

Episode Sixty - Dreams and the Mind's Use of Images

Post by "Cassius" of February 27, 2021 at 9:07 AM

Welcome to Episode Sixty of Lucretius Today.

I am your host Cassius, and together with my panelists from the EpicureanFriends.com forum, we'll walk you through the six books of Lucretius' poem, and discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. We encourage you to study Epicurus for yourself, and we suggest the best place to start is the book, "Epicurus and His Philosophy" by Canadian professor Norman DeWitt.

For anyone who is not familiar with our podcast, please check back to [Episode One](#) for a discussion of our goals and our ground rules. If you have any question about that, please be sure to contact us at Epicureanfriends.com for more information.

In this episode 60 - we will discuss dreams, and the mind's use of images.

Our text comes from Latin Lines 907-1036 of Book Four.

Now let's join the discussion with Charles reading today's text.

Munro Notes

907-928: sleep takes place, when the soul is scattered in the body, and part of it has gone out, part withdrawn into the depths of the body: only part however can go forth; else death would ensue; enough must stay behind to let sense be rekindled, as fire is rekindled when buried under the ashes.

929-961: sleep is thus produced: the body is constantly beaten upon by the outer air as well as by that which is inhaled by breathing; thus assailed within and without the body gives way, and the soul is disordered, part of it as has been said leaving the body, part withdrawing into its recesses, while the rest cannot perform its functions: thus the body too becomes languid and powerless: again sleep follows eating, because the food in passing into the system acts on it as the air does; and the disorder of the soul is then greater than ever.

962-1036: the dreams of men generally turn on what has chiefly occupied their waking thoughts, whether business or pleasure: it is the same with brutes too: again the passions which are strongest in men often display themselves in dreams, as well as other mental states.

Browne 1743

Next, how soft sleep dissolves the limbs in rest, and frees the mind from anxious care, I choose in few but sweetest numbers to explain; as the swan's short song is more melodious than the harsh noise of cranes scattered by winds through all the air. Hear me, my Memmius, with attentive ears and a discerning mind, lest what I shall prove, you think impossible to be; and so your mind refusing to admit the truth I shall relate, you make no progress in philosophy, when the fault is in yourself, that you will not see. And first, sleep comes on when the power of the soul, diffused through the limbs, part of it is thrown out and fled abroad, and part being squeezed more close retires further within; then are the limbs dissolved and grow weak. For without doubt the business of the soul is to stir up sense in us, which since sleep removes, we must conclude that the soul then is disturbed and driven abroad: Not the whole soul, for then the body would lie in the cold arms of eternal death; then no part of the soul would lie retired within the limbs, as a fire remains covered under a heap of ashes; from whence the senses might be kindled again through the body, as a flame is soon raised from hidden fire. But by what means this wonderful change is brought about, how the soul is thus disordered and the body languishes, I shall now explain. Do you see that I do not scatter my words unto the wind.

And first, the outward surface of bodies which are always touched by the adjacent air, must of necessity be struck by it and beaten with frequent blows; and for this reason all things almost are covered either with skin, or bristles, or shells, or buff, or bark. This air then, as it is drawn in and breathed out by respiration, strikes upon the inward parts of the body. Since therefore the body is beat upon from within and without, and since the strokes pierce through the little pores into the seeds and first principles of it, this cause a kind of ruin and destruction through all the limbs; the situation of the seeds, both of the body and mind, are disordered, so that part of the soul is forced out, and part retires and lurks close within, and the part that is diffused through the limbs is so broken and divided, that the seeds cannot unite to perform their mutual operations, for nature stops up all the passages of communication between them, and therefore the regular motions being exceedingly changed, the sense is entirely gone. Since therefore there is not power sufficient to support the limbs, the body becomes weak; all the members languish; the arms, the eyelids fall, and the knees sink under the weight of the body. Thus sleep follows when the belly is full, because food, when it is distributed through all the veins, has the same effect upon the soul as the air had; and that sleep is by much the soundest which you take when you are weary or full, because then more of the seeds being agitated and put into motion by the hard labour, mutually disturb and disorder one another. And for this reason the soul retires further within, and a greater part of it is thrown out, and the parts that remain within are the more separated and the further disjointed.

And then the business we more particularly follow, the affairs we are chiefly employed in, and what our mind is principally delighted with when we are awake, the same we are commonly conversant about when we are asleep. The lawyer is pleading of causes and making of statutes, the soldier is fighting and engaging in battles, the sailor is warring against the winds; for myself, I am always searching into the nature of things, and writing my discoveries in Latin verse; and so, many other arts and employments are commonly the empty entertainments of

the minds of men when they are asleep. And they who spend their time in seeing plays for many days together, when those representations are no longer present to the waking senses, there still remain some open traces left in the mind, through which the images of those things find a passage, so that for many days after the whole performance is acting over again before their eyes; and even while they are awake they fancy they see the dancers leaping, and moving their active limbs, and hear the speaking strings; they see the same audience, the same variety of the scenes and decorations of the stage. So strong impressions do use and custom make upon us; such effects do the common business of life produce in the minds of men, and beasts likewise.

For you shall see the gallant Courser, when his limbs are at rest, to sweat in his sleep, to breath short, and, the barriers down, to lay himself out as it were on the full stretch for the prize. And hounds frequently in their soft sleep throw out their legs, and of a sudden yelp and snuff the air quick with their nose, as if they were full cry upon the foot of the deer; and when awake they still pursue the empty image of the game, as if they saw it run swiftly before them, till undeceived they quit the chase, and the fancied image vanishes away. And the fawning breed of house-dogs, that live at home, often rouse and shake the drowsy fit from their eyes, and start up of a sudden with their bodies, as if they saw a stranger or a face they had not been used to. The sharper the seeds are of which the images are formed, they strike in the sleep with the greater violence; so, many birds will fly about, and hide themselves in the inmost recesses of sacred groves by night, if in their soft sleep they see the hawk pursuing them upon the wing, or pouncing or engaging with his prey.

Munro 1886

Now by what means yon sleep lets a stream of repose over the limbs and dispels from the breast the cares of the mind, I will tell in sweetly worded rather than in many verses; as the short song of the swan is better than the loud noise of cranes scattered abroad amid the ethereal clouds of the south. Do you lend me a nice ear and a keen mind, that you may not deny what I say to be possible and secede with breast disdainfully rejecting the words of truth, you yourself being in fault the while and unable to discern. Sleep mainly takes place when the force of the soul has been scattered about through the frame, and in part has been forced abroad and taken its departure, and in part has been thrust back and has withdrawn into the depths of the body: after that the limbs are relaxed and droop. For there is no doubt that this sense exists in us by the agency of the soul; and when sleep obstructs the action of this sense, then we must assume that our soul has been disordered and forced abroad; not indeed all; for then the body would lie steeped in the everlasting chill of death. Where no part of the soul remained behind concealed in the limbs, as fire remains concealed when buried under much ash, whence could sense be suddenly rekindled through the limbs, as flame can spring up from hidden fire? But by what means this change of condition is accomplished and from what the soul can be disordered and the body grow faint, I will explain: do you mind that I waste not my words on the wind.

In the first place the body in its outer side, since it is next to and is touched by the air, must be thumped and beaten by its repeated blows; and for this reason all things as a rule are covered either by a hide or else by shells or by a callous skin or by bark. When creatures breathe, this air at the same time buffets the inner side also, as it is inhaled and exhaled. Therefore since the body is beaten on both sides alike and blows arrive by means of the small apertures at the primal parts and primal elements of our body, there gradually ensues a sort of breaking up throughout our limbs, the arrangements of the first-beginnings of body and mind getting disordered. Then next a part of the soul is forced out and apart withdraws into the inner recesses; a part too scattered about through the frame cannot get united together and so act and be acted upon by motion; for nature intercepts all communication and blocks up all the passages; and therefore sense retires deep into the frame as the motions are all altered. And since there is nothing as it were to lend support to the frame, the body becomes weak and all the limbs are faint, the arms and eyelids droop and the hams even in bed often give way under you and relax their powers. Then sleep follows on food, because food produces just the same effects as air, while it is distributed into all the veins; and that sleep is much the heaviest which you take when full or tired, because then the greatest number of bodies fall into disorder, bruised by much exertion. On the same principle the soul comes in part to be forced more deeply into the frame, and there is also a more copious emission of it abroad, and at the same time it is more divided and scattered in itself within you.

And generally to whatever pursuit a man is closely tied down and strongly attached, on whatever subject we have previously much dwelt, the mind having been put to a more than usual strain in it, during sleep we for the most part fancy that we are engaged in the same; lawyers think they plead causes and draw up covenants of sale, generals that they fight and engage in battle, sailors that they wage and carry on war with the winds, we think we pursue our task and investigate the nature of things constantly and consign it when discovered to writings in our native tongue. So all other pursuits and arts are seen for the most part during sleep to occupy and mock the minds of men. And whenever men have given during many days in succession undivided attention to games, we generally see that after they have ceased to perceive these with their senses, there yet remain passages open in the mind through which the same idols of things may enter. Thus for many days those same objects present themselves to the eyes, so that even when awake they see dancers as they think moving their pliant limbs, and receive into the ears the clear music of the harp and speaking strings, and behold the same spectators and at the same time the varied decorations of the stage in all their brilliancy. So great is the influence of zeal and inclination, so great is the influence of the things in which men have been habitually engaged, and not men only but all living creatures.

