

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

Post by "Cassius" of December 14, 2017 at 8:44 AM

<http://newepicurean.com/lucretius-not-...-contextidents/>

Here is a word issue that has troubled me for a long time. One of the most important sections of Lucretius (near Book 1, line 424) deals with the nature of combinations of elemental properties, which Lucretius divides into two categories. The first category is "properties," which Lucretius defines as that *"which can in no case be disjoined and separated without utter destruction accompanying the severance, such as the weight of a stone, the heat of fire, the fluidity of water."* (all translations here are Munro). The second category is given a name in English which I find inappropriate - it is translated as "accident" by Munro, by Bailey, and by Martin Ferguson Smith. These "accidents" are defined as *"things which may come and go while the nature of the thing remains unharmed."*

Here is a clip of the passage describing this:

[Selection\\_121.png](#) unknown

Subtleties of definitions of words is very personal to the background of the speaker and hearer, but in my own case I come from a background in which "accidental" necessarily implies "fortuitous," which implies happening by chance, as in lucky, or unlucky, or some work of "fortune." It concerns me that many English-speakers reading this section of Lucretius may also be reading the same implication, and I don't think that is what Lucretius intends.

Here is the Latin of the key part of the passage, again from Munro, and it appears to my non-expert eye that the Latin word being used is "eventa" (**eventus** -us m. [consequence , issue, result; event, occurrence, experience]) :

[Selection\\_122.png](#) unknown

I have not had time before writing this post to look for other passages in Lucretius, nor have I done a detailed study of "eventa" in Latin. Also, I want to check this discussion by earlier texts in Greek, especially the letter to Herodotus. If others have access to information that would help with this discussion, I would appreciate their comment.

But until I see other evidence to the contrary, I would suggest that the meaning that Lucretius is conveying here has nothing to do chance, fortune, or luck. I would go further to suggest that it is a major reversal of meaning to suggest that “luck” has any necessary connection with the qualities that are being described as *“things which may come and go while the nature of the thing remains unharmed.”*

I suggest that what is being conveyed here is that the qualities of bodies are not “accidental,” or even “incidental” as I have sometimes heard used. Rather, what Lucretius is saying here is that the qualities of bodies are CONTEXTIDENTAL (to coin a word, if it does not yet exist.) In other words, the attributes that we observe in objects that come and go while the nature of the thing remains unharmed are determined by the CONTEXT. The attribute is determined by the circumstances that exist at the time that we observe the attribute to exist, including the body itself, the conditions under which we observe it, and the process of our observing it.

The key point that I think deserves to be made is that if we interpret the Epicurean position to be that the major two categories of attributes of a thing are (1) unchanging properties, and (2) things that are “lucky” or “fortunate” or the result of “chance,” then we are missing the main point in a major way. Epicurean physics replaces the laws of God with the laws of Nature – all properties and qualities of bodies arise from the nature of the elements of which they are composed, and the context in which they are assembled. The qualities that result from the combinations of the elements are most certainly not CHANCE but in fact the opposite – they are necessarily determined by the nature of the elements which have come together at a particular time, at a particular place, and in a particular way.

The word “contextual” fills the need for most discussion of this issue, and I think properly conveys what Lucretius was intending. We can say that the weight of stone is a property, and the color of a stone is contextual. But as to the words used to describe the categories themselves, the word “contextual” is an adjective, while “property” is a noun. I would suggest that, for those of us who are concerned that “accident” and “accidental” implies fortuity, – that it is confusing at best and erroneous at worst to refer to “properties and accidents.” Maybe there is a better word, but until a better noun comes along, I will try out “accidents and contextidents.”

