

Episode One Hundred Eighteen - Letter to Herodotus 07 - "Images" - There's More To Them Than Meets The Eye

Post by "Don" of April 9, 2022 at 3:23 PM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

The use of the word "idol" in 46 should not be construed to carry its religious connotations. Epicurus uses the Greek word εἶδωλον, eidolon, which is the root of the English word but means:

Noun Edit

εἶδωλον • (eídōlon) n (genitive εἰδώλου); second declension

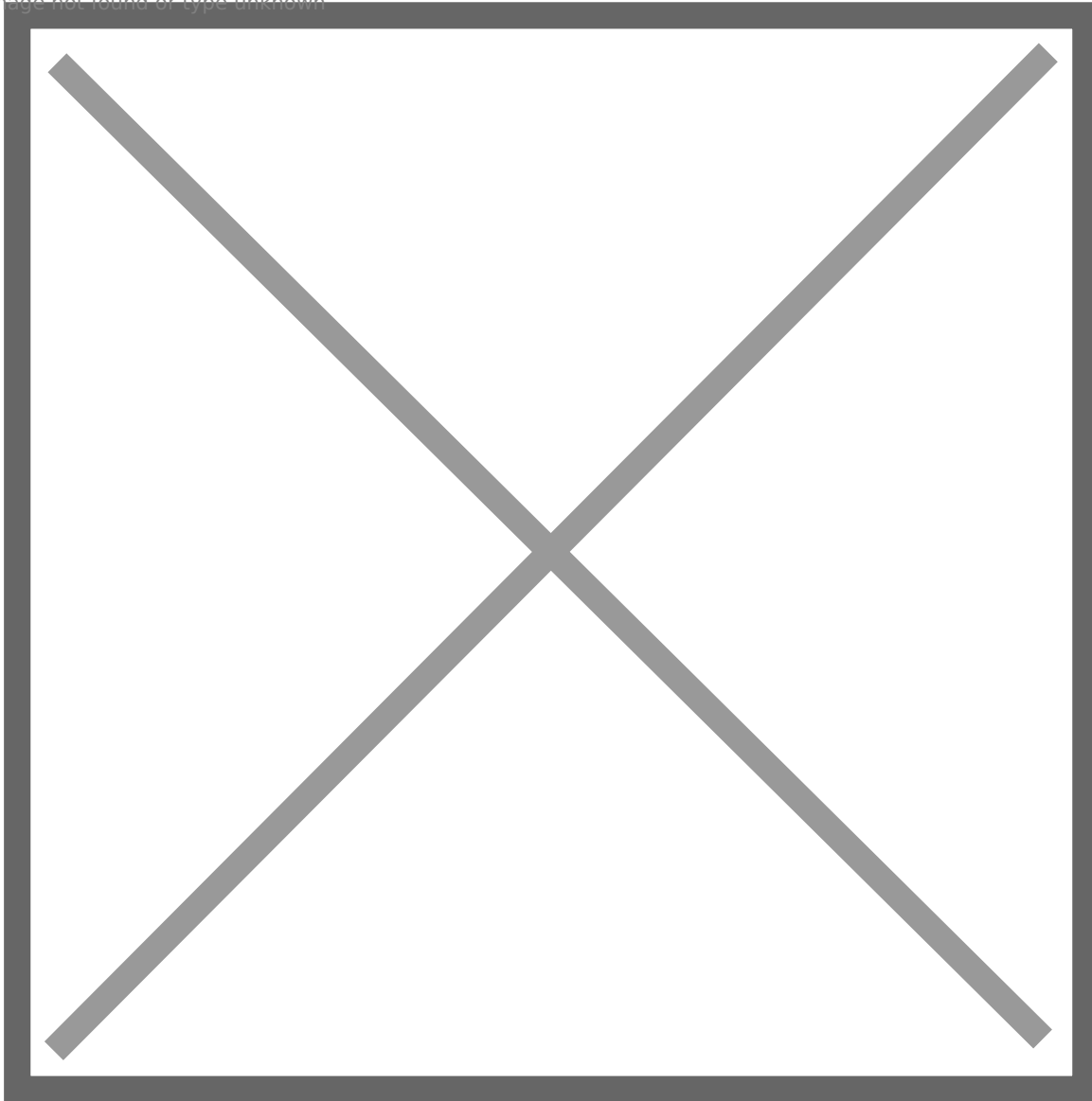
1. phantom, ghost
2. shape, figure, image
3. image of the mind: idea, fancy
4. representation, statue, idol

We appear to be dealing with some combination of definitions 2 and 3.

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Agreed, but I do find it interesting to remember that the literal definition of the (English) word "idol" is a "representation" of a god and stems directly from εἰδολών.