Thus you will see stout horses, even when their bodies are lying down, yet in their sleep sweat and pant without ceasing and strain their powers to the utmost as if for the prize, or as if the barriers were thrown open. And often during soft repose the dogs of hunters do yet all at once throw about their legs and suddenly utter cries and repeatedly snuff the air with their nostrils, as though they had found and were on the tracks of wild beasts; and after they are awake often

chase the shadowy idols of stags, as though they saw them in full flight, until they have shaken off their delusions and come to themselves again. And the fawning brood of dogs brought up tame in the house haste to shake their body and raise it up from the ground, as if they beheld unknown faces and features. And the fiercer the different breeds are, the greater rage they must display in sleep. But the various kinds of birds flee and suddenly in the night time trouble with their wings the groves of the gods, when in gentle sleep hawks and pursuing birds have appeared to show fight and offer battle.

Bailey 1921

Now in what ways this sleep floods repose over the limbs, and lets loose the cares of the mind from the breast, I will proclaim in verses of sweet discourse, rather than in many; even as the brief song of the swan is better than the clamour of cranes, which spreads abroad among the clouds of the south high in heaven. Do you lend me a fine ear and an eager mind, lest you should deny that what I say can be, and with a breast that utterly rejects the words of truth part company with me, when you are yourself in error and cannot discern. First of all sleep comes to pass when the strength of the soul is scattered about among the limbs, and in part has been cast out abroad and gone its way, and in part has been pushed back and passed inward deeper within the body. For then indeed the limbs are loosened and droop. For there is no doubt that this sense exists in us, thanks to the soul; and when sleep hinders it from being, then we must suppose that the soul is disturbed and cast out abroad: yet not all of it; for then the body would lie bathed in the eternal chill of death. For indeed, when no part of the soul stayed behind hidden in the limbs, as fire is hidden when choked beneath much ashes, whence could sense on a sudden be kindled again throughout the limbs, as flame can rise again from a secret fire?

But by what means this new state of things is brought about, and whence the soul can be disturbed and the body grow slack, I will unfold: be it your care that I do not scatter my words to the winds. First of all it must needs be that the body on the outer side, since it is touched close at hand by the breezes of air, is thumped and buffeted by its oft-repeated blows, and for this cause it is that well-nigh all things are covered either by a hide, or else by shells, or by a hard skin, or by bark. Further, as creatures breathe, the air at the same time smites on the inner side, when it is drawn in and breathed out again. Wherefore, since the body is buffeted on both sides alike, and since the blows pass on through the tiny pores to the first parts and first particles of our body, little by little there comes to be, as it were, a falling asunder throughout our limbs. For the positions of the first-beginnings of body and mind are disordered. Then it comes to pass that a portion of the soul is cast out abroad, and part retreats and hides within; part too, torn asunder through the limbs, cannot be united in itself, nor by motion act and react; for nature bars its meetings and chokes the ways; and so, when the motions are changed, sense withdraws deep within. And since there is nothing which can, as it were, support the limbs, the body grows feeble, and all the limbs are slackened; arms and eyelids droop, and the hams, even as you lie down, often give way, and relax their strength. Again, sleep follows after food, because food brings about just what air does, while it is being spread into all the veins,

and the slumber which you take when full or weary, is much heavier because then more bodies than ever are disordered, bruised with the great effort. In the same manner the soul comes to be in part thrust deeper within; it is also more abundantly driven out abroad, and is more divided and torn asunder in itself within.

And for the most part to whatever pursuit each man clings and cleaves, or on whatever things we have before spent much time, so that the mind was more strained in the task than is its wont, in our sleep we seem mostly to traffic in the same things; lawyers think that they plead their cases and confront law with law, generals that they fight and engage in battles, sailors that they pass a life of conflict waged with winds, and we that we pursue our task and seek for the nature of things for ever, and set it forth, when it is found, in writings in our country's tongue. Thus for the most part all other pursuits and arts seem to hold the minds of men in delusion during their sleep. And if ever men have for many days in succession given interest unflagging to the games, we see for the most part, that even when they have ceased to apprehend them with their senses, yet there remain open passages in their minds, whereby the same images of things may enter in. And so for many days the same sights pass before their eyes, so that even wide awake they think they see men dancing and moving their supple limbs, and drink in with their ears the clear-toned chant of the lyre, and its speaking strings, and behold the same assembly and at the same time the diverse glories of the stage all bright before them. So exceeding great is the import of zeal and pleasure, and the tasks wherein not only men are wont to spend their efforts, but even every living animal.

In truth you will see strong horses, when their limbs are lain to rest, yet sweat in their sleep, and pant for ever, and strain every nerve as though for victory, or else as though the barriers were opened [struggle to start]. And hunters' dogs often in their soft sleep yet suddenly toss their legs, and all at once give tongue, and again and again snuff the air with their nostrils, as if they had found and were following the tracks of wild beasts; yea, roused from slumber they often pursue empty images of stags, as though they saw them in eager flight, until they shake off the delusion and return to themselves. But the fawning brood of pups brought up in the house, in a moment shake their body and lift it from the ground, just as if they beheld unknown forms and faces. And the wilder any breed may be, the more must it needs rage in its sleep. But the diverse tribes of birds fly off, and on a sudden in the night time trouble the peace of the groves of the gods, if in their gentle sleep they have seen hawks, flying in pursuit, offer fight and battle.

Post by "Cassius" of February 28, 2021 at 10:34 AM

We just finished recording this one and I will try to get it posted as soon as possible. When you hear the episode, you'll see that one of our topics is to what extent this section describes a

theory that may go so far as to be Epicurus' entire explanation of what we might think of as "memory." In the episode you will hear me resist that conclusion, but Elayne in particular makes good arguments that that might be the case, so please consider and if possible make comments in particular about that when you hear the episode.

Post by "Cassius" of February 28, 2021 at 8:22 PM

Episode Sixty of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. In this episode, we discuss dreams and the mind's use of images. There is some challenging material in this episode, especially as it relates to Epicurus' view of the use of images and how that may or may not relate to memory. We encourage you to listen and post any comments or questions in the thread below.

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/43679004>

Post by "Cassius" of March 1, 2021 at 6:09 AM

I think it would be helpful to post here some of the passages from DeWitt where these issues are discussed:

SOUL, SENSATION, AND MIND

conviction of reality because the memory and the volitional mind, which is rational, are quiescent. Thus the deceitfulness of dreams is an error of the same kind as that of the automatic mind that judges the square tower to be round. The waking mind, in command of the total experience, knows that no such things as centaurs exist.

Even this is not the whole story. The mind is capable of functioning as a supersense even in the hours of waking. It loses this capacity if the being is in a turmoil through fears and anxieties. Thus Lucretius warns Memmius that, unless free from such fears "you will never be able to capture with unruffled peace of mind the idols that from the blessed bodies of the gods float into the minds of men."⁸² These idols belong in that isolated, vagrant class of **images**, which, not being part of a pressing stream, are imperceptible to fleshly sensation and register themselves only upon the mind and only under restricted conditions.

The caution must be observed, however, that visions of the mind do not enjoy the status of criteria of truth. They do possess value but only at the level of circumstantial evidence; they afford reason for believing, by way of example, that the bodies of the gods are anthropomorphic.

MOVING IMPULSES

It was likewise necessary that Epicurus should furnish an account of bodily movement in harmony with his materialistic principles. For information we are again dependent upon Lucretius, because this topic was omitted from the Little Epitome as being unessential for beginning students. It has already been mentioned that all the phenomena of consciousness, or as Epicurus puts it, the capacities "without which we die," were appraised to be accidents, that is, contingent upon the cohesiveness of soul and body. It might then have been thought that volition, being one of these contingent capacities, should have ranked as an adequate cause for the inception of all bodily movements.

Such was not the case. Even for an act of volition an external cause must be found. Before the human being makes the decision to walk, his mind must receive a stimulus from the impact of *images* of himself in the act of walking. *Ipse volens fit*, "from this stimulus results the will to walk." If the translation may be expanded to bring out its implication: "Incidentally, readers will recognize in this theory a precise anticipation of gestalt psychology."

This explanation, if there were no more to it, might win for itself a certain admission as a smart invention. To accept the rest of it is very difficult. It is not unacceptable to be told that the impulse which has been started in the mind, though not by the mind, communicates itself to the rest of the soul, dispersed over the whole body, but when we read that movement comes about through the dilation of all the minute channels of the body, allowing the circulation of surges of air to all parts, this is too fantastic to seem reasonable. Neither does the comparison with the winds driving ships or derricks lifting huge stones result in a verdict of plausibility. The theory may well confirm, however, the truth of the tradition that Epicurus believed the earth to be

Quote

MIND AS A SUPERSENSE

It is part of the psychology of Epicurus that the mind under certain conditions is capable of functioning as an organ of sense; thus the procedure of Lucretius is quite regular in discussing the topic immediately after sensation. The exposition presumes certain subsidiary ideas, such as the gradations of atoms, the irrational nature of sensation, the faculty psychology, and a phenomenon of double reactions.

The gradation of atoms is basic to the account of sensation. The conformations that cause vision, for instance, while finer and more mobile than those of odors, are not sinuous enough to penetrate walls, as sounds do. Vision, moreover, is subject to another limitation: unless the idols be discharged from an object in plain view and so constitute a steady stream, no sufficient pressure on the eyes results and no sensation registers itself. Of the random and vagrant idols only the mind can take cognizance because of the extreme mobility of its component atoms and the resulting supersensitivity.

In order to discern the circumstances under which this takes place the principle must be invoked that sensation is irrational. It merely delivers a stimulus and this may fail of registering itself. It is possible to hear without listening and to see without observing.

