

Is Motion One Of The Three Eternal Properties of Atoms? I.E. Are The Three Properties Shape, Size, and MOTION?

Post by "Cassius" of March 26, 2026 at 10:20 AM

This topic was also discussed in a recent zoom meeting. The answer appears debatable, and I see that Sedley's article "Epicurean Anti-Reductionism" has this to say (see especially footnote 29):

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 EPICUREAN ANTI-REDUCTIONISM

But being rather to body and space as such, at any level (3.4) — its weight, size, tangibility etc. to body, yielding and intangibility to space (Lucretius 1.413). Demetrius of Laconia (and others) if also seen to follow Lucretius, and void are, after all, unsharable, or, at least, by themselves, lack of individual properties.⁵⁰ And since the essential properties of atoms are void are knowable primarily through analogy with sensible bodies, Epicurus would tend to think of these as the shared properties of all bodies (for the specific case of tangibility and intangibility, see below). That is in fact the microscopic criticism of Epicurus' physics seen a rather unorthodox position in Epicurean metaphysics.

Next, we can note the mainly negative description of these properties' mode of existence — most of the points made apparently applying to both space. They are not to be thought of either as bodily parts (3.11), or as incorporeals (6.7, 16); these being notions primarily appropriate to per se atoms in point made explicitly for "incorporeal" at 29.16b.471. But they certainly exist: Epicurus does show both the Democritean extreme of making them eternal, and the Stoic extreme of having their existence at the price of making them bodily parts. In the case of permanent properties, they are perhaps parts of a unit — explicitly not material parts (3.12), but something more like conceptual parts (11-16).⁵¹ What does this amount to? One might be tempted to

⁵⁰ This already leaves some doubt over Demetrius of Laconia's study, and void, both unsharable, since both are unsharable, and the *modus* of atoms are for particular in the void (intangible in the matter).⁵¹ It is in accident, in which one thing is an accident at the moment, and both might include the same point in motion, and their respect, or it is impossible, in which one thing is in fact not impossible property which seems to me that with all bodies bodies might be their individuality.

⁵¹ Epicurus seems to be able to be the modes of conceptual parts (14, 15, 21, 29, by contrast with Demetrius 10), an aspect of material parts (51, 56), but, if it is 471, when, apparently, nothing

Here is the translation from Demetrius Lacon cited on page 306:

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the sense of having his interpretation of Epicurus as making atom an "accident of accidents", Demetrius "ex-ponit" (Epicurus) Epicurus as follows:

"Of things that exist some exist per se while others are viewed as belonging to per se things. What exist per se are things like the substances (cristall), namely body and void, while what are viewed as belonging to per se things are what they call "properties" (επιδημιον). Of these properties some are inseparable from the things of which they are properties, others are of a kind to be separated from them. Inseparable from the things of which they are properties are, for example, extension from body and non-extension from void. For body is inseparable without resistance, and so is void without non-resistance: these are permanent properties of each — resisting of the one, yielding of the other. Not inseparable from the things of which they are properties are, for example, motion and rest. For compound bodies are neither always in continual motion nor always at rest, but sometimes have the property of motion, sometimes of rest (although the atom in itself is in everlasting motion, since it must approach either void or body and if it should approach void it would through it because of its non-resistance, while if it should approach body it resists and moves away from it because of its resistance). Hence, the things which time accompanes are accidents ... I mean day, night, heat, summer and winter and lightning, motions and rest. For day and night are accidents of the surrounding air ..."

This could hardly be clearer:

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    existing things
    /      \
    per se substances      properties (επιδημιον)
    /      \              /      \
    bodies void inseparable not inseparable (= accidents)
    (10770,873)
  
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⁵¹ 15c. 220224.