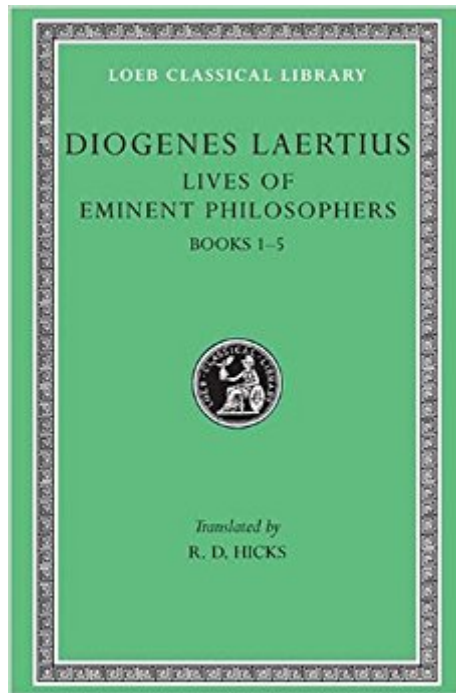


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Diogenes Laertius: Lives Of Eminent Philosophers, Volume I, Books 1-5 (Loeb Classical Library No. 184)



Synopsis

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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This opening line from Diogenes Laertius (as translated by Robert Drew Hicks) neatly sums up the approach of Diogenes in compiling this amazing amount of material about the ancient philosophers. Some of the material is valuable, some is stuff...but even the "stuff" is pretty interesting coming from such an "ancient" compiler (one dating for Diogenes is (ca. A.D. 225-250). According to Herbert S. Long in his "Introduction" to Vol. 1 (there are 2 volumes in the complete set of the Loeb Classical Library Diogenes published by Harvard Univ. Press -- Vol. 1: ISBN 0-674-99203-2 and Vol. 2: ISBN 0-674-99204-0) -- Diogenes ranges from being a source of valuable information about the lives of the ancient philosophers to a source of highly readable, even entertaining, but sometimes unreliable

thoughtbites. A few things Long has to say are: "His account of Plato, one of his longest, clearly shows how superficial and unreliable he was [sigh...]." "The tone of his work as a whole suits better a man of the world who happened to be interested in philosophers, but more as men and writers than as philosophers in a technical sense." Which means that Diogenes can appeal to the general reader who is interested in anecdotes and fascinating out-of-the-way puns and "gossip" about the philosophers (as compiled from tomes of secondary and tertiary sources)-- as well as to the scholar interested in seeing the effect of a compiler/synthesizer as a source of information.

We know but very little, if not almost nothing about Diogenes Laertius. However, this book, written, compiled by him is of tremendous, by far even underestimated IMPORTANCE FOR OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GREEK PHILOSOPHY. The shortage of biographical data is rather remarkable while he wrote no less than 82 biographies of the antique thinkers and their theories. In his work one can easily distinct an inexhaustive passion for "COMPLETENESS", which turns out quite HUMORISTIC ... This tune makes it a real delight to read this superb collection of his "memories", the result of the tremendous MEMORY (and work, research) he must have had. He wrote down EVERYTHING HE KNEW and almost didn't note any differentiation in his own "communications". LAERTIUS STANDS FOR THE ENCYCLOPAEDIC AUTODIDACT, a man who always excels in zeal ... and lack of being fastidious and scepticism towards his subject. His so IMPORTANT, MARVELOUS LIFEWORK contains - in 10 books - the description of the lives of about 80 philosophers, from the "SEVEN WIZARDS" until Epicure. While the vast majority of the sources out of which Diogenes Laertius collected his knowledge have definitely dried up, are destroyed, HIS COMPILATION about the life and the doctrines and theories of all the famous Greek thinkers that were known to him, IS OF INVALUABLE IMPORTANCE up until today for life itself, for history and of course for philosophy. We very probably would never have known now about "his protagonists", about Greek philosophy. What is more, thanks to the many anecdotes, epigrams, letters, citations, testaments, etc... THIS OEUVRE IS EASILY READABLE ... WITH A LOT OF HUMOR !!

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