Down to this point there is nothing peculiar in the thought of Epicurus. The rest of the teaching is his own. He thinks of the mind as a mechanism for processing sensations. Its activity may be automatic or volitional. The automatic mind, though normally dependable, is capable of erring; it may report the square tower to be round. To guard against such errors and to correct them when once made is the function of the volitional mind, directed by reason. Unlike the automatic mind, it pays attention to all

sensations and corrects the false by calling the true to witness.

In dreamful sleep, according to Epicurus, the erring, automatic mind alone is active. Bodily sensation, memory and volition are all quiescent. Under these circumstances the stage is cleared for the entrance of all the random, floating idols that survive from the swift, coherent streams that under waking conditions press upon the organs of sense and register themselves as sensations. Of these errant, subsensory idols the passive mind, partly because of its relief from interference and control, and partly because of the supermobility and supersensitivity of its component atoms, alone is capable of taking cognizance. Thus it functions as a supersense.

To complete this exposition a subsidiary doctrine of the two reactions must be invoked. Let it be assumed that the image of a centaur presents itself to the dreamer; it may even be a galloping centaur. This acts as a stimulus to the mind and causes a reaction, *kinesis*. This is not the end, however, because a second reaction follows and the automatic mind registers a recognition: "It is a centaur." The dream carries the conviction of reality because the memory and the volitional mind, which is rational, are quiescent. Thus the deceitfulness of dreams is an error of the same kind as that of the automatic mind that judges the square tower to be round. The waking mind, in command of the total experience, knows that no such things as centaurs exist.

Even this is not the whole story. The mind is capable of functioning as a supersense even in the hours of waking. It loses this capacity if the being is in a turmoil through fears and anxieties. Thus Lucretius warns Memmius that, unless free from such fears "you will never be able to capture with unruffled peace of mind the idols that from the blessed bodies of the gods float into the minds of men."⁵² These idols belong in that isolated, vagrant class of images, which, not being part of a pressing stream, are imperceptible to fleshly sensation and register themselves only upon the mind and only under restricted conditions.

The caution must be observed, however, that visions of the mind do not enjoy the status of criteria of truth. They do possess value but only at the level of circumstantial evidence; they afford reason for believing, by way of example, that the bodies of the gods are anthropomorphic.

Display More

Quote

MIND

It is now possible to summarize the psychology of Epicurus and to describe with more precision and detail his teaching concerning the mind and its activities.

The human being consists of body and soul, both alike corporeal by nature. The two are born at the same time and grow and decline in pace with one another. They are coterminous and cosensitive. They function as a unit and reactions are psychosomatic.

The soul consists of atoms surpassing others in fineness, smoothness, and sphericity and consequently in mobility. All the component atoms are in contact throughout the body, unless in the condition of sleep, when the contiguity is broken, part of the soul escaping from the containing body, part retreating deep within. In daydreaming -a less extensive but similar condition arises. Among the component atoms gradations of mobility exist, the less mobile being at the periphery and associated with the operations of sense, which are all varieties of touch. The most mobile of the component atoms constitute the rational part of the soul and are situated deep within the breast. This location is no less fixed than that of the ears or eyes, because the mind is an organ of the being no less than they.

Although it is usual to speak of this part of the soul as rational, the adjective is inadequate. The so-called rational part could with equal justice be called the emotional part, because fears and joys, according to Epicurus, have their seat in the same place.⁵⁷ In this instance the Latin language is for once superior to Greek in respect of terminology. The word *mens* is capable of denoting both mental and emotional aspects of the mind's activity, while *animus* can be equated with Greek *dianoia*, "intellect," and *anima* may be used as equivalent to *psyche*, "soul," including all capacities, rational, emotional, and sensory.

The activity of the rational part, *dianoia*, *animus*, is either voluntary or involuntary, that is, either automatic or volitional. The character of the automatic mind that most impressed Epicurus was its speed. Its function is to receive and process sensations and under normal conditions this is done instantaneously: to cite trite examples, the individual is unerringly warned of ditches and precipices and other dangers in his path. It is this automatic mind that takes care of man in his daily rounds on the physical or somatic level of life.

The Sensations are irrational and merely register a stimulus, *kinesis*. It is the quick and automatic mind that with the aid of memory registers a recognition and says, "This is honey." It is likewise the mind that makes the generalization "Honey is sweet." These are "fantastic perceptions of the intelligence." They do not possess the rank of criteria because they are not a direct contact between mind and matter but are rather the result of a process or operation. "Fantastic" means "immediate."⁵⁵

Under the abnormal conditions of either genuine dreaming or daydreaming the supersensitive mind is capable of operating as a sense, registering the incidence of those vagrant idols which, being detached from visual streams, are incapable of exerting pressure and stimulating the senses of the flesh. These visions, however, do not rank as criteria, being subject to no correction by the conscious, rational mind.

Even under normal conditions, however, the automatic mind is liable to err. This error often consists in adding to and subtracting from the data of sense. For instance, to the observer the moon may seem to be moving and the drifting clouds to be standing still; or the shore may seem to be moving and the passing ship to be stationary; or the anchored ship may seem to the passenger to be moving and the passing ship to be motionless. In all of these examples the error is not in sensation but in the automatic mind, which adds motion to standing objects and subtracts it from moving objects. Epicurus calls this error "the addition of opinion," but the fact that it also includes subtraction is recognized by the statement that sensation "is neither stimulated by itself nor, when stimulated by an external object, is it capable of adding or subtracting anything."⁵⁹ In such instances Epicurus is at pains to point out that the reaction caused by sensation is followed by a second reaction within the observer "which is connected with 'the fantastic perception' but distinct from it."⁶⁰ This second, involuntary reaction is the source of error.

It is another shortcoming of the automatic mind that its operations confine themselves to the sensations of the moment. It must consequently be subjected to correction by the volitional mind, which is truly rational. The latter is aware of the danger of error; it remembers that the value of sensations depends upon distances; it recollects past sensations; it takes cognizance of all sensations and it appeals to the observations of others.⁶¹

Unlike the automatic mind that warns the observer of ditches and precipices, the volitional mind takes cognizance of the Anticipations, that is, the innate ideas of justice, of the divine nature, and other such abstractions, and it puts to the test every law of the land to determine whether it harmonizes with the innate idea of justice. The volitional mind also takes cognizance of the Feelings, that is, those fears and anxieties which warn the individual of the false opinions concerning things of supreme importance, the causes of the worst turmoil in the soul.

The status of the volitional mind, which alone is truly rational, is that of a judge presiding in court. The litigants are truth and error. The role of the Sensations, Anticipations, and Feelings is that of witnesses. The judge, as becomes his office, rejects no evidence that is pertinent; he distinguishes between mere opinion and knowledge, between the idea that awaits confirmation by additional evidence and that which is already certain, between the immediate, dependable sensation and the

deceptive, distant view, between false pleasures and wholesome pleasures and between true and false concepts of abstract truth. If the mind falls short of performing these judicial functions, the conflict in the soul will be prolonged and no satisfying decision between truth and error will be attainable. This is the gist of Authorized Doctrine 24.

The point that bears the stress in the above exposition is the danger of indecision, which is even more destructive of happiness than false opinion. For example, it is worse to suspect the truth of the tales about Acheron than to believe in them.⁶² Again, the sole reason for acquiring knowledge of celestial phenomena is "serenity of mind and an unshakable faith."⁶³ The lack of faith, *apistia*, is of the same effect as indecision, *akrisia*. Both spell turmoil.

This equivalence of indecision with lack of faith is made clear in two sayings. The first is Doctrine 22: "We must take into our reckoning the established telos [pleasure] and all the manifest evidence, to which we refer the opinions we form. If we fail to do so, our whole life will be filled with indecision and turmoil." The second dictum is Vatican Saying 57: "His whole life will be thrown into confusion through lack of faith and will be wrecked." Epicurus was in the process of discovering the part played by faith in the happy life. In so doing he was preparing popular thought for the acceptance of the New Testament, where faith at last attained to full stature as a virtue. The difference between faith as it first emerged and the perfected faith resides in the fact that the former was faith in the truth of doctrine while the latter was faith in Jesus Christ as a redeemer.

With the idea of mind as a judicial faculty Epicurus anticipated the practical reason of modern philosophy; in the Platonic vocabulary it was *phronesis*. Describing it by paraphrase in his usual way, he called it "sober calculation" and assigned to it the function "of investigating the reasons for every choice and avoidance and of expelling false opinions, the chief cause of the turbulence that takes possession of the souls of men." It was to him the starting point for all the virtues and for this reason more precious than philosophy, by which he meant what is now called pure reason, and when he says "it teaches the impossibility of living happily without living according to reason, honor and justice,"^M he means that geometry was incapable of imparting this lesson. It is true that geometry is not mentioned, but by implication the Platonic program of education, based upon mathematics, is being repudiated.

As an essential precaution it deserves to be emphasized that this concept of the rational mind as a judge, soberly weighing the evidence contributed by the Sensations, Anticipations, and Feelings, which perform the office of witnesses, constitutes a frame of reference without which the teachings of Epicurus are bound to be misapprehended. This frame, moreover, is incomplete without the Twelve Elementary Principles, which

are, as it were, a sort of legal code, in harmony with which the judging mind must reach its decisions.

That these Twelve Principles were the starting point for the Epicurean program of education is unmistakable whether from the Little Epitome or Lucretius. The truth of them was not demonstrated inductively from sensation but established deductively and only confirmed by sensation. If this involves a logical fallacy or a philosophical defect, it must be borne in mind that Epicurus was not constructing a theory of knowledge but a philosophy that would serve as a road to happiness. This called for a set of principles, a judging mind, and dependable witnesses, all of which his system furnished.

