

Episode Twenty-Six - The Atoms Are Not Uniform

333—380: know too that these first-beginnings are of many different shapes: thus no two men or other animals are quite alike; thus a cow knows its calf among all other calves; thus kids and lambs run each to its own mother; thus every grain of corn, every shell is distinct. 333 *cunct. ex. rer.* = *primordia rerum*, the *cunctarum* being equivalent to *prima*. 335 *multigenis* appears to be a *ἅπαξ λεγόμεν*: it must come from *multigena*, as the *omnigenum* of Virgil from *omnigena*: see n. to I 683: Lucr. has *alienigena terrigena Graiugena Troiugena*; but *caecigeni*. 336 337 recur 723 724, and partially 692 694. 336 *Non quo . . sint, Sed quia non constant*: this is the regular constr.: *non quo, non quod, non quia, non quin*, followed by *sed quia, sed quod*, or *sed* or *verum* alone, take a subj. in the first, an indic. in the 2nd clause: vi 71 *non quo violari summa deum vis Possit . . Sed quia tute . . Constitues . . Nec . . adibis*; Cic. de orat. II 305 *non quo libenter male audiam, sed quia causam non libenter relinquo*; so Tusc. disp. II 56 *non quod, sed quia*; Sall. Cat. 35 3 *non quia, sed quod*; Livy xxxviii 33 11 *non quia salvos vellet, sed quia perire causa indicta nolebat*; Cic. ad Att. vii 26 2 *non quin, sed quia*: Ser. Sulpic. ap. Cic. ad fam. iv 5 1 *non quo ea te fugere existimem, sed quod forsitan dolore impeditus minus ea perspicias*, the *perspicias* depends on *forsitan*. Lachmann's *constant* seems therefore not easy to defend. [However Cic. epist. iv 7 1 mss. give *sed quod iudicem*, editors *iudico*.] With *non quia* the best writers sometimes have an indic. in the first clause: 3 *Non quia vexari quemquamst iucunda voluptas*: so Cic. pro Planc. 78; Livy x 41 12. *parum multa* recurs several times: it and *parum saepe* are similarly used by Cicero: instead of being few, the atoms of each shape are infinite in number, as he soon after proves. 340 *prorsum* seems best taken with *omnia*; as vi 528 *omnia, prorsum Omnia*; but it may be taken with *non* in the sense of *prorsum non*: see n. to I 748; though the other sense agrees best with *quaedam* of 380. 341 *filo*: *filum* is properly thickness, as iv 88 *suptili praedita filo*; hence size as here, and v 572, 581, 589; see Lach. to v 571. 342 *Praeter eat*: iv 388 *ea praeter creditur ire*: let them pass before you in review, and then 347 *sumere perge* out of the number any of them for inspection, and you will find they differ. *Praeter eat*, which I have divided for emphasis, was suggested to me by Hor. sat. I 4 25 *quemvis media elige turba, Aut ob avaritiam aut misera ambitione laborat*. [And so *transeo* is used by Sen. rhet. controv. I 4 12 *quam otiosi, quam securi adulteri transierunt praeter oculos meos*.] The metaph is perhaps from the *sollemnis transvectio* of the knights for inspection: comp. Ov. trist. II 89 *vitamque meam moresque probabas Illo, quem dederas, praetereuntis equo*; 541 *cum*

to cross-check the various
n today's text [from Munro](#):

For comparison, Bailey's notes in this edition essentially skip over this section:

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1609-episode-twenty-six-the-atoms-are-not-uniform/?postID=8102#post8102>

the opposition of the a, through which it passes.

185. *no bodily thing can of its own force, &c.* This is again an important point: upward motion is always the result of external force. Even among the atoms it can only happen as the result of collisions, when e. g. one atom is squeezed between

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shot up.

from their path. The notion of the slight swerve of the atoms and its tremendous result in the free will of man is a supremely important point in the Epicurean philosophy, for it combats Democritus's belief in complete determinism, which Epicurus regarded as a more dangerous enemy to morality than even religion. See Introduction, p. 17.

225. *But if perchance any one believes.* This paragraph contains one of Lucretius's most acute pieces of reasoning, that in a vacuum all things fall at the same pace.

269. *so that you see a start of movement, &c.* The relation between the swerve of the atoms and man's free-will is, of course, to Lucretius's mind not a mere analogy: the former is the cause of the latter. The mind is composed of a subtle texture of fine atoms (III. 161 ff.), and it is the swerving of these atoms which gives rise to an act of will.

410. *the bars shuddering sound, &c.* Sound, in Lucretius's notion, is caused, just like sight or smell, by a body of particles given off by the object, and penetrating the ear (IV. 523 ff.).

485. *For suppose the first bodies, &c.* For this idea of the inseparable 'least parts' in the atom see I. 599 ff.

532. *For because you see, &c.* Here we meet a curious principle of Epicurus, which Lucretius nowhere states, but often acts on, of the 'equal distribution' (*ισορομία*) of things. If a certain class is rare in some parts of the world, or even in our world altogether, it will be found in plenty in other parts of the world or the universe: there is, on the whole, an equal number of things of the same kind. Compare 569 ff. for a similar idea.