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[idol | Etymology, origin and meaning of idol by etymonline](#)

IDOL Meaning: "image of a deity as an object of (pagan) worship," from Old French idole "idol, graven image, pagan... See definitions of idol.

www.etymonline.com

Post by “Joshua” of April 9, 2022 at 4:00 PM

That's a good point, Don, and it raises an interesting problem in theology; while Christianity in the main stream has abandoned the injunction against 'making graven images', Islam still

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2463-episode-one-hundred-eighteen-letter-to-herodotus-07-images-there-s-more-to-them/>

adheres to it. In the Charlie Hebdo case, this meant that western cartoonists were 'deserving of death' for their portraits of Mohammed. In one of the attacks against that magazine, twelve people were killed.

From a ban on physical images, it is but one more step to a ban on mental images:

Quote

“It is not permissible at all to imagine how the Entity of Allah or any of His Attributes is.”

-The late Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen, a prominent scholar of Islam

By way of contrast, we may look into Bernard Frischer's argument from *The Sculpted Word*: the early Epicureans were not only noted for their dedication toward portraits, but actually used them as a method for advocating the philosophy.

Post by “Don” of April 9, 2022 at 4:49 PM

That's an even better point, [Joshua](#) 😊 Thanks for that post!

Post by “Cassius” of April 17, 2022 at 2:00 AM

Welcome to Episode One Hundred Eighteen of Lucretius Today.

This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the only complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world.

I am your host Cassius, and together with our panelists from the EpicureanFriends.com forum, we'll walk you through the ancient Epicurean texts, and we'll 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.

If you find the Epicurean worldview attractive, we invite you to join us in the study of Epicurus at EpicureanFriends.com, where you will find a discussion thread for each of our podcast

episodes and many other topics.

Today we continue our review of [Epicurus' letter to Herodotus](#), and we move further into fundamental physics.

Now let's join Joshua reading today's text:

Bailey:

[46] 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.

[47] 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.

[48] 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.

[49] 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.

[50] 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.

[51] 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.

[52] 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.

HICKS

[46] Again, there are outlines or films, which are of the same shape as solid bodies, but of a thinness far exceeding that of any object that we see. For it is not impossible that there should be found in the surrounding air combinations of this kind, materials adapted for expressing the hollowness and thinness of surfaces, and effluxes preserving the same relative position and motion which they had in the solid objects from which they come. To these films we give the name of 'images' or 'idols.'

[47] Furthermore, so long as nothing comes in the way to offer resistance, motion through the void accomplishes any imaginable distance in an inconceivably short time. For resistance encountered is the equivalent of slowness, its absence the equivalent of speed.

Not that, if we consider the minute times perceptible by reason alone, the moving body itself arrives at more than one place simultaneously (for this too is inconceivable), although in time perceptible to sense it does arrive simultaneously, however different the point of departure from that conceived by us. For if it changed its direction, that would be equivalent to its meeting with resistance, even if up to that point we allow nothing to impede the rate of its flight. This is an elementary fact which in itself is well worth bearing in mind. In the next place the exceeding thinness of the images is contradicted by none of the facts under our observation. Hence also their velocities are enormous, since they always find a void passage to fit them. Besides, their incessant effluence meets with no resistance, or very little, although

many atoms, not to say an unlimited number, do at once encounter resistance.

[48] Besides this, remember that the production of the images is as quick as thought. For particles are continually streaming off from the surface of bodies, though no diminution of the bodies is observed, because other particles take their place. And those given off for a long time retain the position and arrangement which their atoms had when they formed part of the solid bodies, although occasionally they are thrown into confusion. Sometimes such films are formed very rapidly in the air, because they need not have any solid content; and there are other modes in which they may be formed. For there is nothing in all this which is contradicted by sensation, if we in some sort look at the clear evidence of sense, to which we should also refer the continuity of particles in the objects external to ourselves.

[49] We must also consider that it is by the entrance of something coming from external objects that we see their shapes and think of them. For external things would not stamp on us their own nature of colour and form through the medium of the air which is between them and us, or by means of rays of light or currents of any sort going from us to them, so well as by the entrance into our eyes or minds, to whichever their size is suitable, of certain films coming from the things themselves, these films or outlines being of the same colour and shape as the external things themselves. They move with rapid motion; and this again explains why they present the appearance of the single continuous object, and retain the mutual interconnexion which they had in the object, when they impinge upon the sense, such impact being due to the oscillation of the atoms in the interior of the solid object from which they come.

