

Isonomia

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 17, 2021 at 9:00 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

To the extent you are saying that it seems likely to you that advanced beings would take interest in lesser beings as a matter of pleasure to themselves, I think Epicurus would also say "of course" and he would point to his position on isonomia and on infinite numbers of worlds with life on them and he would say of course there are highly advanced beings who do exactly like that, just like we do ourselves, but on a far more advanced scale that would seem to most of us as being "godlike." The isonomia view would I think allow for an infinite progression / spectrum of advancement above us.

I read about Isonomia in DeWitt and did not understand it, it seeming suspiciously platonic. I left it for later and haven't gotten to it. How important is this concept? Could you elaborate on what it is and what is it useful for?

Thanks.

Post by “Cassius” of August 17, 2021 at 9:53 AM

You probably need to look directly at the Vellius statement in "On the Nature of the Gods" as that is all there is - and there is not much.

I personally don't see it as Platonic however - I see it as absolutely the practical inference from the fact that here on earth we "never" see "only one thing of its kind." Extrapolating that out to the rest of the universe, which we presume absent evidence to the contrary is analogous to Earth, then that turns into something we expect to find everywhere.

Now I think were you are heading there is to a discussion of Philodemus' "On Methods of Inference" and I highly recommend the DeLacy translation (free on internet everywhere) and especially his appendix which attempts to unwind the full story of Epicurean reasoning from observation to conclusions.

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 17, 2021 at 11:23 PM

Wikipedia doesn't seem to help much:

Isonomia (ἰσονομία "equality of [political rights](#),"^{[1][2]} from the Greek ἴσος *isos*, "equal," and νόμος *nomos*, "usage, custom, law,"^[1]) was a word used by [ancient Greek](#) writers such as [Herodotus](#)^[3] and [Thucydides](#)^[4] to refer to some kind of popular government. It was subsequently eclipsed until brought back into English as **isonomy** ("[equality of law](#)").

[Isonomia - Wikipedia](#)

Post by “Cassius” of August 18, 2021 at 6:15 AM

Yes I think DeWitt says that is one of the few and maybe only occurrences of this (at least in the Epicurean texts) so it's hard to be sure what it means. Presumably we could reconstruct it if we rigorously thought about the basic Epicurean physics and all the issues involved in infinite universe, eternal time, limited number of shapes and methods of combination, application of analogies of what we see here to the rest of the universe, etc.

We know they thought about dust moving in a beam of light. I could see them contemplating things like "what happens when you take a jar of ocean water and shake it continuously without stopping? (I presume the particles get distributed somewhat evenly if not perfectly so.) And from that kind of thinking all sorts of analogies are possible.

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 18, 2021 at 8:50 AM

I'm deeming it, for now, as an unuseful abstraction. The more I read about it, the more it seems like a magical ideal. But I'm open to being corrected.

Post by “Cassius” of August 18, 2021 at 8:56 AM

Oh I don't think it is "magical" at all - I think they saw it (and I see it) as purely an extrapolation of what we see here, along the lines of the analogies I used. I bet you'll get more comfortable with seeing it as an extrapolation when you tackle Philodemus "On Methods of Inference." I suspect they saw isonomia as a great example of their extrapolation process.

But as to how useful it is, it's probably most useful in thinking about life throughout the universe, and the nature of the gods, neither of which are probably at the top of "immediate problems" list.

Some people I respect strongly reject the science of eternal and infinite universe, and they don't see any issue arising from that rejection. Isonomia is probably in that category as well. If a person isn't bothered by those issues then I see no problem -- BUT

I think that Epicurus saw them as crucial to "connecting" with "common-sense" questions that most laymen ask, and I think that way myself. So I see this as one of those issues that is relevant and important depending on you're talking to, and I doubt it makes sense to try to require either camp to see things the way the other camp does.