It was his view that only notions accessory or inferential to the Twelve Principles, such as the nature of the soul, had their origin in sensations. If this is a fallacy or a defect, it should be borne in mind that he was not working out a psychology but merely showing how his system based upon principles, the practical reason, and evidence was intended to operate. The notion of consciousness, as employed in modern psychology, lay outside of his problem and so he had no need to deal with the content of consciousness.

It should nevertheless be remembered that a misunderstanding of his teaching gave rise to Gassendi's doctrine "that there is nothing in the intellect which has not been in the senses" and that this in turn was a starting point for John Locke and modern empiricism. Epicurus was not himself an empiricist but rather an intuitionist: the mind of the infant was to his thinking not a blank tablet but already laced with the faint outlines of ideas that should gradually acquire definition in pace with experience, instruction, and reflection.

Display More

After reading all this, considering what is said in the podcast, and combining it all together, I am thinking that among many other implications it is much easier to see the role of images of the divine playing an important part in Epicurus' thinking:

The fact that knowledge of the gods lay beyond the range of sensation might well have been taken for granted, but it happens to be one of the points upon which, in the judgment of Lucretius, the rank and file of disciples should be explicitly informed: "Subtle is the nature of the gods, far removed from the perception of our senses, and only with difficulty is it seen by the part of the soul that is called mind." This is consistent with the scholium to the first Authorized Doctrine, which mentions the gods as "discernible by reason," and the same truth is expressly repeated by Cicero, who wrote of them as perceived "not by sensation but by the mind."¹⁶

The mind, however, functions in two ways, first as a representatory organ of vision, and second, as the organ of reason. As a representatory organ it is capable of perceiving the subtle images of the gods, whether in sleep or in waking hours, which are too fine to be caught by the physical eyes. The information so acquired possesses authority because it emanates from Nature and is a universal experience. "For what other shape," Cicero's interlocutor asks, "ever presents itself to anyone, either sleeping or awake?"¹⁷ Nevertheless, this information falls short of finality; it is a hint only. Lucretius is writing with precision when he speaks of the images of the gods which float into the minds of the pious as "harbingers of the form divine."¹⁸ He means that they afford only a hint of the form of the gods.

Along with the question of form goes that of the size of the gods. As on the question of polytheism, the teaching of Epicurus was in harmony with tradition, because even the statues of the gods were made larger than human. Ancient authority, as anonymous papyrus, employs the words "even their forms tending to the sublime."¹⁹ Sextus Empiricus lays emphasis upon the size of the images that visit men in sleep, and St. Augustine not only declares that, according to Epicurus, the stimulus

THE TRUE PIETY

looking on.²⁰ This makes of the dead Epicurus a living criterion of conduct, and it may well be that it was Epicureanism which gave vague to a novel concept of immortality which was current in antiquity, an immortality of good influence as the prolongation of a good life. As Virgil put it, "To perpetuate our names by our deeds, this is the task of virtue."²¹

Quite in line with this worshipful attitude toward Epicurus is the Epicurean attitude toward the gods. They are incapable of anger and so need not be feared, but they are not incapable of loving; "they are partial toward those like themselves"; they are "friends of the wise." There is a psychological nexus between man and them, because the concept of the blissful and incorruptible being is implanted in the mind by Nature herself. Moreover, the images of the gods come down to visit the minds of the pious and are recognized by them. To desire to aspire to a perfect happiness such as theirs is natural for men and this goal is attainable. Lucretius is very positive upon the latter point: "This I seem able in these matters to affirm, that no woe paltry are the traces of their evil natures which reason cannot expel for the wise that nothing prevents them from passing a life worthy of the gods."²² Epicurus himself wrote to the lad Menocretus: "Meditate, therefore, upon these truths and upon others like them by day and by night, both by yourself and with someone like yourself and never will you be troubled whether waking or sleeping but will live like a god among men, for in no respect does a man who lives among immortal blessings resemble a mortal creature."²³ The Christian said, "We shall be like Him." The Epicurean would have said, "We can be like them here and now."

Post by "Cassius" of March 1, 2021 at 6:20 AM

Correspondence between Cicero and Cassius Longinus, highly relevant here and perhaps even directly on point. The exchange seems to be joking, but Cassius seems to be denying Cicero's extremely expansive interpretation (intentionally derogatory) reference to the role of images:

Quote

Cassius had recently become a follower of the [Epicurean](#) school of philosophy.

[15.16] **Cicero to Cassius**

[Rome, January, 45 B.C.]

L I expect you must be just a little ashamed of yourself now that this is the third letter that has caught you before you have sent me a single leaf or even a line. But I am not

pressing you, for I shall look forward to, or rather insist upon, a longer letter. As for myself, if I always had somebody to trust with them, I should send you as many as three an hour. For it somehow happens, that whenever I write anything to you, you seem to be at my very elbow; and that, not by way of visions of images, as your new friends term them, who believe that even mental visions are conjured up by what [Catius](#) calls spectres (for let me remind you that Catius the [Insubrian](#), an [Epicurean](#), who died lately, gives the name of spectres to what the famous [Gargettian](#) [Epicurus], and long before that [Democritus](#), called images).

2 But, even supposing that the eye can be struck by these spectres because they run up against it quite of their own accord, how the mind can be so struck is more than I can see. It will be your duty to explain to me, when you arrive here safe and sound, whether the spectre of you is at my command to come up as soon as the whim has taken me to think about you - and not only about you, who always occupy my inmost heart, but suppose I begin thinking about the Isle of [Britain](#), will the image of that wing its way to my consciousness?

3 But of this later on. I am only sounding you now to see in what spirit you take it. For if you are angry and annoyed, I shall have more to say, and shall insist upon your being reinstated in that school of philosophy, out of which you have been ousted "by violence and an armed force."

Display More

Quote

[15.19] **Cassius to Cicero**

[Brundisium, latter half of January, 45 B.C.]

L I hope that you are well. I assure you that on this tour of mine there is nothing that gives me more pleasure to do than to write to you; for I seem to be talking and joking with you face to face. And yet that does not come to pass because of those spectres; and, by way of retaliation for that, in my next letter I shall let loose upon you such a rabble of [Stoic](#) boors that you will proclaim Catius a true-born Athenian.

2 I am glad that our friend Pansa was sped on his way by universal goodwill when he left the city in military uniform, and that not only on my own account, but also, most assuredly, on that of all our friends.

Post by "Cassius" of March 1, 2021 at 8:47 AM

Another comment about this section that comes to mind: People are always asking about Epicurean "therapies." Based on this section it would seem pretty clear that the idea of tuning your thought processes by the images on which you choose to focus over time would be an obvious path to pursue.

Epicurus: **"Meditate therefore on these things and things akin to them night and day by yourself; and with a companion like to yourself, and never shall you be disturbed waking or asleep, but you shall live like a god among men."**

Post by "Cassius" of March 1, 2021 at 8:57 AM

There is also a significant amount of discussion of images in the letter to Herodotus which needs to be correlated with Lucretius, including:

Quote

(BAILEY)

First of all, Herodotus, we must grasp the ideas attached to words, in order that we may be able to refer to them and so to judge the inferences of opinion or problems of investigation or reflection, so that we may not either leave everything uncertain and go on explaining to infinity or use words devoid of meaning.

For this purpose it is essential that the first mental image associated with each word should be regarded, and that there should be no need of explanation, if we are really to have a standard to which to refer a problem of investigation or reflection or a mental inference.

.....

The movement of elementary material through space leads to images which, when received by our senses, are our means of knowledge.

Moreover, there are images like in shape to the solid bodies, far surpassing perceptible things in their subtlety of texture.

For it is not impossible that such emanations should be formed in that which surrounds the objects, nor that there should be opportunities for the formation of such hollow and thin frames, nor that there should be effluences which preserve the respective position and order which they had before in the solid bodies: these images we call idols.

Next, nothing among perceptible things contradicts the belief that the images have unsurpassable fineness of texture.

And for this reason they have also unsurpassable speed of motion, since the movement of all their atoms is uniform, and besides nothing or very few things hinder their emission by collisions, whereas a body composed of many or infinite atoms is at once hindered by collisions.

Besides this, nothing contradicts the belief that the creation of the idols takes place as quick as thought.

For the flow of atoms from the surface of bodies is continuous, yet it cannot be detected by any lessening in the size of the object because of the constant filling up of what is lost.

The flow of images preserves for a long time the position and order of the atoms in the solid body, though it is occasionally confused.

Moreover, compound idols are quickly formed in the air around, because it is not necessary for their substance to be filled in deep inside: and besides there are certain other methods in which existences of this sort are produced.

For not one of these beliefs is contradicted by our sensations, if one looks to see in what way sensation will bring us the clear visions from external objects, and in what way again the corresponding sequences of qualities and movements.

Now we must suppose too that it is when something enters us from external objects that we not only see but think of their shapes.

For external objects could not make on us an impression of the nature of their own colour and shape by means of the air which lies between us and them, nor again by means of the rays or effluences of any sort which pass from us to them — nearly so well as if models, similar in color and shape, leave the objects and enter according to their respective size either into our sight or into our mind; moving along swiftly, and so by this means reproducing the image of a single continuous thing and preserving the corresponding sequence of qualities and movements from the original object as the result of their uniform contact with us, kept up by the vibration of the atoms deep in the interior of the concrete body.

And every image which we obtain by an act of apprehension on the part of the mind or of the sense-organs, whether of shape or of properties, this image is the shape or the properties of the concrete object, and is produced by the constant repetition of the image or the impression it has left.

