

# Pros and Cons Of Considering Epicurean Philosophy To Be A "Religion"

Post by "Cassius" of March 25, 2024 at 7:02 AM

## [Quote from Peter Konstans](#)

It seems clear to me that Epicurus considered visions and hallucinations (and therefore the existence of the gods as the sources of those visions) to be true.

## [Quote from Peter Konstans](#)

The fundamental epistemological requirement is that every aisthesis should be true, i.e. that whatever seems to be the case should in some sense or other actually be the case.

As to post 119, virtually all of it, if I read it correctly, is dealt with by DeWitt's explanation that "true" has multiple meanings, in which "true to the facts" is only one meaning, while "reported honestly without injection of opinion" is the meaning often intended by Epicurus. If the Epicureans had in fact held that all sensations are "true to the fact" then Lucretius would not have spent so much time in Book Four dealing with the topic of illusions.

This issue is dealt with at length in DeWitt's Chapter 8, which includes the sentence: "To assume that Epicurus was unaware of these plain truths, as one must if belief in the infallibility of sensation is imputed to him, is absurd."

## Quote

The example of the tower will serve as a transition from the topic of ambiguity to that of confusion. When modern scholars seize upon the saying "[all sensations are true](#)," which appears nowhere in the extant writings of Epicurus, and stretch it to mean that all sensations are reliable or trustworthy or "that the senses cannot be deceived," they are confusing the concept of truth with the concept of value.<sup>17</sup> They overlook the fact that even a truthful witness may fall short of delivering the whole truth or may even give false evidence. The distant view of the square tower is quite true relative to the distance but it fails to reveal the whole truth about the tower.

To assume that Epicurus was unaware of these plain truths, as one must if belief in the infallibility of sensation is imputed to him, is absurd. It is because he was aware that the value of sensations, apart from their truth, varied all the way from totality to zero,

that he exhorted beginners "under all circumstances to watch the sensations and especially the immediate perceptions whether of the intellect or any of the criteria whatsoever." <sup>18</sup> Obviously, so far from thinking the sensations infallible, he was keenly aware of the possibility of error and drew sharp attention to the superior values of immediate sensations.