[50] And whatever presentation we derive by direct contact, whether it be with the mind or with the sense-organs, be it shape that is presented or other properties, this shape as presented is the shape of the solid thing, and it is due either to a close coherence of the image as a whole or to a mere remnant of its parts. Falsehood and error always depend upon the intrusion of opinion (when a fact awaits) confirmation or the absence of contradiction, which fact is afterwards frequently not confirmed (or even contradicted) following a certain movement in ourselves connected with, but distinct from, the mental picture presented - which is the cause of error.

[51] For the presentations which, e.g., are received in a picture or arise in dreams, or from any other form of apprehension by the mind or by the other criteria of truth, would never have resembled what we call the real and true things, had it not been for certain actual things of the kind with which we come in contact. Error would not have occurred, if we had not experienced some other movement in ourselves, conjoined with, but distinct from, the perception of what is presented. And from this movement, if it be not confirmed or be contradicted, falsehood results; while, if it be confirmed or not contradicted, truth results.

[52] And to this view we must closely adhere, if we are not to repudiate the criteria founded on the clear evidence of sense, nor again to throw all these things into confusion by maintaining falsehood as if it were truth.

YONGE

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Post by “Cassius” of April 17, 2022 at 7:22 AM

In getting ready for today's podcast I decided to look for any other examples which might exist of ancient or other thought to the effect that the human mind can be affected by the flow of invisible particles. One criteria of significance would need to be that the flow of particles is entirely natural and not in any way supernatural.

Here is my list so far, which is necessarily tentative:

1 - Feng Shui (?) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feng_shui

Post by “Cassius” of April 17, 2022 at 2:38 PM

Just in case Joshua doesn't get around to posting this again, I want to memorialize his comment:

Quote

Of course two seconds after we hang up I think of a this; ambient colors can affect human mood, so that green is restful to the eyes, and red can be used in senior living dining rooms to increase the appetite. Blue and aquariums have a calming effect, hence their use in dentists offices. Yellow may signify danger, as in the bee, wasp, yellow jacket, and the eyes of the snake.

Post by “Cassius” of April 21, 2022 at 5:37 PM

Episode 118 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. This week we talk about the very difficult subject of "images" and how they impact the mind. Please let us know any comments or questions you have in the thread below, and please be sure to subscribe to the podcast on your telephone or other podcast aggregator.

<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/49509898>

Post by “Cassius” of April 21, 2022 at 6:39 PM

Added thought:. I wonder if one of the analogies here too is a parallel between what we presume must be nerve impulses traveling within our body and at least some of these images.

I am not even sure what we think of these today:. Are they electrical impulses? Chemicals?

Another question might be whether these impulses are "analog" vs "digital" -. I presume analog is more likely? "Analog" would probably have more similarities to "images" retaining their "shape."

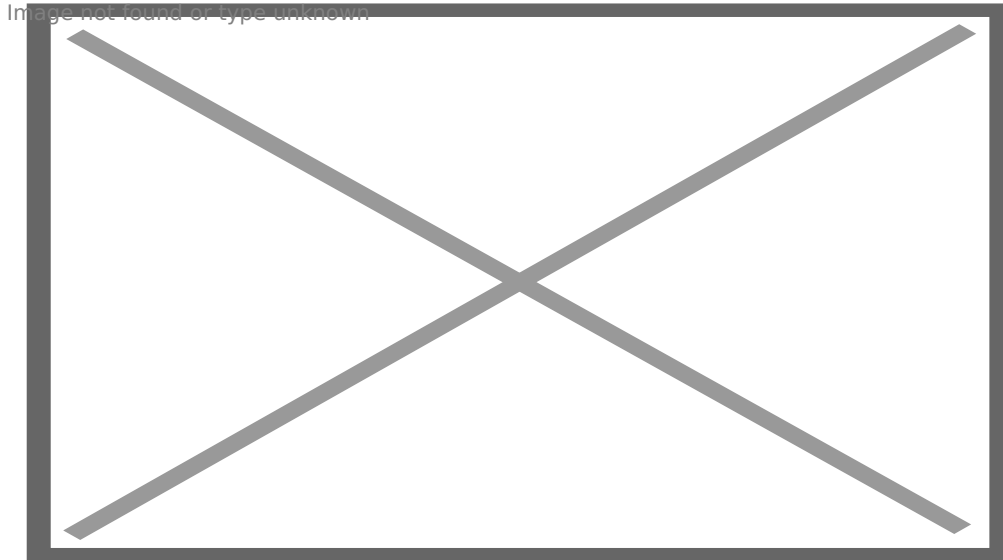
Post by “Don” of April 22, 2022 at 5:39 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2463-episode-one-hundred-eighteen-letter-to-herodotus-07-images-there-s-more-to-them/>

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I am not even sure what we think of these today:. Are they electrical impulses?
Chemicals?

