

Epicurean Isonomy In The Context Of Statements By Balbus As To Gradations In Life In Book 2 of "On the Nature of the Gods"

Post by "Cassius" of August 8, 2025 at 8:04 PM

In [Chapter 16 of A Few Days In Athens Frances Wright](#) goes on and on about "imagination," but here is one passage where she focuses on it:

Quote

"The ascertaining the nature of existences, the order of occurrences, and the consequences of human actions constituting, therefore, the whole of knowledge, what is there to prevent each and all of us from extending our discoveries to the full limits prescribed by the nature of our faculties and duration of our existence? What nobler employment can we invent? What pleasure so pure, so little liable to disappointment? What is there to hold us back? What is there not to spur us forward? Does our ignorance start from the very simplicity of knowledge? Do we fear to open our eyes lest we should see the light? Does the very truth we seek alarm us in its attainment? — How is it that, placed in this world as on a theatre of observation, surrounded by wonders and endowed with faculties wherewith to scan these wonders, we know so little of what is, and imagine so much of what is not? Other animals, to whom man accounts himself superior, exercise the faculties they possess, trust their testimony, follow the impulses of their nature, and enjoy the happiness of which they are capable. Man alone, the most gifted of all known existences, doubts the evidence of his superior senses, perverts the nature and uses of his multiplied faculties, controls his most innocent, as well as his noblest impulses, and to poison all the sources of his happiness. To what are we to trace this fatal error, this cruel self-martyrdom, this perversion of things from their natural bent? In the over-development of one faculty and neglect of another, we must seek the cause. In the imagination, that source of our most beautiful pleasures when under the control of judgment, we find the source of our worst afflictions."

Unfortunately Frances Wright is not going to give us much more help on these issues, because her book barely touches on atomism or physics of any kind -- a problem I attribute to her being much more of a skeptic than Epicurus himself, and therefore she was unwilling to argue for any clear method for how to distinguish true from false when only circumstantial evidence is available. If this book is any indication, Wright didn't seem to care at all about humanity's place in the universe as a whole, and I would say that that is a large part of why an otherwise very

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intelligent book seems to have made almost no impact in her time or afterwards.