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Post by "Cassius" of February 15, 2020 at 5:30 AM

Stated that way, we have very specific statements in Lucretius (and possibly Herodotus, I can't recall) on that topic. Well, I was going to quote specific sections, but really everything from line 420 to the end of book one is really on this topic. In fact, is not the entire structure of "atomism" not the rejection of the contention that "philosophic universals" exist?

[The following is Bailey, and he uses the word "accidents" rather than "events" which is used in the 1743 edition, and I think "events" is far preferable, especially since the Latin is "eventum" (if I recall). But is this not a statement that something like "circularity" (from the wikipedia entry) is only a name which humans give to "qualities" (their observations of temporary and changing combinations of atoms), rather than a reference to "properties" (attributes of eternally-existing atoms)?

I will state too that my own person interest in the "problem of universals" arose because I used to thinki it was necessary to address the issue of "meaninglessness of life" and "nihilism" - the perspective which I "know/feel" must be "wrong" (that if only atoms really "exist" then life is "meaningless.")

I now think that the problem of nihilism has a much different answer than to theorize a (false) "theory of universals" such as Plato or Aristotle suggested. There are better and more accurate ways to see that life is intensely valuable to us despite its impermanency and it arising from atoms and void.

BOOK ONE:

[420] But now, to weave again at the web, which is the task of my discourse, all nature then, as it is of itself, is built of these two things: for there are bodies and the void, in which they are placed and where they move hither and thither. For that body exists is declared by the feeling which all share alike; and unless faith in this feeling be firmly grounded at once and prevail, there will be naught to which we can make appeal about things hidden, so as to prove aught by the reasoning of the mind. And next, were there not room and empty space, which we call void, nowhere could bodies be placed, nor could they wander at all hither and thither in any direction; and this I have above shown to you but a little while before.

[431] ***Besides these there is nothing which you could say is parted from all body and sundered from void, which could be discovered, as it were a third nature in the list.*** For whatever shall exist, must needs be something in itself; and if it suffer touch, however small and light, it will increase the count of body by a bulk great or maybe small, if it exists at all, and

be added to its sum. But if it is not to be touched, inasmuch as it cannot on any side check anything from wandering through it and passing on its way, in truth it will be that which we call empty void.

[439] Or again, whatsoever exists by itself, will either do something or suffer itself while other things act upon it, or it will be such that things may exist and go on in it. ***But nothing can do or suffer without body, nor afford room again, unless it be void and empty space. And so besides void and bodies no third nature by itself can be left in the list of things, which might either at any time fall within the purview of our senses, or be grasped by any one through reasoning of the mind. For all things that have a name, you will find either properties linked to these two things or you will see them to be their accidents.*** That is a property which in no case can be sundered or separated without the fatal disunion of the thing, as is weight to rocks, heat to fire, moisture to water, touch to all bodies, intangibility to the void. On the other hand, slavery, poverty, riches, liberty, war, concord, and other things by whose coming and going the nature of things abides untouched, these we are used, as is natural, to call accidents.

[460] Even so time exists not by itself, but from actual things comes a feeling, what was brought to a close in time past, then what is present now, and further what is going to be hereafter. And it must be avowed that no man feels time by itself apart from the motion or quiet rest of things.

[465] Then again, when men say that ‘the rape of Tyndarus’s daughter’, or ‘the vanquishing of the Trojan tribes in war’ are things, beware that they do not perchance constrain us to avow that these things exist in themselves, just because the past ages have carried off beyond recall those races of men, of whom, in truth, these were the accidents. For firstly, we might well say that whatsoever has happened is an accident in one case of the countries, in another even of the regions of space.

[472] Or again, if there had been no substance of things nor place and space, in which all things are carried on, never would the flame of love have been fired by the beauty of Tyndaris, nor swelling deep in the Phrygian heart of Alexander have kindled the burning battles of savage war, nor unknown of the Trojans would the timber horse have set Pergama aflame at dead of night, when the sons of the Greeks issued from its womb. So that you may see clearly that all events from first to last do not exist, and are not by themselves like body, nor can they be spoken of in the same way as the being of the void, but rather so that you might justly call them the accidents of body and place, in which they are carried on, one and all.

[484] Bodies, moreover, are in part the first-beginnings of things, in part those which are created by the union of first-beginnings. Now the true first-beginnings of things, no force can quench; for they by their solid body prevail in the end. Albeit it seems hard to believe that there can be found among things anything of solid body. For the thunderbolt of heaven passes through walled houses, as do shouts and cries; iron grows white hot in the flame, and stones seethe in fierce fire and leap asunder; then too the hardness of gold is relaxed and softened by

heat, and the ice of brass yields beneath the flame and melts; warmth and piercing cold ooze through silver, since when we have held cups duly in our hands we have felt both alike, when the dewy moisture of water was poured in from above. So true is it that in things there is seen to be nothing solid. But yet because true reasoning and the nature of things constrain us, give heed, until in a few verses we set forth that there are things which exist with solid and everlasting body, which we show to be the seeds of things and their first-beginnings, out of which the whole sum of things now stands created.

[504] First, since we have found existing a twofold nature of things far differing, the nature of body and of space, in which all things take place, it must needs be that each exists alone by itself and unmixed. For wherever space lies empty, which we call the void, body is not there; moreover, wherever body has its station, there is by no means empty void. Therefore the first bodies are solid and free from void.