

"Setting Before the Eyes"

Post by "Don" of January 28, 2022 at 6:15 PM

I've recently become interested in researching the Epicurean practice of "setting before the eyes" which I learned about via Dr. Voula Tsouna's book, [The Ethics of Philodemus](#). According to her, it was a rhetorical technique employed by teachers within the Epicurean school to correct students behaviors, especially when it came to anger. The teacher would "place before the eyes" of the student what they look like when they are angry or what the consequences would be of their anger. I'm just using that as an example. From her writing it appears to have had wider application.

I'm starting this thread to engage in discussion with forum members on this topic, but I also want to provide a placeholder for posting further documentation, both ancient and modern, for this practice/method/technique.

Up front, I need to emphasize that this does **not** appear to be some form of esoteric meditation practice or visualization like [Tibetan Buddhist meditation](#). That being said, as Dr. Tsouna explains it, it does strike me as some form of vivid, imaginative technique to really drive home the error of engaging in certain behaviors during a session of frank speech directed to the student. Frank speech is also used to correct teachers, but usually that's a peer to peer situation and not students correcting teachers (according to Tsouna's book). This vivid picture is "set before the eyes" of the student so they "see" themselves red-faced, scowling, heart racing in anger and then also the consequences of carrying through on that anger without making rational choices and rejections.

That's my current interpretation.

The phrase "setting before the eyes" is evocative to me, and that's why I'm intrigued enough to delve deeper on this topic.

For now, my sources are the book itself and these several papers that are cited or that I found online:

Tsouna, Voula. "Portare davanti agli occhi: Una tecnica retorica nelle opera morali di Filodemo ('Setting-before-the-eyes')", *Cronache Ercolanesi*, 33, 2003, pp. 243-247 (cited in the book)

Sean McConnell. "Epicurean education and the rhetoric of concern." *Acta Classica*, 2015. https://www.academia.edu/16006034/Epicu...oric_of_concern

Tsouna, Voula. Philodemus on Emotions. *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies. Supplement No. 94, GREEK AND ROMAN PHILOSOPHY 100 BC - 200 AD: VOLUME I (2007)*, pp.

213-241 (29 pages) (Available on JSTOR)

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43767829>

I hope to delve into these sources and share excerpts and/or thoughts on them on this intriguing topic.

Post by “Cassius” of January 28, 2022 at 6:51 PM

Thanks Don for starting this. I will try to edit and reconstruct some of my comments that we made in private. I apologize that in pasting them here there is not an entirely logical flow between them, but I think the points are relevant to the conversation, which I hope will go on much further into the details:

OK I see that I need to add Tsouna's book to my reading list, and I see why it is so attractive to Hiram (and no doubt many people) because it has a section on Therapeutic exercises. It says clearly that Philodemus was purposely going outside Epicurean doctrine. I think we can add this to the list of examples where the later Epicureans were not uniform in their views and that there were controversies as to who was or was not straying outside of Epicurean doctrine -- for good or for bad effect will be an individual contextual issue.

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As to "setting before the eyes" I see she refers to this as the "so-called technique" of bringing-before-the-eyes. I wonder if anyone else in the world prior to or other than Tsouna herself identified this with specificity or called it that. I do think that in the syncretic approach there is a tendency to pull things out of context and make something different of them than existed in the original context. Maybe this is important, maybe it is not, but I generally like to see the issue stressed by the founding authorities before I accept that it was important to them (much like the issue of katastematic/kinetic distinctions).

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Looks like there is another reference too, Don --- Tsouna 2003

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As to Philodemus in general and his reliability:

In my opinion Philodemus is in a gray area and he's definitely not a "Founding Authority" in the sense of Epicurus or Metrodorus or Hermarchus. By the time he was writing it's likely that there were significant divisions (and Philodemus reports on them) including those issues documented by Cicero/Torquatus such as:

- How much logical exposition is appropriate to establish that pleasure is the good
- How to look at "friendship."

And I bet by this point there was probably the division too noted by Diogenes Laertius as to a "fourth leg of the canon." Since we're talking here about visualization it's interesting to think about whether that could be related to the "fourth leg" controversy.

I'm not trying to be argumentative (against Philodemus or anyone else! 😊). I think these are fascinating issues on which we have to keep an open mind. I do generally think that when we have a reliable text of Philodemus saying something we have a very high value source that is entitled to a lot of respect. However it's hard to say whether what is being reported has some overlay of Philodemus' own view vs that of Epicurus himself, and I think we always need to be alert to that.

I think we today have an incentive to see things that might not really be there, like Dewitt with Christianity. We're all doing the best we can to reconstruct the wider positions from narrow evidence, and it's easy to make mistakes and go too far. If the person doing the writing isn't rigorously protecting their views from outside "pollution" from their own viewpoints, then it's easy to see what we're looking for. I don't really have a grip on Tsouna's personal perspective other than to observe that she seems to rather frequently disagree with Sedley, whose instincts I personally find more likely to be similar to Epicurus.

Also keep in mind that being a lawyer I do like to constantly pit testimonies and opinions against each other, and in doing so I am not necessarily questioning the good faith of any of them, just trying to test their accuracy from different perspectives.

It's interesting to compare perspectives on how to judge Philodemus vs Lucretius. Philodemus might well have been the smarter person and a major thinker in his own right. Lucretius might have been "just" a poet. But if Lucretius was rigorously following the original texts of Epicurus, that makes him possibly a better source.

Which is a way to bring us around to the fact that the very first words of that section on Epicurus in Book One are "Ante oculos." I didn't have time to search Tsouna to see if she incorporates that in her analysis of the technique.

Note: I mean how much is there that Tsouna is able to cite? Is it a clear section that states "We have an very important Epicurean technique called 'setting before the eyes' or is it just a phrase that appears several times as a natural result of thinking that it is important to visualize what we are talking about? I just haven't read enough to be sure.

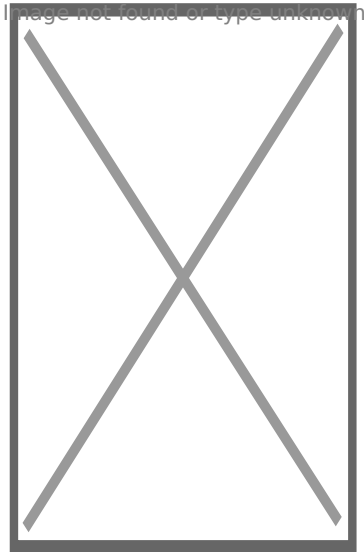
I just finished reading Tsouna's introduction to Ethics of Philodemus. She is very clear as to the very great difficulties in the reconstructions, and that there is a lot of room for reasonable people to differ in interpretations of what she is writing about.

