

# Best Recent Version of Diogenes Laertius?

**Post by “Cassius” of August 29, 2021 at 7:52 PM**

Question from reader : I found many topics in the forums talking about the different versions of this book. I'm not good at reading electronic versions, so I want to buy it. Which version would you recommend? From a post of yours of some months ago, I gather it would be Bailey's? Thanks

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**Post by “Don” of August 29, 2021 at 7:59 PM**

To purchase, I'd mention Loeb Classics edition or [Mensch](#).

PS You can get an idea of Hicks, Yonge, and Mensch from my website <https://sites.google.com/view/epicureansage>

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**Post by “Cassius” of August 29, 2021 at 8:10 PM**

I think if I were buying one I might go with Loeb too, for the benefit of the side-by-side Greek text.

As for the Bailey edition, that would be Bailey's "Extant Remains" which would be good to have if you can find a used copy, and would have a lot more material on it about Epicurus.

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**Post by “Don” of August 29, 2021 at 8:15 PM**

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I think if I were buying one I might go with Loeb too, for the benefit of the side-by-side Greek text.

As for the Bailey edition, that would be Bailey's "Extant Remains" which would be good to have if you can find a used copy, and would have a lot more material on it about Epicurus.

Agreed on Loeb.

The question also depends on whether one just wants Book X - in which case Bailey would need fine - or if you want the entire Lives to see all of Epicurus's mentions plus all the other philosophers.

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**Post by "Cassius" of August 29, 2021 at 8:15 PM**

One way of considering Mensch would be to look at her translations of the PD's:

tion (*agogē*) a way of life (*diagogē*). Epicurus says that virtue is the only thing inseparable from pleasure, everything else—food, for example—being separable from it.

Let me now put the finishing touch, as one might say, to my entire work and to the life of this philosopher by presenting his *Chief Maxims*, thereby bringing the whole work to a close and offering as its conclusion the beginning of happiness.

139 I. The blessed and immortal has no troubles himself and causes none for anyone else; hence he has nothing to do with resentments and partisanship; for all such impulses are a sign of weakness. [*Elsewhere he says that the gods are discernible by reason, being on the one hand numerically distinct, but on the other hand similar in form, because of a continuous flow of similar images to the same place; and that they are human in form.*]

II. Death is nothing to us. For what has been dissolved has no feeling; and what has no feeling is nothing to us.

III. The limit of pleasure is reached with the removal of all pain. Whenever pleasure is present, and for however long, there is neither pain nor grief nor any combination of the two.

140 IV. Pain does not last long in the flesh; in fact, extreme pain is present for the briefest time, while that which hardly outweighs pleasure does not last for many days. And illnesses that are prolonged may even afford the flesh more pleasure than pain.

V. It is not possible to live pleasantly without living prudently, honorably, and justly; nor can one live prudently, honorably, and justly without living pleasantly. Nor is it possible for the man who does not live prudently, though he may live honorably and justly, to live pleasantly.

VI. In order that men might not fear one another, there was a natural benefit to be had from government and kingship, provided that they are able to bring about this result.

141 VII. Some have longed to become famous and celebrated, thinking that they would thereby obtain security against other men. If the lives of such persons were secure, they attained what is naturally good; but if insecure, they did not attain the object that they were originally prompted by nature to seek.

things above and below the earth, and in the unlimited in general, continued to terrify us.

XIV. While some degree of security from other men can be attained on the basis of stable power and material prosperity, the purest security comes from tranquillity and from a life withdrawn from the many.

144 XV. Nature's wealth is both limited and easy to procure; but the wealth of groundless opinions vanishes into thin air.

XVI. Fortune impinges but little on a wise man; reason has directed his greatest and most important pursuits; these it directs and will continue to direct over the course of his life.

XVII. The just man is utterly imperturbable, while the unjust is full of the utmost perturbation.

XVIII. Fleshly pleasure does not increase once the pain of want has been removed; it merely diversifies. But the limit of mental pleasure is reached when one reflects on these very realities, and others of the same kind, which afflict the mind with its worst fears.

145 XIX. Limited and unlimited time furnish an equal amount of pleasure if the limits of pleasure are measured by reason.

