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Post by "Cassius" of February 15, 2020 at 8:52 AM

This is what I perceive to be the sequence of reasoning on this topic in the letter to Herodotus (clips from Bailey):

54 Moreover, we must suppose that the atoms do not possess any of the qualities belonging to perceptible things, except shape, weight, and size, and all that necessarily goes with shape. For every quality changes, but the atoms do not change at all, since there must needs be something which remains solid and indissoluble at the dissolution of compounds, which can cause changes; not changes into the non-existent or from the non-existent, but changes effected by the shifting of position of some particles, and by the addition or departure of others. For this reason it is essential that the bodies which shift their position should be imperishable and should not possess the nature of what changes, but parts and configuration of their own. For thus much must needs remain constant

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Next, even though the qualities of the combination of atoms (which includes all that we can experience directly in our universe) are not permanent and unchanging like the atoms themselves, we must not believe that they do NOT exist, OR that they have some kind of incorporeal existence. The things that we experience in our reality are real TO US (and this is the key to showing the insanity of nihilism):

as though they were concomitant properties either of all things or of things visible or recognizable through the sensation of these qualities, we must not suppose that they are either independent existences (for it is impossible
69 to imagine that), nor that they absolutely do not exist, nor that they are some other kind of incorporeal existence, accompanying body, nor that they are material parts of body: rather we should suppose that the whole body in its totality owes its own permanent existence to all these, yet not in the sense that it is composed of properties brought together to form it (as when, for instance, a larger structure is put together out of the parts which compose it, whether the first units of size or other parts smaller than itself, whatever it is), but only, as I say, that it owes its own permanent existence to all of them. All these properties have their own peculiar means of being perceived and distinguished, provided always that the aggregate body goes along with them and is never wrested from them, but in virtue of its comprehension as an aggregate of qualities acquires the predicate of body.

70 Furthermore, there often happen to bodies and yet do not permanently accompany them (^{events}accidents, of which we must suppose neither that they do not exist at all nor that they have the nature of a whole body), nor that they can be classed among unseen things nor as incorporeal. So

And this is how "events" as arising from the nature and movement of the atoms is the explanation to which Thomas Jefferson referred. And this understanding is hugely important -- none of this is an "**accident**" in the way that you fail to look both ways before crossing a street and get run over by a bus in an "accidental" way. The structure of our universe as a series of "events" arising from the movement of the atoms, and is largely "deterministic" and understandable and predictable, except for the limited instances of "free will" (including the life of higher animals) that arise from the swerve of atoms and which are able to break through under limited circumstances.

But I fully understand why Bailey and others of his attitude would choose to use the word "accident" in these translations. They are essentially Platonic/idealist/theists themselves, they

I. TO HERODOTUS

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that when according to the most general usage we employ this name, we make it clear that accidents have neither the nature of the whole, which we comprehend in its aggregate and call body, nor that of the qualities which permanently accompany it, without which a given body cannot be conceived. But as the result of certain acts of apprehension, provided the aggregate body goes along
71 with them, they might each be given this name, but only on occasions when each one of them is seen to occur, since accidents are not permanent accompaniments. And we must not banish this clear vision from the realm of existence, because it does not possess the nature of the whole to which it is joined nor that of the permanent accompaniments, nor must we suppose that such contingencies exist independently (for this is inconceivable both with regard to them and to the permanent properties), but, just as it appears in sensation, we must think of them all as accidents occurring to bodies, and that not as permanent accompaniments, or again as having in themselves a place in the ranks of material existence; rather they are seen to be just what our actual sensation shows their proper character to be.