The brain and nervous system work with both electrical and chemical signals. Nerve impulses are electrical. But the signals are carried between synapses in the brain are (primarily) by chemical compounds (neurotransmitters).



[The synapse \(article\) | Human biology | Khan Academy](#)

How neurons communicate with each other at synapses. Chemical vs. electrical synapses.
www.khanacademy.org

[4.1 The Neuron Is the Building Block of the Nervous System - Introduction to Psychology - 1st Canadian Edition](#)

Post by “Don” of April 22, 2022 at 6:36 AM

One can try and cram Epicurus's concept of "bodies emitting εἰδωλον and these images/films impinging on our physical senses and minds" into a modern paradigm of bodies emitting infrared electromagnetic energy or visible light reflecting off of bodies and reaching our visual senses. And Epicurus, were he to somehow be transported to our time, would be curious about modern scientific findings and, I believe, be able and willing to incorporate that into his natural, physical universe and his physics.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2463-episode-one-hundred-eighteen-letter-to-herodotus-07-images-there-s-more-to-them/>

BUT we cannot say that Epicurus prognosticated or predicted modern science. His system is coherent within itself, but his concept of the mind receiving fine particles/atoms leading to our thoughts is factually wrong. It's ingenious and provides a purely material basis for sensation. But it does a disservice to Epicurus and to us to shoehorn his ideas into a modern paradigm.

For me, what Epicurus got absolutely correct was the physical explanation of all phenomena without the need for supernatural intervention. THAT we can build on. THAT we can incorporate seamlessly into any modern paradigm.

We can try to analogize and see his εἰδωλον "images" as metaphors for light, but I do not think it's intellectually honest to think he foresaw radio waves or the electromagnetic spectrum. That was not his mechanism for films of atoms. We can be impressed at his intellectual creativity within his contemporary worldview. And he was "less wrong" than Plato or Pythagoras. But my perspective is that a modern Epicurean position is to respect the founders' position that we use our senses to make sense of the cosmos. Our senses now have additional range through instruments we use to augment them. We are not beholden to 2,000+ year old texts when it comes to explaining physical phenomena which we can literally see now thanks to advances in science. Modern Epicurean physics has to incorporate modern scientific facts. This does not preclude an openness and humility that we'll find out more in the future! (I'm looking at you multiverses and dark energy and dark matter.) This ability to incorporate new scientific knowledge into the philosophy with barely a ripple is one of the strengths of Epicurus's system! Think of the cataclysm it was to Christianity for Galileo to say Jupiter had moons!! Epicureans would have said, "Cool!" and went about their day. That's the attitude I'm advocating when it comes to the Physics leg of the Canon.

Post by “Cassius” of April 22, 2022 at 7:04 AM

Agreed. Analogies and comparisons only go so far, and some are more helpful than others. In the end, words are only representations of the reality and we are constantly working to revise them make them more accurate as our information expands. We shouldn't resist improvements in explanations any more than we should get complacent that our current wordings are "final."

Post by “Cassius” of April 22, 2022 at 8:05 AM

Here's a related question: Given the way that the images discussion is presented ("It is not impossible that..." "Nothing contradicts...") is it possible that the "images" were being presented as a hypothetical "one among the possibilities" theory, rather than as a core part of the doctrine? That would be directly related then to the issue of the "gods" as well, since observing them through "images" seems to be a part of the way Epicurus was suggested that they are known.

Further the terminology of the discussion of Centaurs (which do not exist, yet can apparently be observed randomly when images mix) might be another example of how images of the gods are formed and received "clearly" and yet not originating from a "real" object (at least not "real" in the form that the images appear to make them).

I am pretty sure I have seen such a suggestion made in one of more of the commentaries.

And I think that's probably the prime contender for reconciling how the gods can be "real" (the images are real) and yet the truth about the gods is different from what the images convey. They are neither totally idealistic nor totally "real" in the way that we are observing them, and that leads back to incorporating such issues as isonomia and "nature never makes only one thing of a kind."

At the very very least, I do think that the "not impossible" phrasing indicates something important to be considered in the way Epicurus is discussing the whole issue of images.

Post by "Cassius" of April 22, 2022 at 8:16 AM

Oh one one thing I wish I had said differently in the podcast: When Lucretius talks in Book Four about whether Nature has created or lined up these images to be provided for us to think about things, I think at least a significant part of that has to be interpreted as suggesting something that Lucretius was setting up as absurd and not to be believed, just like the idea of nature lining up souls to inhabit the bodies of new-born things. It seems to me he intended us to answer that as "no" and that the real issues is more along the lines of what we tune our minds to receive via past experiences and choices, although with perhaps a dash of "nature" being added in somewhere in addition to the "nurture."