XX. The flesh receives the limits of pleasure as if they were unlimited; and an unlimited time is required to provide it. But the mind, grasping in thought the end and limit of the flesh, and ridding itself of fears of eternity, fashions a perfect life and no longer requires unlimited time. Yet it does not avoid pleasure; and even when circumstances bring life to an end, it dies having missed nothing of the best life.

146 XXI. The man who has discerned the limits of life knows how easy it is to procure what is needed to remove the pain of want and make his whole life perfect; he therefore needs none of the things that cannot be acquired without a struggle.

XXII. We must reason about the true goal and about all the evidence to which we refer our opinions; for otherwise everything will be full of confusion and disorder.

XXIII. If you fight against all your sensations, you will not have a stan-

**Post by "Cassius" of August 29, 2021 at 8:17 PM**

[Quote from Don](#)

The question also depends on whether one just wants Book X - in which case Bailey would need fine - or of you want the entire Lives to see all of Epicurus's mentions plus all the other philosophers.

Right - there is a tremendous amount of good information in the other books

**Post by "Cassius" of August 29, 2021 at 8:22 PM**

In my case Mensch has not proved to be a new favorite, and here is one reason, comparing PD3:

Epicurus Wiki:

Mensch: and what has no feeling is nothing to us.

III. The limit of pleasure is reached with the removal of all pain. Whenever pleasure is present, and for however long, there is neither pain nor grief nor any combination of the two.

140 IV. Pain does not last long in the flesh; in fact, extreme pain is present for

For me, I usually see the translators include what the Epicurus wiki renders as "magnitude" (I think Bailey uses "quantity.") I happen to think that is a very important word, and I am sorry to

see Mensch leave it out. My general impression is that she is being a little too free with the translation and less literal than would be desired given that the material can be pretty complex.

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## Post by “Don” of August 29, 2021 at 8:30 PM

Good comparison side by side. I agree with the importance of μεγέθους there.

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## Post by “Cassius” of August 29, 2021 at 8:51 PM

Here's another issue with Mensch, and since I am all in favor of Epicureans marrying and having lots of children so there will be more Epicureans, I consider this a serious problem with this version 😊 There's a lot of controversy about that line and apparently the text is unclear, but I resolve that dispute consistently with Epicurus providing in his will for Metrodorus' daughter eventually to be married to a member of the school. It doesn't look like in Mensch that she even annotates it, but just chooses what I perceive to be the negative option.

Injuries inflicted by human beings arise from hate, envy, or contempt, to which the wise man proves superior by reason. Furthermore, he who has once become wise never again assumes the opposite character, nor does he willingly forget it. He will be more susceptible to feelings, but this will not impair his wisdom. Yet not every physical constitution would permit a man to become wise, nor every nationality. Even when he is tortured the wise man is content. He alone will feel gratitude toward friends, present and absent alike. When tortured, however, he mourns and wails. The wise man will not consort with women in any manner proscribed by law, as Diogenes says in his *Epistole of Epicurus' Ethical Doctrine*. Nor will he punish his servants; instead he will pity them and pardon any who are of good character. The Epicureans do not think that the wise man will fall in love; nor will he be concerned about his burial; nor do they think that loss is sent by the gods, as Diogenes says in his *...*. Nor will the wise man make fine speeches. They maintain that sexual relations are never beneficial, and that one should be grateful not to be 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 shun himself from certain persons. He will not talk nonsense when drunk, as Epicurus says in his *Synopsis*. 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

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## Post by “Don” of August 29, 2021 at 9:12 PM

Well, the original does say:

Original text: Καὶ μηδὲ καὶ γαμήσειν καὶ τεκνοποιήσειν τὸν σοφόν....

Here marriage is specifically mentioned: γαμήσειν "to be married" and τεκνοποιήσειν "to bear children" and μηδὲ is negation so..

*And neither marry nor bear children..*

But the following phrases seem to say that "under certain circumstances" the wise one will turn aside (from this course) and marry.

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### **Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 29, 2021 at 9:20 PM**

[Quote from Don](#)

PS You can get an idea of Hicks, Yonge, and Mensch from my website <https://sites.google.com/view/epicureansage>

Great, thanks.

So, Bailey's if I can get a hold of it (assuming it's rare) or Loeb's if not.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of August 29, 2021 at 10:00 PM**

I forget how many volumes the Loeb is in..... But to be clear, Bailey is only Book 10.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of August 29, 2021 at 10:04 PM**

[Quote from Don](#)

Well, the original does say:

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And neither marry nor bear children..