I think it's critical to keep those caveats in mind, and that's one of the concerns I have about the article(s) we are talking about. Frequently I don't see any reference at all to the textual uncertainties, and Tsouna's conclusions are presented (and again I am referring to these articles, and not to her) as if they are certain and that we should accept them without question as equal to the best documented texts. And I think that's a very dangerous approach apt to create conflation and improper syncretism (the words of the week!)

Post by "Don" of January 28, 2022 at 11:56 PM

I tracked down "set before the eyes" in both Philodemus's On Frank Criticism and in his On Anger. I found the first two mentions but haven't had a chance to read all the columns yet. But Tsouna is absolutely correct in using that phrase. It is a literal translation of $\tau\iota\theta\acute{\omega}\mu\epsilon\nu\ \pi\rho\acute{o}\ \delta\omicron\mu\mu\acute{\alpha}\tau\omega\nu$:

On Frank Criticism/Peri parressias Column 26.4-5



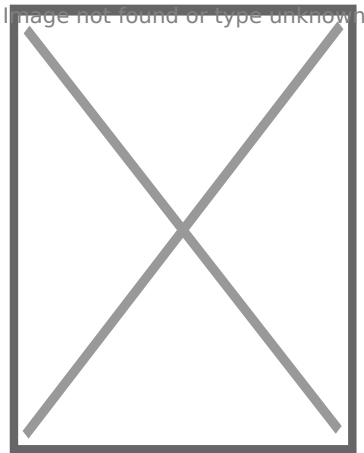
[Philodemi Peri parresias libellus; edidit Alexander Olivieri : Philodemus, ca. 110-ca. 40 B.C : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

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archive.org

τιθῶμεν πρὸ ὀμμάτων

On Anger/Peri orges (De ira (Latin)) Column 1.23



[De ira liber. - \(Google eBook\) : Philodemus, Theodor Gomperz : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

in aedibus B. G. Teubneri, 1864 - 198 pages

archive.org

τιθέναι πρὸ ὀμμάτων

[τίθημι - Wiktionary](#)

τιθῶμεν/τιθέναι < τίθημι "place or put"

(with ἐν ὄμμασι (en ómmasi)) I set before one's eyes

522 BCE – 443 BCE, Pindar, Nemean Ode 8.43:

μαστεύει δὲ καὶ τέρψις ἐν ὄμμασι θέσθαι πιστόν

"yet delight also seeks to set a trustworthy pledge before the eyes"

(Full ode: <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...3DN.%3Apoem%3D8>)

LSJ entry for τίθημι: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...7:entry=ti/qhmi>

ὀμμάτων = poetic word for "eye" (very popular! See quotations at Wiktionary entry: https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/%E1%BD%84...1#Ancient_Greek)

LSJ entry: [http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...57:entry=o\)/mma](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...57:entry=o)/mma)

I think Pindar's use of the phrase is instructive since the whole context seems to point toward a vivid picture in the mind:

[Pindar, Nemean, Nemean 8 For Deinias of Aegina Double Foot Race ?459 B. C.](#)

Excellence grows among skillful and just men up to the liquid air,

as a tree shoots up fed by fresh dew.

The uses of friends are of all kinds;

those in times of toil are the highest,

yet delight also seeks to set a trustworthy pledge before the eyes.

Post by “Cassius” of January 29, 2022 at 5:07 AM

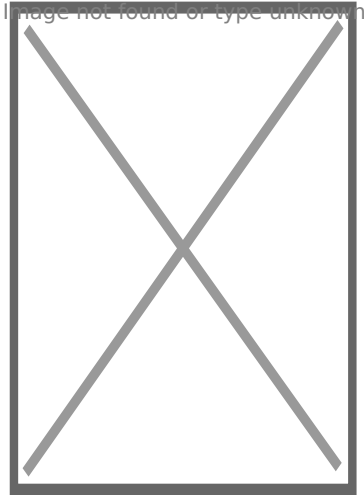
So are there intact sentences which give context to the usage?

Post by “Don” of January 29, 2022 at 7:17 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

So are there intact sentences which give context to the usage?

Yes. Both On Anger and On Frank Criticism have much of their papyri intact. Here's a better link to Column 1 of On Anger:



[Philodemi epicurei De ira liber : Philodemus : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

Book digitized by Google from the library of the University of Michigan and uploaded to the Internet Archive by user tpb.
archive.org

Post by “Cassius” of January 29, 2022 at 7:43 AM

I think what I am really looking for is at least a couple of reliably-sourced English sentences (without major reconstructions of missing text) that make clear what is being discussed and how the term is being used.

Otherwise I would presume that something as simple could be going on as we might regularly say in discussing, for example, how to fish:

"Imagine you are in a boat on a pond getting ready to throw your line...."

"Imagine you are on the shore of a lake and you are about to cast a net...."

I could imagine all sorts of uses of words like "imagine" or "visualize" that would have very little significance as a technique beyond what is used in common conversation to set the stage for a discussion.

Now if there are lines like "Epicurus recommended as a method of thinking clearly that you intensely visualize what it is you are thinking about. Close your eyes and visualize all the colors, the shapes, the textures, and let your eyes wander all over them.... etc etc etc."

Are you seeing clear statements like that which indicate that Philodemus was emphasizing a particular method of pursuing thought about something?

If so can you point us to them? I apologize if they are in those links and I just didn't see them.

Post by "Cassius" of January 29, 2022 at 8:07 AM

Ok finally I remember for this thread one of the main points I want to raise:

What I interpret to be the most important reference to "ante oculos" is the reference early in book one of Lucretius:

"Humana ante oculos foede cum vita....."

The translators seem to view that as an interjection on the order of:

"all too conspicuous" - Humphrey

(I will get some more to add here)

But I interpret them to be saying, and it makes sense in the translation, that this is just some kind of idiom or expression for what we might say as:

- "right in front of you"
- "right before your eyes"
- "apparently"
- "obviously"
- "plain to see"
- "unmistakeably"

All of which would be normal ways of expressing something that is "right in front of you to be seen." And that's a point that is echoed later in book one, in the passage about if you can't have confidence in your senses as to what is right in front of you, you certainly can't have confidence in your opinions about anything that is hidden.

(And I need to look to see if there are other instances of ante oculos in Lucretius)

But the point of this being that if "ante oculos" is just an idiom or expression about things that are clearly right in front of you, that in itself has significance, without turning the issue into a "technique" so we can match the Stoics or some others who are really into "procedures."

Again this is not a criticism of you personally or anyone in particular who wants to search for such techniques, it's just a matter of wanting to document them very clearly before we accept something that Tsouna in the last several decades thinks she has discovered, when there doesn't seem to be any significant record of it in the rest of 2000 years of Epicurean texts.