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## **Post by “Maciej” of January 5, 2018 at 9:42 AM**

Epicurus talks about enduring qualities (properties) and temporary qualities (accidents) in letter to H. in DL X,069-071

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## Post by “Cassius” of January 6, 2018 at 9:05 PM

I don't have the page reference but I think you are probably referring to this part, in the translation at Epicurus.net, where it appears there is no mention of the qualities being "accidental":

Moreover, we must hold that the atoms in fact possess none of the qualities belonging to things which come under our observation, **except shape, weight, and size, and the properties necessarily conjoined with shape. For every quality changes, but the atoms do not change**, since, when the composite bodies are dissolved, there must needs be a permanent something, solid and indissoluble, left behind, which makes change possible: not changes into or from the non-existent. but often through differences of arrangement, and sometimes through additions and subtractions of the atoms. Hence these somethings capable of being diversely arranged must be indestructible, exempt from change, but possessed each of its own distinctive mass and configuration. This must remain.

**For in the case of changes of configuration within our experience the figure is supposed to be inherent when other qualities are stripped of, but the qualities are not supposed, like the shape which is left behind, to inhere in the subject of change, but to vanish altogether from the body.** Thus, then, what is left behind is sufficient to account for the differences in composite bodies, since something at least must necessarily be left remaining and be immune from annihilation.

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## Post by “Maciej” of January 6, 2018 at 10:13 PM

Later in the letter:

"Moreover, shapes and colors, magnitudes and weights, and in short all those qualities which are predicated of body, in so far as they are perpetual properties either of all bodies or of visible bodies, are knowable by sensation of these very properties: these, I say, must not be supposed to exist independently by themselves (for that is inconceivable), nor yet to be non-existent, nor to be some other and incorporeal entities cleaving to body, nor again to be parts of body. We must consider the whole body in a general way to derive its permanent nature from all of them, though it is not, as it were, formed by grouping them together in the same way as when from the particles themselves a larger aggregate is made up, whether these particles be primary or any magnitudes whatsoever less than the particular whole. All these qualities, I repeat, merely give the body its own permanent nature. They all have their own characteristic modes of being perceived and distinguished, but always along with the whole

body in which they inhere and never in separation from it; and it is in virtue of this complete conception of the body as a whole that it is so designated.

Again, qualities often attach to bodies without being permanent concomitants. They are not to be classed among invisible entities nor are they incorporeal. Hence, using the term “accidents” in the commonest sense, we say plainly that “accidents” have not the nature of the whole thing to which they belong, and to which, conceiving it as a whole, we give the name of body, nor that of the permanent properties without which body cannot be thought of. And in virtue of certain peculiar modes of apprehension into which the complete body always enters, each of them can be called an accident. But only as often as they are seen actually to belong to it, since such accidents are not perpetual concomitants. There is no need to banish from reality this clear evidence that the accident has not the nature of that whole—by us called body—to which it belongs, nor of the permanent properties which accompany the whole. Nor, on the other hand, must we suppose the accident to have independent existence (for this is just as inconceivable in the case of accidents as in that of the permanent properties); but, as is manifest, they should all be regarded as accidents, not as permanent concomitants, of bodies, nor yet as having the rank of independent existence. Rather they are seen to be exactly as and what sensation itself makes them individually claim to be.”

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**Post by “Cassius” of January 6, 2018 at 10:23 PM**

Maciej do you know the greek term which is used in these passages? I will have to refer to my Bailey edition.

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**Post by “Cassius” of January 6, 2018 at 10:28 PM**

Here it is in side-by-side English/Greek from Bailey:  
<https://archive.org/stream/Epicuru...ge/n41/mode/2up>

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**Post by “Maciej” of January 6, 2018 at 10:42 PM**

Symptomata

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## Post by "Cassius" of January 6, 2018 at 10:42 PM

I am definitely going to have to ask for help from friends with Greek experience ... It looks like line 70 is key, and do the asterisks indicate missing text and/or other aspects of interpolation of what the text is really saying here? [Furthermore, there often happens to bodies and yet do not permanently accompany them (accidents, of which we must suppose....)]

