

Episode Ten - The Void And Its Nature

Post by "Cassius" of March 15, 2020 at 8:06 AM

Issues Surrounding the Void - Inoculating Students of Epicurus Against Error.

The following notes are of relevance to Episode 10. and to future passages in Lucretius about the void:

Letter to Herodotus: "Moreover, the universe is bodies and space: for that bodies exist, sense itself witnesses in the experience of all men, and in accordance with the evidence of sense we must of necessity judge of the imperceptible by reasoning, as I have already said. **And if there were not that which we term void and place and intangible existence, bodies would have nowhere to exist and nothing through which to move, as they are seen to move. And besides these two, nothing can even be thought of either by conception or on the analogy of things conceivable such as could be grasped as whole existences and not spoken of as the accidents or properties of such existences .** ([Link to Bailey text](#) with Greek)

[Wikipedia Article on Void in Philosophy](#)

Quote

Western philosophers have discussed the existence and nature of void since [Parmenides](#) suggested it did not exist and used this to argue for the non-existence of change, motion, differentiation, among other things.^[5] In response to Parmenides, [Democritus](#) described the universe as only being composed of atoms and void.^[6]

[Aristotle](#), in Book IV of *Physics*, denied the existence of the Void ([Greek](#): κενόν) with his rejection of finite entities.^[7]

The View of the Stoics: The Universe Consists of Matter and GOD

(quote below is from David Sedley's "Lucretius and the Transformation of Greek Wisdom" which quotes Diogenes of Oinoanda)

734–5).⁵⁷ But although the four elements did indeed play an important role in Stoic cosmology, not even they were viewed by the Epicureans as the Stoics' candidate for the primary constituents of things, which were rather, quite correctly, taken to be the two principles 'matter and god'. Diogenes of Oenoanda goes through just the same list of targets as Lucretius (differing only in that he assigns names to the 'water' and 'air' monists, left anonymous at *DRN* I 707–9). But, significantly, he adds the Stoic principles at the end of it (6 I 10–II 9 Smith):

Heraclitus of Ephesus said that fire is the element, Thales of Miletus water, Diogenes of Apollonia and Anaximenes air, Empedocles of Acragas fire, air, water and earth, Anaxagoras of Clazomenae the 'homoeomeries' of each thing, and the Stoics matter and god.

Note however, this in the wikipedia article on Void quoted above, so the Stoics were slippery:

Quote

[Stoic philosophers](#) admitted the subsistence of four [incorporeals](#) among which they included void: "Outside of the world is diffused the infinite void, which is incorporeal. By incorporeal is meant that which, though capable of being occupied by body, is not so occupied. The world has no empty space within it, but forms one united whole. This is a necessary result of the sympathy and tension which binds together things in heaven and earth. [Chrysippus](#) discusses the void in his work *On Void* and in the first book of his *Physical Sciences*; so too [Apollophanes](#) in his *Physics*[\[8\]](#) , [Apollodorus](#)[\[9\]](#) , and [Posidonius](#) in his *Physical Discourse*, book ii."[\[10\]](#)

[Wikipedia Article on Eleatic Philosophers who denied the existence of void](#): bold emphasis added

Quote

The Eleatics **rejected the epistemological validity of sense experience**, and instead took **logical standards of clarity and necessity** to be the criteria of **truth**. Of the members, Parmenides and Melissus built arguments starting from sound premises. Zeno, on the other hand, primarily employed the *reductio ad absurdum*, attempting to destroy the arguments of others by showing that their premises led to contradictions (*Zeno's paradoxes*).^[citation needed]

