

The Possibility of The "Images" Theory Being Not So Absurd After All

Post by "Don" of July 8, 2024 at 11:35 PM

I'm going jump into this fray by saying I lean toward [TauPhi](#) 's position on this thread's topic. First, I will state that there are - let's call them - "similarities" between Epicurean/Democritean physics and their mechanism of sensation via eidola and modern physics and modern neuroscience. Those similarities are what attracted me to investigate Epicurean philosophy in the first place.

However...

Those similarities do *not* translate - for me - into Epicurus or Democritus being prescient about particle physics or electromagnetic energy/waves or RFID or radio/television transmission. And, for me, their paradigms don't have to be prescient to still be impressive For the times they lived in, they were revolutionary! For the times they lived in, they figured out a lot from mere thought-experiments and working through problems in their heads. For me, their huge contributions toward a more scientific world-view included:

1. The world is physical without the need for gods to step in to create or to fine-tune.
2. Everything in the cosmos is composed of innumerable arrangements of tiny "uncuttable" (a-tomos) particles which we can't see.
 1. In fact, we could never see (Thanks to [TauPhi](#)for bringing up the 2-atom idea. Even more so, an "atom" couldn't give off eidola).
3. Our eyes do not give off beams like a lantern that perceive things in our environment. Our eyes - and other senses - are impacted by stimuli (eidola) streaming from material things.
 1. Superficially, light bouncing off something and then interacting with our eyes could seem like "That's just like eidola" but not if we honestly assess the paradigm Epicurus was working under as in "The bodies themselves give off films."

And so on...

Some of those things have superficial analogies in our modern understanding (like the light example above), but once the details are worked out and the underlying paradigms are applied, I don't believe the idea that "They were onto something" holds up. It seems more like cases of parallel or convergent evolution of ideas; however, I will fully agree that later "natural philosophers" and scientists built on Epicurus (sounds mostly like via Lucretius) ideas of atoms and the rest.

I respect Epicurus's ingenuity and deeply respect the direction he set scientific thought. However, I don't think we need to shoehorn his φυσικός (physikos) into modern physics to appreciate that ingenuity.

All that said, I am more than open to additional ideas on this or citations and references to texts that provide additional details to consider! That's one thing I deeply appreciate about this forum is the free and open exchange of ideas on Epicurean philosophy. What's the saying "Iron sharpens iron"? (Oh, no! [That turns out to be Biblical](#) although it appears from that link that Horace and Euripides had similar sayings)!