But the following phrases seem to say that "under certain circumstances" the wise one will turn aside (from this course) and marry.

Yep - some say one way, some say the other way, as below. Seems to me the best course is to be sure to mark the passage as controversial and apparently corrupted

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."

Epicurus The Extant Remains Bailey Oxford 1926

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.

119 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.

The more modern Epicurus Reader translation by Inwood and Gerson agrees with Bailey: "And indeed the wise man will marry and father children..." The 1963 text by George Strodach endorses the same view: "In addition, the wise man will marry and beget children.... but he will marry according to his station in life, whatever it may be."

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**Post by "Cassius" of August 29, 2021 at 10:12 PM**

Don is this part of this article incorrect as to the text where it asserts that the texts asserts positively.....?

# *Did Epicurus approve of Marriage?*

## *A study of Diogenes Laertius X, 119*

C. W. CHILTON

**T**HIS 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 Διαπορίαις καὶ ἐν ταῖς Περὶ φύσεως κατὰ περιστάσιν δέ ποτε βίου γαμήσειν καὶ διατραπησεσθαι τινὰς οὐδὲ 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.

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**Post by "Don" of August 29, 2021 at 11:20 PM**

**Mea culpa!** I forgot about this post of mine from awhile ago: [RE: Did Epicurus Advise Marriage or Not? Diogenes Laertius Text Difficulty](#)

Seems I spoke too hastily. It's the difference between those letters that's the controversy. So, yes, I fully agree that needs footnoted or something in any translation.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of August 29, 2021 at 11:27 PM**

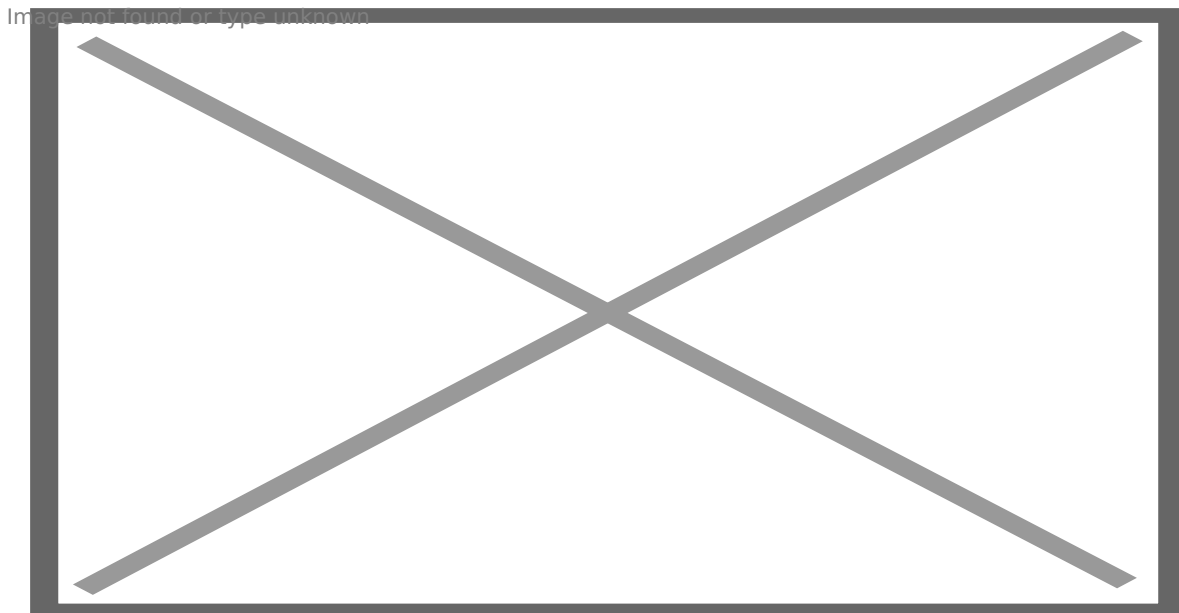
That was less than two months ago and I had completely forgotten about it too!

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### **Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 30, 2021 at 9:19 AM**

Bailey's I can't find specifically, though there are other options of him that I wonder whether would contain Diogenes, but all of them are too expensive.

