

# Keen Reasoning Based on the Evidence of the Senses

Post by "Cassius" of November 28, 2022 at 11:41 PM

It's interesting to think about what terms to talk in. When Don says:

## [Quote from Don](#)

Are we talking about an actual place of fire and brimstone inhabited by condemned souls existing after death in the Christian mythology?

I'd have to say that I have no reason to believe such a "place" exists in the universe other than in the context of Christian mythology. My experience of the universe demonstrates to me - to high degree of confidence - that there is no supernatural overlord - either benevolent or malicious - dealing out punishment. My experience also demonstrates to me that I am no more than my physical parts working in unison and out of that comes my consciousness. When I die, and my physical parts dissolve back into atoms and void, there's not going to be any thing - there will be no thing - which would or could be sent to a place like this Christian figment of the imagination.

.... most reasonable people (98%?) are going to interpret that as as clear answer, and they are going to say to themselves and to each other (when talking about Don).... "Don is certain hell does not exist / Don takes the position that he knows that hell does not exist."

We as people sensitive to philosophical niceties shy away from terms like "know" and "are certain" because we don't like the philosophical sparring that goes along with those terms in philosophical contexts, But I would wager that most of the world does not think like that. And borrowing the terminology from Seneca they are looking to us for answers that they can understand, not riddles where we seem like we are evading giving a direct answer for reasons they cannot understand.

I think that's where Epicurus was willing to go considerably further than people in modern philosophical discussions are willing to go. He was standing up to Pyrrho and Socrates and he was willing to directly assert that it is possible to have confidence in knowledge and to say that indeed there are things that you "know" to be true -- even though you haven't been there or seen it for yourself. (When we think Epicurean confidence in atoms - which the Epicureans never saw or touched - it's kind of funny to be even having this discussion about taking firm positions on things we can't sense directly. Of course Epicureans were confident about things they had never experienced - and could never experience - except through indirect evidence!)

We're talking here in this thread in the abstract, and not about particular conversations with particular people. The context is going to determine the best wording. But the point of this thread, and the real point of the epicurean manner of argument it seems to me, is that it is

possible to have confidence in the core conclusions of Epicurus and for Epicureans to say that they "know" that pleasure and pain are the ultimate guides, that there is no life after death, etc. etc. And in the proper context, even to say to ourselves or to other people that we are "certain" of them.