

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

Post by "Cassius" of May 19, 2021 at 1:40 AM

accuracy (Lucretius II 270-70).

I do not propose to expend much discussion on the swerve's cosmogonical function (Lucretius II 216-42), which I suspect to be a problem dreamed up with a preconceived solution in mind. Chains of atomic collisions in extra-cosmic space could have quite adequately been explained by the lateral intrusion of one or more atoms from elsewhere, despatched, say, by the break-up of a nearby world. The question of how such collisions ever started in the first place would not arise, given the infinity of past time and past worlds. That is, indeed, the view strongly implied by the *Letter to Herodotus* and the *Letter to Pythocles*,⁴ the physical epitomes which Epicurus wrote when he had already worked out his main cosmological views in Books I-XIII of his *On nature*. Since these two works also contain no hint of the swerve doctrine, the likelihood is that it was his later work on psychology, apparently in the closing books of the thirty-seven book magnum opus, that led him to the innovation, and that it was only then grafted onto the existing cosmological scheme.⁵

nt." More weight to the

J. C. S. Democ. *Collected papers 6* (1935) pp. 35-37

And just to be sure I am not misquoting Bailey in the "Core Texts" page here, here is [a screenshot from "Epicurus, the Extant Remains"](#) - Apparently Sedley thinks that whatever is translated here as "*some swerving*" is really "no hint of the swerve doctrine."

I. TO HERODOTUS 15

which too the compounds are created and into which they are dissolved, have an incomprehensible number of varieties in shape for it is not possible that such great varieties of things should arise from the same (atomic) shapes, if they are limited in number. And so in each shape the atoms are quite infinite in number, but their differences of shape are not quite infinite, but only incomprehensible in number.

43 And the atoms move continuously for all time, some of them (falling straight down, others swerving, and others recoiling from their collisions. And of the latter, some are borne on) separating to a long distance from one another, while others again recoil and recoil, whenever they chance to be checked by the interlacing with others, or else shut in by atoms interlaced around them.

44 For on the one hand the nature of the void which separates each atom by itself brings this about, as it is not able to afford resistance, and on the other hand the hardness which belongs to the atoms makes them recoil after collision to as great a distance as the interlacing permits separation after the collision. And these motions have no beginning, since the atoms and the void are the cause.

45 These brief sayings, if all these points are borne in mind, afford a sufficient outline for our understanding of the nature of existing things.