

Long and Sedley, Hellenistic Philosophers, "Gods"

Post by "Cassius" of November 26, 2020 at 2:13 AM

I also think that this is a particularly important and perceptive paragraph, but I also think it's one which may be only part of the picture, because I doubt this is a good description of "any process of imagination," and he's not discussing how the mind would accomplish this. He's implicitly acknowledging DeWitt's view that Epicurus held the mind to be a "suprasensory organism" it seems to me without dealing with the issue of "etching" or unfolding of something that existed prior to the outside stimulus. Anyway I do think Sedley is right that we have to consider all this in the context of how the theory of images works generally.

... that is, by converging on our images they become the same.
In order to make sense of this it is crucial to see that it is simply a standard Epicurean account of the mechanics of concept-formation. Any process of imagination is achieved by the mind's admitting from the surrounding air ('tuning in to', as it were) those of the countless available images which correspond to the required impression, either originating from solid bodies, such as men, or forming accidentally from the limitless stock of atoms (15A I-4, D). The continuity of an impression is produced by the 'similarity' (E 7, G) of the selected images to each other. The impression can then be further adjusted by enlargement, combination, etc., as briefly explained at 15F (cf. the fuller Stoic account at 39D). Sextus Empiricus (*Against the professors* 3.40) tells us that the generic name for these processes of adjustment was 'transition' (*metabasis*), the term used at E 7, F 2-3. To take the example at F 2, we conceive of a giant by first focusing on a series of images of men, then enlarging the resultant mental impression.