

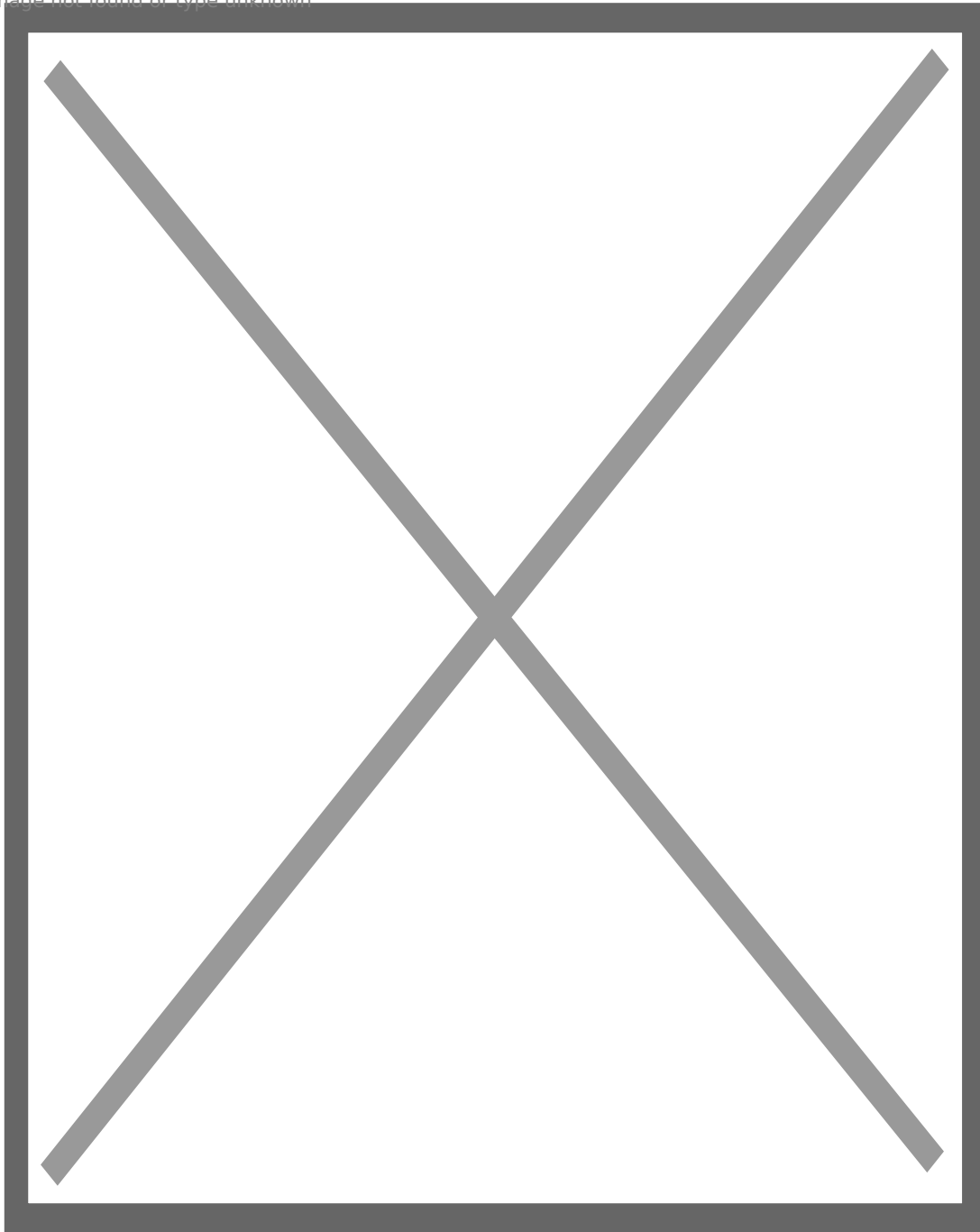
LaMettrie, Anticipations, and Epicurean Thought

Post by "Cassius" of March 8, 2023 at 9:42 AM

[Charles](#) has mentioned several times Julien Offray de La Mettrie -



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[Julien Offray de La Mettrie - Wikipedia](#)

en.wikipedia.org

In recent reading in the work of David Glidden on Epicurean Thought and Anticipations, this reference to La Mettrie occurs:

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2947-lamettrie-anticipations-and-epicurean-thought/?postID=23057#post23057>

There is an objection as old as atomism: namely, that atoms cannot think. Lucretius turned the complaint around, by ridiculing the possibility atoms could laugh or discuss cosmogony.¹ Since all there is consists of atoms in motion in the void, sentience and rationality must result from these same insensible beginnings. Genuine materialism is an unrelenting philosophy. It affords no headquarters for a homunculus to occupy and regulate. Writing in the age of LaMettrie's *The Man Machine* and Diderot's *D'Alembert's Dream*, Pierre Bayle wrote in his *Dictionary* that it would have been far better for Lucretius if atoms had had a sense of humor.² Scholars laugh. To the atomist, the joke is on them. There is no ghost in the machine.

The true materialist and the vitalist differ on the nature of the mind. Their specific epistemologies are built to the specifications of distinct psychologies. So LaMettrie differed from Diderot, and so too Epicureans and Stoics disagree. What makes an idea the formal idea it is, according to Stoics and to vitalists in general, has solely to do with its content, regardless of whether that idea succeeds in representing anything at all. What houses the contents of consciousness are minds. These incorporeal mental contents portray ourselves as persons. For the Epicurean materialist, on the other hand, every idea is divided between act and object. On the one hand, an idea is an act of

I don't know much about La Mettrie at all, but Charles apparently does, so this is at thread to use to document how La Mettrie may deepen our understanding of what Epicurus was saying about the physics of thought.