

Marriage & children seem less pleasurable today: financial worry, relational problems, high rates of divorce. Are they worth the pain (tarakhē τάραχή) they entail?

Post by “Raphael Raul” of July 4, 2026 at 4:51 PM

[Cassius](#)

"Of all this, the beginning and the greatest good is prudence.

Wherefore prudence is a more precious thing even than philosophy;

from it spring all the other virtues..."

Letter to Menoecus, Bailey's section 132.

So, Cassius, you ask how many zeroes, how much money is needed for the wedding, the gamble involved, and the pledge of land and money for marriage?

So, let's start here: a poor man can marry and have 5 children, but most likely he and his children will live hand to mouth, hungry and illiterate, and that is not good, not pleasurable. Also, it is not healthy for his wife to give birth to 5 children, and it is not good for the children to live in poverty. Better for a poor man to marry and have a child, maybe two, that he can properly feed and educate, and give his wife a healthier, longer life, than to have 5, 6 children and live in misery (pain).

I see from the writings of Epicurus that he was a prudent, rational, reasonable, and realistic man with “an ideal”, who not only developed a life-affirming philosophy based on how life could be lived but also on a scientific-materialist view of nature. As well, he built a school based on that ideal, which needed to be managed structurally and socially and administered financially. This required a practical man, a realist who could navigate the socio-political realities of life in the turbulent Athens of the time, such as securing funds for his school for living, and the discipline of sitting down day in and day out to write circa 300 books of his philosophy. And so marriage and children are also endeavors rooted in reality, responsibility, virtue (strength), and the discipline needed to manage a married life reasonably and properly.

This is how marriage was structured for centuries, till the idea of romance really took sway in the Western world, perpetrated by, you know, those delusional artists (such as yours truly), painting pictures, and those unemployed poets and troubadors singing of true love and making up stories of handsome knights sweeping young maidens off their feet, saving them from a fire-

breathing dragon which till this day there is a lucrative book publishing industry on updated version of these fantasies for adolescent girls. ...So, yes, let's wake up and smell the coffee.

Marriage is a contract, a business agreement between a man and a woman, who "wed," from the Old English "weddian," to pledge, to take a wager, to take a gamble, to put up a pledge of money & land. It is an investment in a partnership. This is why we sign a marriage contract and why divorce lawyers are hired and paid very well to sort out the finances between disgruntled ex-partners, which, Cassius and Dave know so well.

I find some comments here have overly emphasized pleasure. Yes, pleasure, pleasure, I love pleasure. In my younger years I was very much a hedonist. But, some years back I discovered Epicureanism and toned down my pleasure seeking, which is a good thing. Yes, we all want pleasure, but also we need common sense (prudence) both in life and in a marriage. The greatest pleasure, as Epicurus states, is the absence of physical pain (aponia) and mental disturbance (ataraxia), which are the Katastematic, not the kinetic pleasures, which are fleeting.

Yes, if one has the means, one can take the risk of making an investment, and that is what the "wedding" is about. The groom and his family, and the bride's family, are taking a gamble with money and land that the couple will live a good, productive, and happy life, within their means.

But a young man in Medieval and Renaissance Europe (as well as today) who had no money, no land, not even a cow to his name, and had nothing to pledge, to wed, to stake, would definitely not have the parents' approval to marry their daughter, because he brought nothing to the table, nothing to secure their daughter's future well-being, and also, worse, even become a financial liability to their family; and thus that is not good nor pleasurable.

So, yes, Cassius, some zeroes are needed, at least to live well enough to ensure the basics and, over time, the married couple, through hard work and prudently saving their money, can have as many children as they can properly feed, clothe, and educate, and thus live pleurably.

And finally, there is great pleasure in a good, loving marriage and in raising children well, and living with common sense, because, as you know, Cassius: "Prudence is a more precious thing "even than philosophy."