70 Καὶ μὴν καὶ τοῖς σώμασι συμπίπτει πολλάκις καὶ οὐκ ἄδιον  
παρὰκολοῦθ' \* \* \* \* οὐτ' ἐν τοῖς ἀστέροις εἶναι οὕτε ἀσώματα.  
9 διαλαβάνωτα scarpus. διαλαβάνωτα libri: διαλαβάνωτα Bignone: διαλαβάνωτα Meibom: συμβάσις Usener 68 2 (γα)  
supplevit Usener 4 (καὶ τῷ) supplevit Usener 7 διὰ τῷ  
Usener: συμβάσις libri ἀστέροις συμβάσις Galenus ἀστέροις ἀστέροις  
libri: ἀστέροις ἀστέροις Bignone 9 ἀστέροις  
γνώσει 2<sup>α</sup>: ἀστέροις γνώσει libri. cett.: ἀστέροις γνώσει Usener  
69 2 c66<sup>α</sup> ὡς Gassendi: ὡς c66<sup>α</sup> (c66<sup>α</sup> FQ) libri ἴσως ἀστέροις  
Usener: ἴσως τῷ libri 3 (εἰ) supplevit Meibom 4 (εἰ)  
supplevit 5 συμπεφορημένους BQP(Co: συμπεφορημένους F 6 μεγε-  
θῶ) μέγας Schneider 7 τοῦτε τινα Usener: τοῦ δὲ τινα  
libri 8 ἀστέροις ἀστέροις HPQ 10 ἀστέροις Usener: ἀστέροις  
BPQ: ἀστέροις libri. cett. ἀστέροις ἀστέροις ἀστέροις B: ἀστέ-  
ροις Usener 11 ἀστέροις ἀστέροις Usener 70 2 παρὰ-  
κολοῦθ' libri. plerique: παρὰκολοῦθ' B: παρὰκολοῦθ' 2 γ'  
Bignone: post παρὰκολοῦθ' lacunam indicavit Usener ἄσως

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## Post by "Cassius" of January 6, 2018 at 10:45 PM

Once again Maciej thank you! Is symptomata the only word being translated as "accident," or do you see others? I note the explanation of symptomata on this page: <https://glosbe.com/el/en/%CF%83%C...%B1%CF%84%CE%B1>

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## Post by "Maciej" of January 6, 2018 at 10:58 PM

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l...0:chapter=1&i=4>

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## Post by "Maciej" of January 6, 2018 at 11:01 PM

[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accident\\_\(philosophy\)](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accident_(philosophy))

## Post by "Cassius" of January 6, 2018 at 11:08 PM

The translation "accidents" also appears just before the discussion of time begins on line 72, so the area to look at for that should be here:

44 I. ΠΡΟΣ ΗΡΟΔΟΤΟΝ  
ἄστε δὴ κατὰ τὴν πλείστην φερόντων τούτων τῷ δυνάμει χρώμενοι  
φανερά ποιοῦμεν τὰ συμπτώματα ὅστε τὴν τοῦ ἄλλου φύσιν  
ἔχειν, ὃ συλλαβόντες κατὰ τὸ ἀθρόον σῶμα προσαγορευόμεν,  
οὔτε τὴν τῶν ἀδίων παρακολουθοῦντων, ὡς ἔρεν σῶμα οὐ  
δυνατὸν νοεῖσθαι. κατ' ἐπιβολὰς δ' ἄν τινος παρακολου-  
71 θούστος τοῦ ἀθρόου ἕκαστα προσαγορευεῖται, | ἀλλ' ὅτε δῆσσε  
ἕκαστα συμβαδύοντα θεωρεῖται, οὐκ ἀδίων τῶν συμπτωμάτων  
παρακολουθοῦντων. καὶ οὐκ ἐξελατέον ἐκ τοῦ ὄστος ταύτης  
τὴν ἐναργίαν, ὅτι οὐκ ἔχει τὴν τοῦ ἄλλου φύσιν ἢ συμ-  
5 βαίνει οὐδὲ τὴν τῶν ἀδίων παρακολουθοῦστων, οὐδ' αἶ καθ'  
αὐτὰ νομιστέον (οὐδὲ γὰρ τοῦτο διασητέον ὅστ' ἐπὶ τούτων  
ὄστ' ἐπὶ τῶν ἀδίων συμβεβηκότων), ἀλλ' ὅπερ καὶ φαίνεται,  
συμπτώματα πάλιν(τα κα)τὰ τὰ σώματα νομιστέον, καὶ οὐκ  
ἀδίων παρακολουθοῦντα οὐδ' αὐ φύσιν καθ' ἑαυτὰ τάγμα  
10 ἔχοντα, ἀλλ' ἂν τρόπον αὐτῆ ἢ αἰσθησις τὴν ἰδιότητα ποιεῖ  
θεωρεῖται. |  
72 Καὶ μὴν καὶ τόδε γε δεῖ προσκατανοῆσαι σφοδρῶς τῶν

