

# Episode Thirty - Only A Limited Number of Combinations of Atoms Is Possible

Post by "Don" of August 8, 2020 at 8:59 AM

YOUNGER EPIKY. (ΓΗΛ. ΕΡ. VII. Ο. Σ Ο.)  
POLYAENUS (Πολύαινος), literary. 1. Of ATHENS, an historical writer, mentioned by Eusebius. (*Chron.* i. p. 25.)  
2. Of LAMPSACUS, the son of Athenodorus, a mathematician and a friend of Epicurus, adopted the philosophical system of his friend, and, although he had previously acquired great reputation as a mathematician, he now maintained with Epicurus the worthlessness of geometry. (*Cic. de Fin.* i. 6, *Acad.* ii. 33; *Diog. Laërt.* x. 24, ii. 105, with the note of Menagius.) It has been supposed that it was against this Polyænus that the treatise was written, a fragment of which has been discovered at Herculaneum under the title of Δημητρίου πρὸς τὰς Πολυαίνου ἀπορίας. (Schöll, *Geschichte d. Griech. Litteratur*, vol. ii. p. 209.)  
3. ILLIUS POLYAENUS, the author of four

Poor Polyænus! He has such an unfortunate English pronunciation to his name (Yes, evidently I'm 12 years old! "Many an.." you get the idea.) I saw the technical Latin pronunciation is pol-ee-EE-nuhs. The Greek is Πολύαινος (Polyainos), something like pol-Û-eye-nos in Ancient Greek or modern Greek sort of like pol-EE-ehnos (I think).

He's not mentioned a lot in the ancient texts, but I think the dictionary entry above doesn't include Philodemus. I seem to remember mention of him mentioning Polyainos in his works.

DL mentions him by name, X.24:

Quote

Next came Polyænus,<sup>37</sup> son of Athenodorus, a citizen of Lampsacus, a just and kindly man, as Philodemus and his pupils affirm.

and footnote 37 reads

Quote

One of the four pillars of the school : a great geometer until he became an Epicurean (*Cic. Ac. Pr.* 106 and *De fin.* i. 20). A letter of Epicurus to him is mentioned by Seneca (*Ep.* 18. 9).

Cicero's *Academics* seems to just mention him by name. *De Fin* has this:

Quote

It is also unworthy of a natural philosopher to deny the infinite divisibility of matter; an error that assuredly Epicurus would have avoided, if he had been willing to let his friend Polyaeus teach him geometry instead of making Polyaeus himself unlearn it.

and Seneca mentions this

#### Quote

(Seneca's Letters - Book I - Letter XVIII) Even Epicurus, the teacher of pleasure, used to observe stated intervals, during which he satisfied his hunger in a stingy ([maligne](#)) fashion; he wished to see whether he thereby fell short of full and complete happiness, and, if so, by what amount he fell short, and whether this amount was worth purchasing at the price of great effort. At any rate, he makes such a statement in the well known letter written to Polyaeus in the archonship of Charinus. Indeed, he boasts that he himself lived on less than a penny, but that Metrodorus, whose progress was not yet so great, needed a whole penny. Do you think that there can be fullness on such fare? Yes, and there is pleasure also, - not that shifty and fleeting Pleasure which needs a fillip now and then, but a pleasure that is steadfast and sure.

That's not a lot to go on. There's the [Wikipedia article](#) that mentions an Italian translation of fragments.

I think it's also worth noting the "stated intervals" of Epicurus fasting or eating minimally. This implies that he in fact didn't live on bread and water all the time (as some try to say) but it sounds like he did experiment from time to time during "stated intervals" to ascertain his limits as to what would satisfy him and provide pleasure/absence of pain of hunger. (Side note: it appears the actual coin mentioned by Seneca is the Roman as: Epicurus didn't require a whole "as" but Metrodorus did: Et quidem gloriatur non toto asse se pasci, Metrodorum, qui nondum tantum profecerit, toto. [Here is a site talking about the purchasing power of Roman coins.](#))

[Admin Edit: This post was copied and placed in [the forum devoted to Polyaeus.](#)]