The main doctrines of the Eleatics were evolved in **opposition to the theories of the early physicalist philosophers, who explained all existence in terms of primary matter**, and to the theory of **Heraclitus**, which declared that all existence may be summed up as perpetual change. The Eleatics maintained that the **true explanation of things lies in the conception of a universal unity of being**. According to their doctrine, **the senses cannot cognize this unity**, because their reports are inconsistent; it is **by thought alone that we can pass beyond the false appearances of sense and arrive at the knowledge of being**, at the fundamental truth that the **"All is One"**. Furthermore, there can be no **creation**, for being cannot come from non-being, because a thing cannot arise from that which is different from it. They argued that errors on this point commonly arise from the ambiguous use of the verb to be, which may imply actual physical existence or be merely the linguistic **copula** which connects **subject** and **predicate**.^[2]

Though the Eleatic school ended with **Melissus of Samos** (fl. c. 450 BC), and conclusions of the Eleatics were rejected by the later **Presocratics** and **Aristotle**, their arguments were taken seriously, and they are generally credited with improving the standards of discourse and argument in their time. Their influence was likewise long-lasting; **Gorgias**, a **Sophist**, argued in the style of the Eleatics in *On Nature or What Is Not*, and **Plato** acknowledged them in the *Parmenides*, the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. Furthermore, much of the later philosophy of the ancient period borrowed from the methods and principles of the Eleatics.^[citation needed]

[Wikipedia on Parmenides](#)

Quote

Parmenides claimed that there is no truth in the opinions of the mortals. Genesis-and-destruction, as Parmenides emphasizes, is a false opinion, because to be means to be completely, once and for all. What exists can in no way not exist.

"For this view, that That Which Is Not exists, can never predominate. You must debar your thought from this way of search, nor let ordinary experience in its variety force you along this way, (namely, that of allowing) the eye, sightless as it is, and the ear, full

of sound, and the tongue, to rule; but (you must) judge by means of the Reason ([Logos](#)) the much-contested proof which is expounded by me. "(B 7.1–8.2)

...

The traditional interpretation of Parmenides' work is that he argued that the every-day [perception](#) of [reality](#) of the physical world (as described in *doxa*) is mistaken, and that the reality of the world is 'One Being' (as described in *aletheia* 😞 an unchanging, ungenerated, indestructible whole. Under the *Way of Opinion*, Parmenides set out a contrasting but more conventional view of the world, thereby becoming an early exponent of the [duality](#) of appearance and reality. For him and his pupils, the [phenomena](#) of movement and change are simply appearances of a changeless, [eternal](#) reality.

[Wikipedia on Zeno's Paradoxes:](#)

Quote

Zeno's paradoxes are a set of [philosophical](#) problems generally thought to have been devised by [Greek](#) philosopher [Zeno of Elea](#) (c. 490–430 BC) to support [Parmenides'](#) doctrine that **contrary to the evidence of one's senses, the belief in [plurality](#) and change is mistaken, and in particular that [motion](#) is nothing but an [illusion](#).** It is usually assumed, based on [Plato's *Parmenides*](#) (128a–d), that Zeno took on the project of creating these [paradoxes](#) because other philosophers had created paradoxes against Parmenides' view. Thus Plato has Zeno say the purpose of the paradoxes "is to show that their hypothesis that existences are many, if properly followed up, leads to still more absurd results than the hypothesis that they are one."^[1] Plato has [Socrates](#) claim that Zeno and Parmenides were essentially arguing exactly the same point.^[2]

Achilles and the Tortoise:

In a race, the quickest runner can never overtake the slowest, since the pursuer must first reach the point whence the pursued started, so that the slower must always hold a lead. — as recounted by Aristotle, *Physics* VI:9, 239b15

Arrow Paradox:

If everything when it occupies an equal space is at rest, and if that which is in locomotion is always occupying such a space at any moment, the flying arrow is

therefore motionless.[15] — as recounted by Aristotle, Physics VI:9, 239b5

The Paradox of Place:

From Aristotle: If everything that exists has a place, place too will have a place, and so on ad infinitum.

The Paradox of a Grain of Millet:

Description of the paradox from the Routledge Dictionary of Philosophy: The argument is that a single grain of millet makes no sound upon falling, but a thousand grains make a sound. Hence a thousand nothings become something, an absurd conclusion.[19]

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