

Mochus (or Moschus) the Phoenician

Post by “Joshua” of July 6, 2020 at 1:53 PM

I was just reading an article called "Newton and Lucretius" by William B. Jensen of the University of Cincinnati, and heard there a strange tale.

It seems that among ancient sources there are references to a proto-philosopher (of a still more ancient vintage) called Mochus the Phoenician. This Mochus, it has been proposed, was the genuine father of atomism. And there is a bizarre temptation in this, at least for those renaissance humanists who followed Gassendi in attempting to give atomism a Christian face. Mochus, claimed one Ralph Cudworth, was nothing more than an etymological branch of the name of the biblical Moses. Yes, you've got that right—Moses, they suggest, as the father of atomism.

"How much effort it takes to affirm the incredible!" —Christopher Hitchens