

Democritus' "Nothing is truly real but atoms and void" statement

Post by "Don" of October 4, 2022 at 5:02 PM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

Quote

1) Joshua do you have a cite for the precise way you quoted " By convention sweet and by convention bitter, by convention hot, by convention cold, by convention color; but in reality atoms and void."

I like that version as making a very clear point, but maybe that is someone's interpretation?

νόμωι (γάρ φησι) γλυκὸ καὶ νόμωι πικρὸν, νόμωι θερμόν, νόμωι ψυχρόν, νόμωι χροίη, ἔτεήι δὲ ἄτομα καὶ κενόν (Tetralogies of Thrasyllus, 9; Sext. Emp. adv. math. VII 135)

Sweet exists by convention, bitter by convention, colour by convention; atoms and Void [alone] exist in reality. (trans. Freeman 1948)[1], p. 92.

By convention sweet is sweet, bitter is bitter, hot is hot, cold is cold, color is color; but in truth there are only atoms and the void. (trans. Durant 1939)[2], Ch. XVI, §II, p. 353; citing C. Bakewell, Sourcebook in Ancient Philosophy, New York, 1909, "Fragment O" (Diels), p. 60

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[Democritus \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](#)

Quote

Texts

The standard scholarly edition of the ancient evidence concerning the views of the Presocratic philosophers is Diels-Kranz' work (cited as DK): H. Diels and W. Kranz, Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, 6th edition, Berlin: Weidmann, 1951. A fuller presentation

of the evidence for Democritus, with commentary in Russian: Solomon Luria, Demokrit, Leningrad, 1970. English translation and commentary (cited as Taylor 1999a): C.C.W. Taylor, The Atomists: Leucippus and Democritus. Fragments, A Text and Translation with Commentary, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999a. See also the report on Democritus in: Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers (Loeb Classical Library), R.D. Hicks (trans.), Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925, book 9.34–49.

"[Democritus] famously denies that perceptible qualities other than shape and size (and, perhaps, weight) really exist in the atoms themselves: one direct quotation surviving from Democritus claims that 'by convention sweet and by convention bitter, by convention hot, by convention cold, by convention color; but in reality atoms and void' (DK 68B9, trans. Taylor 1999a)."