In several recent papers, David Glidden has been investigating a series of connected issues in Epicurus' epistemology, semantics, and philosophy of mind. One of the most challenging elements linking these papers is Glidden's warning that we should guard against the mistake of importing such things as "propositions, Cartesian concepts, and other so-called contents of consciousness" into the Epicureans' materialistic account of perception, concept formation, language, and psychology. His present paper is an attempt to extend this claim to cover Epicurus' theory of thought.

Glidden argues that, for Epicurus, thinking is some kind of material episode that can be explained without any recourse to language or propositions; nor does the Epicurean, on his view, feel the need to rely on any other system of representation, mental or otherwise, to account for the contents of our thoughts and their relation to the world. Strictly speaking, Epicurean materialism, he claims, empties "the mind entirely of its contents, leaving only the thinking organism, the physical world it thinks about, and nothing in between." For those grown accustomed to the idea that we cannot have beliefs or thoughts unless they have some sort of specifiable content, propositional or otherwise, Glidden's claim about Epicurus cannot help but seem rather puzzling. So I want to begin by trying to get somewhat clearer about his grounds for believing that the materialist, or better, what he calls the "true" or "genuine" materialist, is constrained to empty the mind of its contents and avoid all recourse to language and propositions. This basic assumption about

materialism structures much of his discussion of ancient evidence; thus, rather than trotting out some very well-known and disputed passages which to many, at least, have indicated that there are some fairly robust conceptual and linguistic commitments in Epicurean accounts of thought, it might be more useful on the present occasion to try to isolate some possible motivations for his holding that Epicurean materialism altogether dispenses with mental contents, propositions, and so forth. Accordingly, rather than focussing on his detailed evaluations of the doxographical reports, of Epicurean attempts to escape the eristic paradox, etc.—many of which are novel and certainly merit further discussion—I will try to set out what I take to be the basic assumptions guiding Glidden's arguments, although I must confess to still being puzzled by the overall epistemological and psychological project that he is ascribing to Epicurus.

In contrasting Epicurean materialism with that of the Stoics, Glidden claims that if propositions, which are incorporeal "representations," are included among the contents of minds, we run the risk of introducing a ghost into the machine, thus undermining any attempt to fashion a coherent, materialist psychology. The implication here is the Epicurean can avoid the pitfalls of dualism only by refraining from any appeal to propositional or even any intentional accounts of belief or thought. I worry, however, that this way of drawing the contrast is misleading, both as an account of the issues at stake and as an account of the differences between Epicurean and Stoic materialism and their respective psychologies. A brief look at the Stoics will show why. The Stoics believe that the objects of thought are propositions, not bodies per se. Moreover, like Frege, they hold that thinking stands in direct relation to these abstract, independent entities. I fail to see any reason for thinking, however, that cashing out beliefs in terms of such propositions necessarily threatens the Stoics' account with a form of psychological dualism. Nor does it seem right to suggest, as Glidden does, that propositional accounts of thinking will necessarily be forced in the direction of idealism. It surely is open to any materialist who