

The Twelve Fundamentals - Discussion on Lucretius Today Podcast

Post by "Eikadistes" of January 5, 2023 at 11:24 PM

Then again, with respect to (1.), Epicurus **does** discuss the creation of worlds (**EH 45.5**), so perhaps Lucretius is merely referring to the creation of a world-system, and not the universe as a whole. (*I am imagining - as a reasonable, modern analog - a contracting, pre-solar nebula that flattens into a protoplanetary disc that then rotates around a hot protostar until the rotating matter accretes into planetesimals that eventually develop into different worlds.*) I might have been getting stuck on the idea that "nature creating" refers to a *universal* beginning rather than a *local* beginning.

"...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 [...] **this occurs when seeds of the right kind have rushed in** [...] little by little **they make junctions and articulations, and cause changes of position** to another place [...] **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." (*EP 89.2-90.1*). So Epicurus *does* identify a preceding stage of instability, *per kosmos*.

Therein, particles moved from a stage of "falling raindrops" (*DRN II 223*) "first", "and gradually grew in size by the aggregations and whirlings of bodies of minute parts" (*EP 90.8-91.1*). At some point "stability" is reached. I am comfortable with "creation" when taken as the development of a system of celestial bodies ... however, I still don't see the need for the "swerve" to create this arrangement. Perhaps one particle re-bounded from an "interworld" and started a cascade amid the cloud of "falling raindrops" (rather than one drop in the cloud "swerving" into another).

Overall, I question whether or not the "swerve" served any other function for Epicurus besides providing a rational counter-point to Democritus' determinism. Epicurus explained how world-systems develop to Herodotus and Pythokles without discussing the "swerve", and he explained choice and contemplation to Menoikeus without referring to an atomic "swerve". I am speculating that the *declinando* or *clinamen* in *De Rerum Natura* - described as a world-building and thought-forming agent - was more of a poetic embellishment by Lucretius than a reflection of Epicurus.