Here is that question which should be answered "no, or course not, the idols don't keep watch on our wills:"

Quote

[779] First of all it is asked why, whatever the whim may come to each of us to think of, straightway his mind thinks of that very thing. Do the idols keep watch on our will, and does the image rise up before us, as soon as we desire, whether it pleases us to think of sea or land or sky either? Gatherings of men, a procession, banquets, battles, does nature create all things at a word, and make them ready for us? And that when in the same place and spot the mind of others is thinking of things all far different.

And Here is the basis for suggesting that the images of things can be real and yet not reflect actually-existing things:

Quote

[732] And so we see Centaurs and the limbs of Scyllas, and the dog-faces of Cerberus and idols of those who have met death, and whose bones are held in the embrace of earth; since idols of every kind are borne everywhere, some which are created of their own accord even in the air, some which depart in each case from diverse things, and those again which are made and put together from the shapes of these. For in truth the image of the Centaur comes not from a living thing, since there never was the nature of such a living creature, but when by chance the images of man and horse have met, they cling together readily at once, as we have said ere now, because of their subtle nature and fine fabric. All other things of this kind are fashioned in the same way. And when they move nimbly with exceeding lightness, as I have shown ere now, any one such subtle image stirs their mind; for the mind is fine and of itself wondrous nimble.

And that's the basis for my suggestion above that this is probably the prime contender for reconciling how the gods can be "real" (the images are real) and yet the truth about the gods (what we more accurately gather about their true natures) does not come entirely or even primarily from what the images convey. They are neither totally idealistic nor totally "real" in the way that we are observing them, and that leads back to incorporating such issues as isonomia and "nature never makes only one thing of a kind."

Post by “Don” of April 22, 2022 at 8:22 AM

I think you might be in y to something with that line of thinking. "It is not impossible that..." and "Nothing contradicts..." seems firmly inline with the way different options are presented for other physical phenomena.

The word used in the texts for "clearly" in this context is ἐναργῆς:

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, ἐναργῆς](#)

Post by “Cassius” of April 22, 2022 at 8:29 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

seems firmly inline with the way different options are presented for other physical phenomena.

A primary example would be the celestial phenomena, in the letter to Pythocles, about which we are pretty clearly just guesstimating and taking the multivalent approach, correct? Or do you have others in mind?

Post by “Cassius” of April 22, 2022 at 8:35 AM

Taking the approach that "Epicurus was talking possibilities about the gods just like he was talking possibilities about the stars" would probably be the best way to support Frances Wright's having Epicurus say that it would be equally improper to assert that the gods do or don't exist. The continuing problem with that, however, is that Epicurus and the other texts seem much more firm about the gods than just "possibilities."

That's where I think the best reconciliation comes neither in a radical idealist or radical realist formula, but in trying to incorporate all the various premises (at least including: anticipations, isonomia, no single thing of a kind, multiplicity of worlds with living beings, eternal and infinite universe) into the things that Epicurus would have wanted his theory of "gods" to embrace.

I doubt he would allow any of those premises to be contradicted by asserting any characteristic of a "god" that would be in opposition to any of those in that list. If an "image" appeared to convey something contrary to things that are logically compelled by those starting points, then I would expect him to say that such image would be presumed to be unreliable and should be

rejected. The only caveat there would be that if the image recurred over and over and to many different people over time under repeatable circumstances, then such an image would have to be given more credibility, even to the ultimate point of being "conversion-worthy" if it could be repeatedly observed and tested to repeat itself in the same way under "objective" conditions!



Post by “Don” of April 22, 2022 at 8:56 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

The continuing problem with that, however, is that Epicurus and the other texts seem much more firm about the gods than just "possibilities."

θεοὶ ... εἰσιν· "Gods exist"

It doesn't get much more clear than that... Or does it? Here's the excerpt from my translation of the letter to Menoikeus...

123e. θεοὶ μὲν γάρ εἰσιν·

If we take out the μὲν (and look for the inevitable δε in the next phrase) and move γάρ "because, for" out of the way for now, we can pare this down to its essential:

θεοὶ εἰσιν. "Gods exist." "There are gods."

The implications of those two words have had entire essays (if not whole books) written about them. We looked at this a little in 123b with ζῶον. But Epicurus is not equivocating here: Gods exist. What he means by this we simply have to discover from his extant works and fragments. Again, if we take Sedley's position, each person has their own personal concept of a god. Many people, many individual gods.

123f. ἐναργῆς γὰρ αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ γνῶσις.

Here's our δέ "on the other hand."

