

New Annual Event - The "Bread And Water Multimedia Award" - Nominations for 2021 Award (to be selected in December) Now Open!

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I don't have much more to offer at this point, but in glancing at [an article by David Konstan on Epicurean Physics](#), I see he makes a point similar to that which we are discussing -- that there are multiple levels of significance in textual issues that can at first appear very simple:

SOME SURPRISING AND INGENIOUS propositions have been attributed to Epicurus, and to some extent to Democritus, in modern interpretations of ancient atomic theory. These propositions betray a serious involvement by the atomists with the physical and philosophical implications of their doctrines on matter and the void. In place of commonsensical notions about small hard bodies falling or knocking about in space, we now find such sophisticated ideas as quantized space and time, discontinuous motion, theoretical minima—ideas comparable in their subtlety to the Eleatic paradoxes, which, as it seems, they were intended to resolve.¹ The advantage of these new interpretations is that they render a more satisfactory account of difficult arguments and principles in the Epicurean texts, they place the atomists squarely in the tradition of ancient philosophy from Parmenides through Aristotle, and they reveal a degree of philosophical intelligence behind ancient atomism that makes it a stimulating subject for investigation. At the same time they raise new problems, inconsistencies, and paradoxes which demand still further analytical machinery for their solution. Not that there is any cause for consternation in this fact. Even the most refined theories of modern physics produce singularities, limiting cases, and other conceptual potholes where the structure breaks down. It is entirely to be expected that a deeper analysis of the premises of ancient atomism should uncover new dilemmas, which in turn make fresh demands on the theory. There is nevertheless the real danger that in pursuing such lines of speculation as far as possible, we may begin to lose touch with the ancient texts and wander about in intellectual regions which, however fascinating in themselves, have little or nothing to do with the thought of Epicurus and his followers. That is, even if the problems we discover are real ones for the theory, the Epicureans may have been unaware of them or unimpressed by them, and in either case may not have given them much thought. But sometimes engagement with the theoretical issues in their own right points to new significance in familiar texts or brings together apparently unrelated propositions in such a way as to suggest strongly a coherent address to the problems posed. At all events, this is the method of exposition which I have adopted: to raise what seem to me problems and paradoxes in Epicurean atomism, to respond to them, as far as I can, using the intellectual apparatus of the ancient theory, and to indicate, where possible, how the texts support the reconstructions which I offer.

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The present article is a revised and expanded version of the first three sections of a paper distributed by