



Lives of Eminent Philosophers, Vol 1, Books 1-5

Diogenes Laërtius , Robert Drew Hicks (translator)

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This rich compendium on the lives and doctrines of philosophers ranges over three centuries, from Thales to Epicurus (to whom the whole tenth book is devoted); 45 important figures are portrayed. Diogenes Laertius carefully compiled his information from hundreds of sources and enriches his accounts with numerous quotations.

Diogenes Laertius lived probably in the earlier half of the 3rd century CE, his ancestry and birthplace being unknown. His history, in ten books, is divided unscientifically into two 'Successions' or sections: 'Ionian' from Anaximander to Theophrastus and Chrysippus, including the Socratic schools; 'Italian' from Pythagoras to Epicurus, including the Eleatics and sceptics. It is a very valuable collection of quotations and facts. The Loeb Classical Library edition of Diogenes Laertius is in two volumes.

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From Reader Review Lives of Eminent Philosophers, Vol 1, Books 1-5 for online ebook

Michal Paszkiewicz says

A collection of anecdotes and short biographies about some of the more and less known Greek philosophers.

The book is enjoyable and as a whole, gives an interesting account of what it was like to be learned in ancient Greece.

Cameron says

These short biographies of various ancient Greek philosophers are highly entertaining and worth their weight in gold for any serious enthusiast of pre-Socratic philosophy. Despite the fact that Laertius is a nearly anonymous Roman figure and little is verifiable of his source material, much of which has been lost to time, the sheer number of details concerning the lifestyle and sayings of history's most revered philosophers makes for a highly compelling read. What else can you say? If you study philosophy, this is the sort of book you dream about stumbling across.

Evan says

Pretty dull survey; Aristippus was chill though

Winterwade says

A fascinating volume despite the perhaps somewhat dry-sounding title, the idiosyncrasies and outright bizarreness of many of these men, some unquestionably amongst the greatest minds of any age, makes for enjoyable and informative reading.

Erik Graff says

I read the two volumes of the Loeb edition of Diogenes Laertius upon entering Loyola University Chicago's MA/PhD program in philosophy. (cf. note to Volume Two)

Doctor VanNostrum says

A crisp translation. This is the first book in the Loeb library that I have read. They are wonderful books.

Arthur Kyriazis says

the two volumes of Diogenes Laertius provide original source material on the ancient philosophers--and in most cases, this is all that is left.

99% of what you read in other books actually comes from this one. So reading this in the original Greek makes eminent sense, if you really want to grasp the lives and few fragments we have handed down to us of the many philosophers of ancient times.

The rest consists of quotations from treatises about lost works by famous philosophers, such as Plato et al., whose views usually contradict those of the philosopher whose work has been lost.

Thus, this work, written while everything was around, is essential.

Peter J. says

This was a great read. It is easy to fall into the mistake of being overawed by the eloquence and reputation of a philosopher and overlook their shortcomings. There is nothing like reading the words of other brilliant sages pointing out these shortcomings for you to sober one up. This work was full of such healthful quips, leaving one disillusioned about the man behind the philosophy and therefore more free to focus on the philosophy.

Andrew says

Both volumes of Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* provide excellent source material for students of the Hellenistic Philosophers. While less helpful for Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, Diogenes offers a treasure trove of doctrines, letters, and biographical anecdotes on Epicurus, the early Stoics, Diogenes the Cynic, and a host of others. For any student of Hellenistic philosophy--required reading.

James Violand says

Here are the ancient philosophers. Their biographies encapsulates their positions on reality. Wonderful read, but should not be used as a shortcut to reading their works.