Post by "Joshua" of August 20, 2021 at 11:21 PM

Reading more on isonomia, I can see this as the under-pinning logic that gets us from one observed world, to many conjectured worlds, as one example. In that case, it is a species of inductive argument: "the inference of a general law from particular instances".

There's a quote in one of Arthur Conan Doyle's stories where Sherlock Holmes says that if a logician were presented for the first time with a drop of water, he could infer the existence of a Pacific Ocean and a Niagara Falls without ever having seen either.

Isonomia would be an even more direct line of argument; someone presented for the first time with a Niagara Falls could very reasonably infer the existence of a Victoria Falls.

If you hold as a premise that "nature never furnishes only one thing of a kind", then the argument becomes deductive and the conclusion stands or falls exclusively on the merit of that premise.

So the obvious question that imposes is this; do we accept or reject the premise? Does nature ever furnish only one thing of a kind? Bearing in mind, of course, that each kind of atom always occurs in refulgent quantity.

(Some atoms are unstable and do not, evidently, occur in nature. It requires a particle accelerator to produce them and they only "survive" for a fraction of a nanosecond. But the

potential to produce them is always there.)

Post by “Cassius” of August 21, 2021 at 5:28 AM

Joshua just to be clear from what you wrote, which was excellent, let me confirm: while they are clearly related, do you see 1 isonomia, and 2 nature never makes a single thing of a kind, as separate and distinct arguments?

Post by “Joshua” of August 21, 2021 at 1:10 PM

Quote

Joshua just to be clear from what you wrote, which was excellent, let me confirm: while they are clearly related, do you see 1 isonomia, and 2 nature never makes a single thing of a kind, as separate and distinct arguments?

That is an excellent question, for which I don't have an easy answer!

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 22, 2021 at 6:06 PM

Why is isonomia important to us? How is it useful? How does it help us understand nature better?

And also, when you talk about many worlds [Joshua](#) you mean many configurations similar to earth in this universe? Or other universes similar to our own? (Why would nature allow only one kind of universe like ours)...

Sorry for the apparently stubborn and foolish question, but I think it reinforces for me that this is a concept I don't need at all, but, again, I'm very open to have my mind changed.

Post by “Cassius” of August 22, 2021 at 7:34 PM

You asked Joshua but if you'll pardon my making a comment:

[Quote from camotero](#)

Or other universes similar to our own?

That's why it's always necessary to be clear in terminology. As for me I refuse to depart from the traditional terminology, and for me "universe" will always mean "everything that exists." Others may way to talk about multiverses and multiple universes but I'm too old for that 😊

[Quote from camotero](#)

Why is isonomia important to us? How is it useful? How does it helps us understand nature better?

And my answer to that, from what I believe was probably Epicurus' perspective, is that many people would conclude (if they believed that this earth was the only inhabited place in the universe) that that would mean there is something "special" about us, leading directly to a likely conclusion of divine action to explain that "specialness". Taking the position that life is naturally occurring means it's likely to naturally occur in an infinite number of places (given the view that the universe is infinite in size) so those views go hand in hand.

And to the extent we're talking about isonomia as a spectrum of complexity from extremely primitive to something we would call "godlike" that also provides a general overview to why humans should not be considered to be the highest form of life in the universe, and leads us to think about what is higher, which is something that seems to be an important part of Epicurean philosophy and helps explain why we should not, in fact, generally be satisfied with living in a cave on bread and water.

Post by “Godfrey” of August 22, 2021 at 8:51 PM

Coincidentally this paper discussing *isonomia* showed up in my feed. I've only skimmed it as it's pretty academic, but what I gather is that *isonomia* refers to opposites and the idea that DeWitt is referring to is that in an infinite universe, if something exists, then so must it's opposite.

Apparently this relates to the pre-Socratic writer Alcmaeon's theory of health (ἰσονομία, equilibrium of opposite forces in the body) and disease (μοναρχία, domination of one excessive force).

