

Article by Zucca - Lucretius And The Epicurean View That All Perceptions Are True

Post by "Cassius" of February 2, 2022 at 10:47 AM

[Article from Academia.com](#) Probably lots of good research in it that will be helpful on this topic, but I haven't read it - only long enough to word search "DeWitt" and find no hits 😊

Here's the final paragraph:

Quote

Thus, Lucretius' account of APT and simulacra supports the following view: all sensations (dreams and hallucinations included) are truth-conducive (TCR), and their object is typically distal. Illusion about distal objects is never stricto sensu perceptual but depends on the informational integration by our doxastic activity; only in hallucinations and dreams is the object not a solid but the very floating simulacra (distal view plus disjunctivism), but this does not undermine truth-conduciveness, because the difference between solid and non-solid objects is phenomenologically appreciable, except when dreaming. However, even in this last circumstance it is not the case that dreamed contents are not truth-conducive, as it is their very truth-conduciveness that cannot be appreciated due to the inactivity of senses, so APT is safe and consistently grounds an objectivist epistemology.

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So you may want to read the article, or else read Chapter 8 in DeWitt as to the multiple meanings of "true" and consider which is more clear and useful. 😊

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2380-article-by-zucca-lucretius-and-the-epicurean-view-that-all-perceptions-are-true/?postID=16504#post16504>

Quote

While Epicurus was adamant in his determination to defend the validity of the sensations as being the means of direct contact between man and reality and as possessing precedence over reason, he exhibits no desire to defend the individual sensation. The fallacies of those who impute to him belief in the infallibility of sensation lie partly in their failure to observe the ambiguity of the word true and in their confusion of ~"truth" with "value."

It is not difficult to differentiate the various meanings of true and it is essential to right understanding. For example, when Epicurus declared that "the phantasms seen by the insane and in dreams are true," he meant that they were "real" and existed independently of the madman or the dreamer, because "they act as a stimulus and that which does not exist does not deliver a stimulus." 13 These phantasms, however, are not "true" in the sense that a sensation experienced by the waking observer is true. The dreamer may have a vision of a centaur but no centaurs exist in real life. If the waking man sees an ox, then the sensation is true because the stimulus is delivered by a living ox.

A still different meaning of true may be discerned when Epicurus denominates his system as "true philosophy." He means it is true in the sense that his Twelve Elementary Principles are true or in the sense that the modern scientist believes the accepted calculation of the speed of light to be true. This may be called absolute truth, if there is such a thing.

It remains to speak of the relatively true. The views of a tower at various distances may be cited as examples. Each is true relative to the distance; its value as evidence of the facts is another matter. This distinction was no novelty to the ancients; Sextus Empiricus sets it forth at some length in a discussion of Epicureanism.

Also worthy of mention is the sensation which is optically true but false to the facts. An example much brandished by the skeptics was the bent image of the oar immersed in the water. 15 Epicurus made logical provision for this difficulty: "Of two sensations the one cannot refute the other, 16 because we give attention to all sensations." This statement alone would acquit him of belief in the infallibility of sensation, because it is distinctly implied that some ~sensations are employed to correct others.

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. 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."

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, When once these ambiguities and confusions have been discerned and eliminated, it is possible to state the teaching of Epicurus with some of that precision by which he set high store. In the meaning of the Canon, then, a sensation is an *aisthesis*. All such sensations may possess value; otherwise there would be no sense in saying. "We pay attention to all sensations." Their values. however. range all the way from totality to zero. The value is total only when the sensation is immediate.

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Of course Zucca is written for a professional audience so I am sure *they* will enjoy the jargon employed in the paper.