

Epicurus

Reading 12 – Simplicity of Life – Plain Food & Drink among Friends

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"O Epicurus! You who were first able to raise so bright a light from so great a darkness, shedding light on the blessings of life! . . . For as soon as your system of philosophy that arose in your divine intellect begins to proclaim aloud the nature of things, the terrors of the mind disperse and the walls of the world open wide. . . . You placed human existence from amid great waves of trouble and great darkness of the mind into a condition of tranquility and a clear light. . . . I follow you, the glory of the Greeks!" —Titus Lucretius Carus

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Reading 12

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The source for the following text is

Book 10 of Diogenes Laertius' *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*.

All section numbers are part of Book 10. For example, section 11, or [11], is 10.11.

This reading comes from the Cave's

The Best of Epicurus: The Life, Writings & Teachings of Epicurus the Greek Philosopher.

Simplicity of Life

Plain Food & Drink among Friends

Diogenes Laertes: [10]

EPICURUS' FRIENDS CAME to him from all parts and lived with him in his Garden, as Apollodorus affirms. He also reports that Epicurus purchased the Garden for eighty minae.

[11] And Diocles, in the third book of his *Epitome*, speaks of them as living a quite simple and frugal life. Anyway, they were, he says, content with a cup of

poor wine. Otherwise, they were water drinkers.

Diocles also declares that Epicurus did not think that their property should be held in common, as required by the saying of Pythagoras about the shared good of friends. In his view, such a practice implied mistrust. And without trust, there is no friendship.

In his own letters, Epicurus declares that he was

content with inexpensive bread and water alone. In one, he says, “Send me a small earthen pot of cheese so that, when I wish, I may feast luxuriously.” This was the man who taught that pleasure is the goal of life.

And here is the epigram in which Athenaeus commemorates him [12]:

O men! You weary yourselves with toil for inferior things, insatiably beginning quarrels and battles for gain. And yet the wealth of nature is held to small and humble limits, whereas groundless judgments suggest unlimited growth. Neocles’ wise son heard this message from the Muses or from the sacred tripod at Delphi.

So ends Reading 12. See you in **another reading or item**.

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