In spite of a supercilious opinion to the contrary, Epicurus was not a muddled thinker but a very systematic one. He enunciated his Twelve Elementary Principles and adhered to them closely. Two of these, the fifth and sixth, asserted the infinity of the universe in respect of matter and space. To this idea of infinity he ascribed fundamental importance. He exhorted the young Pythocles to study it as one of those master principles which would render easy the recognition of causation in details.⁶⁸ Cicero must have been recalling some similar exhortation when he wrote: "But of the very greatest importance is the significance of infinity and in the highest degree deserving of intense and diligent contemplation."⁶⁹ He was quoting Epicurus.

It was from this principle that Epicurus deduced his chief theoretical confirmation of belief in the existence of gods. It was from this that he arrived at knowledge of their number and by secondary deduction at knowledge of their abode. He so interpreted the significance of infinity as to extend it from matter and space to the sphere of values, that is, to perfection and imperfection. In brief, if the universe were thought to be imperfect throughout its infinite extent, it could no longer be called infinite. This necessity of thought impelled him to promulgate a subsidiary principle, which he called *isonomia*, a sort of cosmic justice, according to which the imperfection in particular parts of the universe is offset by the perfection of the whole. Cicero rendered it *aequabilis tributio*, "equitable apportionment."⁷⁰ The mistake of rendering it as "equilibrium" must be avoided.

The term *isonomia* itself, which may be anglicized as isonomy, deserves a note. That it is lacking in extant Epicurean texts, all of them elementary, and is transmitted only by Cicero is evidence of its belonging to higher doctrine and advanced studies. Epicurus switched its meaning slightly, as he did that of the word *prolepsis*. To the Greeks it signified equality of all before the law, a boast of Athenians in par-

to barbaric despotism, a boast of Greeks in general. That Epicurus thought to make capital of this happy connotation may be considered certain. He was vindicating for Nature a sort of justice, the bad being overbalanced by the good. It is also possible that he was remotely influenced by the teachings of Zoroaster, well known in his day through the conquests of Alexander, according to whom good and evil, as represented by Ormazd and Ahriman, battled for the upper hand in mundane affairs.

Whatever may be the facts concerning this influence, Epicurus discovered a reasonable way of allowing for the triumph of good in the universe, which seemed impossible under atomic materialism. Thus in his system of thought isonomy plays a part comparable to that of teleology with Plato and Aristotle. Teleology was inferred from the evidences of design, and design presumes agencies of benevolence, whether natural or divine. Epicurus was bound to reject design because the world seemed filled with imperfections, which he listed, but by extending the doctrine of infinity to apply to values he was able, however curiously, to discover room for perfection along with imperfection.

That he employed isonomy as theoretical proof of the existence of gods is well documented. For example, Lactantius, who may have been an Epicurean before his conversion to Christianity, quotes Epicurus as arguing "that the divine exists because there is bound to be something surpassing, superlative and blessed."⁷¹ The necessity here appealed to is a necessity of thought, which becomes a necessity of existence. The existence of the imperfect in an infinite universe demands belief in the existence of the perfect. Cicero employs very similar language: "It is his doctrine that there are gods, because there is bound to be some surpassing being than which nothing is better."⁷² Like the statement of Lactantius, this recognizes a necessity of existence arising from a necessity of thought: the order of Nature cannot be imperfect

from a necessity of thought; the order of Nature cannot be imperfect throughout its whole extent; it is bound to culminate in something superior, that is, in gods.