Kind of like that other Lucretius line -- If it's true let's embrace it, if it's not true let's fight against it, but whatever, let's work to be as accurate as we can possibly be.

Post by "Don" of January 29, 2022 at 8:17 AM

I haven't read your last post yet but:

What is that section in Lucretius with "bring into the light" or something like it? I can't remember the context to determine if it's relevant here or not.

Post by "Cassius" of January 29, 2022 at 8:17 AM

I am just writing notes now as they come to mind:

I also want to say that if we can find good documentation for something special, Cassius will be the first to call a series of "Visualization Parties" so we can all talk about and work on the technique together! 😊

But what I am afraid of is something that Don and I both note in DeWitt: It's kind of embarrassing, and undermines his credibility somewhat, to find connections to Christianity hiding almost under every rock. I do think he's right to draw many of his connections, but he probably goes overboard and ends up turning off readers who aren't really interested in drawing out every possible connection.

That's what I am afraid of here - that if indeed there is nothing more going on here than an idiom for "examine closely" or "look closely" or "look at what's right in front of you" then to imply that there was a special and well developed Epicurean technique that goes far beyond what is obvious (sort of a pun there) could tend to be an embarrassing contention to make if people go looking for the documentation, find it very meagre and too speculative and ambiguous to be of any use, and get disappointed in studying Epicurus as a result.

Post by “Cassius” of January 29, 2022 at 8:19 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

What is that section in Lucretius with "bring into the light" or something like it? I can't remember the context to determine if it's relevant here or not.

I am not in a place where I can find quotes immediately but I think at least Munro translates it as "shores of light" and it's usually (if I recall) in those sections where we are talking about the need for a comprehensive philosophy, and the cup of wormwood for its healing properties (I think). Let me see what I can find and I will paste here:

Post by “Cassius” of January 29, 2022 at 8:23 AM

I must be hallucinating as to "shores." I was sure it was there (maybe Humphries) but what I am finding is "borders":

Munro:

[159] If things came from nothing, any kind might be born of any thing, nothing would require seed. Men for instance might rise out of the sea, the scaly race out of the earth, and birds might burst out of the sky; horned and other herds, every kind of wild beasts would haunt with changing broad tilth and wilderness alike. Nor would the same fruits keep constant to trees, but would change; any tree might bear any fruit. For if there were not begetting bodies for each, how could things have a fixed unvarying mother? But in fact because things are all produced from fixed seeds, each thing is born and goes forth into the borders of light out of that in which resides its matter and first bodies; and for this reason all things cannot be gotten out of all things, because in particular things resides a distinct power.

Post by “Cassius” of January 29, 2022 at 8:25 AM

Yes the "shores" is from Humphries, which means it's the text that Charlton Griffin reads, which is why that is burned into my mind:

[159] Now, if things come from nothing, all things could
Produce all kinds of things; nothing would need
Seed of its own. Men would burst out of the sea,
And fish and birds from earth, and, wild or tame,
All kinds of beasts, of dubious origin,
Inhabit deserts and the greener fields,
Nor would the same trees bear, in constancy,
The same fruit always, but, as like as not,
Oranges would appear on apple-boughs.
If things were not produced after their kind,
Each from its own determined particles,
How could we trace the substance to the source?
But now, since all created things have come
From their own definite kinds of seed, they move
From their beginnings toward the shores of light.

Post by “Don” of January 29, 2022 at 8:37 AM

Ah, maybe not relevant then (the light thing). Thanks for the cites!

I'm reading quickly through your posts, but you might be expecting something more than I'm expecting out of all this research. I think the words "technique" or "practice" may imbue this way of counteracting behaviors in a formal teacher/student interaction with more of a "mystical" flavor than either Philodemus or I intended. That's all I'll say for now. Heading out to work. I find this fascinating and an enjoying digging into the texts. More later.

Post by “Godfrey” of January 29, 2022 at 12:20 PM

Quote from Don

I think the words "technique" or "practice" may imbue this way of counteracting behaviors in a formal teacher/student interaction with more of a "mystical" flavor than either Philodemus or I intended.

That's my impression as well and you've said it quite succinctly.

When I reviewed my highlights from the book I ended up with nine pages of text. So it's going to take a while to see if I can make something useful of it all. That might indicate that the book is worth reading 😊

Post by “Cassius” of January 29, 2022 at 12:39 PM

Here is another analogy:

In the letter to Herodotus Epicurus is quite clear in advocating the use of outlining.

In the letter to Menoeceus Epicurus is quite clear in advocating the study of nature, and the discussion of issues such as infinity.

It's that level of clarity that I think we should look for in embracing any advice as to "techniques.". Because those are so clear and from Epicurus, those should be at the top of the list of any list of "techniques."

It's probable also that there are clear instructions to try to it some or all of the central doctrines to memory. That also deserves a highest priority.

If there are other "techniques" that deserve similar status to those, we should add them to the list, while also documenting their level of authority. I suspect there are others that can be added to this list just from the letters to Epicurus or Lucretius.

There is also the "do all things as if Epicurus we're watching" - from Seneca if I remember correctly?

Likewise "Meditate Mortem" - also from Seneca?

And so for basic programs of this forum we ought to stress and focus on those that are clearly documented, and only when those are tended to supplement the list.

It would be really good to make this into an explicit numbered list in terms of level of authority of the source, and then as we go forward decide where to put the visualization issue on that list.

And as for newer students, probably the soundest advise is to take Epicurus to heart and follow the list in the order Epicurus himself seemed to stress it, and only then, and afterwards, begin to experiment with other possibilities.

Post by “Don” of January 30, 2022 at 12:06 AM

I realized I could get online access to Philodemus's On Anger (Philodemus, On anger / by David Armstrong and Michael McOsker. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020) through one of the university libraries. What I've done is copy Columns 1-5 and then highlight where the phrase in question shows up. I apologize for the disjointed text. There are lengthy passages of each papyrus leaf that are intact for the most part, allowing long texts, but they are broken up at the top of the rolls. So, here is what I have so far. All text is copied. I haven't included any commentary of my own. There are also mentions of the therapeutic technique in On Frank Criticism but I don't have an English translation for that one, so I may have to puzzle through the Greek on my own. For now, here are the passages mentioning the "setting before the eyes" explicitly in On Anger, keeping in mind the book goes on for 357 pages with only a small introduction. Most of it is Greek on one page, English translation on the other. There are a lot of details in dealing with the patient/student that I haven't included here which could flesh out the technique but simply do not use that phrase:

From Column 1: From this point on, the papyrus unrolled very cleanly, and there are no major problems with stratigraphy or order, except for the fragments of tops pasted in above the columns (frags. A- H), some of which cannot be securely placed.

