

New Sedley Chapter On Ancient Greek Atheism

Post by "Don" of April 11, 2022 at 7:28 AM

Okay here are some random thoughts on this this morning:

1. The films/images coming *from* things *to* our eyes or minds was a direct refutation of the competing ancient theory that our eyes beamed out some kind of ray. To me, it's a lighthouse metaphor (Epicurean theory) vs a flashlight metaphor (Platonic et al metaphor)
2. The films/images are entirely consistent with Epicurus's physics. He needed a way to explain sensation and this is what he came up with.
3. Now, this one has me genuinely stumped: How do images in our minds of the gods differ from images of unicorns and centaurs? Why would the former be considered real and the latter false and a combination of images colliding in the air?
4. It would be a disservice to Epicurus to say he was prescient or worse to ascribe some sort of Nostradamus-like prophetic ability in that humans could receive some as-yet-undiscovered rays. See #1 and #2 above. Epicurus was a man of his time. He responded to contemporary controversies in physics and philosophy with novel answers and significant and deep understanding of human nature and the physical world. It's important to keep that perspective in mind. His philosophy is timeless in its ability to "remove suffering from the soul" but his physics are not modern physics. To me, they're best understood to drive home the idea that we live in a material world.