My options are this version of RD Hicks:

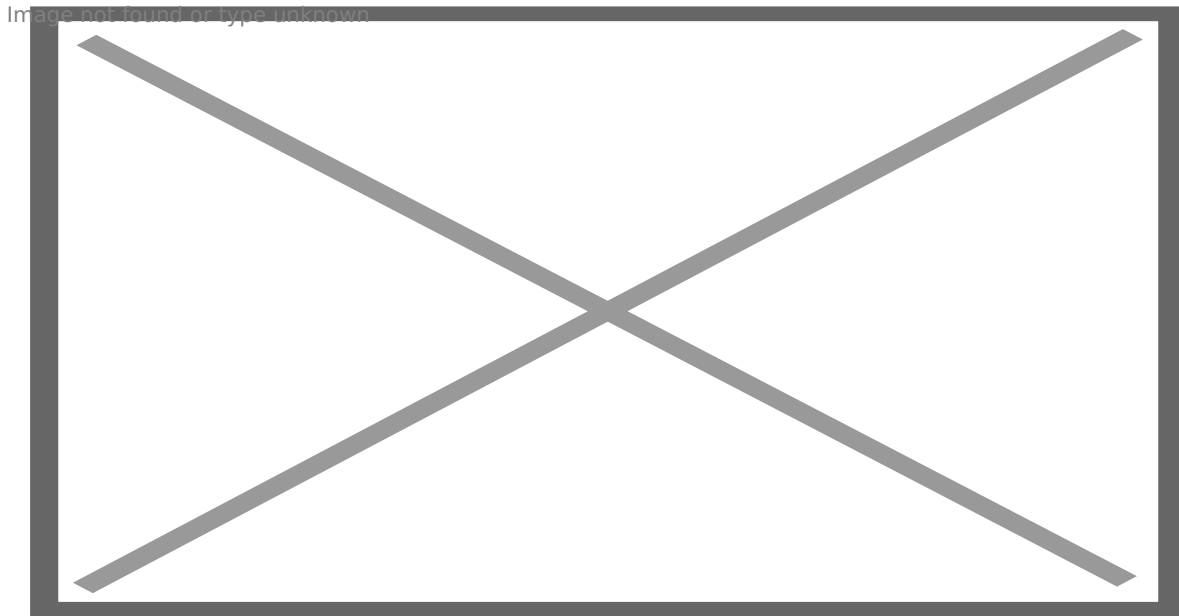


[Lives of the Eminent Philosophers](#)

Lives of the Eminent Philosophers

www.amazon.com.mx

This Yonge version:

