

Episode One Hundred Twenty-Seven - Letter to Pythocles 02 - The Formation of "Worlds"

Post by "Cassius" of June 25, 2022 at 8:29 PM

I don't know about anyone else but I don't pretend to have any confidence in any particular reconstruction we've seen so far. Why should the number of horses or elephants be related to each other?

Now for things which are in some sense natural opposites, like "hot" and "cold" - I can more readily see that.

But I think we ought to be able to do a better job of reconstructing Epicurus' thought than what I have seen so far.

The principle of "Nature never makes a single thing of a kind" seems to me to be pretty firmly graspable and a firm starting point for expecting there to be an infinite number of worlds (or for the sake of our discussion, and infinite number of planets like Earth).

And I can see there being some kind of observable "progression" in those things that Nature has created. Nature has created pleasure as a reality (a very deep question there) but regardless of anything else we know that living things have the feeling of pleasure and pain and it's a small leap to conclude that this faculty of feeling allows living things to "progress" over time to get stronger and more self-fulfilling.

But as for there being an "equal number" of beings through some kind of principle of opposition or lineage, I think we would need to be able to articulate something better than "Velleius says so." "Maybe" the equality issue arises from the infinite number series observation that is cited above, but if Epicurus' point was there there is an infinite number of everything and therefore there's the same number of everything -- that does not seem to me like the kind of point Epicurus would have made -- it sounds too purely abstractly mathematical to me.

So therefore I suspect something more than has been articulated so far, and I don't think it's fair to jump to the conclusion that this was an interpolation of later Epicureans.

I guess my focus would be on a more likely translation of "all like things match all like things."