

Episode Sixty - Dreams and the Mind's Use of Images

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I am objecting to attributing ideas to Epicurus that he didn't state, especially when those ideas are wrong! He clearly describes visual images as being made of particles and imagined images as being made of even finer particles, both thrown off as films from objects. He never says we store those particles in our minds, and that whole idea is even wilder than having them available to re-enter.

When we remember images, we are not pulling particles of what we saw back out of storage to view. Visual memory involves neural transmission from the parietal lobe to the visual cortex (as well as widespread network neural activation in the brain), whereas in the initial seeing, the neural transmission is from the visual cortex to those other parts. But it's not image particles (the modern analogous thing being photons, which stimulate our retinas) being sent around again in the brain.

Epicurus was very literal about his images being made of films of particles, and he has never said they are stored. He very concretely describes a re-entry process for visual imagination and dreams that is images re-entering, and he has not said memory is getting its images a different way. And although we do have a lot to learn about memory and imagination still today, it's very safe to say we are not storing photons in the brain! So why attribute such a notion of storing the actual _images_ to him, when he never said it?