

My notes - Tsouna's Prolepsis Essay

Post by “Hiram” of April 4, 2017 at 3:47 PM

LETTER OF EPICURUS TO HERODOTUS

72-73 (on whether time is prolepsis)

[72] [G](#) Another important question is that of time. Here we cannot apply any more the method of examination to which we submit other objects, where we study with reference to a give subject; and which we refer to the preconceptions which exist in ourselves. We must seize, by analogy, and going round the whole circle of things comprised under this general denomination for time - we must seize, I say, that essential character which causes us to say that time is long or short. It is not necessary for that purpose to seek for any new forms of expression as preferable to those which are in common use; we may content ourselves with those by which time is usually indicated. Nor need we, as certain philosophers do, affirm any particular attribute of time, for that would be to suppose that its essence is the same as that of this attribute. It is sufficient to seek for the ingredients of which this particular nature which we call time is composed, and for the means by which it is measured. [73] [G](#) For this we have no need of demonstration; a simple exposition is sufficient. It is, in fact, evident, that we speak of time as composed of days and nights, and parts of days and nights; passiveness and impassability, movement and repose, are equally comprised in time. In short it is evident that in connection with these different states, we can conceive a particular property to which we give the name of time. ([Epicurus](#) lays down the same principles in the second book of his treatise on Nature, and in his [Great Abridgment](#).)

It is from the infinite that the worlds are derived, and all the finite aggregates which present numerous analogies with the things which we observe under our own eyes. Each of these objects, great and small, has been separated from the infinite by a movement peculiar to itself. On the other hand, all these bodies will be successively destroyed, some more, and others less rapidly; some under the influence of one cause, and others because of the agency of some other. (It is evident, after this, that Epicurus regards the worlds as perishable, since he admits that their parts are capable of transformation. He also says in other places, that the earth rests suspended in the air.)