

Creative Assistance Needed! "The Twelve Days of Class With Epicurus"

Post by "Cassius" of January 4, 2020 at 10:37 PM

This reminds me that I am aware that Diskin Clay, to mention one commentator, came up with a different version of the twelve than did DeWitt. I will paste here the clips that i have on that and also upload the full article. Clay's version does not make the point stated by DeWitt in his number 4.

I have personally been disposed to reject Mr. Clay's version because he counts ten principles of physics, and then to round out the twelve (a number I understand was referenced as a book title in Diogenes Laertius) he considers the first two of the PD's (about gods and death) to be the last two of the twelve. That does not sound convincing to me. I could see a stretched argument that PD1 might have some physics implication, but not PD2. This material will help in analysing the DeWitt material however.

Also, I remember some commentator somewhere saying that Clay's version was "more careful" than that of DeWitt. However as I read back over these I think Dewitt was probably correct in thinking that the twelve principles were very specifically related to the nature of the atoms, from which the more sweeping principles arise, but are not specifically stated as among the fundamentals themselves. It seems to me that Clay is mixing axioms (nothing comes into being or goes out of being) with conclusions (the universe is as it always was and will be). I think DeWitt is probably correct that all 12 would have been more like axioms than conclusions.

the *Letter to Herodotus*¹⁸. These 10 *stoicheiomata* of the *Letter to Herodotus*, together with the first two remedies of Epicurus' τετραφάρμακος (ΚΔ I and II) they are the only originals in Epicurus' Greek (as much of it as survives) which have been translated into the Latin of the *De Rerum Natura*. Given the terms of Epicurus' last will and testament, it is proper to see Lucretius, and not Hermarchus, as his principal beneficiary.

The ten *stoicheiomata* are:

<i>Letter to Herodotus</i>	<i>De Rerum Natura</i>
1. Nothing comes into being out of nothing. 38.8—39.1	I 145—150, 159—160
2. Nothing is reduced to nothing. 39.1—2	I 215—218, 237
3. The universe always was as it is and always will be. 39.2—5	II 294—307; V 359—363
4. The universe is made up of bodies and void. 39.6—40.2	I 418—428

¹⁸ This same *Scholion* connects the Epicurean axiom of change with the nine other *stoicheiomata* set out early in the *Letter to Herodotus*, 44.6—10. The syllogistic form of this axiom is also distinctive and characteristic of Epicurus' manner of presenting the *stoicheiomata*.

5. Bodies are atoms and their compounds.
40.7—9 I 483—486
6. The universe is infinite.
41.6—10 I 958—964, 1001
7. Atoms are infinite in number and space extends without limit.
41.11—42.4 I 1008—1020
8. Atoms of similar shape are infinite in number, but the variety of their shapes is indefinite, not infinite.
42.10—43.4 II 522—527
9. Atomic motion is constant and of two kinds.
43.5—44.1 II 95—102 (I 952)
10. Atoms share only three of the characteristics of sensible things: shape, weight, mass.
54.3—6 II 748—752

Στοιχείον (*elementum*) is the basis of the term which Epicurus used to describe the manner in which he presented his physiology to Herodotus. Στοιχείωσις and its product, στοιχειώματα, are terms which were new to Greek (in so far as we know) and first attested in the *Letter to Herodotus*¹⁹. But the process of reduction, refinement, and simplification which the term *stoicheiosis* describes appears to have been a major trend in the scientific thought of the IV century as it was known to Proclus in the V century A.D.

(On a personal note I should say I have a high regard for Diskin Clay because shortly after I starting studying Epicurus I wrote him a letter - maybe about 2011; obviously before he died - and he was gracious enough to write me a nice note in response, so I will always be appreciative of that.)

Here is the full article from which these two pages come:

File

[Diskin Clay: Epicurus' Last Will and Testament](#)

Epicurus' Last Will and Testament
by Diskin Clay (diskin@clay.org)

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For more information on this article, please visit the following link: <https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1350-creative-assistance-needed-the-twelve-days-of-class-with-epicurus/?postID=5887#post5887>

The title of this article is very figuratively written, and the subject is not at all focused narrowly on Epicurus' last will, but much more broadly on Epicurus' general legacy, with a lot of attention to physics.



Cassius

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