ἐναργῆς [δέ] ἐστιν αὐτῶν ἡ γνῶσις

"And the knowledge (ἡ γνῶσις (gnōsis)) of them (θεοί "gods", note the plural here) is ἐναργῆς." But what does ἐναργῆς mean?

It has two primary definitions:

visible, palpable, in bodily shape, properly of gods appearing in their own forms (in Homer); so of a dream or vision; ex., ἐναργῆς ταῦρος "in visible form a bull, a very bull"

manifest to the mind's eye, distinct

Epicurus can't mean the first meaning since he's adamant that the gods don't interact with humans. But the second definition coincides with his contention (and the idea of the prolepsis of the gods) that the gods are apprehended by the mind only. That also sets up a nice contrast with the first definition's use by Homer in describing the Olympian gods appearing "in visible form." Homer's gods were ἐναργῆς in one sense of the word; Epicurus's in the other sense.

Unfortunately, this does nothing to resolve our problem with puzzling out how the gods are ζῶον. Are they physically-existent material beings? Are they existing only as mental perceptions manifest merely to the mind's eye? The ambiguous nature of ἐναργῆς doesn't necessarily help us fully. It does, however, set up some of Epicurus's clever wordplay contrasting his view with Homer's.

Post by "Cassius" of April 22, 2022 at 9:20 AM

It also seems pretty clear that Epicurus is saying that, as to the gods that exist, they are not such as the majority thinks of them. I interpret that as asserting his own definition of the word "god" and that's where we have to infer his definition from the rest of his work, primarily (I would say) by eliminating assertions that would contradict the rest of his premises. So in other words gods can't be supernatural and those other "mystical" qualities that some ascribe to them.

I haven't read Sedley's views closely enough to comment on them, but I would not expect Epicurus to be willing to accept a lot of "subjectivity" on the existence of national or personal gods. I would expect him to assert general high-level conclusions dictated by strict logic from his premises, but as to personal assertions of subjectivity I would expect him to take a strong "I'll entertain it if and when you can prove it by showing it to me" approach.

In other words, a strong Missouri "Show Me" approach!

Post by "Cassius" of April 22, 2022 at 9:24 AM

If Joseph Smith can assert that the Garden of Eden was in Independence Missouri, we can claim a section of Missouri for an Epicurean Garden.

Or:

The gods may not speak Greek; but they speak a language like Greek.

All Epicureans may not live in Missouri, but they live in a state like Missouri.

Post by “Don” of April 22, 2022 at 10:41 AM

I get the idea that the ONLY thing that is *εναργής* about the gods is that they are *ἄφθαρτον* and *μακάριον*. That's it. That's the extent of our prolepsis. But I'm open to other thoughts...

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, ἄφθαρ-τος](#)

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, μα^κα^ρ-ιος](#)

Post by “Cassius” of April 22, 2022 at 11:26 AM

Yes, that is the direction I would take too. All the rest is of significantly less confidence. And I bet if we had more texts we would see that element more clearly, just like Velleius talks about "quasi blood" and the rest. Probably a lot of it was just entertaining theorizing.

Post by “Don” of April 22, 2022 at 5:16 PM

Finishing up the podcast episode and listening to section at 39:00. You found the Lucretius section that is connected to the following. If I remember correctly, somewhere else I remember something about if we think about something repeatedly, that makes our minds receptive to those images. The images create grooves or channels or holes that match their shape. This makes it easier for images of the same shape to enter the mind, whether in sleeping or in waking, and that's how we think of things or dream of things.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2463-episode-one-hundred-eighteen-letter-to-herodotus-07-images-there-s-more-to-them/>

And I think [Joshua](#) was getting there when his mention of impressions at 50:00 when talking about prolepses.

Post by “Cassius” of April 23, 2022 at 7:31 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

If I remember correctly, somewhere else I remember something about if we think about something repeatedly, that makes our minds receptive to those images.

I also have to think that the Epicureans considered this when employing busts and rings and other images of Epicurus.

