

Can the senses be wrong?

Post by “Garden Dweller” of October 6, 2019 at 12:48 PM

One of the foundations of Epicurus teachings is that our understanding of nature comes through our senses.

In order to find happiness, one must live in accord with laws of nature.

Our senses are the most direct connection with the natural world, far more direct than our understanding and learning about the natural world that we receive through communication with others.

Our intellect provides us with a response to what we sense in the natural world, which is pleasure, pain, or indifference.

Epicurus teaches that we should build an ethical framework on how to live by avoiding pain and seeking pleasure.

The foundation of this ethical framework is our sensory perception.

Can our senses be wrong? Could they be disturbed, modified or distorted in some way?

Some examples of ways that are senses are disturbed are intoxication or mental illness. Humans may also be affected by psychological methods (hypnosis) or by application of electrical charges to the nervous system.

Since some persons do not have robust and reliable use of their senses, does this mean that those people are not able to use Epicurean techniques to develop an ethical framework?

Should the student of Epicurus carefully guard against anything that would disturb, modify or distort one's senses and sensory observation of the natural world?