Now falsehood and error always lie in the addition of opinion with regard to what is waiting to be confirmed or not contradicted, and then is not confirmed or is contradicted.

For the similarity between the things which exist, which we call real and the images received as a likeness of things and produced either in sleep or through some other acts of apprehension on the part of the mind or the other instruments of judgment, could never be, unless there were some effluences of this nature actually brought into contact with our senses.

And error would not exist unless another kind of movement too were produced inside ourselves, closely linked to the apprehension of images, but differing from it; and it is owing to this, supposing it is not confirmed, or is contradicted, that falsehood arises; but if it is confirmed or not contradicted, it is true.

Therefore we must do our best to keep this doctrine in mind, in order that on the one hand the standards of judgment dependent on the clear visions may not be undermined, and on the other error may not be as firmly established as truth and so throw all into confusion.

Display More

Post by “Godfrey” of March 1, 2021 at 7:18 PM

From the Melville translation of Lucretius, line 907:

"Next, in what way sleep floods the limbs with peace..."*

The asterisk links to this footnote:

"sleep: sleep is a puzzling phenomenon, much discussed by ancient (and modern) scientists and philosophers: see especially the treatise On Sleep and Waking included in the so-called 'Parva Naturalia' of Aristotle (453b ff.). For the Epicurean view, compare the comment preserved in Letter to Herodotus66 (fr. 311), and fr. 325, with Diogenes of Oenoanda fr. 9."

From the Inwood and Gerson translation of the letter to Herodotus there is this footnote to paragraph 66:

"Scholion: 'Elsewhere he says that it is also composed of very smooth and very round atoms, differing quite a bit from those of fire. And that part of it is irrational, and is distributed throughout the rest of the body, while the rational part is in the chest, as is evident from

[feelings of] fear and joy. And that sleep occurs when the parts of the soul which are distributed through the whole compound are fixed in place or spread apart and then collide because of the impacts. And semen comes from the entire body.' "

Unfortunately I can't tell if/where Herodotus66 falls in the excerpt above in post #7. Also, I'm guessing that Diogenes of Oenoanda fr. 9 is what Charles read in the podcast.

Post by “Elayne” of March 1, 2021 at 7:28 PM

Here is a description of research on aphantasia-- where people can't generate internal imagery, including for memories <https://theconversation.com/blind-in-the-m...agination-86849> -- I bring this up because we were wondering what the process would be whereby people would decide which images they wanted to see, in Epicurus' model. The folks with aphantasia do have memories but the images don't show up for them.

And they mention how internally generated images are thought to occur-- by a network which attempts to recreate pattern from prior activation of the pattern, for memory (different for imagination of things never seen). Rather than a specific area of the brain where a sort of pixel-like photograph is stored. The visual cortex is involved but it is stimulated by other parts of the brain-- it isn't the first area to be involved the way it is in receipt of images through the eyes.

Visual memory is being described as computational <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/articl...364661320303053> -- the point being that it seems to be a re-creation of an image, not a direct storing of the image itself.

Post by “Cassius” of March 1, 2021 at 7:34 PM

Thanks for both comments, and as Elayne stated in the podcast, it would be very good to compare this to what was said in other schools, so Godfrey's hint is a great place to start! I definitely was not aware of Aristotle having a view of it, and as Elayne was saying I bet that would shed some important light on this. It seems so often that what Epicurus was saying was in response to other schools.

Post by “Cassius” of March 1, 2021 at 8:03 PM

Maybe some of the issue can be gleaned from this article:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/33...OD_IN_ARISTOTLE'S_DE_SOMNO

In outline, the argumentative strategy that Aristotle follows in the first chapter of the *De somno* consists of the following three steps.

First step: Aristotle establishes that waking and sleep are contraries, and that what receives one of the two contraries receives also the other (but it does not, and indeed cannot, receive both at the same time). This is a general point, and a point that Aristotle makes without invoking any particular principle of natural philosophy. Rather, Aristotle secures this result by invoking a logical property shared by any chance pair of contraries.⁵

Second step: What is specific about the phenomena of sleep and waking is that they depend on the activity of perceiving. Aristotle establishes this point by means of the following observation: we know that someone (or something) is awake or asleep based on the presence or absence of the activity of perceiving. With this observation, Aristotle secures two results. The first is that, since the activity of perceiving is proper neither to the soul nor to the body but it entails both, sleep and waking are to be studied as part of the explanatory project that is concerned with "what is common to the soul and the body."⁶ As a result, we can say that this explanatory project is clearly distinct from the one attempted in the *De anima*. While in the *De anima* Aristotle is concerned with the soul as the principle of life, in the *De somno* he is concerned with natural phenomena that are common to both the soul and the body, the explanation of which depends at least in part on the results achieved in the study of the soul.⁷ A full appreciation of the relationship between the two projects helps us understand why in the *De somno* Aristotle invokes the *De anima* for the claim that the capacity of perception belongs to animals to the exclusion of plants. This claim is enough to secure the following important result: animals alone are affected by sleep and waking.

Third step: No animal can be always asleep or always awake, but each and every one of them must alternate sleep and waking. Aristotle argues that the capacity for perception cannot be exercised continuously, and hence

periods of activity (waking) must be followed by periods of inactivity (sleep). This result is secured by invoking the following general principle: if *x* possesses a natural function, then there is also a natural time-limit for the exercise of that function; when the function is exercised beyond that time-limit, *x* is incapacitated. Aristotle does not pause to elaborate on the epistemological status of this principle; we do not try to qualify it, by saying that it is a natural principle, or to restrict it by adding that this is a principle that applies to the sublunary world to the exclusion of the celestial world. The overall impression is that Aristotle is invoking a general principle of natural philosophy that, at least by his lights, is empirically evident. His claim is that things such as eyes, hands, and *everything else with a distinctive function*, is given a time-limit beyond which they are incapacitated.

With the help of these three steps, Aristotle has secured the *axiomatic* fact that he will attempt to explain in the rest of the *De somno*—namely, that all animals alternate periods of sleep and periods of waking. It should not go unnoticed that Aristotle has also achieved an initial characterization of the phenomena of sleep and waking. More directly, if the animal is defined by possession of the capacity for perception, sleep is a fettering or an immobilization of perception, whereas waking is the release and liberation of perception.

That all animals partake of sleep is clear from these considerations: for the animal is defined by the possession of perception, and we say

We have already seen that, in the first chapter of the *De animis*, Aristotle introduces the principle that no natural capacity can be exercised indefinitely but rather periods of activity must be followed by periods of inactivity. Aristotle builds on this principle by arguing that the periods of inactivity are *for the sake of* the periods of activity. More specifically, the periods of sleep are *for the sake of* the periods of waking.¹⁶ Waking is understood as the full, and indeed optimal, exercise of the perceptual capacities. As a result, saying that sleep is *for the sake of* waking is equivalent to saying that the optimal exercise of the perceptual capacities is contingent on having adequate periods of sleep. In other words, periods of sleep are necessary *for* the optimal exercise of the perceptual capacities to obtain:

It is necessary for sleep to belong to every animal. I mean "necessity" in a conditional sense (*ἐπιδημιμα*)—namely, if the animal is to have its own nature, then certain things must belong to it of necessity; moreover, since

¹⁶ Aristotle reaches this result by applying the teleological principle that *nature does nothing in vain* ("for an animal exists *for the sake of an end, and this end is a good*"). 405a17-18. For more on this principle and the function it plays in Aristotle's search for teleological explanations, see the alternative accounts offered in Lennon 2000: 182-204 and Leunissen 2010: 119-135.

well THIS is surprising to me -- that Aristotle held that the brain exists for the sake of cooling the rest of the body:

To understand the physiological process outlined in this passage we have to keep in mind the function that Aristotle assigns to the brain. The brain is the coldest among the parts of the body and exists in the body for the sake of cooling the entire organism.¹⁷ When the heat produced in the process of digestion enters into the veins,

¹⁷ The reader should compare what Aristotle says in the *De animis* with the following passage from *P.A.* "as the non-liveness excludes upward through the veins, the solids from it becomes cooled owing to the specific nature of this place [=i.e. the brain], and produces fluxes of phlegm and serum. And we should be justified in maintaining that this process resembles, on a small scale, the one which produces rain showers. Damp vapour rises up from the earth and is carried into the upper regions by the heat and when it reaches the cold air it condenses back again into water owing to the cold and pours down toward the earth" (*P.A.* II 7, 655a1-8).

¹⁸ Here is what Aristotle says on the function of the brain in *P.A.*: "Everything needs something to counterbalance it, so that it may achieve proportion and the mean [...] for this reason nature has contrived the brain to counterbalance the region of the heart and the heat in it; and this is why animals have a brain, the composition of which is a combination of water and earth. Hence, although all blooded animals have a brain, practically none of the others has (unless it be just a counterpart, as in the case of the octopus), for since they lack blood they have but little heat" (*P.A.* II 7, 652a28-36). Among other things, this passage helps us understand that blooded animals must have both a heart and a brain. With the exception of a few cases (most notably, the octopus), bloodless animals do not have a brain. In their case, cooling takes place in some another way. In the *De animis*, Aristotle deals with cooling in bloodless animals at 2, 406a6-21.