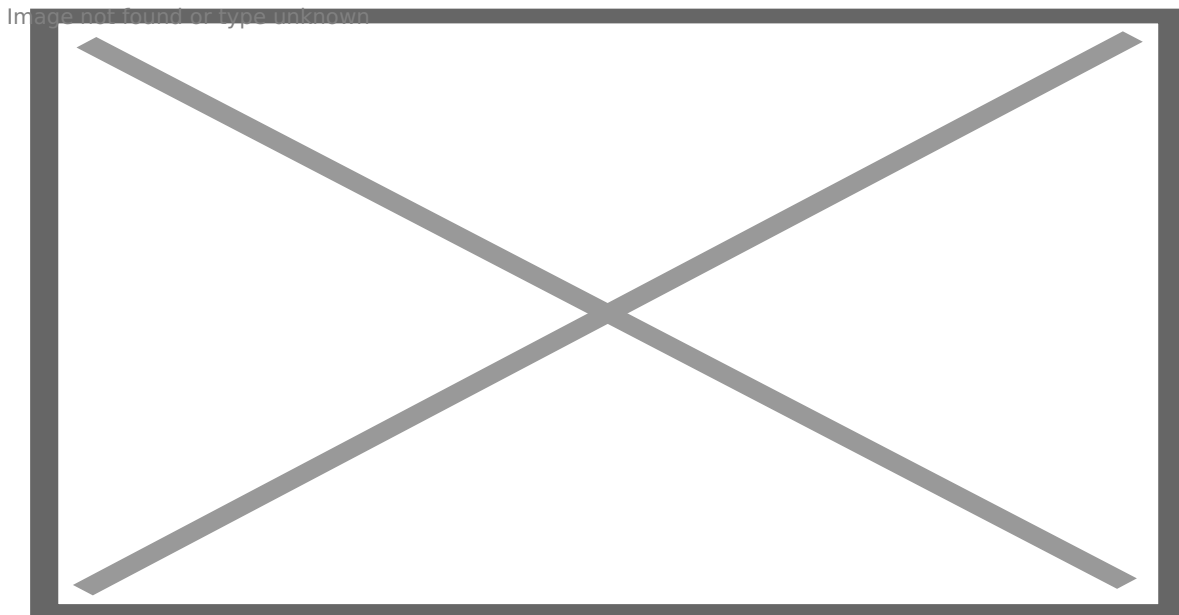


[Lives of the Eminent Philosophers](#)

Lives of the Eminent Philosophers

www.amazon.com.mx

Or the already mentioned Mensch version:

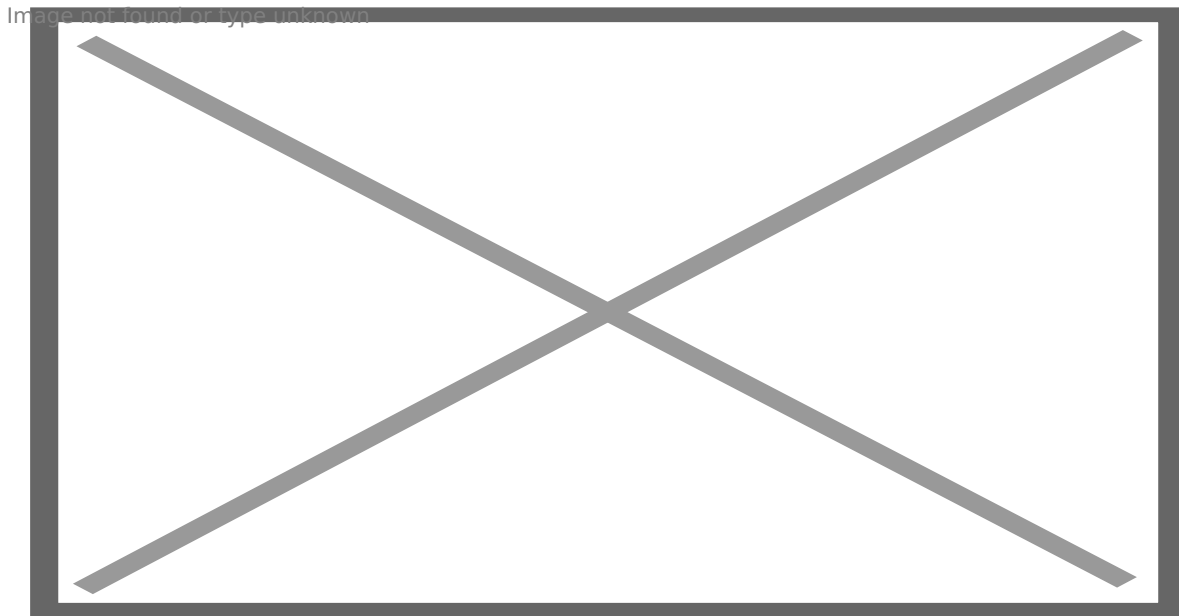


[Lives of the Eminent Philosophers: Compact Edition](#)

Lives of the Eminent Philosophers: Compact Edition

www.amazon.com

I also found this one, that is not specifically Diogenes but contains the "ancient biography of Epicurus" (and other texts, so that may be convenient):



[The Epicurus Reader: Selected Writings and Testimonia](#)

The Epicurus Reader: Selected Writings and Testimonia

www.amazon.com.mx

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Introduction

The ancient biography of Epicurus

The extant letters

Ancient collections of maxims

Doxographical reports

The testimony of Cicero

The testimony of Lucretius

The polemic of Plutarch

Short fragments and testimonia from known works:

\* From On Nature

- \* From the Puzzles
- \* From On the Goal
- \* From the Symposium
- \* From Against Theophrastus
- \* Fragments of Epicurus' letters

Short fragments and testimonia from uncertain works:

- \* Logic and epistemology
- \* Physics and theology
- \* Ethics

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## **Biografía del autor**

Brad Inwood is Professor of Philosophy and Classics, University of Toronto.

