

# Episode One Hundred Eighteen - Letter to Herodotus 07 - "Images" - There's More To Them Than Meets The Eye

**Post by "Don" of April 22, 2022 at 6:36 AM**

One can try and cram Epicurus's concept of "bodies emitting εἰδωλον and these images/films impinging on our physical senses and minds" into a modern paradigm of bodies emitting infrared electromagnetic energy or visible light reflecting off of bodies and reaching our visual senses. And Epicurus, were he to somehow be transported to our time, would be curious about modern scientific findings and, I believe, be able and willing to incorporate that into his natural, physical universe and his physics.

BUT we cannot say that Epicurus prognosticated or predicted modern science. His system is coherent within itself, but his concept of the mind receiving fine particles/atoms leading to our thoughts is factually wrong. It's ingenious and provides a purely material basis for sensation. But it does a disservice to Epicurus and to us to shoehorn his ideas into a modern paradigm.

For me, what Epicurus got absolutely correct was the physical explanation of all phenomena without the need for supernatural intervention. THAT we can build on. THAT we can incorporate seamlessly into any modern paradigm.

We can try to analogize and see his εἰδωλον "images" as metaphors for light, but I do not think it's intellectually honest to think he foresaw radio waves or the electromagnetic spectrum. That was not his mechanism for films of atoms. We can be impressed at his intellectual creativity within his contemporary worldview. And he was "less wrong" than Plato or Pythagoras. But my perspective is that a modern Epicurean position is to respect the founders' position that we use our senses to make sense of the cosmos. Our senses now have additional range through instruments we use to augment them. We are not beholden to 2,000+ year old texts when it comes to explaining physical phenomena which we can literally see now thanks to advances in science. Modern Epicurean physics has to incorporate modern scientific facts. This does not preclude an openness and humility that we'll find out more in the future! (I'm looking at you multiverses and dark energy and dark matter.) This ability to incorporate new scientific knowledge into the philosophy with barely a ripple is one of the strengths of Epicurus's system! Think of the cataclysm it was to Christianity for Galileo to say Jupiter had moons!! Epicureans would have said, "Cool!" and went about their day. That's the attitude I'm advocating when it comes to the Physics leg of the Canon.