



The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers

Diogenes Laërtius

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Purchase of this book includes free trial access to www.million-books.com where you can read more than a million books for free. This is an OCR edition with typos. Excerpt from book: in the city of the Prieneans, then we ourselves will come thither and settle near you. LIFE OF SOLON. I. Solon the son of Execestides, a native of Salamis, was the first person who introduced among the Athenians, an ordinance for the lowering of debts; for this was the name given to the release of the bodies and possessions of the debtors. For men used to borrow on the security of their own persons, and many became slaves in consequence of their inability to pay ; and as seven talents were owed to him as a part of his paternal inheritance when he succeeded to it, he was the first person who made a composition with his debtors, and who exhorted the other men who had money owing to them to do likewise, and this ordinance was called *tsiiffd%8im*; aud the reason why is plain. After that he enacted his other laws, which it would take a long time to enumerate; and he wrote them on wooden revolving tablets. II. But what was his most important act of all was, when there had been a great dispute about his native land Salamis, between the Athenians and Megarians, and when the Athenians had met with many disasters in war, and had passed a decree that if any one proposed to the people to go to war for the sake of Salamis he should be punished with death, he then pretended to be mad and putting on a crown rushed into the market place, and there he recited to the Athenians by the agency of a crier, the elegies which he had composed, and which were all directed to the subject of Salamis, and by these means he excited them; and so they made war again upon the Megarians and conquered them by means of Solon. And the elegies which had the greatest influence on the Athenians were these: — Would that I were a man of Pholegandros, f Or small Sicinna,) rather than of Athens : Vide Thirlw...

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Pavel Moiseenko says

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Jeroen Bernds en says

Een geleerd werk over de bekendste Griekse filosofen. Het leest niet constant prettig, maar is enorm interessant als je de filosofie een warm hart toedraagt. Laat je niet misleiden door de titel, dit is beslist geen toegankelijke inleiding! Vaak staan dingen zomaar na elkaar... Toch echt de moeite waard, al is het boek volgens mij nu uitverkocht en moeilijk verkrijgbaar. Hieronder media recensies:[return][return]Het klassieke overzicht van de Griekse filosofie, een onmisbare bron voor de kennis van de Griekse cultuur en de bijzondere positie van de filosofie daarin.[return][return]'Voor de kennis van de Griekse filosofie is dit boek een waardevolle bron omdat het een van de weinige werken in zijn soort is die ons zijn overgeleverd. Het is in de eerste plaats een bonte verzameling anekdoten, brieven, testamenten, uitreksels, citaten en epigrammen, waaronder vele van de schrijver zelf. Al lezende leert men veel over de Griekse cultuur en over de bijzondere positie die filosofen daarin innamen.' - Trouw[return][return]Van Diogenes Laërtius weten we bijna niets. Het gebrek aan biografische gegevens is des te opmerkelijker omdat hijzelf 82 biografieën heeft geschreven, waarin hij een hang naar volledigheid toont die zeer humoristisch blijkt uit te pakken. Hij schreef alles op wat hij wist en bracht nauwelijks enige differentiatie aan in zijn mededelingen. Hij is een voorbeeld van de encyclopedische autodidact, die altijd uitmunt door ijver en door gebrek aan kieskeurigheid en scep sis. Zijn levenswerk bevat in tien boeken de levens van tachtig wij sgeren, van de Zeven Wijzen tot Epicurus.[return]Omdat de bronnen waaruit Diogenes Laërtius putte voor het merendeel verloren zijn gegaan, is zijn compilatiewerk over de leer en het leven van alle hem bekende Griekse filosofen van grote waarde. Bovendien is het werk, mede door de vele anekdoten, gemakkelijk en plezierig leesbaar.

Holly Foley (Procida) says

Dry as toast... but it does go to show that writing has evolved as a craft over the last 2000 years..

Markus says

Diogenes Laertius

This otherwise unknown Roman author is thought to have lived at the beginning of the third century during the reign of Sextius.

His work on:

“Life and Doctrines of Eminent Philosophers”

Spanned over three centuries, from Thales (640BC-545BC) to Epicurus (342BC-270BC), and the most important historical philosophers, some of them well known, but others more obscure to me.

It is presented as a mixture of a short, humorous biography, with many personal habits, reputations and behaviors, and a well-elaborated description of their philosophical beliefs, lecturings, and writings.

Diogenes Laertius must have collected his information from hundreds of Ancient Greek sources and refers to a great number of quotations.

For me this was a very pleasant reading, giving an idea of their everyday life, but more importantly an idea of the vast amount of thinking and writing on how many subjects and into how many dead ends have been necessary to lead up to our knowledge of today in many fields of science and philosophy.

