

Isonomia

Post by “Don” of August 22, 2021 at 11:18 PM

It concerns me a little that Dewitt explicitly states "[isonomia] is lacking in extant Epicurean texts," but then goes on to weave this elaborate complex explanation of what Epicurus meant by isonomia, how important it is, etc. If it is "lacking in extant Epicurean texts," where does DeWitt get the justification for all this? How do we know Cicero got it right with his one mention?

Quote from Cicero

Moreover there is the supremely potent principle of infinity, which claims the closest and most careful study; we must understand that it has the following property, that in the sum of things everything has its exact match and counterpart. This property is termed by Epicurus isonomia, or the principle of uniform distribution. From this principle it follows that if the whole number of mortals be so many, there must exist no less a number of immortals, and if the causes of destruction are beyond count, the causes of conservation also are bound to be infinite.

That's it. That's all I can see in Cicero's text. And Dewitt even takes issue with Cicero's interpretation, but there's so little to go on and the term "is lacking in extant Epicurean texts" I'm thinking it's esoteric enough that, *if* Epicurus found it to be a helpful concept, it wasn't uppermost in his mind.

All I can see is that, basically, it says if something *can* exist in the universe, it probably exists in abundance due to the infinite nature of the universe.

It seems to me Dewitt is off and running on one of his "I have a tiny snippet of information, and I can build and extrapolate on that to infinity and beyond."