It is possible to attain more precision in the exposition. Cicero, though brutally brief, exhibits some precision of statement. The infinity of the universe, as usual, serves as a major premise. This being assumed, Cicero declares: "The nature of the universe must be such that all similars correspond to all similars."⁷³ One class of similars is

272

THE TRUE PIETY

obviously taken to be human beings, all belonging to the same grade of existence in the order of Nature. As Philodemus expresses it in a book about logic, entitled *On Evidences*, "It is impossible to think of Epicurus as man and Metrodorus as non-man."⁷⁴ Another class of similars is the gods. This being understood, the truth of Cicero's next statement follows logically: "If it be granted that the number of mortals is such and such, the number of immortals is not less."⁷⁵ This reasoning calls for no exegesis, but two points are worthy of mention: first, Cicero is not precise in calling the gods immortals; according to strict doctrine they are not deathless, only incorruptible of body; the second point is that Epicurus is more polytheistic in belief than his own countrymen.

The next item, however, calls for close scrutiny. Just as human beings constitute one set of similars and the gods another, so the forces that preserve constitute one set and the forces that destroy constitute another.

At this point a sign of warning is to be raised. There is also another

that destroy.⁷⁶ The difference is that the latter operate in each of the innumerable worlds, while the former hold sway in the universe at large. For example, in a world such as our own, which is one of many, the forces of creation have the upper hand during its youthful vigor. At long last, however, the forces of destruction gradually gain the superiority and eventually the world is dissolved into its elements.⁷⁷

In the universe at large, on the contrary, the situation is different and the forces opposed to each other are not those that destroy and those that create but those that destroy and those that preserve. Moreover, a new aspect of infinity is invoked, the infinity of time. The universe is eternal and unchanging. Matter can neither be created nor destroyed. The sum of things is always the same, as Lucretius says. This truth is contained in the first two of the Twelve Elementary Principles. In combination they are made to read: "The universe has always been the same as it now is and always will be the same."⁷⁸ This can be true only on the principle that the forces that preserve are at all times superior to the forces that destroy.

It follows that Cicero was writing strictly by the book when he made his spokesman draw the following conclusion from the doctrine of isonomy: "And if the forces that destroy are innumerable, the forces

EPICURUS AND HIS PHILOSOPHY

that preserve must by the same token be infinite."⁷⁹ This doctrine, it is essential to repeat, holds only for the universe at large. It is not applicable to the individual world and it does not mean that the prevalence of elephants in India is balanced by the prevalence of wolves in Russia. Isonomy does not mean "equal distribution" but "equitable

alence of elephants in India is balanced by the prevalence of wolves in Russia. Isonomy does not mean "equal distribution" but "equitable apportionment." It does not denote balance or equilibrium. No two sets of similar forces are in balance; in the individual world the forces of destruction always prevail at last, and in the universe at large the forces of preservation prevail at all times.

By this time three aspects of the principles of isonomy have been brought forward: first, that in an infinite universe perfection is bound to exist as well as imperfection; that is, "that there must be some surpassing being, than which nothing is better"; second, that the number of these beings, the gods, cannot be less than the number of mortals; and third, that in the universe at large the forces of preservation always prevail over the forces of destruction.

All three of these are direct inferences from the infinity and eternity of the universe. There remains to be drawn an indirect inference of primary importance. Since in the individual worlds the forces of destruction always prevail in the end, it follows that the incorruptible gods can have their dwelling place only outside of the individual worlds, that is, in the free spaces between the worlds, the so-called *intermundia*, where the forces of preservation are always superior. There is more to be said on this topic in the section that follows.

THE LIFE OF THE GODS

Post by "Mathitis Kipouros" of August 22, 2021 at 9:28 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

think about what is higher, which is something that seems to be an important part of Epicurean philosophy and helps explain why we should not, in fact, generally be satisfied with living in a cave on bread and water.

A platonic red flag was raised in my mind when I read this: This may put you on track to disregard your pleasure by searching for "something higher". I'm pretty sure you didn't mean it the way I'm putting it but I think it's important to clarify it for future reference.

Post by "Mathitis Kipouros" of August 22, 2021 at 9:34 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

And my answer to that, from what I believe was probably Epicurus' perspective, is that many people would conclude (if they believed that this earth was the only inhabited place in the universe) that that would mean there is something "special" about us, leading directly to a likely conclusion of divine action to explain that "specialness".

