

Episode 166 - The Lucretius Today Podcast Interviews Dr. David Glidden on "Epicurean Prolepsis"

Post by "Bryan" of December 23, 2023 at 11:55 AM

Yes (expanding on what I said in KD24) instead of using the modern analogy of 'focusing' the mind (as though the mind were something like a camera), Epicureans used the analogy of 'throwing' or 'casting' the mind (as though the mind were something like a net). The paraphrases *animī iniectus* ("throwing the mind") and ἡ επιβολή τῆς διανοίας ("casting the mind upon") therefore are equivalent to our modern use of 'attention' or 'focus' in the broad sense. Everything from trying to hear a particular sound out of many to focusing on our automatic mental images/stereotypes.

As Lucretius says, often things in the room with us are totally out of our thoughts, so much so they may as well be miles away—until we focus on them. He says the same of our mental images. Many people are very busy and ignore all but the most pressing impressions that cannot be ignored for life to continue (stereotypes of dangerous things, for example).

There is also the idea (cynically promoted by those who prefer that they -- not you -- are in control of your thoughts) that if a stereotype is wrong even once it is invalid. But abandoning this natural mechanism would make us defenseless in body and enfeebled in the mind. In reality nobody can actually live for very long without using them.

If some people tell you to stop relying on your senses as the basis of your thinking, you must stop trusting those people.