

Reflections on chapter 11

Post by “SimonC” of January 28, 2022 at 5:01 PM

What an interesting chapter! I was not very familiar with this material before. I wonder how much of it is explicit in the sources and how much is DeWitt extrapolating though.

Particularly impressive points as I understood them:

- The need for soul atoms (ie the nervous system, sort of) to *interact* with the body to give rise to sensation. This makes sense to me even though it is apparently a controversial issue in current philosophy. But it does seem to follow from the physics.
- The automatic vs intentional thinking, this is very perceptive psychology and also makes a lot of sense. It brings to mind the later [dual process theory](#).
- The courtroom analogy. Is this entirely DeWitt? Again very clarifying and brings context to "[all sensations are true](#)".

I did not entirely grasp why it should be worse to think that Acheron might exist than to be sure that it does.

I also wonder what evidence could have led Epicurus to claim that the rational soul is situated in the chest. The Stoics apparently also thought this so perhaps it was a cultural idea? Or because you die if you get stabbed there?

Post by “Don” of January 28, 2022 at 5:28 PM

[Quote from SimonC](#)

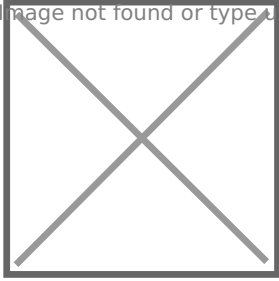
I also wonder what evidence could have led Epicurus to claim that the rational soul is situated in the chest.

Because that's where you "feel" many emotions, the metaphorical and literal "tightening of the chest." It's the same cultural idea we have vestiges of with words like "heart broken."

There was a real debate in the ancient world of whether the mind was centered in the brain or the heart.

FYI:

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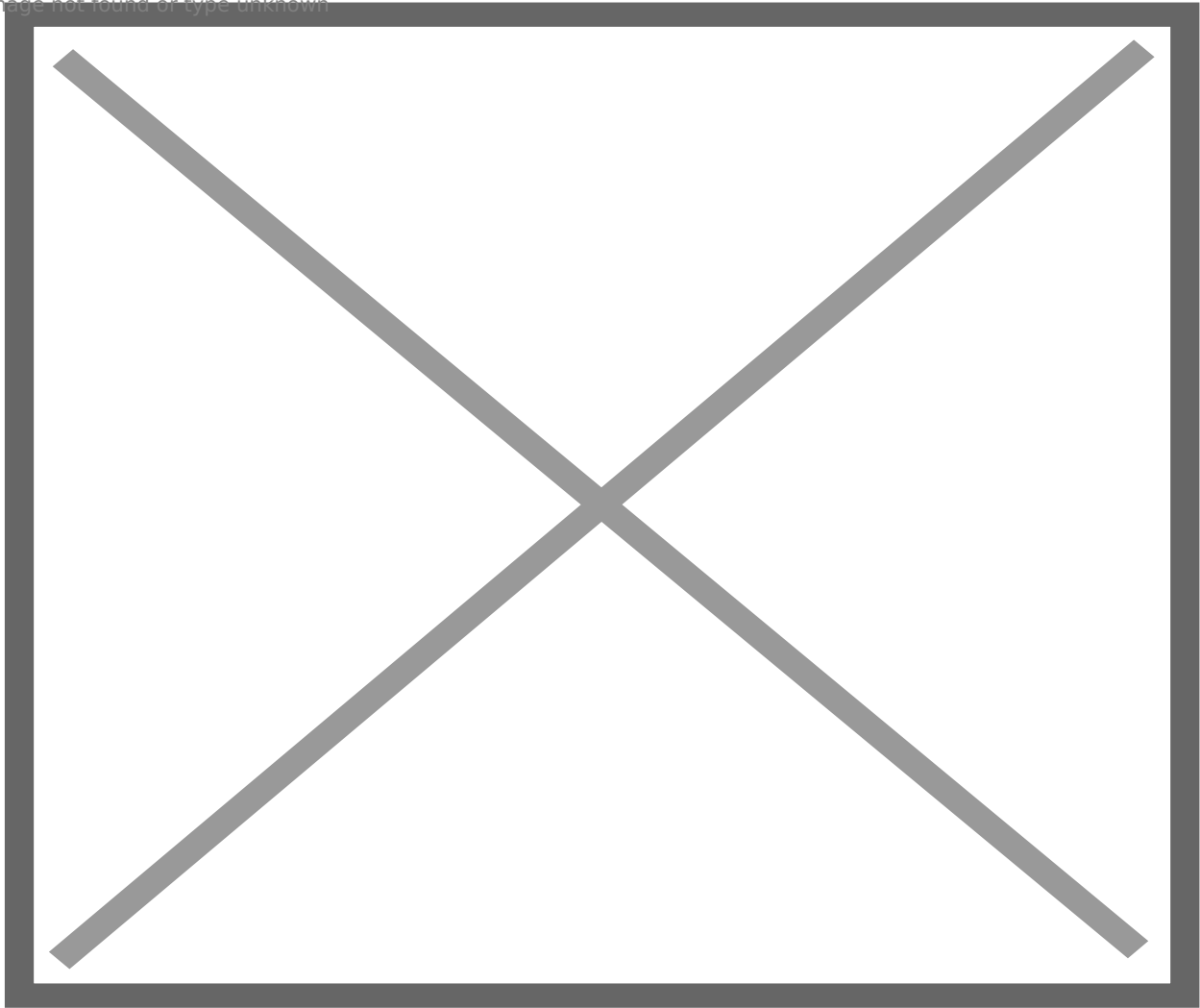
[Understanding Brain, Mind and Soul: Contributions from Neurology and Neurosurgery](#)

