PHYSICS

Titles of Books

137 List of Titles Referring to Works on Physics


The recorded titles of works on physics attributed to Theophrastus fall into three groups: general titles (1-8) referring to physics, to the study of nature, or to natural philosophers; titles indicating specific themes in natural philosophy (9-26); and titles indicating a discussion of the work of some earlier natural philosopher (27-43). The second and third groups pose few general problems. The first group is however doubly problematic. First, the number of similar titles raises suspicions that we may in some cases have two or more titles for the same work. Second, it is generally agreed that here too there was a distinction between texts that were primarily developments of Theophrastus' own theory and those that were primarily concerned to record the views of others; but the assignment of reports to one or the other category, and the relation between the two types of writing, are both matters of controversy and debate.

This second issue cannot be separated from the general question of the nature and purpose of so-called "doxography" both in ancient thought generally and in the Peripatetic school, which Jaap Mansfeld in particular has done so much to illuminate.20 In the present context, however, it seems appropriate to postpone general discussion of this topic for the Overview which will appear at the beginning of the commentary (in volume 3 part 2) on the main group of reports relating to Theophrastus' work in physical

doxography (224-245). The commentary that follows here will be confined to more specific points relating to individual titles.

1a  *Physics* (i.e. *Writings concerning Nature*)

b  *Lecture(s) on Nature*

c  *On Heaven*


Book 3 of 1a was identical with 1c, as is shown by 176;22 books 4 and 5 were identical with *On the Soul* (265 no. 1), as is shown by 307A. It has been suggested that books 1-3 of 1a were also identical with *On Motion*, no. 2 below, but this is doubtful; see further the Commentary on no. 2.

Book 1 of the *Physics* was concerned with general physical principles (143, 144B) and with motion (153A, 153C, 271);23 book 3 included references to the ensouled heavens and probably to the limits of enquiry (159), and to things subject to coming-to-be (169, 176). Also included were discussion of place (146, 149) and no doubt of time; we have no direct evidence for the treatment of these topics having been in the first three books,24 but it would seem

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21 See the Introduction to the present volume. Some other texts might well have been included in the section on physical doxography, but have not been because they relate closely to specific topics which Theophrastus also discussed *in propria persona*; 150, 184 (on which see the Commentary), 221. The division is admittedly somewhat arbitrary.

22 Mejer (1998) 6 n.16 doubts this, suggesting that Simplicius in 176 is indicating that he could not remember in which of two works he found the passage, or that Theophrastus offered the same analysis in different works. However, the fact that the quotation is given as Theophrastus’ own words makes both of the foregoing unlikely.


24 There seems—in contrast with the case of Eudemus, on whom cf.