## Post by "Cassius" of January 6, 2018 at 11:10 PM

And indeed it appears that I see symptomata again:

44 I. ΠΡΟΣ ΗΡΟΔΟΤΟΝ  
ἄστε δὴ κατὰ τὴν πλείστην φερόντων τούτων τῷ δυνάμει χρώμενοι  
φανερά ποιοῦμεν τὰ συμπτώματα ὅστε τὴν τοῦ ἄλλου φύσιν  
ἔχειν, ὃ συλλαβόντες κατὰ τὸ ἀθρόον σῶμα προσαγορευόμεν,  
οὔτε τὴν τῶν ἀδίων παρακολουθοῦντων, ὡς ἔρεν σῶμα οὐ  
δυνατὸν νοεῖσθαι. κατ' ἐπιβολὰς δ' ἄν τινος παρακολου-  
71 θούστος τοῦ ἀθρόου ἕκαστα προσαγορευεῖται, | ἀλλ' ὅτε δῆσσε  
ἕκαστα συμβαδύοντα θεωρεῖται, οὐκ ἀδίων τῶν συμπτωμάτων  
παρακολουθοῦντων. καὶ οὐκ ἐξελατέον ἐκ τοῦ ὄστος ταύτης  
τὴν ἐναργίαν, ὅτι οὐκ ἔχει τὴν τοῦ ἄλλου φύσιν ἢ συμ-  
5 βαίνει οὐδὲ τὴν τῶν ἀδίων παρακολουθοῦστων, οὐδ' αἶ καθ'  
αὐτὰ νομιστέον (οὐδὲ γὰρ τοῦτο διασητέον ὅστ' ἐπὶ τούτων  
ὄστ' ἐπὶ τῶν ἀδίων συμβεβηκότων), ἀλλ' ὅπερ καὶ φαίνεται,  
συμπτώματα πάλιν(τα κα)τὰ τὰ σώματα νομιστέον, καὶ οὐκ  
ἀδίων παρακολουθοῦντα οὐδ' αὐ φύσιν καθ' ἑαυτὰ τάγμα  
10 ἔχοντα, ἀλλ' ἂν τρόπον αὐτῆ ἢ αἰσθησις τὴν ἰδιότητα ποιεῖ  
θεωρεῖται. |  
72 Καὶ μὴν καὶ τόδε γε δεῖ προσκατανοῆσαι σφοδρῶς τῶν

## Post by "Cassius" of January 6, 2018 at 11:35 PM

[Alexander RiosGroup Admin](#) But doesn't the word "event" includes all accidents, incidents and all intentional coincidents. Every collision, every emission, and every absorption and every

beginning or end of a interlacing is an event. Agreed?

And of course they have context.

What is special about "contextident"?

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[Cassius Amicus](#) type unknown

**[Cassius AmicusGroup Admin](#)** Yes definitely agreed. But the point I think is significant here is that "events" and "symptoms" clearly are words of logical / natural \*\*\*connection\*\* which we can investigate and predict through science, as against "accident" which implies randomness and unpredictability.

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[Cassius Amicus](#)

**[Cassius AmicusGroup Admin](#)** In other words, the reason I think this is significant is that Epicurus is saying that the atoms provide us predictability and natural explanations for what we see. They do that through their "properties," which are eternal and unchangeable, and through their qualities, which do change according to circumstance, but which change in logical / natural / predictable ways that are wrapped up in their circumstances. Atomic theory therefor allows for science to explore and understand phenomena. What I am rejecting is the use of terms like "accidental" which implies that the things around us are determined "accidentally" or "randomly" or "without explanation" which would make science impossible.

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[Alexander Rios](#) type unknown

**[Alexander RiosGroup Admin](#)** Determined randomly????

That makes zero sense.

