Aëtius Placita 2.11

Περὶ οὐρανοῦ, τίς ἡ τοῦτον οὐσία

Witnesses

Ps.Plutarch 2.11, Eusebius 15.42, ps.Galen 54, Qusṭā Ibn Lūqā 2.11
Stobaeus 1.23.1–2
Cf. Achilles 5, Dox. Pasq. 22, Philo Somn. 1.21, Lactantius Opif. 17,
Arnobius Adv. Natur. 3.17

Analysis

1. Having completed the chapters on the cosmos as a whole (1–10), Aëtius now turns to its loftiest and most eminent part, the heaven, to which only two chapters are devoted before moving on to the stars. This is the first of four chapters in Book II focusing on the οὐσία of parts of the cosmos (also ¶13 stars, ¶20 sun, ¶25 moon). These chapters are crucial in organizing the structure of the remainder of the book. The chapter is remarkable on account of the unusually copious amount of related doxographical material available from outside the narrow Aëtian tradition. This additional material will help us to discover the chapter’s rationale, but is of limited use in the task of reconstructing the text, which unfortunately is in a poor state.

2. We start as always with P. There are three lemmata, but the last of these is hopelessly corrupt. We print the text as given by Mau:

1α. Περὶ οὐρανοῦ, τίς ἡ τοῦτον οὐσία

P2.11.1 Ἄναξιμένης τὴν περιφορὰν τὴν ἐξωτάτω γηνήν.
P2.11.2 Ἐμπεδοκλῆς στερέμνην εἶναι τὸν οὐρανὸν ἐξ ἀέρος συμπαγέντος ἑν πυρὸς κρυσταλλειδῶς, τὸ πυρὸς καὶ ἄνεα ἐν ἑκατέρῳ ἡμισφαίριον συμπαγέντος.
P2.11.3 Ἀριστοτέλης ἐκ πέμπτου σώματος τὸν ἑκατέρῳ ἡμισφαίριον

We note first that there is some variation in the chapter’s title: E and G have the very short Περὶ οὐρανοῦ, while Q seems to be closer to

245 On the possibility that another chapter on cosmic distances occurred here see ch. 31 sect. 4.
P in reading Περὶ οὐρανοῦ οὐσίας. The first two lemmata in the mss. of P are quite acceptable. In the first E has a striking variant, reading its final part as τῆς ἔκσιων ἔναι. This does not give a quality to the heaven and may be connected to the short title without οὐσία. The third is not ungrammatical but makes little sense. It is deleted in E, which suggests that the text must have become corrupt very early on (otherwise it would surely have been included). G changes his text to Ἀριστοτέλης ἔξεστι σώµατος πύρινον ἐν τὸν οὐρανὸν ἐκ θερμοῦ καὶ ψυχροῦ μῆκος. This indicates that his text was problematic, but is of no help to us. Q is also of no assistance for trying to restore P’s original text. Diels ad loc. (cf. DG 23) tried to use G to emend the text, and finds justification for including the name-label Anaximander from Achilles, but in this he was mistaken (as we shall see). Mau and Lachenaud rightly obelize, as above.

3. S is this time the more straightforward source. In his brief chapter on the substance and division of the heaven he does little more than join together two chapters from A, refraining from any coalescence and adding almost no extraneous material. For the current chapter five doxai are to be considered:

1.23 title Περὶ τῆς οὐρανοῦ οὐσίας καὶ διαφέρεσις

1.23.1 S1 Ἀναξιμένης καὶ Παρµενίδης τὴν περιφορὰν τὴν ἐξωτατί τῆς γῆς εἶναι τὸν οὐρανὸν.

S2 Ἐµπεδοκλῆς στερεόν εἶναι τὸν οὐρανὸν ἐξ ἀέρου παγέντος ὑπὸ πυρὸς χρυσαλλοειδῆς, τὸ πυρόδες καὶ τὸ αέριος ἐν ἑκάτερον τὸν ἤµορφοι φυσὶς περιέχοντα.

S3 Ἀναξιάµανδρος ἐξ θερµοῦ καὶ ψυχροῦ μῆκος.

S4 Παρµενίδης, Ἡράκλειτος, Στράτων, Ζήνων πύρινον εἶναι τὸν οὐρανὸν.

1.23.2 S5 Ἀριστοτέλης ἔξεστι σώµατος, λέγει γοῦν ἐν τοῖς Περὶ τῆς φυσικῆς ἀκροδιάσεως καὶ οὐρανοῦ (mss. αὐτοῦ) λόγος οὗτος· συνεστάναι δὲ τὰ ἄστρα καὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν ἐκ τοῦ αἰθέρος …

The first lemma is parallel to P1, but it shows signs of Stobean rephrasing. The addition of the name-label Parmenides is unexpected in light of its repetition in S4. In the other three οὐσία chapters Parmenides is described in each case as regarding the celestial bodies as fiery, so it is

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246 Q may support the proposed change to πύρινον (cf. G), but not the suppression of ἦ.