

# Episode Seventy-One - The Formation Of the World (Our Part of the Universe)

Post by "Cassius" of May 19, 2021 at 1:33 AM

Well here ya go again - I guess my memory was a little better than I thought. Here's David Sedley's "Epicurus' Refutation of Determinism" but i tend to think it's not really attested as his" (?)

## EPICURUS' REFUTATION OF DETERMINISM

David Sedley

### 1. *The Swerve*

A few facts are, I hope, uncontroversial enough to be set out without defence. Epicurus inherited Democritus' atomic system, but modified it in a number of respects. In particular, he so vehemently objected to its rigidly deterministic laws as to postulate a minimal 'swerve' (παρέγκλισις) in the motion of atoms, occurring at no fixed place or time — a doctrine which does not feature in his meagre surviving writings but is nonetheless amply attested as his; and defended on his behalf by Lucretius (II 216-93). The swerve (a) enables atoms falling through space at equal speed in parallel lines to collide occasionally and initiate cosmogonic patterns of motion; and (b) somehow or other serves as a necessary condition for the behavioural autonomy of animate beings — a power often identified as 'free will'.

The latter function of the swerve has been widely debated, but no general agreement has been reached on its inter-