

"Setting Before the Eyes"

Post by "Cassius" of February 2, 2022 at 9:57 PM

I had more to say on this earlier today and I should have pulled off the road to post it, but this is the best I can reconstruct hours later:

When I think of telling someone one to "set this before their eyes" I think of telling them to "picture this" in their minds.

Telling them to "picture this" is pretty close to asking them "Can you picture this?"

The reason I bring that up is that it seems to me that some of the epistemology sections refer to what may be a test of "can you picture this?" For example, I am thinking of Lucretius' suggesting that we imagine throwing a javelin toward the edge of space. and picturing whether anything might ever stop it.

It's my impression that Lucretius/Epicurus is suggesting that it is impossible ("inconceivable?") to imagine anything stopping the javelin, or that there is a wall or limit or end to outer space.

So where I am going is that as we examine passages which talk about "setting before the eyes" we might want to be on the alert for epistemological test aspects to the exercise.

If we can picture something in our minds, that might be an indication that the thing "might" at least possibly exist. If we cannot even picture it, that might be an indication of "inconceivability." Maybe I am picking up that "inconceivability" word in Philodemus On signs and it has no relation to the current discussion, but it seems to me to be something to be on the alert for as we read whatever material may exist. Because we clearly have Lucretius using the term "ante oculos" in one part of book one, plus we have him suggesting that we imagine the flying javelin as a technique of impressing the lesson on the student.