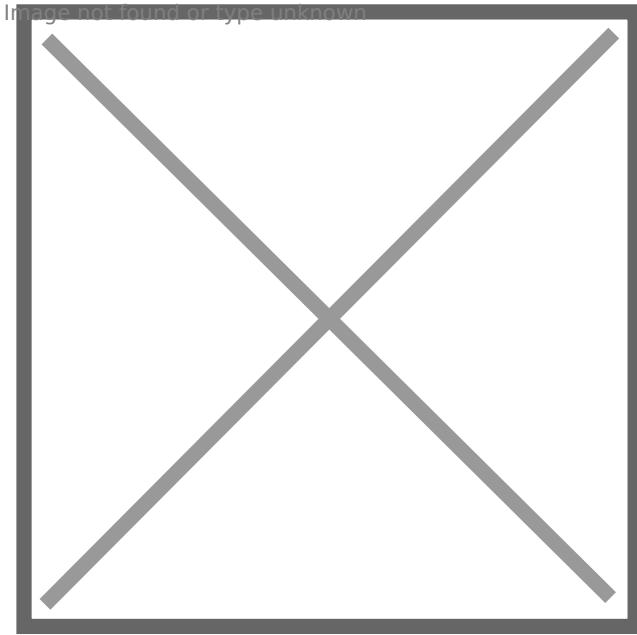
In fact it probably makes sense when we think about comparing "techniques" with Stoics and others that an Epicurean would pursue what is effectively "tuning the mind" by surrounding ourselves with images (artwork) of things that we find pleasing and/or motivational to us.

It's probably no coincidence that Epicurus said he found his greatest happiness in studying nature - he we surrounding himself with thoughts and observations about the way nature works.

That might be something to think about when considering the impact of modern television over the last 75 years broadcasting images into almost every home of a very different kind.

Post by “Don” of August 10, 2022 at 8:00 AM

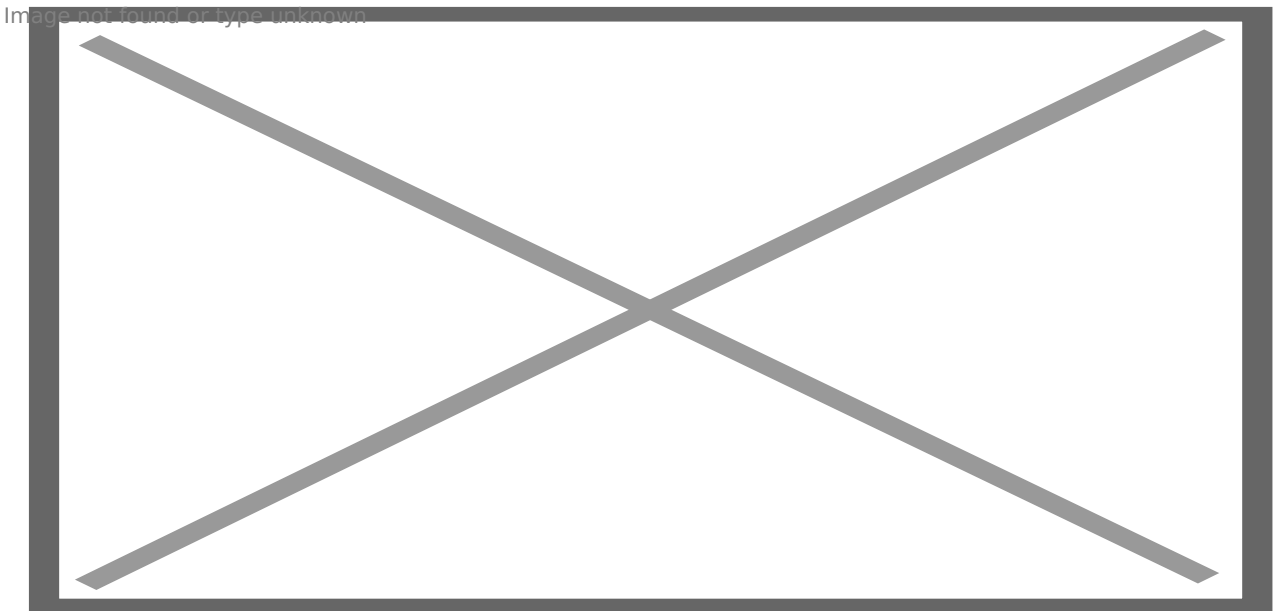
I wasn't sure where to post this but found it fascinating. I recently found out that Euripides' play *Helen* shows that Helen of Sparta was actually transported to Egypt before Paris carried "her" to Troy and she safely spent the entirety of the Trojan War in Egypt. What got carried to Troy and what got blamed for being the cause of the war was an eidolon created by Hera. That IS the same word Epicurus used to describe the images emitted by bodies that we perceive. Fascinating!



[Introduction to “Helen and her Eidolon” - Classical Inquiries](#)

2016.05.01 | By Donna Zuckerberg Donna Zuckerberg, editor of the online journal Eidolon, introduces the Helen-focused collaboration between two publications...

classical-inquiries.chs.harvard.edu



[Euripides’ Helen – an Alternative View of Helen of Troy](#)

by Sean Kelly, Managing Editor, Classical Wisdom She’s probably the single most famous woman from all of Greek mythology. We think we know the tale – the...

classicalwisdom.com

PS. I'm not saying Euripides' (and others' telling the Helen eidolon story) and Epicurus' use of the word eidolōn are synonymous. However, I did find it very interesting that both could use the

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2463-episode-one-hundred-eighteen-letter-to-herodotus-07-images-there-s-more-to-them/>

same word for (maybe) parallel concepts. Epicurus would have known this story and still used the word. Do we know if the eidolon theory is extant from other Greek philosophers?

