At Praeparatio Evangelica, 1.7.16 Eusebius observes that most of the Greek philosophers believed that the world was a product of chance. He continues: δὸξας καὶ τὰς πρῶς ἄλληλους διαστάσεις καὶ διαφωνίας, . . . ἀπὸ τῶν Πλούταρχου Στρωματέων ἐπὶ τοῦ παρόντος ἐκθέσεως ('I shall now present, from the miscellany of Plutarch, their opinions and their differences and controversies'). There follow doxai of twelve thinkers, namely Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Xenophanes, Parmenides, Zeno of Elea, Democritus, Epicurus, Aristippus of Cyncrene, Empedocles, Metrodorus of Chios and Diogenes of Apollonia in that order.

While the Stromateis may well be a compilation of the second century A.D., it has generally been considered unlikely that Plutarch was in any way connected with them. As Diels demonstrated in his seminal Doxographi Graeci two strata can be detected in the work. The earliest, comprising all the material with the exception of that on Epicurus and Aristippus, derives ultimately from doxographical material in the works of Theophrastus. The second consists of summaries, based upon post-Theophrastean doxography, of views of Epicurus and Aristippus. The doxai of Epicurus were intruded, in defiance of chronology, immediately after those of Democritus because both Democritus and Epicurus were famous atomists. The opinions of Aristippus were tagged to those of Epicurus, again with disregard for chronology, because the two thinkers shared the view that ἥδεν, pleasure, was the supreme good.

The order of thinkers in the first, Theophrastean, stratum, is Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Xenophanes, Parmenides, Zeno, Democritus, Empedocles, Metrodorus and Diogenes. It seems clear that the unknown epitomator responsible for this assemblage intended that the order of thinkers should be chronological. Why else should he reflect in his distillation Theophrastus' statements that Anaximander was associated with Thales and Parmenides with Xenophanes? To our critical gaze, however, two chronological anomalies are in evidence. First, few would be prepared to agree, tout court, that the work of Democritus was prior to that of Empedocles. An inversion, from our perspective, certainly, but not a particularly disturbing one. Empedocles and Democritus both responded, in their different ways, to the critique of Elea, they were partly contemporary and there was much ancient confusion as to Democritus' precise dates. Far more remarkable is the precedence of the indubitably fourth century figure Metrodorus over Diogenes of Apollonia who flourished around the third quarter of the fifth. Yet stranger are the doxai for which Metrodorus is held responsible. I go on to cite them in full.

Μητρόδωρος ὁ Χίος Ἀδίουν εἶναι φησι τὸ πᾶν, ὅτι, εἰ ἦν γεννητὸν, ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ἂν ἦν ἀτείραν δὲ, ὅτι Ἀδίουν οὐ γὰρ ἔχειν ἀρχὴν ὥσπερ ἂν τὰ ἄλλα ὁμοίως πέρας ὁμοίως τελευτήραν. ἂλλοι δὲ κυνήσεως μετέχειν τὸ πᾶν κυνίσθαι γὰρ ἄδιναν μὴ μεδιστάμενον μεταθυσιάζει δὲ ἀναγκαῖον ἔτοι εἰς πλήρεις ἢ εἰς κενοὶ. ***πυκνούμενον δὲ τὸν ἀέρα ποιεῖν νεφέλας, εἶτα ὕδωρ, ὦ καὶ κατάκ σὲ τὸν ἦλιον οἰκεύνυναι αὐτῶν, καὶ πάλιν ἀραιούμενον εξάπτεισθαι χρόνων δὲ πήγεσθαι τῷ ἔμρῳ τὸν ἦλιον καὶ ποιεῖν ἐκ τοῦ λαμπροῦ ὕδατος ἀστέρας, ὥστε τε καὶ ἡμέραν ἐκ τῆς σφέσεως καὶ ἐξαφέως καὶ καθόλου τὰς ἐκλείψεις ἀποτελεῖν.

Instead of ἀέρα some manuscripts have ἀείθερα. One manuscript has κατάκ σὲ instead of κατάκ. The latter, majority, reading perturbed Diels but he did not emend.

Zeller marked a lacuna after εἰς κενοὺς and was followed by subsequent editors including Diels. The problem is not so much the abruptness of the transition from metaphysics to physiologia. Almost as drastic a change of subject matter features in the entry (*Stromateis*, 5) on Parmenides where, having concluded a synopsis of the Way of Truth with the words οὕτως ὢν τὸ ἅγιον ἀπολείψει ("so he concludes that what exists did not come to be"), the epitomator plunges on λέγει δὲ τὴν γῆν τοῦ πυκνοῦ καταρρεύνοντος ἀέρος γεγονέναι ("and he states that the earth came into being due to the precipitation of the dense air"). What is required at the very least, but conspicuously and indispensably missing, is some explanation as to why locomotion into void is ruled out.

I render as follows: ‘Metrodorus of Chios states that the all is everlasting because if it came into existence it would derive from the non-existent. Further, because it is everlasting, it is infinite; for it has no beginning from which it started nor any limit or termination. Nor is the all involved in movement, for it is impossible to move without changing place; change of place must be either into what is full or into what is empty . . . when the air is condensed it makes clouds, then water, which descending on the sun quenches it; rarified again the air catches fire.9 Eventually the sun is compacted by means of the dry; it makes asteres <stars and planets> out of the bright water, and causes night and day and, in general, eclipses by being quenched and catching fire'.

The portion of the notice after the lacuna is obscure and elucidation is called for. I take it that the subject throughout is the nature and activity of the sun. The picture, according to my understanding, is roughly as follows. At the end of each day as the sun sets on the western horizon it is put out and dissolved by water that has condensed from ‘clouds’10 themselves the products of condensed air. Every dawn the sun is reintegrated, kindled and compacted on the eastern horizon from air progressively rarified to incandescence.11 In the course of its diurnal passage across the heavens the sun tenuifies suspended, but invisible because translucent (λαμπροῦ), water drops which become incandescent. These continue to glow throughout the night until they sink to the western horizon and are put out; they are the stars and planets.12 Solar quenching and kindling is responsible not only for the alternation of night and day but also for the sun’s eclipses. The latter are due to temporary partial elimination or extinction13 of the sun’s fire during its daily transit.