

Epicurus

Reading 1 – Epicurean Philosophy – The Three Basic Parts & Epicurus' Works

Thank you for supporting The Classics Cave.

You'll find books, readings, workouts, and more at www.theclassicscave.com. **Do you want to support the Cave's mission?** Let's talk! Contact Tim Young at tim@theclassicscave.com to sponsor or donate to the Cave.

"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

The Classics Cave ▪ www.theclassicscave.com

Reading 1

Thanks for supporting The Classics Cave.

Please visit and support our sponsors.

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 29, or [29], is 10.29.

This reading comes from the Cave's

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

Epicurean Philosophy

The Three Basic Parts & Epicurus' Works

IN WHAT COMES, I, Diogenes Laertius, will endeavor to give Epicurus' views that are expressed in his works. I will quote three of his letters in which he has given an epitome of his whole philosophical system. [29] I will also set down his *Principal Teachings* and any other of his views that seem worth citing. I will do this so that you may be in the position to study the

philosopher from every angle and know how to judge him.

The first letter is addressed to Herodotus. It is about natural philosophy, or physics. The second letter is to Pythocles. It deals with things high in the sky, or celestial phenomena. The third letter is addressed to Menoeceus. It is about human life.

THE THREE BASIC PARTS OF PHILOSOPHY

We must begin with . . . some preliminary remarks about Epicurus' division of philosophy. He divides philosophy into three parts—the canonical, the physical, and the ethical, which is to say, canonic, physics, and ethics.

[30] The canonical serves as an introduction to Epicurus' system. It is contained in a single work of his titled *The Canon*. The physical part includes his entire theory of nature. It is covered in the thirty-seven books of his work *On Nature* and, in summary form, in his letters. The ethical part is about matters having to do with choice and avoidance. It may be found in his work *On Human Life*, in his letters, and in his treatise *On the Goal of Human Life*.

Most people usually join the canonical part of

Epicurus' philosophy with the physical part. The canonical part deals with the standard or criterion of truth, that is, the means by which one may judge what is true. It also deals with the first principle, or the elementary part, of philosophy. The physical part is about becoming and perishing, as well as other aspects of nature. The ethical part, on the other hand, considers human life, that is, what is best to choose and what is best to avoid, as well as the end or goal of human life.

[31] Epicurus and his followers reject dialectic, that is, the art of discussion, as superfluous. They hold that in their inquiries, natural philosophers should be content to employ the ordinary terms for things.

SELECTED WORKS OF EPICURUS HAVING TO DO WITH THE THREE PARTS OF PHILOSOPHY [27-28]

Canonic

On the Criterion, or The Canon
On Vision
On the Sense of Touch
Teachings on the Feelings—addressed to Timocrates
On Images
On Presentations

Physics

On Nature
On Atoms and Void
Epitome of Objections to the Natural Philosophers
On the Gods
On the Angle in the Atom
On Music

Teachings about Disease—addressed to Mithras

Ethics

On Desire
Principal Teachings
On Choice and Avoidance
On the Goal of Human Life
On Piety
On Human Life—four books
On Just and Honest Dealing
On Fate
Discovery of the Future
Exhortation
On Justice and Other Virtues
On Gifts and Gratitude
On Kingship

So ends Reading 1. See you in **another reading or item**.



THE CLASSICS CAVE
 The earliest light for a brighter life
www.theclassicscave.com



Thank you for supporting The Classics Cave.

You'll find books, readings, workouts, and more at www.theclassicscave.com. **Do you want to support the Cave's mission?** Let's talk! Contact Tim Young at tim@theclassicscave.com to sponsor or donate to the Cave.

"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

The Classics Cave ▪ www.theclassicscave.com



THE CLASSICS CAVE

The earliest light for a brighter life

www.theclassicscave.com

