

Demetrius Lacon - Main Biography

Post by “Bryan” of November 25, 2023 at 1:45 AM

Here is a version of PHerc 1055, which is attributed to our Demetrius. (Possibly for the first time in English. Comments and critiques are welcome. Greek is in the attachment.)

11. Clearly, men preserve the memories of what has been impressed in childhood. Because the soul remains, extending throughout the body, it grows entirely during childhood...

12. It is possible to preserve some of the bodies, and it is evident that memories are also preserved due to these previously imparted motions to the generative faculties of the mind...

13. He says that memories are preserved (in general, as much authority as we have over these matters to speak) although the material that forms the intellect is completely transformed.

14. Because of this, [the mind] possesses a direct reception of similar things, and when these are examined closely, they are not difficult to restore, and by such restorations, we leave god in a human form - because clearly we connect [the form of a human] to a god.

15. Since we do not find reason in any other form apart from a human form, it is evident that we should leave a god in an anthropomorphic form so that, even with reason, he may have substance (so that he has a real existence along with the rational faculty). Therefore, we say that [a god] is anthropomorphic...

16. He [Bion] does not grasp our point even when he leads to it. For they say that if god is anthropomorphic because it has reasoning and shared vitality, we associate with god many other common properties of forms, such as hands, fingers...

17. ...[god] has a similar soul [to man]. Therefore, it is not necessary that if any animals have such a form that a god also has that form. But it will have the faculty of reasoning and, in addition to these common properties, it will also have many other properties in the highest degree...

18. "If indeed," he [Bion] says, "it has a human form, it is clear that it will have eyes, so it will also suffer from ophthalmia, and it will be affected similarly by the remaining senses." But this itself is similar to nonsense.

19. Therefore, it is completely convincing - as it comes from Bion, who first according to Theophrastus adorned philosophy with flowers - but what he left is unadorned due to his ignorance of the nature of things. This is, in fact, the argument: "we say that each species of living being has its own form in its own species..."

20. We say that “god is not the universe nor tireless sun or the full moon” but it is not possible to say this to a Stoic or a Peripatetic! For how does that which is spherical have its own form? Otherwise, those saying that [god is spherical] do not see that because it is proper for the nature of things...

21. Greater density and lesser density areas differ to the extent that the [greater density] is composed of more atoms, the [lesser density] of fewer atoms. As a consequence of this, that which is denser and capable of generating sensation, produces it – and conversely, that which is less dense and does not produce sensation, cannot set it into motion.

22. We should not exclude the things excluded from sight – because nothing perceptible is immortal. The density (of visible things) opposes this, receiving strong blows. And again, nothing translucent (διαφανές) is perceptible [ie visible by the 5 senses]. Since that which produces large counterforces with great weight for what is perceptible...

23. Of the things said in this way about Bion’s thinking, I will establish this: Since every kind of living being has its own form within its own genus, but not in every way at once – so this same thing that happens in what is visible also happens in what is observable by reasoning.

24. Given that visible things harmonize with what is observable by reasoning, as we demonstrated previously, when what is visible does not oppose [what is observable by reasoning], this is also easily understood – and those things which were then discussed are circulated. Regarding these questions, dear Kointos, I have thoroughly applied myself...

25. But we say that the form of a god is not like what other philosophers attribute. Certainly, they would have seen that [a god] has shapes that are not spherical nor has judgments or angry dispositions or pettiness, but forms that stand apart in the sublime and dispositions rejecting everything lower – all directed towards its own bliss (μακαριότητα) and imperishability (ἀφθαρσίαν).