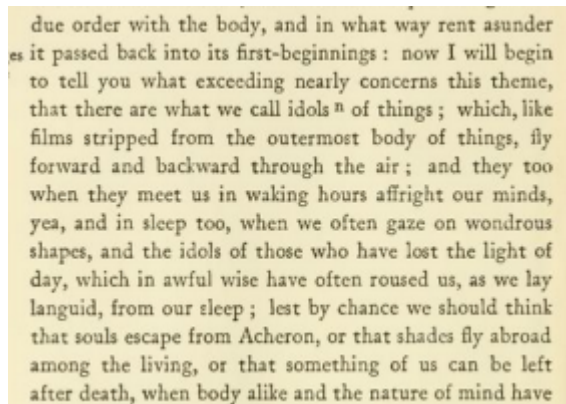


Reverence and Awe In Epicurean Philosophy

Post by "Cassius" of October 27, 2020 at 6:43 AM

So far we've primarily been referring to anticipations, but of course there is a great deal of text material on idols / images / spectres or whatever term you prefer. It is going to be several weeks before we reach this point in the podcasts, so we have not had occasion to review the details of this as a group, but of course this discussion can hardly even begin before we review the material on images in book four of Lucretius, starting here:

<https://archive.org/details/lucretiusepicureanfriendsreferenceeditionversion01/page/n1026/mode/1up>
(That's page 1027 of the PDF if the link doesn't go to the right place.)



due order with the body, and in what way rent asunder
as it passed back into its first-beginnings: now I will begin
to tell you what exceeding nearly concerns this theme,
that there are what we call idolsⁿ of things; which, like
films stripped from the outermost body of things, fly
forward and backward through the air; and they too
when they meet us in waking hours affright our minds,
yea, and in sleep too, when we often gaze on wondrous
shapes, and the idols of those who have lost the light of
day, which in awful wise have often roused us, as we lay
languid, from our sleep; lest by chance we should think
that souls escape from Acheron, or that shades fly abroad
among the living, or that something of us can be left
after death, when body alike and the nature of mind have

I don't myself rule out at all the possibility that some form of this theory has some validity, but I wouldn't even want to start speculating on what parts or how that validity could occur without going through the details of what was being asserted, how it relates to light and all the issues of waves and energy and particles and gravity and action-at-a-distance that science discusses today, how our sense organs work,, how the brain works, and all sorts of other things.

However, such a review is exactly what a thorough consideration of this part of Epicurean theory would require. I've rarely seen much of this treated in modern commentary at all - it's always dismissed out of hand, but I definitely do not think it should be.

Especially since the discussion of images leads right into the discussion of epistemology about dismissing those who say that no knowledge is possible, we must rely on the senses, etc.