

Greek Atomism and subatomic particles. 'Atomos' and 'Ameres'

Post by "Don" of October 30, 2023 at 11:00 PM

I'm intrigued. For ease of reference:

Quote from Diogenes Laertius 10.58

58] "We must consider the minimum perceptible by sense (Τό τε ἐλάχιστον τὸ ἐν τῇ αἰσθήσει) as not corresponding to that which is capable of being traversed, i.e. is extended,⁸⁹ nor again as utterly unlike it, but as having something in common with the things capable of being traversed, though it is without distinction of parts. But when from the illusion created by this common property we think we shall distinguish something in the minimum, one part on one side and another part on the other side, it must be another minimum equal to the first which catches our eye. In fact, we see these minima one after another, beginning with the first, and not as occupying the same space ; nor do we see them touch one another's parts with their parts, but we see that by virtue of their own peculiar character (i.e. as being unit indivisibles) they afford a means of measuring magnitudes : there are more of them, if the magnitude measured is greater ; fewer of them, if the magnitude measured is less.

[59] "We must recognize that this analogy also holds of the minimum in the atom (ἐν τῇ ἀτόμῳ ἐλάχιστον); it is only in minuteness that it differs from that which is observed by sense, but it follows the same analogy. On the analogy of things within our experience we have declared that the atom has magnitude ; and this, small as it is, we have merely reproduced on a larger scale. And further, the least and simplest (τε τὰ ἐλάχιστα καὶ ἀμυγῆ)# things must be regarded as extremities of lengths, furnishing from themselves as units the means of measuring lengths, whether greater or less, the mental vision being employed, since direct observation is impossible. For the community which exists between them and the unchangeable parts (i.e. the minimal parts of area or surface) is sufficient to justify the conclusion so far as this goes. But it is not possible that these minima of the atom should group themselves together through the possession of motion.

#Note in Hicks' English translation:

i.e. "uncompounded." But von Arnim's ἀμερῆ, "void of parts," is more suitable.