

New Sedley Chapter On Ancient Greek Atheism

Post by "Cassius" of April 12, 2022 at 1:50 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

Mental images" might be a better description.

Except that I think that term would imply that they originate or exist only in the mind, which would pretty clearly contradict what they Epicureans state- they originate outside the mind.

There are all sorts of pitfalls:

"invisible" images sort of implies woo

"imperceptible" images might work, but they are supposedly perceptible to the mind

"non-visible" is awkward, but might actually be better than Invisible.

there's also the issue as to whether to describe them as "films" or some other word that conveys that they leave the surface of each object in sequence so as to retain to at least some degree the shape of the object. The word "shed" is almost more appropriate from that perspective.

Maybe I am coming around to Cassius' "spectres" 😊

Quote

Cassius had recently become a follower of the Epicurean school of philosophy.

[15.16] Cicero to Cassius [Rome, January, 45 B.C.] I expect you must be just a little ashamed of yourself now that this is the third letter that has caught you before you have sent me a single leaf or even a line. But I am not pressing you, for I shall look forward to, or rather insist upon, a longer letter. As for myself, if I always had somebody to trust with them, I should send you as many as three an hour. For it somehow happens, that whenever I write anything to you, you seem to be at my very elbow; and that, not by way of visions of images, as your new friends term them, who believe that even mental visions are conjured up by what Cassius calls spectres (for let me remind you that Cassius the Insubrian, an Epicurean, who died lately, gives the name of spectres to what the famous Gargettian [Epicurus], and long before that Democritus, called images).

2 But, even supposing that the eye can be struck by these spectres because they run up against it quite of their own accord, how the mind can be so struck is more than I can see. It will be your duty to explain to me, when you arrive here safe and sound, whether the spectre of you is at my command to come up as soon as the whim has taken me to think about you - and not only about you, who always occupy my inmost heart, but suppose I begin thinking about the Isle of Britain, will the image of that wing its way to my consciousness?

3 But of this later on. I am only sounding you now to see in what spirit you take it. For if you are angry and annoyed, I shall have more to say, and shall insist upon your being reinstated in that school of philosophy, out of which you have been ousted "by violence and an armed force." In this formula the words "within this year" are not usually added; so even if it is now two or three years since, bewitched by the blandishments of Pleasure, you sent a notice of divorce to Virtue, I am free to act as I like. And yet to whom am I talking? To you, the most gallant gentleman in the world, who, ever since you set foot in the forum, have done nothing but what bears every mark of the most impressive distinction. Why, in that very school you have selected I apprehend there is more vitality than I should have supposed, if only because it has your approval. "How did the whole subject occur to you?" you will say. Because I had nothing else to write. About politics I can write nothing, for I do not care to write what I feel.

[15.19] Cassius to Cicero [Brundisium, latter half of January, 45 B.C.] L

I hope that you are well. I assure you that on this tour of mine there is nothing that gives me more pleasure to do than to write to you; for I seem to be talking and joking with you face to face. And yet that does not come to pass because of those spectres; and, by way of retaliation for that, in my next letter I shall let loose upon you such a rabble of Stoic boors that you will proclaim Catus a true-born Athenian.

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Seems like the same confusion of issues and words was plaguing Cicero and Cassius.