

Epicurus

Reading 10 – The Life of Epicurus – His Birth, Life, Death & School

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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 10

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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 1, or [1], is 10.1.

This reading comes from the Cave's

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

The Life of Epicurus

His Birth, Life, Death & School

DIOGENES LAERTIUS writes: [1]

IN HIS BOOK *On Noble Birth*, Metrodorus reports that Epicurus, the son of Neocles and Chaerestrates, was from Athens. Within Athens, he was from the deme of Gargettus. He also says that he was from the family of the Philaidae.

Some others, including Heraclides in his *Epitome* of Sotion, declare that Epicurus was raised in Samos after the Athenians had sent settlers there. He later

came to Athens at the age of eighteen, at the time when Xenocrates was lecturing at the Academy, and Aristotle in Chalcis.

Upon the death of Alexander of Macedon and the expulsion of the Athenian settlers from Samos by Perdiccas, Epicurus left Athens to join his father in Colophon. He spent some time there collecting students before returning to Athens later on in the

archonship of Anaxicrates. There he spent time with some others studying philosophy. Subsequently, he put forward his own unique views and organized the school that is named after him. . . .

[10] Though Epicurus lived when very difficult times prevailed in his homeland, he nevertheless passed his life in Greece. That said, he did sail across the sea to Ionia two or three times in order to visit his friends there.

As for his friends, they came to him from all parts and lived with him in his Garden, as Apollodorus affirms. . . .

[14] In his *Chronology*, Apollodorus reports that Epicurus was born in the third year of the 109th Olympiad, in the archonship of Sosigenes, on the seventh day of the month of Gamelion, in the seventh year after the death of Plato.

[15] When he was thirty-two, Epicurus organized and ran a school for five years in Mytilene and Lampascus. He then moved to Athens.

Epicurus died in Athens in the second year of the

127th Olympiad, in the archonship of Pytharatus. He was seventy-two. Hermarchus, the son of Agemortus, a Mytilenian man, took over the school.

In his letters, Hermarchus states that Epicurus died thanks to stones that blocked the flow of his urine. He suffered this malady for fourteen days. Hermippus relates that he entered a bronze bath of warm water and asked for wine unmixed with water, which he drank to the last. [16] After this, having already encouraged his friends to keep his teachings in mind, he died.

Here is something of my own about Epicurus:

“Farewell, my friends. Keep in mind my teachings.” Such were Epicurus’ last words before he died. He stepped into a warm bath and drank unmixed wine. His next drink was in cold Hades.

Such was the life of the man Epicurus, and such was his death.

So ends Reading 10. See you in **another reading or item**.

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