

# Stoic Objections to Epicurean Doctrine on Infinity of The Universe

Post by "Cassius" of August 31, 2020 at 10:39 AM

In contrast to the issues about infinity of the universe based on modern physics, the original issues involved in infinity theory involved important logical and ethical issues. This thread is not to address the physics arguments, but to address the arguments of the Stoics and others who thought that the Epicurean argument on infinity of the universe was insufficient. I don't have time to go through this right now but the attached article came across my email, and I see it is written by someone whose thesis is that the Stoic argument was superior. Over time I'd like to develop in this thread some discussion on potential responses to these Stoic-based arguments.

## Chapter 3 The End of Epicurean Infinity: Critical Reflections on the Epicurean Infinite Universe



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**Abstract** In contrast to other ancient philosophers, Epicurus and his followers famously maintained the infinity of matter, and consequently of worlds. This was inferred from the infinity of space, because they believed that a limited amount of matter would inevitably be scattered through infinite space, and hence be unable to meet and form stable compounds. By contrast, the Stoics claimed that there was only a finite amount of matter in infinite space, which stayed together because of a general contrapetal tendency. The Roman Epicurean poet [Lucretius tried to defend the Epicurean conception of infinity against this Stoic alternative view, but not very convincingly](#). One might suspect, therefore, that the Epicureans' adherence to the infinity of matter was not so much dictated by physical arguments as it was motivated by other, mostly theological and ethical, concerns. More specifically, the infinity of atoms and worlds was used as a premise in several arguments against divine intervention in the universe. The infinity of worlds was claimed to rule out divine intervention directly, while the infinity of atoms lent plausibility to the chance formation of worlds. Moreover, the infinity of atoms and worlds was used to ensure the truth of multiple explanations, which was posited by Epicurus as the only way to ward off divine intervention in the realm of celestial phenomena. However, it will be argued that in all of these arguments the infinity of matter is either unnecessary or insufficient for reaching the desired conclusion.