

Should An Epicurean Marry?

Post by “Cassius” of January 26, 2018 at 7:59 AM

One of the most troublesome translation issues is the passage in Diogenes Laertius in which Epicurus either advises "for" or "against" marriage, depending on the translator.

There is a maddening discrepancy in the various translations of Diogenes Laertius in the crucial “Wise Man” sequence. CD Yonge’s 1853 translation reports that Epicurus thought marriage to be a bad idea: “Marriage, they say, is never any good to a man, and we must be quite content if it does no harm; and the wise man will never marry or beget children, as Epicurus himself lays down in his Doubts and in his treatises on Nature. Still, under certain circumstances in his life he will forsake these rules and marry.”

The Loeb Classical Library version of the R.D. Hicks translation, which dates from 1931, concurs: “Nor, again, will the wise man marry and rear a family: so Epicurus says in the Problems and in the De Natura. Occasionally he may marry due to special circumstances in his life.”

But Cyril Bailey in his 1926 translation says the opposite: “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.”

Is Bailey leading us into a trap with a problem translation? Or in this case does Bailey have the better view? We know that Epicurus provided in his will for the marriage of Metrodorus daughter, so I tend to think in this case Bailey is correct. I posted about this previously [here](#).