André Palao 27

it becomes a warm substance moving up quickly through the veins toward the upper part of the body. When it has reached the brain, this hot substance is cooled off.¹⁸ At that point this substance, which will at some point be transformed into blood, is ready to flow toward the heart. Sleep happens in connection with the sudden concentration of blood in the region around the heart. The brain produces sleep but it is not itself affected by sleep. What is affected by sleep is the heart because the latter is the seat of the common sense-organ.¹⁹

We can go further in describing what Aristotle envisions happening in the body in connection with episodes of sleep and waking. Aristotle argues that one awakes when the separation of the thinner blood from the thicker blood is completed (3, 408a12). Aristotle seems to think that an episode of sleep occurs as a result of the fact that a large quantity of blood in need of separation has flooded the region around the heart; when the separation is completed, an episode of waking ensues:

¹⁹ Based on what Aristotle says in *De animis* 3, 408a5-10, it is suggestive to think that the brain works like a radiator, the function of which is to cool the body off. The brain is surrounded by a dense network of veins. By being forced to flow through these narrow passages, the hot substance is cooled off. Cf. *De anima* 495a 5-15: "In all animals, the brain is bloodless; there is not a single vein in it, and it feels cold to the touch [...] the

Post by "Godfrey" of March 2, 2021 at 1:27 AM

Carpe somnum!

Post by “Don” of March 2, 2021 at 7:11 PM

I agree with the contention that the images enhanced the mind's ability to perceive similar images and that is what constitutes memory. There is no storage from what I can see.

This makes sense to me. Epicurus was arguing against any inborn memories like Plato so he needed the mind to perceive existing images. Even the prolepses appear to have been based on repeated exposure to concepts and things. This grooves those mind passages to be able to recognize justice, a cow, Plato (😊 my phone autocorrected there as "potato"!). Now, this ability could take place as infants even... I don't know if a text says this, but that would allow infants to acquire prolepses and memory without their being born with those things from a previous life or from some supernatural soul corral. Epicurus needed a fully physical procedure for memory with NO supernatural input and this seems to be what her hit on.

Post by “Cassius” of March 2, 2021 at 9:01 PM

Quote

{Norman Dewitt)

In dreamful sleep, according to Epicurus, the erring, automatic mind alone is active. Bodily sensation, memory and volition are all quiescent. Under these circumstances the stage is cleared for the entrance of all the random, floating idols that survive from the swift, coherent streams that under waking conditions press upon the organs of sense and register themselves as sensations. Of these errant, subsensory idols the passive mind, partly because of its relief from interference and control, and partly because of the supermobility and supersensitivity of its component atoms, alone is capable of taking cognizance. Thus it functions as a supersense.

Quote

[15.19] **Cassius to Cicero**

[Brundisium, latter half of January, 45 B.C.]

1 I hope that you are well. I assure you that on this tour of mine there is nothing that gives me more pleasure to do than to write to you; for I seem to be talking and joking with you face to face. And yet that does not come to pass because of those spectres; and, by way of retaliation for that, in my next letter I shall let loose upon you such a rabble of Stoic boors that you will proclaim Catus a true-born Athenian.

2 I am glad that our friend Pansa was sped on his way by universal goodwill when he left the city in military uniform, and that not only on my own account, but also, most assuredly, on that of all our friends.

Well at this point it appears that only Cassius the First, Cassius the Second, and Norman DeWitt seem to see a role for "memory" separate and distinct from what is being described here in the function of the mind receiving images directly. I am still at the moment of the opinion that the extension of this function from (A) a description of what I see as primarily significant for a relatively narrow set of examples of the mind receiving images directly in dreams and/or of the gods (which apparently I am also in a minority in thinking plausible) to (B) constituting Epicurus' complete description of the operation of all of human memory, is something that is so dramatic that - if true - would have been documented extensively by every ancient and subsequent critic of Epicurus who ever lived, not just in the private joking of Cicero and Cassius! 😊

So for the time being I'm not sure whether DeWitt is correct in referring to a distinction in automatic/volitional operations of the mind, or whether there is some other logical division, but I can't see this being a description of something as crucial as all of human memory. But that's why we talk together and compare notes, becomes it's all too easy to make mistakes and the best way forward is comparing observations with others who are on the same path!

Note: This was also in Episode 58: "Nor from any other reason is the mind awake when the body is asleep, but because those very images affect the mind which were used to move the sense when we were awake, so that we fully believe we see a person who has been long since dead and buried in the grave; and it cannot well be otherwise, because all the senses of the body are obstructed and bound up by sleep, and therefore have no power to convince us of the contrary. Besides, the memory is feeble and languishes by rest, and makes no objection to satisfy us, that the man has been long in the arms of death, whom the mind really believes it sees alive."

I do agree that there is probably more to this than just the issue of the gods, but I don't think we have a good grasp on the role of memory, or on how the mind is using past images to store up something that it uses in the present. In other words, I am not convinced that he is not saying that these images (such as the image of walking) are not stored and then summoned from within, rather than having to be picked out of an apparently infinite number of images floating in the air currently. Perhaps there is some combination involved, but I am thinking that there's got to be an image storage system involved as well.

And I think a significant part of the difference in where we are at the moment may be in the question of what it is that the mind is storing, because I think it is more likely that Epicurus considered most of what is stored in the mind to be some kind of "pictures" or "images" and I don't think we're all on the same page on that.

Much more for me to think about (and to think about the process of thinking and memory)!

Post by “Cassius” of March 2, 2021 at 9:23 PM

Apparently the gods and/or Epicurus were thinking ahead to this technology:

<https://www.livescience.com/66060-pentagon...king-laser.html>

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'Talking Lasers' That Beam Messages into Your Head Could Be Here in 5 Years, Pentagon Says

By Brandon Specktor July 31, 2019

— — — — —

Post by “Don” of March 2, 2021 at 9:38 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

something that is so dramatic that - if true - would have been documented extensively by every ancient and subsequent critic of Epicurus who ever lived, not just in the private joking of Cicero and Cassius!

Well, those quotes you have are intriguing! Plus there is the fact that there is SO many lost Epicurean texts, I'm not willing to say that an alternative memory mechanism isn't out of the question.

There's also the Sedley idea of one sending images *to* the gods which sounds like we can create images in our minds. I don't think he'd say this without substantiation.

[Cassius](#) , I'm willing to entertain that there may be more here than I originally thought.

Post by “Elayne” of March 2, 2021 at 11:18 PM

[Cassius](#) that's a bad headline on the laser article, lol. It is not talking about extrasensory transmission of ideas but about a way to cause sound waves to occur at a specific distant place, using lasers. Ears would be necessary for the message to be heard! ☐☐

There's nothing in those references to memory that says internal images are involved-- and that's partly why I linked to the article on aphantasia. Memory and remembered images are not inseparable-- a person can remember events even if unable to reconstruct an image. So I don't think that's an argument for special memory images so much as that an awake person remembers the person they dreamed about is dead!

It also doesn't really make sense for Lucretius to say the memory is asleep, though. Bc how would the dreamer recognize the image as someone they knew, without the pattern recognition of memory? It would just look like a random person-- we would not recognize anyone in dreams without memory. It's a gap in his model. It would make more sense to say memory is not functioning the same in sleep as awake, but it's obviously not totally offline-- we can observe that ourselves with our own dreams.

Post by “Elayne” of March 2, 2021 at 11:26 PM

I'm confused as to why you would want Epicurus to have included image storage in his model when he hasn't said it _and_ it wouldn't square with our observations of the brain? Considering he thought of images as these physical film structures, they would have to get crammed into the brain like a filing cabinet, and nothing of that sort happens-- no sheets of photons are being stored in the brain. He said they were very fine so there was room for them in the air... but the images of a lifetime all stuck into the skull would be an even odder idea.

Both the external images floating through the pores and your idea of a stored image film are not happening, but I wouldn't propose adding an extra incorrect idea to his model without strong proof that he believed it!

Post by "Cassius" of March 3, 2021 at 5:26 AM

Well in the same way that Epicurus held the swerve to exist without suggesting a mechanism for it, I would think that he would presume that there is a method of storing pictures in the mind, even if he did not suggest a mechanism. I believe in my own introspection that I can picture in my mind a picture of the Mona Lisa, for example, and I can call from memory what seems to be a "picture" of it, which I see no reason not to consider as related to storing "images."

Maybe we are thinking of images differently, in that I see them as simply variation of the particles that are also seen and heard, not as something fundamentally different that would require a different storage mechanism, although certainly that's a possible reading of what it going on here.

My main issue is that I think that there is clearly a mechanism of memory for things we see, we hear, and touch, and taste, and I don't see any reason to conclude that memory of those sensations should be presumed to be consumed by this mechanism of the effect of images on the mind, which seems to me to be a separate category of phenomena on its own. Having some kind of general memory function is so basic to human operation that it would be impossible either to write the poem or read it and get any understanding of it unless we had a fundamental capacity to remember things that happen to us, so it seems to me to be highly unlikely that such a fundamental capacity would escape mention until the latter part of book four in these passages.

If that were what was meant by this aspect of Epicurus theory I would think the mechanism would be much more prominent in other parts of the texts

(Oops I missed seeing Don's comments, let me address those too)

[Quote from Don](#)

There's also the Sedley idea of one sending images *to* the gods which sounds like we can create images in our minds.

I had not thought of this but yes I can see that being a possible explanation of the "to" issue. In that context I was presuming that we were referring the particles that make up the images that

float through the air as something that the gods were accessing directly to replenish their own particles, kind of like sucking static electricity out of the air, so it wouldn't make any difference to them what images they used to replenish themselves. But you are right that that "to" indicates something else.