I see what you say but I still think that you can get to that conclusion from the materialism and naturalism of the Philosophy; I don't need isonomia for that. I would even go as far as saying that there being other places where life like ours exist doesn't automatically discard the possibility of a supernatural intervention, these supernatural gods could've very well decided to create others "as special as we are".

Post by “Cassius” of August 22, 2021 at 9:42 PM

Well supernatural intervention is ruled out from the basic physics and is extrapolated by extension to the universe as a whole as a fundamental to which there can be no violation, so that's what rules out supernatural no matter how far out you get.

Now as to beings who have superior technology to us that is of course possible and even probable -- but it's never "supernatural."

Post by “Mathitis Kipouros” of August 22, 2021 at 9:57 PM

I just re read the text from DeWitt you pasted... re reading it now a second time helps in understanding it a bit better (the text, not the concept), but it's still pretty dense, obscure and convoluted for me, and it doesn't help me see isonomia as something different than pure logic and without practical application.

Perhaps I'm too early in my studies to be able to grasp the practical implications and/or usefulness of such a concept.

Post by “Don” of August 22, 2021 at 11:18 PM

It concerns me a little that Dewitt explicitly states "[isonomia] is lacking in extant Epicurean texts," but then goes on to weave this elaborate complex explanation of what Epicurus meant by isonomia, how important it is, etc. If it is "lacking in extant Epicurean texts," where does DeWitt get the justification for all this? How do we know Cicero got it right with his one mention?

Quote from Cicero

Moreover there is the supremely potent principle of infinity, which claims the closest and most careful study; we must understand that it has the following property, that in the sum of things everything has its exact match and counterpart. This property is termed by Epicurus isonomia, or the principle of uniform distribution. From this principle it follows that if the whole number of mortals be so many, there must exist no less a number of immortals, and if the causes of destruction are beyond count, the causes of conservation also are bound to be infinite.

That's it. That's all I can see in Cicero's text. And Dewitt even takes issue with Cicero's interpretation, but there's so little to go on and the term "is lacking in extant Epicurean texts" I'm thinking it's esoteric enough that, *if* Epicurus found it to be a helpful concept, it wasn't uppermost in his mind.

All I can see is that, basically, it says if something *can* exist in the universe, it probably exists in abundance due to the infinite nature of the universe.

It seems to me Dewitt is off and running on one of his "I have a tiny snippet of information, and I can build and extrapolate on that to infinity and beyond."

Post by "Godfrey" of August 23, 2021 at 1:34 AM

From Cicero's statement as well as from Alcmaeon, I don't see isonomy implying a hierarchy of beings. I read it as "equalities of opposites" (mortal/immortal, creation/destruction, good/evil, light/dark...).

This seems valid to a point, but it seems like at some point it could just turn in to sophistry or Platonism where one might name a random thing and then claim that another random thing is its opposite, leading to endless logical nonsense. Come to think of it, the principle of isonomy requires that since there is an infinite amount of common sense in the universe, there must also be an equally infinite amount of idiocy in the universe 🤔

I wonder if this is what led Pyrrho down his path of not knowing?

Post by “Godfrey” of August 23, 2021 at 3:04 AM

Quote from Cassius

The isonomia view would I think allow for an infinite progression / spectrum of advancement above us.

Quote from Cicero

From this principle it follows that if the whole number of mortals be so many, there must exist no less a number of immortals

First, I think that the Cicero quote is more accurate as to the meaning of isonomia: it sounds to me like it deals with opposites and not a progression or spectrum.

Second, I don't agree with Cicero's conclusion that there must be an infinite number of immortals: this seems like a juxtaposition of a Platonic ideal with a living reality. To me it's no more valid than saying "if the number of mortals be so many, there must exist no less a number of rocks." Ah, logic....