Column 1

[circa seventeen lines missing or untranslatable]

“...[nor do] I [deny?] this. For it is obvious to all that, just as that is an evil, so is this.” [7] By such arguments, indeed, he (sc. Timasagoras) undertook (to prove) that “blaming (anger) is ridiculous,” but idly, as is his custom. [12] Now, if he were rebuking those who only blame (anger) and do little or nothing else about it, like Bion in his On Anger and Chrysippus in the Therapeutikos Logos of his On Emotions , he would be taking a reasonable position. [20] As it is, in supposing that the general idea, (i.e.,) putting the consequent evils before one’s eyes, is ridiculous and raving, he him[self is rav]ing and ri[diculous]....

Column 2

[circa sixteen lines missing]

... natural (angers?) ... by feeling com[es about (?)] ... of his reasonings. [6] [When]ever he (sc. the philosopher censuring anger) inf[ers] what is hidden from him —what is external is obvious, especially to a person who can reason about emotions —he has not m[isled] us, and it is “obvious to all” (66*) that things [are] as he has said. [15] And that element of their disposition, from which they (angry people) become distraught, through which (they are) afflicted by numberless evils, we know begets new evils all over again, in most cases. [21] ... philosophical reasoning ... [from belief?] (can change this disposition?),

66. Philodemus sarcastically paraphrases Timasagoras’s words πᾶσι ... φα | νερόν (see 1.5- 6 above), as he will do yet again in 5.22 and in lines 9- 10 of this column (and see n. 70).*

Column 3

[circa seventeen lines missing or untranslatable]

... [5] for which reason, [by describ]ing some things that are completely unknown (sc. to the patient), some that have been forgotten, others that are being left unappraised— at least with respect to their seriousness, if in no other regard—[11] and others that he never contemplated as a whole, and by putting all this in his sight, he (sc. the therapist) creates a great fright, so that (the patient), now that he has also been reminded that it is up to him, can escape it with ease. [18] For this is what even ordinary philosophers present to him, but the really good ones also sketch out the behaviors by which we might fall prey to angry passions as little as possible. [25] That is, in fact, why, in saying that it is quite “obvious” to everyone ... (sc. that Timasagoras is mistaken?) ...

Column 4

[circa nineteen lines missing or untranslatable]

... [4] although some?] of the doctors (sc. point out?) the seriousness of the disease, the sufferings that happen because of it, and its other difficulties, and sometimes also its dangers, these things escape the sick men’s notice— some generally, others by (failure of) rational appraisal, [12] which is why they become too careless of their escape (sc. from these dangers), as if moderate (evils) were afflicting them, but these (evils), once put before their eyes,*74 render them attentive to their treatment. [19] In fact, in this case (i.e., philosophical therapy), because they do not consider some of these at all and others not clearly, they do not even want to commit themselves to therapy, but once they have learned ... according to (?) ...

**74. Putting the consequences of evildoing before one’s eyes for rational appraisal (τιθέναι πρὸ ὀμμάτων ; cf. 1.21- 23 and 3.13- 14), is key to Epicurean therapy; it also appears at Lib. [On Frank Criticism] frag. 26.4- 5; cf. frag. 78N.1- 3 (ἐπιδεικνύουσι πρὸ ὀμμάτων) and col. 17a.4-*

14. Here it is defended as a paramedical virtue of the right kind of diatribe. See further Tsouna 2003.

Column 5

[circa sixteen lines missing or untranslatable]

... [7] and others call (on them) to pay attention more carefully to this therapy and not to pass over lightly the seriousness and the evils attached to their diseases and to their fits of anger, since the reasons why it is indispensable for doctors to use blame are no less unknown (to Timasagoras?), or at any rate equally as unknown. [17] So the misfortunes that were going to follow from his anger toward Basilides and Thespis were not "obvious" (sc. to him), even though, as he thought, he had s[e]t limits to his bitterness. [25] He is so blind that, though it is much more profitable ... (to pay attention to?) reputable [sages] ... easi[ly] ...

Post by "Cassius" of January 30, 2022 at 4:38 AM

Thanks for that work! Sounds in most cases like the meaning is essentially "Think about the consequences..." Or "imagine for a moment the consequences..." Of s particular course of action?

Post by "Don" of January 30, 2022 at 8:58 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Thanks for that work! Sounds in most cases like the meaning is essentially "Think about the consequences..." Or "imagine for a moment the consequences..." Of s particular course of action?

That's part of it, but I'm getting the impression that it's not just "think about.." and is more "imagine.." Really "see" it, *not* in a "mystical, visualization" way but see it vividly. In other parts of On Anger, (and I think Tsouna writes about this) Philodemus vividly describes the bulging eyes etc. of someone consumed with rage. He makes it, literally, not a pretty sight.

Post by “Godfrey” of January 30, 2022 at 1:09 PM

It seems too like a key part of it is a teacher or friend describing or illustrating to the one receiving therapy. It doesn't seem to be a technique for solitary meditation. Setting before the eyes would then be the act of describing or illustrating, right?

Post by “Don” of January 30, 2022 at 1:29 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

It seems too like a key part of it is a teacher or friend describing or illustrating to the one receiving therapy. It doesn't seem to be a technique for solitary meditation. Setting before the eyes would then be the act of describing or illustrating, right?

I'm not entirely sure about the solitary possibility. I could see reading (the works of Philodemus like On Anger for example) to "put before your eyes" a situation the individual is dealing with. But that teacher/student (doctor/patient) relationship within the community does seem to be a BIG component of where this is coming from. This also seems to me to be an important way in which Epicurus's philosophy was practiced within the school.

Post by “Cassius” of January 30, 2022 at 4:29 PM

On solitary vs teacher-student, since I am still viewing this as a very simple issue, I would say the answer would likely be either.

Either alone, or with a teacher (and I can certainly see that advantages of having a teacher or at least a friend to talk to) the way to reason through any situation would be to turn the possibilities over in your mind and identify them as best you can. For a very obvious example, when evaluating which course of several to apply, sitting down and preparing a chart of the pluses and minus of each option. Which brings to mind that i still like at time today to use a pen and paper to write things down, and I find that the act of writing seems to solidify my connection with the thought. People talk about that as muscle memory or something, right? Maybe there's something analogous about visualizing that also helps make the issues real.

Post by “Don” of January 30, 2022 at 4:44 PM

I've used Tsouna's book for reference primarily and haven't read beginning to end. I realize now that I should really do that. Now that I know we have access to the manuscripts or at least apographs and I can see the translation of On Anger, I'll need able to follow along with her references. Adding it to my list of to-do's. 😊

Post by “Godfrey” of January 30, 2022 at 7:35 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

For a very obvious example, when evaluating which course of several to apply, sitting down and preparing a chart of the pluses and minus of each option.

