

# Stoic Objections to Epicurean Doctrine on Infinity of The Universe

Post by “Don” of August 31, 2020 at 11:00 PM

I had not heard the argument the author puts forward that Epicurus needed all possible explanations of phenomena to be true throughout the infinite cosmos. The reason for multiple explanations in other threads on this forum seemed to assume that we reserve multiple explanations until we have more sensory input to make a judgement of one over the others. What the author is saying is that the Epicureans demanded dogmatically that all explanations were, in fact, true: if not here in this cosmos, then in one of the other infinite number of cosmoi. That's both an intriguing and somewhat unsettling proposition. It does actually echo the multiple universe theory, but I'm not convinced that's what's going on. So, we're to accept that snow can be caused:

Quote

"Snow may be formed when a fine rain issues from the clouds because the pores are symmetrical and because of the continuous and violent pressure of the winds upon clouds which are suitable ; and then this rain has been frozen on its way because of some violent change to coldness in the regions below the clouds. Or again, by congelation in clouds which have uniform density a fall of snow might occur through the clouds which contain moisture being densely packed in close proximity to each other ; and these clouds produce a sort of compression and cause hail, and this happens mostly in spring. [108] And when frozen clouds rub against each other, this accumulation of snow might be thrown off. And there are other ways in which snow might be formed. (Letter to Pythokles)

... By any and all of these causes throughout the infinite cosmos? That doesn't make sense to me. Later in the Pythokles, Epicurus writes:

Quote

All this, Pythocles, you should keep in mind ; for then you will escape a long way from myth, and **you will be able to view in their connexion the instances which are similar to these**. But above all give yourself up to the study of first principles and of infinity and of kindred subjects, and further of the standards and of the feelings and of the end for which we choose between them. For **to study these subjects together will easily enable you to understand the causes of the particular phenomena**. And those who have not fully accepted this, in proportion as they have not done so, will

be ill acquainted with these very subjects, nor have they secured the end for which they ought to be studied." (My emphasis added)

My interpretation here is that Epicurus is saying that the study of his philosophy will equip you to "understand the causes of the particular phenomena" and "see connections which are similar" and to reason from analogy with what your senses and the Canon provide you with. I will need to investigate the articles authors citations, so I don't want to dismiss his assertion out of hand on this topic.

I also need to investigate the Stoic refutation the author says is going on. I didn't see much about the Stoics' Logos. Is that what is causing their "centripetal" hexis? I'm intrigued by the paper, but I don't - at first reading - find his arguments compelling.