That means not determined.

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[Cassius Amicus](#) type unknown

**[Cassius AmicusGroup Admin](#)** Correct. That is what I meant. It would make no sense to say that qualities are determined randomly, and yet that is what the term "accidentally" implies. I am suggesting that Balley and the others who use accidentally are spoling the philosophical point. They are not commenting here on swerves of the atom, they are implying that colors and things we see contextually are RANDOM, which they certainly are not.

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Cassius Amicus

*Write a reply...*

[Alexander Rios](#) type unknown

**[Alexander RiosGroup Admin](#)** Yeah. So what? At this level of few particles and few interactions we're not applying statistics. And we know that the trajectories depend both on properties (deterministic) and swerve (indeterministic) which is not predictable (modeled by chaos).

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Cassius Amicus

**[Cassius AmicusGroup Admin](#)** The "so what" is that at the observable level (which is where qualities occur) the qualities ARE predictable and understandable (if we have the tools and experience and knowledge to dig deep enough)

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Alexander Rios

**[Alexander RiosGroup Admin](#)** Of course. Because at the body/quality level we are applying statistics and averages. Too many particles to count and keep track of.

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Alexander Rios

**[Alexander RiosGroup Admin](#)** Sounds to me like you are denying the swerve of individual particles.

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Cassius Amicus

**[Cassius AmicusGroup Admin](#)** No! But I am suggesting that Balley and the others who use accidentally are spoiling the philosophical point. They are not commenting here on swerves of the atom, they are implying that colors and things we see contextually are RANDOM, which they certainly are not.

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Alexander Rios

**[Alexander RiosGroup Admin](#)** Only when we have huge populations of particles is it that the swerve of each washes out, for the body, and applying averages makes sense, and the body/system becomes more deterministic.

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Cassius Amicus

**[Cassius AmicusGroup Admin](#)** Right! And that higher level is exactly the level that Epicurus is

talking about, because it is at that level that humans see and feel and hear and taste and touch etc...

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Cassius Amicus

**[Cassius AmicusGroup Admin](#)** At the level of color and weight as humans measure it, we are talking about huge populations of particles, and at this level, the color and other qualities that we observe flow scientifically / chemically / etc from the order and arrangement and placement etc of the atoms

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Cassius Amicus

**[Cassius AmicusGroup Admin](#)** If what we see and touch and here were "random" or "accidents" then we could know predict from one moment to the next what color an orange might appear to us on the tree

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Alexander Rios

**[Alexander RiosGroup Admin](#)** Ok. That is mostly true. But the swerve is not 100% washed out. Because bodies are made of parts, and some of those parts are like islands, isolated from the mob of particles, and to those the swerve still plays a non-ignorable role.

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Cassius Amicus

**[Cassius AmicusGroup Admin](#)** Right. I am in no way attacking the swerve itself. I am saying that properties and qualities are the two major steps up from atoms to our real world in which we experience things, and that at our real level world the swerve does not ordinarily come ...

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Alexander Rios

**[Alexander RiosGroup Admin](#)** In a city each person moves at their own will. Yet when we consider the whole population, we can apply averages and predict, deterministically, and be right in our predictions more often than not.

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Cassius Amicus

**[Cassius AmicusGroup Admin](#)** Yes I completely agree with the individual vs city population analogy. To sort of return full circle to the original point, the strength of Epicurean philosophy in replying to religion is that we have a predictable science of nature which is based on atoms/particles which have natures which allow us to explain nature, through science, and show that nature does not rely on Gods to direct her. If we had no predictable mechanism, we would not succeed in convincing people that we had a viable theory. To suggest that an important step in the process is "accidental" is to break the chain of causation that makes the system work. That is no concern to Bailey and many other translators who are theists and anti-Epicurean, but it should be of great concern to us to maintain the integrity of the Epicurean system.,

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Cassius Amicus

**[Cassius AmicusGroup Admin](#)** Thank you Alex for continuing to talk about this because I want to be sure I am not overstating or understating the issue. I want to incorporate the swerve and properties and qualities into a coherent whole that makes the system understandable.

