

"Setting Before the Eyes"

Post by "Don" of January 28, 2022 at 6:15 PM

I've recently become interested in researching the Epicurean practice of "setting before the eyes" which I learned about via Dr. Voula Tsouna's book, [The Ethics of Philodemus](#). According to her, it was a rhetorical technique employed by teachers within the Epicurean school to correct students behaviors, especially when it came to anger. The teacher would "place before the eyes" of the student what they look like when they are angry or what the consequences would be of their anger. I'm just using that as an example. From her writing it appears to have had wider application.

I'm starting this thread to engage in discussion with forum members on this topic, but I also want to provide a placeholder for posting further documentation, both ancient and modern, for this practice/method/technique.

Up front, I need to emphasize that this does **not** appear to be some form of esoteric meditation practice or visualization like [Tibetan Buddhist meditation](#). That being said, as Dr. Tsouna explains it, it does strike me as some form of vivid, imaginative technique to really drive home the error of engaging in certain behaviors during a session of frank speech directed to the student. Frank speech is also used to correct teachers, but usually that's a peer to peer situation and not students correcting teachers (according to Tsouna's book). This vivid picture is "set before the eyes" of the student so they "see" themselves red-faced, scowling, heart racing in anger and then also the consequences of carrying through on that anger without making rational choices and rejections.

That's my current interpretation.

The phrase "setting before the eyes" is evocative to me, and that's why I'm intrigued enough to delve deeper on this topic.

For now, my sources are the book itself and these several papers that are cited or that I found online:

Tsouna, Voula. "Portare davanti agli occhi: Una tecnica retorica nelle opera morali di Filodemo ('Setting-before-the-eyes')", *Cronache Ercolanesi*, 33, 2003, pp. 243-247 (cited in the book)

Sean McConnell. "Epicurean education and the rhetoric of concern." *Acta Classica*, 2015. https://www.academia.edu/16006034/Epicu...oric_of_concern

Tsouna, Voula. Philodemus on Emotions. *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies. Supplement No. 94, GREEK AND ROMAN PHILOSOPHY 100 BC - 200 AD: VOLUME I (2007)*, pp. 213-241 (29 pages) (Available on JSTOR)

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43767829>

I hope to delve into these sources and share excerpts and/or thoughts on them on this intriguing topic.