My impression, though I could certainly be wrong, is that this isn't what Philodemus is referring to. I'm interpreting what you're describing here Cassius as a planning activity whereas as I understand it (at least in the specific context of the scrolls) is to work on improving specific shortcomings of a student.

What you're describing is certainly valid as a practice, but I don't think that's what "setting before the eyes" is referring to. It seems very specific. As I recall, it's always referred to under discussion of "therapy".

Post by “Don” of January 30, 2022 at 8:56 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

as I understand it (at least in the specific context of the scrolls) is to work on improving specific shortcomings of a student.

What you're describing is certainly valid as a practice, but I don't think that's what "setting before the eyes" is referring to. It seems very specific. As I recall, it's always referred to under discussion of "therapy".

That's my understanding as well, [Godfrey](#) .

And I concur that the list of + and - is a valid practice but it's not "setting before the eyes."

Post by “Cassius” of January 30, 2022 at 9:22 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

And I concur that the list of + and - is a valid practice but it's not "setting before the eyes."

Well I didn't really mean to restrict the activity to words as much as I meant that when you envision the option you document it like on a check off list. But that's probably not the issue you guys are referring to. How do you envision "setting before the eyes"?

Post by “Godfrey” of January 30, 2022 at 10:23 PM

My impression is that it seems to involve a very detailed description of the consequences of a particular trait or action, such as anger. The "therapist" paints such a detailed word picture of the consequences that the "patient" learns from this as though they actually experienced it.

Am I inadvertently quoting this from a source posted above? Anyway, the extant sources are limited so "setting before the eyes" could involve more than just this, however this seems to be all that's in the sources.

This brings to mind an experience I had as a teenager: I learned to waterski by sitting in a room with a friend and listening as he talked me through each step of the process, from getting into the water to standing up. He did this on two or three occasions. His explanations were so vivid and detailed that the first time I got in the water I was able to ski as if I'd been doing it for quite a while, and continued to progress from there. I've always been amazed at how that worked! I consider that to be "setting before the eyes", although not in the Epicurean context.

Post by “Don” of January 30, 2022 at 11:11 PM

[Godfrey](#) , that's exactly it! I was about to start typing out a long explanation, but your water-skiing example is spot on. Just transferring that to a teacher/doctor-student/patient scenario where the teacher is trying to get the student to see how to deal with anger or their habit of dealing with an angry disposition and I think that's it.

The phrase that Tsouna keeps using is "vivid description."

Tsouna: "It seems reasonable to infer that the technique works by inducing the creation of pictures or images in the patient's mind and engages some form of imagination which has mental pictures and related items as its proper medium. An enraged person sees the evils deriving from anger, feels aversion towards the passion, and forms the desire to remove it."

I would conjecture Philodemus's *On Anger* excerpts below would serve as part of a session of setting before the eyes to get someone to abandon their angry ways:

Column 8 [circa nineteen lines missing or untranslatable] ... [16] the rage ... anger ... if ... whole ... [20] as if composed of raging fever and swelling and irritation and indignation and a dreadful desire to get revenge and anxiety [26] whether one will be able to, as the utterances of those people will demonstrate, who sometimes boast they will "gird themselves with the guts" of the one who hurt them and other times "tear him up raw." [32] Then (their anger progresses) to unstable movements distributed throughout their bodies; I mean, for example, the dislocation of their lungs, ribs and all, from their shouting, their very rapid, shallow breathing like that of men who have just run a thousand stadia, the throbbing of their heart ...
Column 9 [circa seventeen lines missing] ... [18] trembling fits and [movements] of their parts and [paraly]ses, such as hap[pen] to epileptics [as well], so that, since (these effects) continually follow them, they are afflicted for their whole lives and take the greater part of their time in nursing their misery. [27] The fact is that it (sc. anger) and its consequences have produced breakings of lungs, pains in the sides, and many such afflictions that bring death in their wake—[34] as it is possible for those watching over them to hear from their doctors and to notice. At the same time, (these circumstances) dispose them to continual bouts of melancholy as well, so as often [to produce] black ..."

Fragment 18: "he has the eyes of [madmen] in his outbursts of anger, eyes [5] sometimes even throwing out flashes, a thing that the greatest of the poets appear to have made a distinguishing mark (sc. of anger), and "gazing," [10] that is looking, ["askance"] at those with whom he is angry, and characteristically he has a flushed face in most cases, but some have [15] a blood-red one, and some have their neck stretched tight, and their veins swelling up, and their saliva very bitter and salty, [20] and in some such way"

These are just two examples.

On a different but related note, I found Column 45 to be very interesting:

Column 45

the Founders accept the idea that “the wise man will be enraged,” not according to that preconception, but according to the more general one. [5] In fact, Epicurus makes clear in his *First Appellations* *214 both that the sage “will experience rage” and (will experience it) “in moderation,” and Metrodorus, if he says “the rage of the wise man” in its proper sense, shows also that he feels it “very briefly.” [12] That “he will feel rage”... also to Hermarchus ... [two lines missing or untranslatable] ... [16] so that I am amazed at those who want to be textbook Epicureans, *215 that they ignored these and the things I mentioned before, and as a result tried to demonstrate that, according to our Founders, “the sage will become wrathful.” [23] And their proofs that he will become enraged are very far from establishing that he will become enraged according to every notion of rage, as they ought to have, since nowhere do they establish both anger and rage as separate categories, nor that “he (the wise man) will become angry” in the sense common (to both words), as we will show. [33] It is clear that both in magnitude and quality rage differs from anger and is not natural. [37] But they have reasoned wrongly about when anger and rage are referred to the same thing and when they are not,”

*214. *The Anaphōnēseis is mentioned only here, and this is its only fragment.*

*215. *The βιβλιακοί are “Epicureans by the book,” or at least so they claimed. The school encouraged verbal disputations over the texts of the founders like those in Demetrius Laco’s Textual Problems . See Sedley 1998, 62– 93; and Del Mastro’s (2014, 184– 87) reconstruction of the title Πρὸς τοὺς φασκοβιβλιακοὺς A , in P.Herc . 1005/862 (partially published in Angeli 1988a).*

Post by “Don” of January 31, 2022 at 7:31 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

I've used Tsouna's book for reference primarily and haven't read beginning to end. I realize now that I should really do that. Now that I know we have access to the manuscripts or at least apographs and I can see the translation of On Anger, I'll need able to follow along with her references. Adding it to my list of to-do's. 😊

In rethinking this, I think I should prioritize reading On Anger then read Tsouna's book. Having access to an ancient Epicurean text seems like it should take priority. ... So many books, so little time.