Post by “Cassius” of August 10, 2022 at 8:55 AM

So Helen was not even in Troy during the war? But I presume Paris was?

Post by “Don” of August 10, 2022 at 9:00 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

So Helen was not even in Troy during the war? But I presume Paris was?

Exactly. Paris and everyone got fooled by Hera 's eidolon. And Hera did it to get back at Aphrodite for Paris awarding Aphrodite the golden apple. At least, according to this version of the tale.

Post by “Julia” of October 8, 2024 at 1:48 PM

For me, discussion of images always beings to mind the aphasia-hyperphasia continuum (some people have no mind's eye, some people have a vivid photorealistic one, and it is not an ability (fixed innate) but a skill (ie, it is flexible and can be trained) as well as the equally learnable skill to consciously create pseudohallucinations (to see the images of the mind's eye superimposed on-top of physical eye's images, as opposed to seeing them in a separate mental black-blank-canvas kind of space).

[As I had describe regarding a previous episode](#) (but after this one was recorded), it is entirely possible that ancient Greeks had their brains abilities developed so differently, that the resulting skills would seem unusual to us today. Considering the differences of average Western physical abilities versus those of children, adolescents and adults raised in Shaolin Kung-Fu monestaries, there is little reason to assume the mental skills of average modern Westerners

would virtually identical to those raised in a similarly foreign environment than that of a Shaolin monestary – especially since it is known fact these skills exist and can be trained.

To illustrate once again the extent to which mental architecture and processing differs between subjects, it is entirely possible to train – rather than “train”, I should really say torture... – a child into developing dissociative skills to the extend that their perfectly healthy eyes will no longer evoke the pre-conscious electrical responses in the brain's visual center, rendering them blind for all intents and purposes: rather than their eyes seeing something, their minds becoming aware of it, but choosing to ignore it, their eyes see something, but the information does no reach their visual cortex, and they do not even subconsciously become aware of what their eyes saw. (Some can, later, regain their sight, because none of the nerves and infrastructure needed to see was ever actually damaged; it was just unplugged, disconnected, dissociated at the lowest level.)

To summarise, I think when discussing the images and idols, it might really be beneficial to keep in mind how different visualisation skills are between people, and how different the abilities of Average Jane Doe are compared to those of, say, East Asian monks, even though they arguably start from being the same quality babies 😊 Then, the idea the Ancient Greeks frequently had quite vivid and realistic images pop up effortlessly in their mind's eye, and they were simply looking for a reason for that, might no longer seem so absurd, and it would explain why this topic keeps being brought up alongside physical sight, using parallel vocabulary.

😎 Now, if y'all won't mind, I'll be going to casually punch through five layers of solid bricks whilst standing on hot coal without feeling any discomfort 😬

A less related example, but useful to make the point of just how different even simple, basic, and seemingly obvious things like shooting a bow and arrow were from how we think of them today, and how the evidence seems to have been there all along but nobody was ready to see it (until Lars Andersen entered the scene[1]).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BEG-ly9tQGk>

I think it's really okay to think outside the box a bit more when it comes to these images appearing in the minds of Epicurus or Lucretius. In an environment were non-atomism is the prevailing conceptualisation of the world, closely connecting visual sight with visualisation really stands to reason, and is, in fact, much more reasonable than most people think, even according to modern science (cf what I said above, plus: the brain heavily auto-corrects according to what it expects to see, as our eyes themselves aren't actually all that good).

[1] If you like (watching) archery, he re-invented and perfected-by-practise even more tricks that for centuries were considered "exaggerated myths" and "impossible" during the nine years after the video I linked to was made.

Post by “kochiekoch” of October 9, 2024 at 3:05 PM

Wow! 🤩 I'm just astonished by that archery video! The bowmen must have been incredibly deadly.

Who needs a machine gun when you have skills like that.

Post by “Julia” of October 10, 2024 at 1:51 AM

[Quote from kochiekoch](#)

The bowmen must have been incredibly deadly.

Especially since there was [no hiding from them](#).

Post by “Cassius” of October 10, 2024 at 9:08 PM

Wow that IS a great archery video and I agree a very good parallel to what we need to do in "thinking outside the box" by looking again at the historical record!