

VS35 - Bailey's Strange and Probably Misleading Translation of VS 35

Post by "Cassius" of January 23, 2018 at 5:58 AM

It appears to me that we have a real problem with Cyril Bailey's translation of VS35, which speaks of "Fortune" in a way that seems positively un-Epicurean. Here are my notes so far, but I would appreciate the help of anyone and everyone in tracing down authoritative alternate translations, and also seeing if there is some reason for Bailey's use of "gift of fortune."

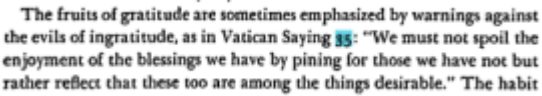
Bailey translates 35 this way: "We should not spoil what we have by desiring what we do not have, but remember that what we have too was the gift of fortune."

The translation that seems to be preferred on other websites, which is much more consistent with Epicurean philosophy, is: "35. Don't spoil what you have by desiring what you don't have; but remember that what you now have was once among the things only hoped for."

[Peter St Andre](#): "Don't ruin the things you have by wanting what you don't have, but realize that they too are things you once did wish for." Peter adds the note "[35] The word translated here as "ruin" (λυμáινομαι) means, at root, to mistreat. The implication is that not honoring the good things you have achieved is a sign of disrespect and shows a lack of appreciation. See also Vatican Sayings [#69](#) and [#75](#)."

[Epicurism.info - the Epicurism Wiki](#)

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DeWitt, Page 326: The fruits of gratitude are sometimes emphasized by warnings against the evils of ingratitude, as in Vatican Saying 35: "We must not spoil the enjoyment of the blessings we have by pining for those we have not but rather reflect that these too are among the things desirable." The habit

In thinking about the alternative version (Don't spoil what you have by desiring what you don't have; but remember that what you now have was once among the things only hoped for.) I wonder if DeWitt (We must not spoil the enjoyment of the blessings we have by pining for those we have not but rather reflect that these too are among the things desirable) might be more correct. Does it make sense to say that "the things we have are what we one hoped for" when "the things we have" could be cancer, disease, hunger, etc?) We could presume that "the things we have" refers to good things, but Dewitt's version links "the blessings we have" with "these too are among the desirable" so in the Dewitt version there is (arguably) less ambiguity. What do you think? I would like to see how other "authorities" translate this for comparison.

H - De Witt's translation of the word "εὐκταίων" as "the gift of fortune" is not correct in strict sense. The word "εὐκταίων" is used today with the same meaning as " the things I wish(ed) for". De Witt may be right if we expand the meaning of the word and assume that our wishes are materialized through good fortune.

Cassius Amicus H - I think you have the names reversed - the "gift of fortune" comes from Bailey rather than DeWitt. I have not yet found anyone else who refers to fortune besides Bailey, but I am still looking.

Cassius Amicus And given the other clear admonitions in Epicurean texts against relying on Fortune, or thinking that it is as force at all, I am thinking that any positive references to "Fortune" must be severely scrutinized and presumably avoided. I would expect Dewitt to have a similar attitude because of his respect for Epicurus. I am afraid the same cannot be said for Bailey. Bailey's primary motivation to be accurate was probably academic respectability, rather than any respect for the consistency of Epicurean doctrine. So I would think that "if we expand the meaning of the word and assume that our wishes are materialized through good fortune" is the very thing we would not do if we were looking for a consistent interpretation across the texts(??)1

Cassius AmicusGroup Admin I hope we can find some other academic translations of the Vatican Sayings. I have never found too much on them other than Bailey's collection, which presumably is based on Usener (?) I would think there would be numbers of articles about how and where it was found, what the text looks like, where it is now, etc.