A ‘must read’ for anybody interested in Ancient Greece and Philosophy.

Xavier says

Het laatste boek rekt af met de andere wijsgerige tradities en poneert de beste natuurkundige (atoom)theorie die dusver bestaat.

X Epicurus, 87-89 (p.444):

"Want ons bestaan heeft geen behoefte meer aan onredelijkheid en aan ongefundeerde meningen maar aan een ongestoord leven. Alles nu vindt zonder schokken voortgang als alles verklaard wordt aan de hand van meerdere oplossingen die met de verschijnselen overeenkomen, wanneer we op passende wijze daarvoor plausibele verklaringen aanvaarden. Maar wanneer men het ene aanvaardt maar het andere verwerpt dat evenzeer met de verschijnselen overeenkomt, dan is het duidelijk dat we de natuurwetenschap in de steek laten en helemaal vervallen tot de mythe."

Tegen de sceptici dat de wijze niet overal het antwoord op schuldig te blijven zal en tegen de stoa dat niet alle fouten gelijk zijn. (p456) Tegen de cyrenaïci dat genot ook in een staat van rust (na de bevrediging) kan zijn en zielenonrust erger is dan lichamelijke pijn omdat die zich niet tot het heden beperkt maar ook het verleden en de toekomst omvat. (p462)

"We moeten daarbij nog bedenken dat wij 'onlichamelijk' in de meest gangbare betekenis gebruiken voor iets wat op zichzelf gedacht kan worden. Nu kan men zich alleen het lege als een onlichamelijk zelfstandig iets denken. Maar het lege kan niet iets doen of iets ondergaan, het verschaf alleen aan de lichamen de mogelijkheid om zich erdoor te bewegen. Dus zij die zeggen dat de ziel onlichamelijk is, bazelen maar wat." (p436)

Wesam Karam says

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Richard says

Different edition: "Loeb Classical Library," v. 1, Books 1-5, tr. R.D. Hicks (HUP, 1972 [1925]). Read in small pieces in bed, at night, into sleep.

My interest in this has existed since the late '60s when I was working on Swift's A TALE OF A TUB, but it was tangential and just stuck in my mind. I was interested in mining for its nuggets; v. 1 contains longer entries on Plato and Aristotle, but also follows philosophers of the Academy and the Peripatetics.

Nuggets? Not so many as to make this worthwhile from a philosophical standpoint though I wish some prof had made reference to this work and noted its authentic historical value. Diogenes seems to have collected his subjects' wills, giving a sense of their lives.

Nuggets? Aristippus and his followers opinions regarding pleasure and pain (pp 217 ff.); "obstetric dialogue" (p. 329) and other forms; of Arcesilaus, a first to a) suspend judgment, b) argue both sides of a question, c) "meddle with the system handed down by Plato and, by means of question and answer, to make it more closely resemble eristic," i.e., aiming at winning the argument rather than achieving truth; Bion: "He called old age the harbour of all ills; at least they all take refuge there" (p. 427); Diogenes L. on Lacydes who died of drink, described Bacchus as "the Loosener" (p. 437), regarding limbs, a sobriquet I might associate with the bowels--perhaps Diogenes was merely being discreet.

There hints here for means for a philosophical neophyte to approach Plato and Aristotle's ideas (as well as others) that might have proved helpful; I can remember my first semester of college in a confrontation with Aristotle's PHYSICS, somebody's idea of a bad joke, I still think. Oh, well, perhaps I'll return to it, older and less impatient/stupid/self-indulgent.

Ivan says

Well, the anecdotes were fun to read.

Erick says

Much of our knowledge of the Pre-Socratics and other Greek philosophers, comes from Diogenes Laertius. While there may be some criticisms that can be provided about this work, its weaknesses are far outweighed by its strengths as a primary source.

Obviously, many biographical details of the philosophers here treated are anecdotal and probably not historically accurate in every case, but that doesn't really detract from the work. I think Laertius did a fairly good job at presenting the teachings of the philosophers treated. One can simply look at the philosophers whose works are still extant in order to show that he was faithful in summarizing them. He certainly humanizes them to a great extent; e.g. Diogenes the Cynic comes off as a bit of an arrogant blowhard; Aristippus the Cyrenaic seems to be more of a comedian (in the modern sense) than a philosopher; and

Epicurus comes off as bit of a cult leader. Laertius does seem to be interested in particular philosophers more than in others. He spends an ample space on philosophers such as Plato, Diogenes and Epicurus. This may indicate his personal interest in these philosophers, or possibly their acknowledged influence. This is really an excellent early survey of Greek philosophy and thus essential reading for those interested in the subject of philosophy in general and Greek philosophy in particular.