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[Manage Alexander RiosGroup Admin](#) [The chain of causation cannot ignore the swerve when the population count is small. Or has isolated islands of particles. Only when the population of particles is "too large to count" does it "wash out" so that the population's model is "in effect" modelled effectively by a deterministic system.](#) [Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [9 mins](#) · [Edited](#) [Manage Cassius AmicusGroup Admin](#) [I think that is a very valid point, but at the qualitative level at which humans observe the world around us, the number of particles are too large to count, do you not agree? Is not science based on the reproducibility of experimentation that produces same results under same circumstances? I understand that does not apply at the subatomic](#)

[level in all cases, but it does apply at the macro level we see and touch and feel with our natural senses, correct? Like · Reply · 8 mins Manage Cassius AmicusGroup Admin In other words if we are at home and we take an icecube from our refrigerator, and apply a blowtorch to it, EVERY TIME that ice cube is going to melt, regardless of the fact that the swerve of atoms also exists. Like · Reply · 1 · 6 mins Manage Cassius AmicusGroup Admin And if we set our freezers to cool down to 32 degrees Fahrenheit, EVERY TIME our water-filled cube holders are going to freeze and produce ice, again regardless of the fact that atoms continue to swerve at the same time. The point being once again that at the macro level at which we live, we do not rely on gods nor do we throw up our hands in helplessness against accidental chaos , but we build our lives on an understanding of the universe based on atomic science built on the macro understandable properties of atoms and the qualities of the bodies that atoms form when they come together. Like · Reply · 1 min · Edited Manage Alexander RiosGroup Admin Yes. The physical models that we use for everyday human scale, phenomena is usually deterministic. Classical physics can be derived from quantum physics when the count of particles in the population of the bodies is very large. Like · Reply · 1 · Just now Manage Cassius AmicusGroup Admin And there I think we can rest for the night - i better turn in - thanks!](#)

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### **Post by “Maciej” of January 7, 2018 at 12:19 AM**

Interesting discussion but I think offtopic. Issue of wheather quality is permanent property or accident is related to nature of a thing. For example. Life is property that permanently belongs to nature of human beeing since loss of it is also destruction of that nature. Human that is dead is not human strictly speaking. On the other hand slavery is something accidental to human nature since we can conceive a human that is not a slave.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of January 7, 2018 at 1:10 AM**

I think we probably are not on the same topic, agreed. The issue is that I think is of concern is when it might be proper to use terms like accidental, which imply fortuity, to combinations of atoms into bodies, and it seems to me that those circumstances would be extremely rare, given that the changes in bodies also operate according to the movements of the combinations of atoms of which they are part. Words implying events and symptoms in normal speaking imply causation and natural relationships, while words implying accident and fortuity imply breaking of exactly those expectations. I think that Epicurus would have wanted to stress that while slavery is not a permanent attribute it most certainly is not "accidental" either, but rather a

result of a sequence of events that was not initiated either by gods or by chaos. To observe that some attributes of human life are changeable is not particularly useful unless one is looking to draw conclusions about the nature of that change, i.e. was the change caused by gods? Was it totally chaotic? If either of those alternatives is true, then successful happy living by studying nature is impossible.

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### **Post by “Maciej” of January 7, 2018 at 10:42 AM**

Slavery is not accidental in the sense that it causes itself. But in relation to human nature it is accidental because human nature can be imagined without it. Human may or may not be a slave. That is all to it. Word may be at first glance misleading but it is used to denominate in English Aristotle's distinction between essential and accidental properties. And Epicurus' one is very similar to it. I am pretty sure that they both use *symptomata* to denominate temporary/not essential properties.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of January 7, 2018 at 11:17 AM**

Yes now we are getting to the point. When you say: "in relation to human nature it is accidental because human nature can be imagined without it" that may be a technical philosophical definition (I don't know; would be interested if you have a cite) but that definition is totally divorced from the real world of ordinary people who speak of "accidental" as involving fortuity. And it is in the real world of ordinary people that I want to talk about Epicurus' philosophy to people who need it.

