

Lucretius - Not Accidents, Not Incidents, But "Contextidents"

Post by "Cassius" of January 7, 2018 at 9:42 PM

Thanks for the comparison to Aristotle Maciej, and I will look into that. I frequently link to an article by Richard Dawkins criticizing Aristotle for "essentialism" which is probably related to this topic. <https://www.edge.org/response-detail/25366> As you indicate I believe Epicurus intended to separate himself from Aristotelian essentialism in the respect that we are discussing here.

I think we continue to disagree on the matter of "accidental." When you say "To be more precise they are accidental in relation to the nature of the body they are temporally attached to." That is exactly what I think is NOT "accidental," or a matter of fortuity in the meaning that I am objecting to. While I might possibly agree that there is some category of perspective that might fit the role of a fortuity, in the discussion of the assembly of the universe from the atomic level to the level of bodies that we experience them, I believe the great majority, and probably all, of the effects that Epicurus was referring to are entirely naturally determined (from the movement and arrangement of the atoms). Now as one moves higher to the level of "Helen of Troy" and other "events of event" as Lucretius presumably was referring to them, when the actions of higher animals are involved, then I can see fortuity having more of a role. But I continue to think that the primary purpose of Epicurus' exercise here was to illustrate how the universe we see operates on natural principles (not by Gods, and not by chance/chaos).

(In case I have not previously referenced it I am heavily influenced in this discussion by my reading of AA Long's "Chance and Natural Law in Epicureanism" which argues that the swerve is of very little impact in the real world other than through the effects of free will in higher animals.)