

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

Post by "Cassius" of May 19, 2021 at 9:34 PM

I was looking back at Munro's notes as I was posting this week's episode:

Quote

416-431: I will now describe how the various parts of the world were formed: as we said above, it was not by design that atoms framed it; but after many fruitless collisions, they chanced to fall into such motions as produced the world and all that is in it.

I think we can all understand Munro's phrasing, and how most people would relate to it. But I don't think Epicurus/Lucretius would agree with it - especially the word "fruitless." This phrasing gives the impression that for an eternity before us the atoms were working on rearranging themselves all so they could arrive at the beneficent arrangement in which they find themselves in the month of May in the year of our lord 2021. Or at least the year 5000 BC or 10 billion or whatever starting point you'd like to affix as particularly significant. (I think in my case I'll pick 753 BC for the founding of Rome!)

I doubt seriously whether that kind of perspective is consistent with what Epicurus wanted to convey 😊 The motion of the atoms has never been any more or less "fruitless" (in the sense of reaching some point of particular importance to Nature) than the motion that's going on today. There's both no starting point and no end point from the Epicurean perspective.