So the problem, I think, is determining what the "exact match and counterpart" of a mortal (a mortal defined as a living human being, subject to dying?) is, and if this would have been a useful idea for Epicurus. Although the idea of a spectrum of beings makes perfect sense to me, I don't understand that as isonomia. But of course I could be confused about that 🤔

Post by “Cassius” of August 23, 2021 at 6:47 AM

I am in agreement with some of the last several posts and not in agreement with some, but I think mainly the answer to concern that this is Platonic is that it appears to me we have ample justification for projecting higher and lower forms of life based on what we see here on earth, so I think that is fully sufficient ties the full theory to reality and observation. Based on observing worms and below all the way up to humans and elephants and so many others, it seems to me very empirically reasonable to extend the attributes we do see to a wider scope of varieties that would exist if there are an infinite number of Earth's in the universe.

I absolutely see that as rigorously empirical and not Platonic, and I feel sure that they would have argued that NOT to take that position would be a Platonic rejection of the variety we see here.

I think that a lot of what is missing here is that we have never undertaken a study of the "epicurean reasoning" theory and the best place to focus on that is probably Philodemus' "Methods of Inference" material.

So we need to figure how to devote some time to that.

The entire philosophy is ultimately based on things we cannot see or touch or sense (atoms) so we have to get comfortable with "true reason" and I don't think we're there yet.

And that's not unexpected because so little attention is paid to it. DeWitt can maybe get carried away but I think many of his points are highly insightful and one of them is (to my reading) that DeWitt was both an "empiricist" *and* a master logician and that these are not necessarily in conflict if you understand and apply those correctly.

Post by "Godfrey" of August 23, 2021 at 1:06 PM

Methods of Inference sounds valuable and I confess that I haven't spent a lot of time with it.

The issue here, to me, is that I don't see how higher and lower life forms relate to the idea of isonomia as presented by Cicero. Higher and lower life forms, both known and unknown, I see as intuitively obvious based on the Epicurean viewpoint. But if the only description of isonomia that we have is Cicero's, then I don't see isonomia as a pertinent concept in EP.

So I think that finding a proper definition of isonomia is necessary if we are to be able to accurately evaluate its place in the philosophy. Unless I'm mistaken, I don't think that anyone here is questioning the existence of higher and lower life forms. It's just that Cicero seems to use isonomia to validate the divine, so if we think that isonomia is valid based on an agreed upon definition, then we need to evaluate what is meant by the divine, based on the definition of isonomia. That may lead right back to higher and lower life forms, but with my current understanding I don't see it doing so.

Post by "Cassius" of August 23, 2021 at 1:37 PM

Of course when we're referring to Cicero we're referring to "Cicero's reporting of the Epicurean view" because Cicero himself wasn't advocating any of this.

If we didn't have Cicero's reports we'd still have the letter to Menoeceus talking about anticipations of the gods, and Lucretius talking about the "images" we receive of their lives of blessedness, and Epicurus himself talking about life in the rest of the universe and (I think? the gods in the intermundia - isn't that in the letters too?).

In my view what the fragments on isonomia give is a linkage to how they apparently extended their methods of reasoning in order to speculate further about the life of the gods. But what's also not clear is which came first and which is primary -- the "anticipations/images" argument for the gods, or the "physics/isonomia/no single thing of a kind" argument for the gods.

My best guess is that they developed alongside each other and were seen as mutually reinforcing, rather than one relying on the other.

But again if we can find a way to do it, it will really help if we can pull out DeLacey's appendix and then get into "Methods of Inference" so we can see how they grappled with the issue of reaching conclusions about things about which we can never get direct sense-based evidence.

Post by "Cassius" of August 23, 2021 at 1:58 PM

Please see this post too for the place to pursue the question of the "logic" of isonomia:

Post

[RE: Anticipations - Justice & Divine Nature](#)

I am going to try to make some comments and point us to the reading material in this post here. It's been a long while since I read this myself so I am going to put a priority on rereading it now. (Yes Don, even before I finish reading Sedley's work on Lucretius! There is too little time!!!)

