicurus to look contradictory, but in doing so he simply followed the text and that helps us expose those who would change it.

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## **Post by “Cassius” of January 28, 2020 at 1:08 PM**

Gee WIZ this is such an obvious point and I don't know that I have seen it made very often - thanks to [Charles](#) for making it:

**So Metrodorus had at least one son and a daughter!**

"And let Amynomachus and Timocrates take care of Epicurus, the son of Metrodorus, and of the son of Polyaeus, so long as they study and live with Hermarchus. Let them likewise provide for the maintenance of Metrodorus's daughters so long as she is well-ordered and obedient to Hermarchus; and, when she comes of age, give her in marriage to a husband selected by Hermarchus from among the members of the School; and out of the revenues accruing to me let Amynomachus and Timocrates in consultation with Hermarchus give to them as much as they think proper for their maintenance year by year.

**Why would we not presume that Metrodorus was following Epicurus' opinion even on this, as he did so much else? And unless Metrodorus was just sleeping around, and there is no real reason to think that other than slanders against the Epicureans, he presumably had at least one marriage to go with the children.**

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**Post by "Mike Anyayahan" of January 28, 2020 at 1:10 PM**

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Does that address your question because I am not quite sure what part you think calls into question DeWitt's credibility.

Yes. Thanks Cassius. I find it more comfortable focusing on DeWitt to lessen the complexity of my learning. I only raised this question so the confirmation can make me go on and have complete confidence on the material I have.

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**Post by "Cassius" of January 28, 2020 at 1:17 PM**

Thanks for the clarification. I have tremendous respect for DeWitt's scholarship and have found no reason to doubt him on fundamental issues even after many years of additional reading. On the issues where doubt is warranted DeWitt makes very clear that he is reconstructing or challenging the consensus so you can easily know when to hold an issue in your mind as something to pay special attention to. The reason he is cited so little today is mostly because he disagrees with the consensus on things like anticipations and "all senses are true" but you'll

have no trouble sorting out those issues and deciding who has the most persuasive argument.

I think part of the reason DeWitt is so good is that he not only clearly has a lot of affection and respect for Epicurus, but he was also primarily a classical languages expert rather than primarily a philosopher. To me that helped him stay focused on the main issues of how Epicurus differed from Plato and the others without getting too bogged down in the philosophical minutiae and unanswerable questions that seem to bog down so many writers into paralysis.

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### Post by “Cassius” of January 28, 2020 at 1:20 PM

So Polyaenus had at least one child as well!

19 Amynomachus and Timocrates shall take care of Epicurus, the son of Metrodorus, and of the son of Polyaenus, provided they devote themselves to philosophy and live with Hermarchus. Likewise they shall take care of Metrodorus' daughter, and when she comes of age shall give her in marriage to one of his disciples whom Hermarchus shall choose, provided she is well-behaved and obedient to Hermarchus. Amynomachus and Timocrates shall set aside for the maintenance of these children such sum out of the revenues of my estate as shall seem good to them each year in consultation with Hermarchus.  
20 They shall give Hermarchus authority with themselves

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### Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 28, 2020 at 1:29 PM

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Thanks for the clarification. I have tremendous respect for DeWitt's scholarship and have found no reason to doubt him on fundamental issues even after many years of additional reading.

I also have high respect on your estimation of him as I know you have dedicated years of studying and investigating Epicureanism deeply as much as I respect the rest of you guys here. My aim is simple - to understand Epicurean philosophy correctly and bring it to lay audience in a down-to-earth language that can be understood and be applied by ordinary people the way I apply it in my practical daily life.

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### Post by “Cassius” of January 28, 2020 at 2:22 PM

This is not to say that you should rely on me for the time of day, much less anything else, but I can say this:

I started studying up on Epicurean philosophy intensely in 2009, and have made the study of Epicurus my number one "hobby" since then. I have some personal differences with a few of DeWitt's interpretations, but I have not over that time found any single work that comes anywhere close to "Epicurus and His Philosophy" in presenting an understandable, well documented, and perceptive presentation of the big picture of Epicurean philosophy.

I don't want to oversell it because a lot more work needs to be done to expand on what DeWitt has started, but there's really nothing like EAHP in terms of an overall understandable introduction to and presentation of every major branch of the philosophy.

I give "A Few Days In Athens" high marks as well in the "sympathetic to Epicurus" department, but that is a much more narrowly-targeted work. Other than EAHP I am not aware of any book that I can wholeheartedly recommend to the average reader who says "I want to know what Epicurus was all about."

For professional philosophers and people who have a lot of background, there are many other good books with many other details, but not of a general nature like EAHP. And I would not dare send someone new to a collection of Epicurean works, even "The Epicurus Reader" or Bailey's "Epicurus The Extant Remains," until they have the general introduction that DeWitt provides.

Even starting with the [Principal Doctrines](#), or the Vatican Sayings, or any of Epicurus' letters, is in my experience going to lead to too much confusion to start off with reading those.

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### **Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 28, 2020 at 10:02 PM**

Thanks Cassius. I'll keep that in mind. I just want to make my learning process as simple as I wish to apply it. 😊