

Time in Epicurus, Lucretius, and Aristotle

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Got it:

as self-existent.

Epicurus, as **Demetrius** the Laconian interprets 219 him, declares that time is “ a symptom of symptoms,^b accompanying days and nights and hours and affections and non-affections and motions and rests.” For all these are symptoms attached to things, and as accompanying all these time may naturally be called “ a symptom of symptoms.” For in general—to go 220 back a little, for the reader following of our exposition—some existent things are self-existent, while others are viewed as attached to such as are self-existent. And such things as substances (like body and void) are self-existent ; and such as are viewed

^a In the Stoic logic “ Something ” (τό τι) was the highest universal (*summum genus*); see *Introd.* Vol. I. p. xxvi. For “ expression ” (*i.e.* “ meaning ” of a term, or the subjective idea which it excites) *cf.* *P.H.* ii. 81, *Adv. Log.* ii. 12.

^b *Cf.* § 81 *supra* ; *P.H.* iii. 137. “ Symptom ” (or “ concurrence ”) nearly = “ attribute ” or “ property ”, *cf.* § 221.

properties. And of these properties some are 221
separable from the objects whereto they belong,
while others 'are naturally separated from them.^a
Inseparable, for instance, from the things whereto
they belong are the resistance ^b of body and the non-
resistance of void ; for body can never be conceived 222
as without resistance, or void without non-resistance ;
but each has a property that is eternal, the one
resistance, the other non-resistance. But not in-
separable from the things whereto they belong are
such properties as motion and rest. For such bodies 223
as are composite are neither in restless motion con-
tinually nor continually motionless, but have at one
time the property of motion, at another that of rest,
although the atom, when it is by itself, is in perpetual
motion. For it must collide either with a void or
with a body ; and if it collides with a void, it passes
through this because of its non-resistance ; but if
with a body, it moves back from this by way of re-
bound, because of its resistance.—Thus these things 224
are “ symptoms ” which time accompanies—I mean
day and night and hour and affections and non-affec-
tions and motions and rests. For day and night are
symptoms of the surrounding air, of which day is a
property due to the illumination from the sun, while
night results from the privation of the illumination
from the sun. And hour again, being a part either 225
of day or of night, is a symptom of the air, like day
and night. And time extends parallel to every day
and every night and hour ; and for this reason a day
or a night is called long or short, as we pass over the

* Such “ properties ” are (in logical phrase) “ accidents.”

^b Or “ solidity,” *cf.* § 239 ; *P.H.* iii. 39.

time which is a property thereof. The affections, too, and non-affections are either pains or pleasures, and on this account are not substances but symptoms of those who are affected either pleurably or painfully, and not timeless symptoms. And besides these, 226 motion and also rest are, as we have already established,^a symptoms of bodies and not without time; for certainly we measure by time the quickness and slowness of motion, and the greater or less amount of rest. Well then, from this it is plain that Epicurus 227 thinks that time is incorporeal, but not in the same sort of way as do the Stoics; for whereas they, as has been said, supposed that time is an incorporeal thing conceived as self-existent, Epicurus supposed it to be a property of certain things.

Such were the views of these men; but Plato— 228 and, as some say, Aristotle ^b—declared that “time is the number of the prior and posterior in motion”; and Strato the physicist—and, as others say, Aristotle—that it is “the measure of motion and rest.”