Post by “Godfrey” of January 31, 2022 at 12:27 PM

That sounds like a good plan! In reviewing my highlighting in her book, it touches on quite a bit of ground. For example just in my first couple of highlights she touched on the pleasure/absence of pain controversy, which got me thinking about some of the issues involved in that debate. I don't recall if she goes in depth into that issue or not, but I'm getting the sense that there are endless topics for discussion in the book.

I think that's one reason why I remember so little of it other than general ideas. As you suggest [Don](#) you might be better served to begin with the original text and then dig into secondary discussion of it...

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 31, 2022 at 4:27 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

I think I should prioritize reading On Anger then read Tsouna's book.

Don, when you have read that, I would be so curious to find out how it compares to modern psychology. Here is a website, has four parts, all very good:

<https://www.apa.org/topics/anger/control>

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

in my first couple of highlights she touched on the pleasure/absence of pain controversy, which got me thinking about some of the issues involved in that debate.

Godfrey, that sounds interesting and am curious to hear more about that.

Post by “Godfrey” of January 31, 2022 at 7:44 PM

Kaloesyni, here are some notes from the beginning of the book, all based on one short passage that I had highlighted when I read the book some time ago:

[Quote](#)

Philodemus follows Epicurus' general theory of pleasure. However by the 1st century BCE the nature of pleasure was debated both inside and outside of the school and Philodemus responded accordingly. One subject of controversy regards the definition of the moral end both as pleasure and as the absence of pain.

- It's counterintuitive that the highest pleasure is absence of pain.
- Pleasure having several distinct aspects may conflict with the presumed unity of the supreme good.
- Some first generation Epicureans held that *aponia* is not a part of the moral end.
- (from footnote: Demetrius Laco, a teacher of Philodemus, insists that Epicurus considers the *telos*, pleasure, as the removal of pain)
- Zeno and Philodemus, his student, interpret both absence of physical pain (*aponia*) and absence of mental suffering (*ataraxia*) as being in the Canon and as parts of the highest good.

(My thoughts:

- *virtue has several aspects as well [the cardinal virtues] so similarly could not be the telos under the unity argument [re the telos argument among schools]*
- *how do you recognize that you are acting virtuously? Through reason or by experiencing pleasure? [re the telos argument among schools]*
- *absence of pain = pleasure by definition. Could another way to look at it be that absence of pain produces pleasure?)*

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This probably belongs in another thread and I hesitate to even post this, but in any case it doesn't do her argument justice. She continues to develop this for a couple of pages. My apologies: I'm realizing that trying to put my highlights in a useful form is a project that wouldn't do the book justice and in any case is beyond what I can tackle at the moment. But the book is definitely worth reading. Just looking through it makes me wish that I had the time to re-read it! As [Don](#) said, "so many books, so little time!"

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.

Post by "Don" of February 2, 2022 at 11:26 PM

I'm intrigued by your suggestion, [Cassius](#) . Hmm. You could be on to something... Just not sure what yet.

Post by "Cassius" of February 3, 2022 at 5:53 AM

As usual my thoughts are clear as mud 😊

Combined with a half-memory of reading something in "On methods of inference."

I think the key word for any potential relationship would be what I think is translated as "inconceivability.". That might sound like a logical concept at first glance, but since proof of anything is grounded in the senses, and there is probably a major role for "picturing" things in Epicurean views of thought processes, we might have a related issue.

Also long ago in the Lucretius podcast I think we ran into reason to discuss the extent to which memories constitute stored pictures, and I think there was resistance to that view, but that might factor in too if our emphasis on the use of words is clarity of meaning in a "picture" sense.

Do you have the picture of what I am suggesting yet?

I am sure by now you are getting the picture.



Post by "Cassius" of February 3, 2022 at 6:06 AM

So see I am not at all resistant to pursuing the implications of "ante oculos" and that reminds me too:

1 - Is "ante oculos" what we are discussing?

2- Did we yet pull out the actual quotes from Philodemus (rather than Voula Tsouna's paraphrases or opinions)? That's what I was really concerned about, that we were speculating based on relying on Tsouna rather than on reading the actual reliable-grade texts themselves.

Right now I can picture at least two sections of Lucretius that might be relevant to a "picture this" idiom or method of explaining, but I don't have a firm picture of anything specific from Philodemus.

So I am not asking you (Don) to do it since we are all covered with work, and I don't have the time right now to offer to do it myself, but that would be a good goal for us at some point to pull together at least some preliminary English version of those cites for this project.

And if the texts are so fragmentary that all we can put together in English is Tsouna's conjectures as to the meaning of corrupted sentences, then we can do that, but then at least we can have them clearly labeled as such.

Post by “Don” of February 3, 2022 at 7:06 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

So I am not asking you (Don) to do it since we are all covered with work, and I don't have the time right now to offer to do it myself, but that would be a good goal for us at some point to pull together at least some preliminary English version of those cites for this project.

My posts 16 and 27 are directly from On Anger, not Tsouna's book. The translators appear very conservative, not trying to fill in. They're very clear where the papyrus is missing. But the papyrus is intact over long sections.

Post by “Cassius” of February 3, 2022 at 7:48 AM

Ok I looked back at 16 and 27 but I still don't see much more there than an allusion or idiom referring to "confronting" a person with the consequences of their thoughts or actions, which seems to me to be a fairly ordinary thing that anyone of any philosophy would do in making a point.

Do you see Philodemus saying more than that in those passages?

What I am reading seems to be something like:

"If someone has a problem confront them by discussing with them the consequences of their actions and fleshing those out in detail."

Ok, if so, that makes sense.

But is there more than that?

Now the specific aspect of telling them to "picture it" might be significant, but wouldn't it be significant only if there is something special in the Epicurean view of how "picturing" relates to thinking?

So I gather that is what we are talking about, some kind of special relationship between thinking and picturing (?)

if so, what is that special insight of Epicurus that makes this significant?

Post by "Cassius" of February 3, 2022 at 8:21 AM

Duh. I should have brought this question up earlier too (I hope I didn't and have forgotten)!

What would be the relationship, if any, between this discussion and the flow of "images" that is discussed extensively in Book 4 of Lucretius?

I gather from our discussion of book 4 (which I think took place before your arrival in the podcast Don) that Epicurus was suggesting that many of our thought processes derive from our minds selectively receiving some from among many of the "images" that are constantly floating in the air. This is specifically suggested too by Cicero in his correspondence to Cassius Longinus and in Cassius' subsequent reference to "spectres."

