

Episode One Hundred Twenty-Seven - Letter to Pythocles 02 - The Formation of "Worlds"

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Welcome to Episode One Hundred Twenty Seven of Lucretius Today.

This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the only complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world.

I am your host Cassius, and together with our panelists from the EpicureanFriends.com forum, we'll walk you through the ancient Epicurean texts, and we'll discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. We encourage you to study Epicurus for yourself, and we suggest the best place to start is the book "Epicurus and His Philosophy" by Canadian professor Norman DeWitt.

If you find the Epicurean worldview attractive, we invite you to join us in the study of Epicurus at EpicureanFriends.com, where you will find a discussion thread for each of our podcast episodes and many other topics.

Today we continue [Epicurus' Letter to Pythocles](#), with a look at the formation of "worlds." Joshua is away today, so let's now join Don reading today's text:

BAILEY

A world is a circumscribed portion of sky, containing heavenly bodies and an earth and all the heavenly phenomena, whose dissolution will cause all within it to fall into confusion: it is a piece cut off from the infinite and ends in a boundary either rare or dense, either revolving or stationary: its outline may be spherical or three-cornered, or any kind of shape. For all such conditions are possible, seeing that no phenomenon is evidence against this in our world, in which it is not possible to perceive an ending.

[89] And that such worlds are infinite in number we can be sure, and also that such a world may come into being both inside another world and in an interworld, by which we mean a space between worlds; it will be in a place with much void, and not in a large empty space quite void, as some say: this occurs when seeds of the right kind have rushed in from a single world or interworld, or from several: little by little they make junctions and articulations, and cause changes of position to another place, as it may happen, and produce irrigations of the appropriate matter until the period of completion and stability, which lasts as long as the underlying foundations are capable of receiving additions.

[90] For it is not merely necessary for a gathering of atoms to take place, nor indeed for a whirl and nothing more to be set in motion, as is supposed, by necessity, in an empty space in which

it is possible for a world to come into being, nor can the world go on increasing until it collides with another world, as one of the so-called physical philosophers says. For this is a contradiction of phenomena.

Sun and moon and the other stars were not created by themselves and subsequently taken in by the world, but were fashioned in it from the first and gradually grew in size by the aggregations and whirlings of bodies of minute parts, either windy or fiery or both, for this is what our sensation suggests.

HICKS

A world is a circumscribed portion of the universe, which contains stars and earth and all other visible things, cut off from the infinite, and terminating [and terminating in a boundary which may be either thick or thin, a boundary whose dissolution will bring about the wreck of all within it] in an exterior which may either revolve or be at rest, and be round or triangular or of any other shape whatever. All these alternatives are possible: they are contradicted by none of the facts in this world, in which an extremity can nowhere be discerned.

[89] That there is an infinite number of such worlds can be perceived, and that such a world may arise in a world or in one of the intermundia (by which term we mean the spaces between worlds) in a tolerably empty space and not, as some maintain, in a vast space perfectly clear and void. It arises when certain suitable seeds rush in from a single world or intermundium, or from several, and undergo gradual additions or articulations or changes of place, it may be, and waterings from appropriate sources, until they are matured and firmly settled in so far as the foundations laid can receive them. For it is not enough that there should be an aggregation or a vortex in the empty space in which a world may arise, as the necessitarians hold, and may grow until it collide with another, as one of the so-called physicists says. For this is in conflict with facts.

"The sun and moon and the stars generally were not of independent origin and later absorbed within our world, [such parts of it at least as serve at all for its defence]; but they at once began to take form and grow [and so too did earth and sea] by the accretions and whirling motions of certain substances of finest texture, of the nature either of wind or fire, or of both; for thus sense itself suggests.