Lloyd P. Gerson is Professor of Philosophy, University of Toronto.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of August 30, 2021 at 9:46 AM**

The Epicurus reader is well respected. I would be careful about the Yonge and Hicks versions from Amazon as they may be cheap reprints. Have you searched Ebay or places like Abebooks?

[Don](#) may have recommendations....

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### **Post by “Don” of August 30, 2021 at 12:27 PM**

[Quote from Cassius](#)

The Epicurus reader is well respected

Agreed.

I'd be wary of Yonge and Hicks too, but all of them are going to have their idiosyncrasies per our conversation above. You can't rely on one translation, which is what makes the plethora of online editions so beneficial.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of August 30, 2021 at 12:31 PM**

Yes and I was referring to the tendency of Amazon to convert scans of old books to "print on demand" which may turn out to be of a quality inferior to what you can get at a used book store. I haven't ordered many like that but it's my understanding that the print on demand product might not be satisfactory in some cases. I always prefer the originals when possible.

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### **Post by “Don” of August 30, 2021 at 1:36 PM**

[Quote from Cassius](#)

. I always prefer the originals when possible.

That's why I liked the Internet Archive and HathiTrust so much. They have the originals 😊

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### **Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 30, 2021 at 4:17 PM**

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Have you searched Ebay or places like Abebooks?

On AbeBooks I couldn't find Baiely's, but their search function is not very good, I'll give it another try there and ebay. Thanks.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

The Epicurus reader is well respected

How come it hadn't come up as one of the top recommendations?

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### **Post by “Don” of August 30, 2021 at 6:49 PM**

[Quote from camotero](#)

How come it hadn't come up as one of the top recommendations?

I think one of the issues is that it's an anthology and all the texts are available elsewhere.

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### **Post by “Don” of August 30, 2021 at 7:36 PM**

In all honesty, my go-to resource is the Perseus Digital Library  
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/>

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### **Post by “Cassius” of August 30, 2021 at 7:37 PM**

Yes it is not really focused on Laertius and contains other material as well.

It's good to have too, but I think you want a translation of the entire set of books. They are actually fun to read

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### **Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of September 4, 2021 at 4:58 PM**

Well the Epicurus Reader has just arrived. The back cover reads as follows:

"A total philosophy of life, death, religion, science, ethics, and culture promising liberation from the obstacles that stand in the way of our happiness, the teachings of Epicurus claimed many thousand committed followers all over the Mediterranean world and deeply influenced later European thought. From the first years of its development, however, Epicureanism faced hostile opposition, and, as a result, much of our evidence for the content of its teaching is unhelpful and even misleading.

The Epicurus Reader fills the need for a reliable selection and translation of the main surviving evidence, some of it never previously translated into English. Included here, with exception of Lucretius' DRN, are the most important surviving texts of a system of thought that even today remains a powerful living philosophy. "

So I'm hopeful that the translation will be pro Epicurus.

From what I glimpsed, and as the cover says, the biography of DL is not complete but rather just selections of the text.

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## **Post by "Cassius" of September 4, 2021 at 5:11 PM**

### [Quote from camotero](#)

So I'm hopeful that the translation will be pro Epicurus.

Well the trick there is "What is the meaning of 'pro-Epicurus?'" It's pretty safe to say that most or all of the writers who have devoted the time to write a book about him in the last 100 years would call themselves "pro-Epicurus" -- but the issue is what do they think Epicurus taught, especially in terms of engagement with the world, asceticism, relationship to Stoicism, relationship to standard Platonic doctrine, etc.

Every one of the writers on my "unfriendly" list, starting perhaps with Cyril Bailey himself, I rate as unfriendly not because they don't think they are personally well disposed toward Epicurus, but that their version of Epicurean philosophy is, in my humble opinion, antithetical to what Epicurus himself was teaching and wanted the world to understand.

That's why here on the page we've tried to summarize some of those important points, especially in the "Not Neo-Epicurean, but Epicurean" list, as well as even in the shorter golden graphic of four key elements of what Epicurus taught. Most people don't argue about the "no supernatural gods," "no life after death" part, although even there I find many writers want to

gloss over that as if that's not as important as the "pleasure" issue.

