

Episode One Hundred Nineteen - Letter to Herodotus 08 - More On Perception Through The Atoms

Post by "Cassius" of June 21, 2022 at 8:42 AM

[Quote from SimonC](#)

A thought on the inconceivability of visible atoms: according to Epicurus, things are visible because they constantly emit thin films of atoms. But a single atom can't emit a film smaller than itself and is therefore not visible in the ordinary sense.

I think that's a really perceptive observation SimonC as to single atoms not giving off images!

As to the basketball size single atoms, maybe one answer there is that while such a thing might not give off an image, such a thing would (presumably?) be very "touchable" and we would be able to "feel" its presence even if it didn't give off particles to see, hear, or smell (?)

But I really like your observation that a single atom would not give off an image. I think that sounds right to me - anyone disagree?

As of today we'd presumably look at the issue differently and talk about light bouncing off things, and I really don't know that Epicurus rejected the issue of light bouncing either. But to the extent we would talk about receiving "images" I think your logic is sound - a single atom couldn't give off an image from its surface.

Then of course we'd have to consider whether every use of the word "image" is really the same thing. Epicurus seems to talk about "receiving images" as different from "seeing things" (at least at times) so maybe what we're really observing is that a single atom would not give off an "image" that could be "perceived directly by the mind" as opposed to "seeing it" with our eyes.

Now I am rambling but this kind of thinking really strikes me as "thinking like an Epicurean." I bet if we turned this over in our minds just a little we could develop a coherent set of observations about this, but it would need to take into account the difference between "receiving images" and "seeing things" which I don't think to be exactly the same thing.