

Infinity and the Expanding Universe

Post by “Don” of July 25, 2020 at 9:22 AM

My heavens (pun intended)! This thread has been active since I've been sleeping! Wonderful, thought-provoking comments and clarifications! I'm looking forward to digging in and responding!

One thing that hit me this morning was that I wanted to go back and see what Epicurus actually said when talking about other worlds in the Letter to Herodotus:

Quote

"Moreover, there is an infinite number of worlds [κόσμοι ἄπειροί εἰσιν], some like this world, others unlike it. For the atoms being infinite in number, as has just been proved, are borne ever further in their course. For the atoms out of which a world might arise, or by which a world might be formed, have not all been expended on one world or a finite number of worlds, whether like or unlike this one. Hence there will be nothing to hinder an infinity of worlds [τὴν ἀπειρίαν τῶν κόσμων].

I admit I assumed that he used a word like Earth or something. I was pleasantly surprised and amused that the word he uses throughout is κόσμος *kosmos* or, if you will, *cosmos*. So, "there will be nothing to hinder an infinity of worlds" could just as readily be translated as "There is nothing impeding an unlimited number of cosmos." The ambiguity of that word "cosmos" is fun to play with. Don't misunderstand! I'm not saying Epicurus was a proponent of the multiverse interpretation (necessarily) but I don't think he'd rule it out. As I understand, *cosmos* can refer to a world or a world and its associated system or the universe, the sum total of "order" (*cosmos*) that arose out of Chaos (and we know Epicurus was unsatisfied by his early teachers' attempts to explain Hesiod's Chaos).

The poetry of a phrase like "an infinity of worlds" has a certain allure and power to my ears. That whole last sentence of that paragraph would make a great Tshirt or bumper sticker 😊

Quote

οὐδὲν τὸ ἐμποδοστατήσόν ἐστι πρὸς τὴν ἀπειρίαν τῶν κόσμων.

"Ouden to empodostatēson esti pros tēn apeirian tōn kosmōn."

That *empodostatēson* carries the connotation of feet (..podo...) being put into shackles or fetters. So, there's nothing (ouden) binding the feet of reality for the existence of innumerable (apeirian) cosmos.

Ah! That concept - and the way Epicurus expresses it - just sings for me in the original language! 😊