But by the time you get to "all good and evil consists in sensation" (a bright line that there is no absolute virtue) and "pleasure is the beginning and end of the blessed life" (which ought to be clear enough) it takes significant explanation to lay out where the battle lines are, and unless people get directed to a source that wants to dive into those issues (like this website, or to some extent DeWitt) then they don't even see that the issues exist.

[Quote from camotero](#)

From what I glimpsed, and as the cover says, the biography of DL is not complete but rather just selections of the text.

Yes, that is what I recall. It's a "selection" from Book ten, if i recall. So that makes it a good supplement but not a full replacement to DL himself. I would still advocate you find one of the used (or new I guess) Loeb Editions (green sleeve). There are significant references to Epicurus in other sections as well as Book Ten, so ultimately you'll want to read the full thing.

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**Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of September 4, 2021 at 5:38 PM**

Well, the names in the cover are predominantly published in:

Brad Inwood: Stoicism

LP Gerson: Platonism

DS Hutchinson: Plato and Aristotle

So there's that. But perhaps this is common in all professional philosophers?

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**Post by “Don” of September 4, 2021 at 6:13 PM**

[Quote from camotero](#)

Well, the names in the cover are predominantly published in:

Brad Inwood: Stoicism

LP Gerson: Platonism

DS Hutchinson: Plato and Aristotle

So there's that. But perhaps this is common in all professional philosophers?

I guess the best advice is:

Proceed with caution.

Please do let us all know what you think of the book!!

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### **Post by "Cassius" of September 4, 2021 at 6:24 PM**

No, Camotero, I think you are going to find that those writers are true to their areas of expertise.

They are not going to be partisans of Epicurus against their own specialities and interests.

They are going to provide valuable perspective, but you are going to have to be wary of their predispositions.

There is only one reputable academic writer I know of who is not a Stoic, not a Platonist, not an Aristotelian, and who devoted his career to the study of Epicurus because he was so sympathetic to Epicurus' perspective and his importance to the world.

You probably don't need me to repeat his name but of course I will: **Norman DeWitt.**

Note: As a possible second example we might want to consider Hugh Munro. In reading Munro's commentaries on Lucretius I have found Munro to be a defender of Epicurus/Lucretius' ethical positions against his detractors. I don't have a good list of cites to give you to that, but if I were looking for someone else who apparently devoted his academic career to Epicurus/Lucretius I think Hugh Munro is a good bet.

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### **Post by "Cassius" of September 4, 2021 at 6:32 PM**

Darn. I collected some of Bailey's negative comments about Epicurus here, but I thought I had some positive ones by Munro as well. I will keep an eye out for what I remember but I remembers some distinct kind words for Epicurus' ethics and negative words about the Stoics in one of Munro's introductory commentaries on Lucretius;

[The "Yea-Sayers" and the "Nay-Sayers" - NewEpicurean](#)

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### **Post by "Mathitis Kipouros" of September 6, 2021 at 9:06 AM**

Quote from Herodotus on epicureanfriends.com

For we have frequent need of the general view, but not so often of the detailed exposition. Indeed it is necessary to go back on the main principles, and constantly to fix in one's memory enough to give one the most essential comprehension of the truth.

Quote from Herodotus from Epicurus Reader

For we frequently need the overall application [of the intellect], but not so often the detailed application.

36. We must, then, approach those [general points] continually, and get into our memory an amount [of doctrine] sufficient to permit the most vital application [of the intellect] to the facts;

The word application is what's confusing for me here. If he hadn't put "[of the intellect]", I would've read it as application of the principles. I guess "application of the intelect" could be analogous to "view"?

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### **Post by "Cassius" of September 6, 2021 at 9:45 AM**

On first thought Camotero I think the issue is that there are a couple(?) Of text references to Epicurus talking about "casting the mind" such as in his figurative journey through space, and so that tends to get picked up by commentators when they see something about "applying the mind.". Pretty clearly Epicurus stressed that thinking requires action of the mind applied to observations, and I don't think there is much more to it than that. The bottom line for me would

be that we don't often need the full details but we do need the overall outline in order to apply our minds in an organized way to figuring out problems consistent with the overall view. You could reverse that and say you are applying the principles to the problem but I doubt that makes much difference.

Maybe you are asking something else?