

# Can the senses be wrong?

Post by "Cassius" of October 6, 2019 at 4:54 PM

Garden Dweller I also want to cover this by apologizing in advance if you read any sense of disapproval ("You should have read the DeWitt book already!!!) in my comment 😊

By no means is DeWitt the only writer worth reading, and I am acutely aware that most people who come across Epicurus today by means of recent / modern commentaries are not going to have heard of DeWitt, because it is the current fashion to omit him, treat him as if he never existed, and mention him only in a demeaning manner if at all. For example if your primary exposure to Epicurus is to read the Okeefe / Cambridge / Warren / Catherine Wilson / Voula Tsouna material you are probably never even going to know DeWitt's book exists.

DeWitt is by no means the most brilliant writer who ever lived, but if and when you do find the time to read him I think you will understand the enthusiasm that some of us have for him. DeWitt was a very competent scholar but what he brings to the table is a sweeping approach that first and foremost grounds you in what Epicurus was trying to teach without a lot of condescending commentary, or over-focus on how some particular doctrine ('absence of pain' I am looking at you) may seem "to be a lot like Stoicism" or that "Epicurus was an anti-commercialist ascetic just like we should be," and "really and truly if the Stoics and Epicureans had just listened to each other they would have been best pals," etc etc etc.

DeWitt takes the material in a logical manner and organizes it pretty much (in my view) as you would expect an ancient Epicurean would have organized it. And on issues which we find difficult today, such as "[all sensations are true](#)," or the meaning of the "greatest good" argument, DeWitt gives explanations that are sympathetic to Epicurus and come together into a consistent whole.

Many of us here got our start in Epicurus through DeWitt, and I don't think that is an accident. If you read DeWitt you see the power and logic of the entire system. If you read most of the others, you get a piecemeal approach that ends up making Epicurus look like a footnote to Stoicism or to Plato and you're generally left wondering why anyone would worry about studying Epicurus.

DeWitt may not be the sage of the ages, but in my view, and in many cases, DeWitt is the key to awakening a real interest in what Epicurus was all about and untangling the controversies. And I know no better way to get people off on the right track, and to "inoculate" them from and against the modern pseudo-Stoic and pseudo-Epicurean "heresies" than to recommend that, if possible, they start off reading DeWitt first. And if they have already started elsewhere, but still have an interest and have not been totally turned off, the best antidote is to go back and find a copy of EAHP.