

"Setting Before the Eyes"

Post by "Don" of February 3, 2022 at 12:52 PM

[Cassius](#) , thanks for all that food for thought! That's a lot of material in those last few posts, and, I'll admit, I haven't waded through it all yet. Remembering that I'm still also wading through *On Anger* (both Philodemus's text and the translators' commentary in that book) and the articles I linked to, let me summarize where I'm at:

I'm *intrigued* by [Cassius](#) idea about possible links among the therapeutic technique of "setting before the eyes" in Philodemus, the use of the phrase "ante oculus" in Lucretius, and the sensory perception of images/eidolon in Epicurus. I have not seen that brought up anywhere else. I'm not saying I agree there's a link yet, but I'm intrigued.

That being said, my take is that "setting before the eyes" is - for the most part - just a part of the instruction/correction of fellow Epicureans. Philodemus talks about it in *On Anger* in relation to ridding oneself of harmful behaviors. It's also mentioned by name in *On Frank Criticism*. Granted, since we've lost SO many texts, there could have been many more detailed explanations of the technique and its place in the "therapy" sessions.

I originally thought Hiram may have been making more of it than was warranted. Now, Cassius might be imbuing it with more depth than is warranted. Maybe.

That being said, it was obviously specific enough for Philodemus to consistently use the phrase to refer to an integral part of the sessions of frank criticism engaged in by the school.

There is definitely an element of imagination involved. I do not think there is any evidence of an actual "seeing" from a visual perception perspective. The technique appears to have involved confronting the student/patient with vivid descriptions describing in detail the problem behavior and its consequences. But I seem to remember it wasn't meant to be preventative. It was employed after the behavior had been engaged in during a session of frank criticism to *correct* the behavior moving forward.

So, that's why I'm not convinced that the images/eidolon are involved... Although I'm still unclear of those connections. It does appear that memory habituated the mind to receiving images, but that's all a little murky, too.

This is interesting from a "what was actually going on inside the Epicurean community in ancient times" perspective, but also "how can we resurrect or re-use or re-interpret ancient practices for modern times" perspective. That's one reason why it's important to dig into this.