

# On The Meaning Of The Word "Canon"

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<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...39242846124677/>

I just glanced at the new website [Yiannis Tsapras](#) linked for the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae, and I noticed something that may be worthy of comment. On their page entitled CANON, they have a book they describe as containing "a searchable database and a bibliographic guide to the authors and works included in the TLG® Digital Library." That reminds me of what I think is a **\*\*major\*\*** distinction between what "canon" means in "Epicurean Canon" vs. "canon" as the word is generally used today. For example, check this link at wikipedia for "canon": <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canon> On this "disambiguation" page, they have ten or so possible meanings for "canon", all of them referencing what amounts to a "body of laws."

As I understand it, the Epicureans used the word "canon" in a much different sense, not to refer to a "body of laws" but to the "tests of truth." In Epicurean terms the "tests of truth" are NOT a set of written rules, laws, or guidelines, but the faculties of sensation give us by nature: (1) five senses, (2) the faculty of pain and pleasure, and (3) the faculty of anticipations. The Epicurean Canon is NOT the [Principal Doctrines](#), or any set of rules whatsoever. The Epicurean Canon is applied by trusting the senses and intelligently processing the information they provide, with the test of truth always requiring that anything considered to be true must be validated by information provided by these three categories of faculties.

Here is Bailey's translation where Diogenes Laertius explains this point. It is crucial, because Epicurean philosophy is not a system of logical syllogisms constructed from reason alone. It is above all a procedure for intelligently following the lead of Nature.