

Did Epicurus really oversell the power of science to diminish anxiety?

Post by “Little Rocker” of February 15, 2023 at 9:28 AM

Yeah, it sounds like she might be ceding too much ground to the common objection from academic philosophers that if Epicurus thinks we only study science for the sake of achieving the good, then that opens the empirical possibility that false scientific beliefs can be prudent, either because false beliefs more effectively diminish anxiety or make you safer from external threats. Epicurus cares both about diminishing anxiety and protecting himself against external threats, so they object that his commitment to truth is only skin deep.

I myself prefer to think that true belief diminishes anxiety, and I sort of suspect Epicurus might be happy to die rather than recant his science before the world. But I could be wrong--perhaps those beatific faces of the saints really do reflect greater psychological equanimity than I will ever achieve (see [this](#) study, admittedly quite vague, as usual, about 'happiness'), and perhaps Epicurus would recommend turning Galileo under the circumstances. I agree she probably should have argued in Epicurus' defense more forcefully.