If anyone gets started ahead of me please post in that thread (the link that follows) and let's try to prompt each other to deal with those issues soon:

[epicureanfriends.com/thread/?postID=13484#post13484](https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/?postID=13484#post13484)



Cassius

August 23, 2021 at 1:56 PM

Post by “Eikadistes” of August 31, 2024 at 2:08 AM

I’ve been chewing on **isonomy** and thinking about different *kinds* of infinities.

So, mortals have this annoying habit of dying whenever you try to count them all, and that **is** frustrating, considering that *the total number of immortals never decreases*. Mortals die *all* the time. Sometimes, *all* the mortals on a world die *all* at once. Sometimes, the total sum of mortals in the universe drops by **trillions** in a *fraction* of a second ... but, the total sum of immortals in the universe never, ever, **ever** decreases. Epicurus supposes that there is a mathematical relationship between the value of these two sums (these two different evaluations of infinity).

My readings thus far haven't really provided me with a satisfying justification to see any meaningful value in the concept of **isonomy** ... so, I thought of another instance of comparative infinities:

Countless particles *fall* and *fall* through *endless* space, but never **so much** space that the particles become **so** distant that they never meet to form bodies (nor **so many** particles that the available space is always already occupied with other particles, and cannot facilitate movement). So, there can never be “too much space” compared to particles, nor can there be “too few particles” compared to space. Our universe hosts a healthy portion of particles-to-void. There is some cosmic variable that express the relationship between the infinite sum of endless space and the infinite sum of innumerable particles. They are both infinities, but not equal.

I wonder if *this* difference-of-infinities (countless particles vs. endless space) might inform my understand of **isonomy** (the fluctuating infinity of mortals vs. the stable infinity of immortals)?

I've found some correspondence, with the inspiration of atoms and void:

Perhaps cosmic **isonomy** is Epicurus' way of describing the ratio of mortals-to-immortals such that we have frequent interactions with mortals but only conceive of immortals. If there were a higher distribution of immortals, then we would have bumped into one. But we haven't. So the density of immortals must be less than that of mortals. Likewise, if there were less significantly less mortals than we observe, then perhaps we would rarely encounter another soul. But we don't. So in this regard, **isonomy** might provide another reason why first-hand knowledge of the gods is so limited, not just because they are geometrically tucked away from terrestrial forces in adobes between worlds, but also, because their total numbers are stable, and do not fluctuate like numbers of humans (or other animals), and that those numbers are comparatively rare.

This is all purely speculation, on my part.

At the same time, if we take a monolatrist interpretation of Epicurean theology, and suppose that everyone has their own "Zeus" inside of them, then the number of deities definitely does share a 1:1 correspondence with each mortal, 1 God/person. That's another thing I've been chewing.

Post by "Cassius" of August 31, 2024 at 6:47 AM

Interesting thoughts Twentier. I don't have anything to add to your thinking at the moment, but this phrase in particular sparked my interest:

[Quote from Twentier](#)

but, the total sum of immortals in the universe never, ever, ever decreases

Are we sure that that is part of the theory? If so, why?

Is there something more going on to explain that, or is that exclusively a deduction from the view that if a class exists, then it exists and infinite number of times, and if so then "infinity never decreases" and so "the total sum of mortals in the universe never, ever, ever decreases"?

Post by "Eikadistes" of August 31, 2024 at 8:34 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Are we sure that that is part of the theory?

Nope, this is definitely just my own deduction.

Post by "Bryan" of August 31, 2024 at 12:02 PM

Great post, thank you!

[Quote from Twentier](#)

mortals have this annoying habit of dying whenever you try to count them all

This make me think of Seleucus in Petronius' Satyricon who speaks of a recently dead man (Chrysanthus, part 42) saying "abiit ad plures -- he went over to the majority."