

Key Citations - Nothing From Nothing And Nothing To Nothing

Post by “Cassius” of October 4, 2023 at 4:30 PM

NOTHING FROM NOTHING:

1. Epicurus - Letter to Herodotus: [38] ... Having made these points clear, we must now consider things imperceptible to the senses. First of all, that nothing is created out of that which does not exist: for if it were, everything would be created out of everything with no need of seeds.
2. Lucretius Book One Line 146:
 1. [146] This terror then, this darkness of the mind, must needs be scattered not by the rays of the sun and the gleaming shafts of day, but by the outer view and the inner law of nature; whose first rule shall take its start for us from this, that nothing is ever begotten of nothing by divine will. Fear forsooth so constrains all mortal men, because they behold many things come to pass on earth and in the sky, the cause of whose working they can by no means see, and think that a divine power brings them about. Therefore, when we have seen that nothing can be created out of nothing, then more rightly after that shall we discern that for which we search, both whence each thing can be created, and in what way all things come to be without the aid of gods.
 2. [159] For if things came to being from nothing, every kind might be born from all things, nought would need a seed. First men might arise from the sea, and from the land the race of scaly creatures, and birds burst forth from the sky; cattle and other herds, and all the tribe of wild beasts, with no fixed law of birth, would haunt tilth and desert. Nor would the same fruits stay constant to the trees, but all would change: all trees might avail to bear all fruits. Why, were there not bodies to bring each thing to birth, how could things have a fixed unchanging mother? But as it is, since all things are produced from fixed seeds, each thing is born and comes forth into the coasts of light, out of that which has in it the substance and first-bodies of each; and 'tis for this cause that all things cannot be begotten of all, because in fixed things there dwells a power set apart.
 3. [174] Or again, why do we see the roses in spring, and the corn in summer's heat, and the vines bursting out when autumn summons them, if it be not that when, in their own time, the fixed seeds of things have flowed together, then is disclosed each thing that comes to birth, while the season is at hand, and the lively earth in safety brings forth the fragile things into the coasts of light? But if they sprang from nothing, suddenly would they arise at uncertain intervals and in hostile times of year, since indeed there would be no first-beginnings which might be kept apart

from creative union at an ill-starred season.

4. [184] Nay more, there would be no need for lapse of time for the increase of things upon the meeting of the seed, if they could grow from nothing. For little children would grow suddenly to youths, and at once trees would come forth, leaping from the earth. But of this it is well seen that nothing comes to pass, since all things grow slowly, as is natural, from a fixed seed, and as they grow preserve their kind: so that you can know that each thing grows great, and is fostered out of its own substance.
5. [192] There is this too, that without fixed rain-showers in the year the earth could not put forth its gladdening produce, nor again held apart from food could the nature of living things renew its kind or preserve its life; so that rather you may think that many bodies are common to many things, as we see letters are to words, than that without first-beginnings anything can come to being.
6. [199] Once more, why could not nature produce men so large that on their feet they might wade through the waters of ocean or rend asunder mighty mountains with their hands, or live to overpass many generations of living men, if it be not because fixed substance has been appointed for the begetting of things, from which it is ordained what can arise? Therefore, we must confess that nothing can be brought to being out of nothing, inasmuch as it needs a seed for things, from which each may be produced and brought forth into the gentle breezes of the air.
7. [208] Lastly, inasmuch as we see that tilled grounds are better than the untilled, and when worked by hands yield better produce, we must know that there are in the earth first-beginnings of things, which we call forth to birth by turning the teeming sods with the ploughshare and drilling the soil of the earth. But if there were none such, you would see all things without toil of ours of their own will come to be far better.

NOTHING TO NOTHING:

1. Epicurus - Letter to Herodotus: [39] And again, if that which disappears were destroyed into that which did not exist, all things would have perished, since that into which they were dissolved would not exist.
2. Lucretius Book One:
 1. [215] Then follows this, that nature breaks up each thing again into its own first-bodies, nor does she destroy ought into nothing. For if anything were mortal in all its parts, each thing would on a sudden be snatched from our eyes, and pass away. For there would be no need of any force, such as might cause disunion in its parts and unloose its fastenings. But as it is, because all things are put together of everlasting seeds, until some force has met them to batter things asunder with its blow, or to make its way inward through the empty voids and break things up, nature suffers not the destruction of anything to be seen.

2. [225] Moreover, if time utterly destroys whatsoever through age it takes from sight, and devours all its substance, how is it that Venus brings back the race of living things after their kind into the light of life, or when she has, how does earth, the quaint artificer, nurse and increase them, furnishing food for them after their kind? how is it that its native springs and the rivers from without, coming from afar, keep the sea full? how is it that the sky feeds the stars? For infinite time and the days that are gone by must needs have devoured all things that are of mortal body. But if in all that while, in the ages that are gone by, those things have existed, of which this sum of things consists and is replenished, assuredly they are blessed with an immortal nature; all things cannot then be turned to nought.
3. [238] And again, the same force and cause would destroy all things alike, unless an eternal substance held them together, part with part interwoven closely or loosely by its fastenings. For in truth a touch would be cause enough of death, seeing that none of these things would be of everlasting body, whose texture any kind of force would be bound to break asunder. But as it is, because the fastenings of the first-elements are variously put together, and their substance is everlasting, things endure with body unharmed, until there meets them a force proved strong enough to overcome the texture of each. No single thing then passes back to nothing, but all by dissolution pass back into the first-bodies of matter.
4. [250] Lastly, the rains pass away, when the sky, our father, has cast them headlong into the lap of earth, our mother; but the bright crops spring up, and the branches grow green upon the trees, the trees too grow and are laden with fruit; by them next our race and the race of beasts is nourished, through them we see glad towns alive with children, and leafy woods on every side ring with the young birds' cry; through them the cattle wearied with fatness lay their limbs to rest over the glad pastures, and the white milky stream trickles from their swollen udders; through them a new brood with tottering legs sports wanton among the soft grass, their baby hearts thrilling with the pure milk. Not utterly then perish all things that are seen, since nature renews one thing from out another, nor suffers anything to be begotten, unless she be requited by another's death.