And to add to this mix of confusion in my mind I can't help but this this could be related to the process of forming anticipations, but on the other hand I remember from the first time I read DeWitt's book (i would have to now look for the reference) that DeWitt didn't think that Lucretius addressed anticipations anywhere at all in the poem, so apparently DeWitt himself didn't relate this section to anticipations.

Of course all of us are capable of being wrong so any or all of my current thinking on this could be incorrect.

Most of this and probably all of it don't strike me as particularly urgent to resolve quickly, but I would like to make some progress on the issue of determining how likely it is that the operations being discussed here constitute a complete description of human memory and/or the operation of the mind in general. I think whether we are just trying to reconstruct Epicurus or whether we are stating our own views based on all sources of information up through today, we ought to be able to articulate a description of what memory seems to us to be, and I think this discussion is showing that we have some basic gaps in that description as to what memory appears to be. Are we remembering pictures, or not? And what is the relation to "images" in this part of the discussion to "pictures"? Is there any at all? - perhaps "pictures" is applicable only to what the eyes process, and "images" in this context is a deceptive word for this use in English.

So at this point I am not satisfied either with our articulation of what memory is, or of what Epicurus is saying, much less how the two come together.

Post by “Don” of March 3, 2021 at 7:21 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

And to add to this mix of confusion in my mind I can't help but this this could be related to the process of forming anticipations, but on the other hand I remember from the first time I read DeWitt's book (i would have to now look for the reference) that DeWitt didn't think that Lucretius addressed anticipations anywhere at all in the poem, so apparently DeWitt himself didn't relate this section to anticipations.

I think you're onto something here, [Cassius](#) . The anticipations seem to clearly reside in the individual somehow.

Post by “Elayne” of March 3, 2021 at 7:32 AM

I am objecting to attributing ideas to Epicurus that he didn't state, especially when those ideas are wrong! He clearly describes visual images as being made of particles and imagined images as being made of even finer particles, both thrown off as films from objects. He never says we store those particles in our minds, and that whole idea is even wilder than having them available to re-enter.

When we remember images, we are not pulling particles of what we saw back out of storage to view. Visual memory involves neural transmission from the parietal lobe to the visual cortex (as well as widespread network neural activation in the brain), whereas in the initial seeing, the neural transmission is from the visual cortex to those other parts. But it's not image particles (the modern analogous thing being photons, which stimulate our retinas) being sent around again in the brain.

Epicurus was very literal about his images being made of films of particles, and he has never said they are stored. He very concretely describes a re-entry process for visual imagination and dreams that is images re-entering, and he has not said memory is getting its images a different way. And although we do have a lot to learn about memory and imagination still today, it's very safe to say we are not storing photons in the brain! So why attribute such a notion of storing the actual _images_ to him, when he never said it?

Post by “Cassius” of March 3, 2021 at 7:35 AM

Over my years of reading about Epicurus and talking about him on the internet I have always realized that images were one of the most challenging topics, right up there with anticipations (maybe for good reason).

Certainly we're not alone in seeing this as challenging, and I feel absolutely sure that there are a lot of commentaries focused on these passages that will save us some time, at least in integrating other relevant passages, no matter whether we agree with the commentators' conclusions or not.

So I will start looking through the basics (Diogenes Laertius, Diogenes of Oinoanda, Munro, Bailey, and also on JSTOR) and I am sure we will find some helpful material to post back here. Anyone who can help with that will of course be welcome!

Post by “Elayne” of March 3, 2021 at 7:37 AM

Besides that, when he explains visualizing (imagination) of an actual type of thing as images re-entering, that whole process relies on memory! If I want to think of a cow, how would I do it without memory of what a cow looks like? And he said that is a process of deciding to see the thing and that image is instantly available. Not that the memory of what a cow looks like comes from inside a storage in the mind!

Post by “Cassius” of March 3, 2021 at 7:50 AM

[Quote from Elayne](#)

Besides that, when he explains visualizing (imagination) of an actual type of thing as images re-entering, that whole process relies on memory! If I want to think of a cow, how would I do it without memory of what a cow looks like? And he said that is a process of deciding to see the thing and that image is instantly available. Not that the memory of what a cow looks like comes from inside a storage in the mind!

Yep - that's the kind of observation that makes it clear that there's more to this picture / spectre / image than we're currently seeing!

Post by “Don” of March 3, 2021 at 7:55 AM

[Quote from Elayne](#)

And he said that is a process of deciding to see the thing and that image is instantly available. Not that the memory of what a cow looks like comes from inside a storage in

the mind!

But isn't that how some academics describe the prolepsis? We know we're seeing a cow because we "have" a prolepsis of the concept of a cow in our language? Where do we "have" that Prolepsis?

I'm not attempting to imply I have answers... Just questions.

Post by "Cassius" of March 3, 2021 at 7:55 AM

Another implication is that we need to keep in mind that unless we are going to equate this process with that of "anticipations / preconceptions" then whatever this process is it has nothing to do with the "Canon of Truth" since it is not included within in. If so, what would that mean?

Note: Don and I cross-posted on essentially the same point.

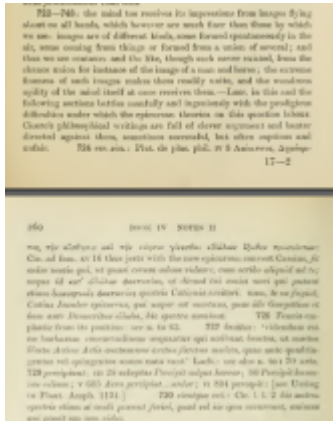
Post by "Cassius" of March 3, 2021 at 8:19 AM

Ok, with the caveat that in my humble view Bailey is not the most sympathetic interpreter of Epicurus, such that his opinions need to be handled with care, here is Bailey's commentary on these passages. I clipped the first page as a jpg -- see the attachment for the full section.



Post by "Cassius" of March 3, 2021 at 8:25 AM

Here is Munro's commentary. I trust Munro's interpretations more, but he came before Bailey and his commentary isn't as detailed: See attachment for full section



Post by "Cassius" of March 3, 2021 at 8:32 AM

Elisabeth Asmis on "Lucretius' Explanation of Moving Dream Figures"

Elisabeth Asmis

LUCRETIUS' EXPLANATION OF MOVING DREAM FIGURES AT 4.768-76

The great majority of editors of Lucretius have long recognized a serious disorder in Lucretius' explanation of mental images at 4.768-822.¹ Verses 768-76 are an answer to a question which is not asked until later, at vv. 768-93, and vv. 805-22 clearly follow in some open vv. 768-76. Almost all editors have, therefore, resorted to one of two hypotheses: (1) following Lachmann, many have supposed that vv. 777-817 were composed by Lucretius some time after he had composed vv. 768-76, as a revision or addition which he did not fully integrate with the earlier text; and (2) following Merrill, others have supposed that all of the text from v. 768 to v. 822 was written as a single rough draft which Lucretius would have revised if he had had the opportunity.²

¹ I am grateful to the anonymous reader of the *American Journal of Philology* for valuable comments and suggestions. — Throughout the following discussion I shall use the same numbering of Carl Bailey's *De Lucretio Carili Romano Virgilio Libris Sex*, 3 vols. (Oxford 1947) vol. 1: *Prolegomena, Text and Critical Apparatus, Translation*.
² For the first hypothesis, see Karl Lachmann, *In J. Lucii Carili ab urbane seneca liber commentarius* (Berlin 1836: 255-96); J. Béranger's edition (Leningrad 1912); H. J. Maury's edition with a translation and notes, 2 vols. (Cambridge 1964); Adolf Brügge's edition (Leningrad 1934), as well as Brügge's article, co-authored with F. Süsskind, "Beziehungen zum varronischen Buche des Lucretius," *opus 3, Philologus* 11 (1914): 413-48; 419-50; Carlo Galassi del Boca, "L'ordine delle immagini e delle visioni," *Atti della Accademia dei Lincei*, 1930, pp. 1-11; Appendix II to Book 4, 288-91; Cyril Bailey's *Text edition* (Oxford 1966); Hermann Drexler, *Text und Übersetzung*, 2 vols. (Berlin 1927-31); and Karl

Post by "Cassius" of March 3, 2021 at 8:39 AM

On the issue of whether this process of working with images is the same or similar to that of preconceptions, it would be good to review Voula Tsouna's article. In posting this today I scanned through it to look for whether it equated image processing with preconceptions. It doesn't jump out at me that she does, but I may have missed it. I do note, however, that in her table of keywords I do not see "images" or its equivalent.

Epicurean Preconceptions

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Abstract

This paper provides a comprehensive study of the Epicurean theory of 'preconception'. It addresses what a preconception is; how our preconception of the gods can be called *noetai*; *noetai*; the role played by *epithetai* (active mental focusing); and how preconceptions play a semantic role different from that of 'sayables' in Stoicism. The paper highlights the conceptual connections between these issues, and also shows how later Epicureans develop Epicurus' doctrine of preconceptions while remaining orthodox about the core of that doctrine.

Keywords

Epicurus - preconception - empiricism - *noetai* - *epithetai* - gods - mental focusing - semantics - definitions

Post by "Cassius" of March 3, 2021 at 4:22 PM

Here is side by side comparison of the commentary of Bailey (white, left) vs Munro (colored, right) on this same section. Compare how Bailey categorizes the entire discussion in terms of "thought" while Munro does not mention the words "thought" or any variation of "thinking," but deals with the subject as if it is just another variation of sensation, not something different in kind.