To what extent would an idea of "setting before the eyes" be related to selectively tuning your attention to certain images as part of the thought process.

One of the reasons the images discussions seem to be largely ignored by modern commentators is that Epicurus seems to have been suggesting that these images were intimately involved in our thoughts, which we tend to reject today. I can't imagine that Philodemus departed too far from Epicurus on that, so is it possible that the Epicurean view of images is related to issues involving setting before the eyes?

10.2*****Letter from Cicero to Cassius, written from Rome, January of 45 B.C.

DXXX \ (F XV, 16\)

TO C. CASSIUS LONGINUS \ (AT BRUNDISIUM\)

ROME \ (JANUARY\)

I think you must be a little ashamed at this being the third letter inflicted on you before I have a page or a syllable from you. But I will not press you: I shall expect, or rather exact, a longer letter. For my part, if I had a messenger always at hand, I should write even three an hour. For somehow it makes you seem almost present when I write anything to you, and that not "by way of phantoms of images," as your new friends express it, who hold that "mental pictures" are caused by what Catus called "spectres" - or I must remind you that Catus Insuber the Epicurean, lately dead, calls "spectres" what the famous Gargettius, and before him Democritus, used to call "images."

Well, even if my eyes were capable of being struck by these "spectres," because they spontaneously run in upon them at your will, I do not see how the mind can be struck. You will be obliged to explain it to me, when you return safe and sound, whether the "spectre" of you is

at my command, so as to occur to me as soon as I have taken the fancy to think about you; and not only about you, who are in my heart's core, but supposing I begin thinking about the island of Britain – will its image fly at once into my mind? But of this later on.

I am just sounding you now to see how you take it. For if you are angry and annoyed, I shall say more and demand that you be restored to the sect from which you have been ejected by “violence and armed force.” In an injunction of this sort the words “within this year” are not usually added. Therefore, even if it is now two or three years since you divorced Virtue, seduced by the charms of Pleasure, it will still be open for me to do so. And yet to whom am I speaking? It is to you, the most gallant of men, who ever since you entered public life have done nothing that was not imbued to the utmost with the highest principle. In that very sect of yours I have a misgiving that there must be more stuff than I thought, if only because you accept it. “How did that come into your head?” you will say. Because I had nothing else to say. About politics I can write nothing: for I don't choose to write down my real opinions.

****10.3*****Letter from Cassius to Cicero, written from Brundisium, January, 45 B.C.

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 Catius a true-born Athenian.

Post by “Cassius” of February 3, 2022 at 8:25 AM

Now of course “images” do not appear to be the same thing in the texts as what we see, BUT it seems fair to say that the things that we see do generate images as well as visible sights. So is it possible that we are talking about picturing things so as to summon up the images that are received directly into the mind?

Post by “Cassius” of February 3, 2022 at 8:34 AM

Also: Are there not some references in Lucretius to our motions being the result of us first visualizing the motion? I thought it was here in Book 2 in regard to the swerve, but it's not

exactly stated that way -- HOWEVER see the reference to "clear to see" in line 272 : (Bailey) I wonder if that is an "ante oculos" ->

[251] Once again, if every motion is always linked on, and the new always arises from the old in order determined, nor by swerving do the first-beginnings make a certain start of movement to break through the decrees of fate, so that cause may not follow cause from infinite time; whence comes this free will for living things all over the earth, whence, I ask, is it wrested from fate, this will whereby we move forward, where pleasure leads each one of us, and swerve likewise in our motions neither at determined times nor in a determined direction of place, but just where our mind has carried us? For without doubt it is his own will which gives to each one a start for this movement, and from the will the motions pass flooding through the limbs.

[263] Do you not see too how, when the barriers are flung open, yet for an instant of time the eager might of the horses cannot burst out so suddenly as their mind itself desires? For the whole store of matter throughout the whole body must be roused to movement, that then aroused through every limb it may strain and follow the eager longing of the mind; so that you see a start of movement is brought to pass from the heart, and comes forth first of all from the will of the mind, and then afterwards is spread through all the body and limbs.

[272] Nor is it the same as when we move forward impelled by a blow from the strong might and strong constraint of another. For then it is clear to see that all the matter of the body moves and is hurried on against our will, until the will has reined it back throughout the limbs. Do you not then now see that, albeit a force outside pushes many men and constrains them often to go forward against their will and to be hurried away headlong, yet there is something in our breast, which can fight against it and withstand it? And at its bidding too the store of matter is constrained now and then to turn throughout the limbs and members, and, when pushed forward, is reined back and comes to rest again.

Post by "Cassius" of February 3, 2022 at 8:38 AM

In case it may be helpful here are other references in Lucretius which Bailey has translated the phrase "clear to see":

Quote

[700] And yet we must not think that all particles can be linked together in all ways, for you would see monsters created everywhere, forms coming to being half man, half beast, and sometimes tall branches growing out from a living body, and many limbs of land-beasts linked with beasts of the sea, and nature too throughout the lands, that are

the parents of all things, feeding Chimaeras breathing flame from their noisome mouths. But it is clear to see that none of these things comes to be, since we see that all things are born of fixed seeds and a fixed parent, and can, as they grow, preserve their kind. You may be sure that that must needs come to pass by a fixed law. For its own proper particles separate from every kind of food and pass within into the limbs of everything, and are there linked on and bring about the suitable movements. But, on the other hand, we see nature cast out alien matter on to the ground, and many things with bodies unseen flee from the body, driven by blows, which could not be linked to any part nor within feel the lively motions in harmony with the body and imitate them.

[98] \[Yet many wise men have thought\] that the sensation of the mind is not placed in any part determined, but is a certain vital habit of the body, which the Greeks call a harmony, in that it makes us live with sensation, although in no part does an understanding exist; as when often good health is said to belong to the body, and yet it is not itself any part of a healthy man. In this wise they do not set the sensation of the mind in any part determined; and in this they seem to me to wander very far astray. Thus often the body, which is clear to see, is sick, when, all the same we feel pleasure in some other hidden part; and contrariwise it happens that the reverse often comes to be in turn, when one wretched in mind feels pleasure in all his body; in no other wise than if, when a sick man's foot is painful, all the while, may be, his head is in no pain. Moreover, when the limbs are given up to soft sleep, and the heavy body lies slack and senseless, yet there is something else in us, which at that very time is stirred in many ways, and admits within itself all the motions of joy and baseless cares of heart.