Treatment of diseases of the brain by drugs or surgery necessitates an understanding of its structure and functions. The philosophical neurosurgeon soon...

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

"Prioreshi (1996) concluded that by the end of the 5th century B.C., the question of whether the heart or the brain was the seat of intelligence remained unresolved in Western medicine. This changed with the works of Hippocrates (ca. 460 BC-ca. 370 BC)"

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[Ancient Greek Philosophy and the Birth of Neuroscience](#)

We recognize today that the Ancient Greeks made significant achievements in mathematics, engineering, and astronomy, and that their achievements in these...

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"We now think that the opposing view - cardiocentrism - is obviously wrong. But thinkers as prominent as Aristotle subscribed to this view. Why? One possible explanation is that these philosophers observed that when the heart stops beating, you die, and so they conjectured that the heart must control the mind. Many prominent ancient Greek physicians held this view, and indeed the debate between cardiocentrism and encephalocentrism continued well into the Renaissance."

Post by "Cassius" of January 28, 2022 at 6:42 PM

As far as the courtroom analogy on the "truth" of the senses as witnesses, I have never seen that developed anywhere else in my reading other than DeWitt. I too consider it to be very clarifying and likely correct and consistent with the texts. In my mind this is an example of some of DeWitt's major strengths. You may or may not agree with all his extrapolations but I think his sympathy with Epicurean positions and his attempt to find explanations that make sense are very refreshing. You'll have plenty of time in the future to get tired of those many commentators who are convinced that they are far smarter than Epicurus and like nothing more than to argue how naive Epicurus was. For all the faults that he may have, DeWitt makes an effort to reconstruct Epicurus in a sensible way.

Post by "Joshua" of January 28, 2022 at 7:08 PM

The kernel of this idea is so pervasive even today, that it remains an argumentative ploy for the supernatural. How many best-selling books have been trafficked under the paradigm?

"I was dead---" sometimes the word *clinically* or *medically* appears here, sometimes the word *literally* "---for 11 minutes and I went to heaven"---sometimes *saw my past/future lives*, or *experienced the whole of being* or some such. Generally the 'experience' is culturally and religiously dependant.

Clinical death is misleading, precisely because it is *not* necessarily death. If you've come back to tell me what happened while you were dead, you weren't dead. Your brain yet lived.

Interestingly, the brain was sometimes dealt with in a rather cavalier fashion in antiquity, not just in the Mediterranean but all around the world--in a procedure called trepanation, holes were drilled through the skull to relieve pressure or headaches, to release evil spirits, or to repair damage to the skull itself. Surprisingly, people actually sometimes survived!

Then there is the story of the birth of Athena, clanking around in Zeus' head in a full suit of armor until he (Zeus) asked for it to be cracked open like an egg. Make of that what you will!

Post by "Don" of January 28, 2022 at 7:19 PM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

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Yeah, I still like the stories of the ancient Egyptian embalmers taking such care with the heart, placing it in its own canopic jar... Then sticking a hook up the nose and just yanking out the brain, chunk by chunk 😊

Post by “SimonC” of January 29, 2022 at 2:19 AM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

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I agree, and we don't use that terminology in my country at all. If you live afterwards you weren't dead.

Post by “Marco” of January 29, 2022 at 4:48 AM

The reason of feelings like pain in the heart is Takotsubo cardiomyopathie.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Takotsubo_cardiomyopathy