I also added underlines in Bailey which emphasize where Bailey is presuming his conclusion in his description. In passages marked 2 and 3 I also question the presumption that it is necessary for sensation and thought BOTH to be "set in action" and "stirred" by emanations from outside. Yes as to sensations, but why does the action of the mind have to be in reaction to something OUTSIDE. I see no reason whatsoever in the rest of Epicurus to think that the mind cannot generate its own actions, and I would presume as devoted as Epicurus was to "agency" that the mind DOES initiate its own thoughts, in addition to responding to things that it perceives, just as we in this thread are both initiating our own comments and responding to the comments of each other.

Bailey is insisting that in all cases the the receipt of images in the mind and the receipt of vision by the eyes are linked together in result, and I certainly see the passage that he is referring to it, but by no means does it follow (in my view) that this process is going on in *everything* that our minds think.

COMMENTARY

IV. 722

(e) *Thought*. 722–822.

From sensation Lucretius proceeds naturally to thought and concludes in the main that like vision it is produced by 'idols' which enter the mind. This conclusion goes back to the Atomists. Just as 'mind is the same as soul',¹ the same, that is, in atomic structure (see iii. 136 ff.), so the processes by which sensation and thought are set in action are the same, and in a material world this must be by means of contact with the object or with an emanation from it. So for Democritus 'thought is sensation, that is to say change',² or, as it is put more explicitly, 'sensations and thoughts are alterations of the body'.³ It is obvious that the mind does not come into direct contact with objects, and it must therefore be stirred by emanations, and these emanations the Atomists decided were the 'idols' which caused vision, which enter the mind through 'the pores in the body (*corporis . . . per rara* 730).⁴ So close was this identification of thought and sensation that Epicurus in his treatment of the 'idols' constantly couples them together: 'it is when something enters us from external objects that we not only see but think of their shapes';⁵ 'models, similar in colour and shape, leave the objects and enter according to their respective size either into our sight or into our mind';⁶ 'every image which we obtain by an act of apprehension on the part of the mind or of the sense-organs . . . this image is the shape of the solid object'.⁷ And again in a passage where he introduces the images seen in sleep 'the similarity between the things which exist, which we call real, and the images received as a likeness of things and produced either in sleep or through some other acts of apprehension on the part of the mind or the other instruments of judgement, could never be, unless there were some effluences of this nature actually brought into contact with our senses'.⁸ Cicero⁹ in recounting the

ἡνίκά τις ἰδέσθαι ἴσται οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν.

722–748: the mind too receives its impressions from images flying about on all hands, which however are much finer than those by which we see: images are of different kinds, some formed spontaneously in the air, some coming from things or formed from a union of several; and thus we see centaurs and the like, though such never existed, from the chance union for instance of the image of a man and horse; the extreme fineness of such images makes them readily unite, and the wondrous agility of the mind itself at once receives them.—Lucretius in this and the following sections battles manfully and ingeniously with the prodigious difficulties under which the Epicurean theories on this question labour. Cicero's philosophical writings are full of clever argument and banter directed against them, sometimes successful, but often captious and unfair. 724 *rer. sim.*: Plut. de plac. phil. iv 8 Δεύκιππος, Δημόκρι-

17—2

260

BOOK IV NOTES II

τος, τὴν αἰσθησιν καὶ τὴν νόησιν γίνεσθαι εἰδώλων ἕξωθεν προσόντων: Cic. ad fam. xv 16 thus jests with the new Epicurean convert Cassius, *fit enim nescio qui, ut quasi coram adesse videre, cum scribo aliquid ad te; neque id κατ' εἰδώλων φαντασίας, ut dicunt tui amici novi qui putant etiam διανοητικὰς φαντασίας spectris Catiuinis exoritari. nam, te ne fugiat, Catius Insaber Epicurus, qui nuper est mortuus, quae ille Gargettius et iam ante Democritus εἰδῶλα, hic spectra nominat.* 726 Tenia emphatic from its position: see n. to 63. 727 *bractea*: 'videndum est ne barbaram consuetudinem sequantur qui scribunt *bractea*, ut *mactea blacta Actius Actis auctumnus aretya iurctus muleta* quae ante quadrip-

Post by "Cassius" of March 3, 2021 at 4:29 PM

... and more than once tells of their striking on the mind.
Lucr. follows his master's lead, but spends regrettably little time on the main theory of thought and goes off into side-issues, such as the thought of images of compound creatures like centaurs (732-43), the seeing of 'images' in dreams (757-76), and the more fundamental question how we are able to think of things at will (777-817). He makes some important additions to Epicurus' statements, such as that the 'idols' of thought are 'more subtle' (*magis . . . tenuia* 728) than those of sight, and that the mind can be moved by a single 'idol' and does not, like sight, require a series to produce an image (746-8). These and other points in his exposition of the theory raise difficulties, which will best be dealt with in their respective sections.

at is

Why, Mr Bailey, are you so certain that Lucretius / Epicurus chose to "go off into side issues" rather than "the main theory of thought?" Maybe it is you, Mr. Bailey, who misunderstands what the main issue is, and that that main issue is not "thought" at all, but the issues which Lucretius chooses to discuss?

Following what I always think should be one of the most important rules of construction, maybe we should give Lucretius the benefit of the doubt and presume that he knows a little more about Epicurus than we do, and that if Lucretius chooses to say something and go off in a particular direction, that he has good reason for it?

Post by "Cassius" of March 3, 2021 at 10:39 PM

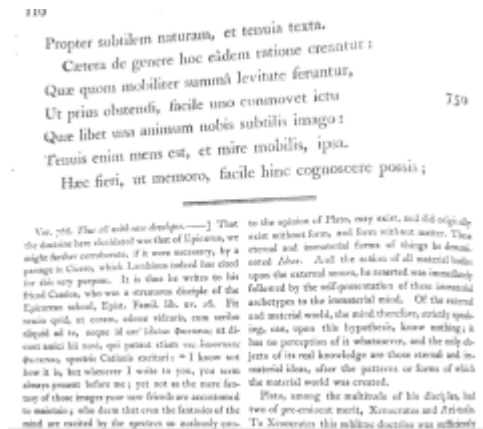
I generally don't purchase antique / antiquarian books, but several years ago on ebay I saw listed a copy of Lucretius translated by John Mason Goode and published in 1810. The binding and format looked impressive and I had not heard of this edition, so I bought it. It has forever soured me on "poetic" translations of Lucretius, because I took an immediate dislike to it and have got very little benefit from it over the years. Goode takes what seem to me to be extreme liberties in converting the text into English poetry, and as if to one-up his questionable translation, Goode tended to add the most incredibly tangential footnotes I have ever read in a Lucretius translation. They seem much more oriented toward making Mr. Goode look like a man

of the world rather than a classical poetry scholar.

At any rate, I decided to check Goode's notes on this topic and what do you know he actually wrote a fairly lucid note that is probably helpful enough to include here. In the end his point seems to be "Epicurus' theory may be nonsense but those that came afterwards have been just as bad" but I do think the part that is his comparison to Plato and Aristotle on the theory of ideas is actually pretty insightful. I don't know that this puts him in either Munro's camp or Bailey's camp -- possibly slightly closer to Bailey than Munro, but in the end, it seems to me Goode is focused on the images more in the respect that they end up being a component of "analysis" or "truth" than their being the main mechanism of general "thought."

A perfect example of my frustration with Goode is that he starts his note off by referencing the exchange between Cassius and Cicero, which as noted above i think is right on point, but he manages to cut out Cassius' reply and thereby omits to say that Cassius *denied* what Cicero was alleging about the images. Seems to me a rather surprising omission. 😊

Anyway, maybe someone will find a scan of this to be a little thought-provoking. (Attached)



I feel like the comment below underlined in red is HIGHLY justified, if Goode's note-writing is any indication:

John Good's parents were the [Nonconformist](#) minister Revd Peter Good and Sarah Good, the daughter of another Nonconformist minister, Revd Henry Peyto of [Great Coggeshall](#).^[1] John Mason Good was named after the [Puritan](#) clergyman and hymn writer [John Mason](#) (1645-1694), of whom his mother Sarah was a descendant.^[1]

Good attended a school at [Romsey](#) kept by his father. At about the age of 15 John Good was apprenticed to a surgeon-apothecary at [Gosport](#). In 1783 he went to [London](#) to practice his medical studies. In the autumn of 1784, he began to practice as a surgeon at [Sudbury](#) in [Suffolk](#). There he was an acquaintance of [Nathan Drake](#), a fellow writer and student of [Shakespeare](#).

In 1793 Good removed to London, where he entered into partnership with a surgeon and apothecary. But the partnership was soon dissolved, and to increase his income, he began to devote attention to literary pursuits. Besides contributing both in prose and verse to the *Analytical and Critical Reviews* and the *British and Monthly Magazines*, and other periodicals, he wrote a large number of works relating chiefly to medical and religious subjects.

In 1794 John Good became a member of the British Pharmaceutical Society, and in that connection, and especially by the publication of his work, *A History of Medicine* (1795), he did much to effect a greatly needed reform in the profession of the apothecary. In 1795 the [London Medical Society](#) awarded him their Fothergillian gold medal.^[2] In 1820, he took the diploma of M.D. at [Marischal College, University of Aberdeen](#). He died at [Shepperton, Middlesex](#), on 2 January 1827.

Good was not only well versed in classical literature, but was acquainted with the principal European languages, and also with [Persian](#), [Arabic](#) and [Hebrew](#).

His prose works display wide erudition, but their style is dull and tedious. His poetry never rises above pleasant and well-versified commonplace. His translation of [Lucretius](#), *The Nature of Things* (1805-1807), contains elaborate [philological](#) and explanatory notes, together with parallel passages and quotations from European and Asiatic authors.



Engraving

