

Episode Fifty-One - The Workings of Images

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I am very reluctant to explain away the passage describing images as self arising without an extremely clear indication. I think there is a desire, which I understand, to stretch Lucretius to fit our current evidence... but that doesn't seem like a good idea to me. Imo it is better to pull out the parts which are confusing and don't fit the rest, and leave those questions open. That is what we do in science-- when there is weird data we don't know what to do with, we make note of that. Sometimes later it becomes clear what was going on.

When scientists have given in to the urge to finagle data in order to make it fit the rest, this has caused a delay in understanding what was really happening.

Unless there is some translation error, such that self generated does not mean what we think of today (meaning modern translators need to use a more accurate phrasing), the wording there seems very different from images which form as a result of prior images being merged. That would not be self generated, because the original images arose in the usual way-- anymore than a mule is self generated just because it comes from a donkey and a horse. If Lucretius meant recombined rather than self generated and used confusing language in the original, perhaps it was just sloppy writing-- that doesn't seem very likely, but I'm willing to leave that possibility on the table.

Leaving some of these odd bits unexplained, maybe a list of them, would be useful in case further documents are discovered which elaborate these ideas more clearly.