[323] This nature then of the soul is protected by the whole body, and is itself the guardian of the body, and the cause of its life; for the two cling together by common roots, and it is seen that they cannot be torn asunder without destruction. Even as it is not easy to tear out the scent from lumps of frankincense, but that its nature too passes away. So it is not easy to draw out the nature of mind and soul from the whole body, but that all alike is dissolved. With first-beginnings so closely interlaced from their very birth are they begotten, endowed with a life shared in common, nor, as is clear to see, can the power of body or mind feel apart, either for itself without the force of the other, but by the common motions of the two on this side and on that is sensation kindled and fanned throughout our flesh.

[995] The Sisyphus in our life too is clear to see, he who open-mouthed seeks from the people the rods and cruel axes, and evermore comes back conquered and dispirited. For to seek for a power, which is but in name, and is never truly given, and for that to endure for ever grinding toil, this is to thrust uphill with great effort a stone, which after all rolls back from the topmost peak, and headlong makes for the levels of the plain beneath.

[54] First of all, since among things clear to see many things give off bodies, in part scattered loosely abroad, even as wood gives off smoke and fires heat, and in part more closely knit and packed together, as when now and then the grasshoppers lay aside their smooth coats in summer, and when calves at their birth give off a caul from their outermost body, and likewise when the slippery serpent rubs off its vesture on the thorns; for often we see the brambles laden with these wind-blown spoils from snakes. And since these things come to pass, a thin image from things too must needs be given off from the outermost body of things. For why these films should fall and part from things any more than films that are thin, none can breathe a word to prove; above all, since on the surface of things there are many tiny bodies, which could be cast off in the same order wherein they stood, and could preserve the outline of their shape, yea, and be cast the more quickly, inasmuch as they can be less entangled, in that they are few, and placed in the forefront. For verily we see many things cast off and give out bodies in abundance, not only from deep beneath, as we said before, but often too from the surface, such as their own colour. And commonly is this done by awnings, yellow and red and steely-blue, when stretched over great theatres they flap and flutter, spread everywhere on masts and beams. For there they tinge the assembly in the tiers beneath, and all the bravery of the stage and the gay-clad company of the elders, and constrain them to flutter in their colours. And the more closely are the hoardings of the theatre shut in all around, the more does all the scene within laugh, bathed in brightness, as the light of day is straitened. Since then the canvas gives out this hue from its outermost body, each several thing also must needs give out thin likenesses, since in either case they are throwing off from the surface. There are then sure traces of forms, which fly about everywhere, endowed with slender bulk, nor can they be seen apart one by one.

[1056] Lastly, what is there so marvellous in this, if the human race, with strong voice and tongue, should mark off things with diverse sounds for diverse feelings? When the dumb cattle, yea and the races of wild beasts are wont to give forth diverse unlike sounds, when they are in fear or pain, or again when their joys grow strong. Yea verily, this we may learn from things clear to see.

[137] It comes to pass, too, sometimes, that the force of a mighty wind rushing on tears through the cloud and breaks it asunder with a front attack. For what the blast can do there is shown by things clear to see here on earth, where the wind is gentler and yet it tears out and sucks up tall trees from their lowest roots.

[272] Nor is it the same as when we move forward impelled by a blow from the strong might and strong constraint of another. For then it is clear to see that all the matter of

the body moves and is hurried on against our will, until the will has reined it back throughout the limbs. Do you not then now see that, albeit a force outside pushes many men and constrains them often to go forward against their will and to be hurried away headlong, yet there is something in our breast, which can fight against it and withstand it? And at its bidding too the store of matter is constrained now and then to turn throughout the limbs and members, and, when pushed forward, is reined back and comes to rest again.

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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.

Post by “Cassius” of February 3, 2022 at 12:58 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

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.

We'll all soon be having whiplash!

But I do think that the "images" aspect is one of the least appreciated aspects of Epicurean philosophy. It's almost totally neglected and most of us (including me) treat it as an amusing sidebar not worthy of much consideration.

But given how it appears to tie into many aspects of the philosophy, I bet if we had more materials we would find it popping up in unexpected places, and this may be one.

So I'm not really advocating any position yet except for let's dig into the material.

And I need to verify near the beginning of the dig is to verify how many (if any) of those "clear to see" references are indeed "ante oculos."

I need a good text version of Lucretius in latin somewhere -- I think there is or was a latinlibrary.com ?

Post by “Don” of February 3, 2022 at 1:20 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I need a good text version of Lucretius in latin somewhere -- I think there is or was a latinlibrary.com ?

[Lucretius, De Rerum Natura, Liber Primus, line 1](#)

Post by “Don” of February 3, 2022 at 1:29 PM

[Perseus Search Results](#)

I noticed that the link just shows as "search results." It's every occurrence of the word oculus in De Rerum Natura. It wouldn't take the phrase ante oculus.

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 3, 2022 at 7:42 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

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.

This fascinating to me, and so some day soon hope to learn more. And there may end up being a similar process within "Nonviolent Communication by Marshall Rosenberg" ...which uses "Observations, Feelings, Needs, and Requests" ...and the first step uses vivid exact description of exactly what happened or what was said...and they say: "describe what the video camera would see" as a way to be very objective.

Post by “Don” of February 3, 2022 at 10:08 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

the first step uses vivid exact description of exactly what happened or what was said...and they say: "describe what the video camera would see" as a way to be very objective.

That's how I'm thinking "setting before the eyes" goes except in reverse: "Here's what the video camera would see."

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 3, 2022 at 10:17 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

That's how I'm thinking "setting before the eyes" goes except in reverse: "Here's what the video camera would see."

So it is like practicing something in your mind, beforehand?

Post by “Don” of February 3, 2022 at 10:27 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

[Quote from Don](#)

That's how I'm thinking "setting before the eyes" goes except in reverse: "Here's what the video camera would see."

So it is like practicing something in your mind, beforehand?

Well, I don't think so exactly. The technique, as I understand it, is used by the teacher to correct behavior in the student. "You keep up this behavior, this is what's going to happen to you." Then the teacher proceeds to paint a vivid word picture (see my previous post of excerpts from On Anger), making the student "see" what's in store for them. Also, as I understand it, it wasn't meant to be used beforehand, but after some behavior had been admitted to by the student. "I've been experiencing a lot of anger." Or the teacher or another student notices the person acting in an angry way. Then a frank criticism session is engaged in with the student,

incorporating "setting before the eyes" to depict the consequences of the behavior. And I'm using anger simply because that's the topic of the surviving text.

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 3, 2022 at 10:32 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

Or the teacher or another student notices the person acting in an angry way. Then a frank criticism session is engaged in with the student, incorporating "setting before the eyes" to depict the consequences of the behavior.

That doesn't seem to address the "root cause" of the anger...so no matter how much someone knows that bad results will happen, if they don't actively shift the "root cause" (by incorporating new more effective strategies) they will repeat the same behaviour. So this must have just been one small aspect of a larger "program" (one would hope).