

An Epicurean Understanding of Valentine's Day: Love, Romance, and Free-will

Post by "Cassius" of January 16, 2022 at 3:55 PM

Here is the conclusion of the BRENNAN article which I will also attach here (sorry that this clip does not pick up the greek, so I will post a picture too):

Quote

But that something like this is right seems to me overwhelmingly plausible. We should count it pure gain to rid ourselves of "6iaTpa7rtc sicOaO"t and the monstrous fragment (frag. 591 Us.) that it spawned. No longer must we suppose that the Epicurean sage "turns aside from his purpose," or "feels shame in the presence of others"-both of them incredible claims for any school to make about its sage.

Instead, we have a perfectly natural continuation of the earlier discussion, which shows that the exceptional circumstances recognized in the case of marriage were also recognized in the case of child-rearing-exactly what Epicurus' own will tells us.

The evidence of the will thus coheres with our emendation of the text, and with the earlier alteration of Kai lpv to Kai Tr&5 or 06?? ptfv. 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.

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The syntactical demand is slightly greater; we must take the future passive with the active or middle sense. While this usage is attested for many other verbs, *τρέπω* among them as we saw above, I have been unable to find a parallel for it with *τρέφω*. But I do not take this as a decisive strike against the emendation. Usage is fluid, and users follow the pattern of similar words in extending anomalies to new cases. The grammarian who feels that *τραπήσασθαι* simply cannot take a middle sense may try other routes. For instance, *τινάς* may originally have been *τινά*, even *τινός*,¹⁸ in which cases the subject switches from the sage to the children, as it does in the passage of Epictetus above.

But that something like this is right seems to me overwhelmingly plausible. We should count it pure gain to rid ourselves of “*διατραπήσασθαι*” and the monstrous fragment (frag. 591 Us.) that it spawned. No longer must we suppose that the Epicurean sage “turns aside from his purpose,” or “feels shame in the presence of others”—both of them incredible claims for any school to make about its sage. Instead, we have a perfectly natural continuation of the earlier discussion, which shows that the exceptional circumstances recognized in the case of marriage were also recognized in the case of child-rearing—exactly what Epicurus’ own will tells us.

The evidence of the will thus coheres with our emendation of the text, and with the earlier alteration of *Καὶ μὴν* to *Καὶ μηδὲ* or *Οὐδὲ 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.¹⁹

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In conclusion on this article, even though it is closer to my view, I think that it goes too far to say in English that Epicurus was likely to have been “on record as advising, in general, against marriage and childrearing.”

I think the most likely-to-be-accurate statement would be that Epicurus was: “on record as advising, in general, *about the risks and dangers* of marriage and childrearing.”

The final statement, that “nothing in the structure of Epicurean hedonism could justify the blanket prohibition,” is almost surely correct, since I think you could go further and say that “nothing in the structure of Epicurean hedonism could justify the blanket prohibition” of any

pleasure, because the proper formulation would be that on the other hand we do not choose every pleasure, because some actions can be expected to bring more pain than pleasure.