So to restate when you say: "Word may be at first glance misleading but it is used to denominate in English Aristotle's distinction between essential and accidental properties." I would reply that you may indeed be right in the academic classrooms - I don't know - but I (don't want this to sound harsh) but have very little interest in their technical word games when it serves to confuse the general public.

Maciej as always thank you for discussing this with me as always, because this is exactly the point I wanted to pin down. I want to be accurate in discussing these things, and I know that "accurate for the technicians" may not be the same as "accurate for the general public." When the academic translators want to use a word a certain way I don't need to make a judgment as to whether their intention is fair or foul, but when I want to talk to real-world people about

issues they should understand, I want to use whatever words will lead to accurate understanding. And in this case fortuity I would contend is the furthest thing from Epicurus' mind in describing how the atoms come together so as to emerge into the real world - the "shores of light."

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### **Post by "Maciej" of January 7, 2018 at 12:58 PM**

You can use world occurrence. But then you will blur the meaning of symptomata as not-necessary quality. You can invent the new word but then you will not meet your general public requirement. Every choice has its good and bad. Now you have at least a word that enables philosophical discussion and can be explained to general public in one sentence with examples.

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### **Post by "Cassius" of January 7, 2018 at 3:06 PM**

Maciej you mean "now" as referring to "accident" or to "occurrence." I do believe that occurrence would be far superior to "accident." And you are again making the point that I understand - that with "accident" we have a current context in speaking with "professional" philosophers. The problem with that is that I have no real desire to talk with "professional" philosophers, at least those who have no interest in making philosophy understandable to and usable by the general public. The public can understand "events," "symptoms" and "occurrences" as not being accidental. The word "accidental" itself is fatal to the Epicurean point - and I am not at all sure that is not why professional philosophers adopted it in the first place.

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### **Post by "Maciej" of January 7, 2018 at 9:30 PM**

And yet temporary qualities are accidental in a way. To be more precise they are accidental in relation to the nature of the body they are temporally attached to. So like I wrote earlier you will blur this meaning by changing the term.

But to change a subject a bit. Epicurus clearly takes this distinction from Aristotle and improves on it. If there is more to be said about this it would be a good idea to find in Aristotle

this distinction and compare it with letter to H and de rerum natura.

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### **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.)

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### **Post by “Maciej” of January 7, 2018 at 11:20 PM**

In my opinion accidental relation of temporary properties in no way makes room for existence of chance in way you suggest (as causal agent). However, Metrodorus in Vs 47 speaks about chance as if it were a real cause.

I will try to look into the article if i find something that would add to the discussion i will quote it here.

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## Post by "Cassius" of June 2, 2018 at 12:55 PM

Update 06/02/18: The following is the English translation from the 1743 Daniel Browne edition, and I believe this version gets this right. The correct word is simply "events." This word choice gives no hint of "fortuity," which, as I comment above I believe to be improper. It appears to me

AGAIN, \* whatever Is must either act itself, or be by other Agents acted on; or must be somewhat in which other Bodies must have a Place and move; but Nothing without Body can act, or be acted on; and where can this be done, but in a Vacuum or empty Space? Therefore, beside what Body is or Space, no third Degree in Nature can be found, Nothing that ever can affect our Sense, or by the Power of Thought can be conceiv'd. All other Things you'll find essential *Conjuncts*, or else the Events or Accidents of these. I call essential Conjunct, what's so joined to a Thing that it cannot, without fatal Violence, be forced or parted from it; such is Weight to Stones, to Fire Heat, Moisture to the Sea, Touch to all Bodies, and not to be touch'd essential is to *Void*; but, on the contrary, Bondage, Liberty, Riches, Poverty, War, Concord, or the like, which not affect the Nature of the Thing, but when they come or when they go, the Thing remains entire; these, as 'tis fit we should, we call *Events*.

\* Nothing exists but Body and Void; for whatever is, either has a Power of acting on another, or may suffer from another: that is, it must be subject either to Action or Passion, and that must be a Body; or it must be that in which Things are contained, and in which they are made and moved, and that is the Void.

sensitive to the issue I see in use of "accidents," not chosen for the final term.