

# Discussion of the Society of Epicurus' 20 Tenets of 12/21/19

Post by "Cassius" of January 7, 2020 at 8:58 AM

So that this allegation by Cicero from "[On the Nature of the Gods](#)" is not a "bug" in Epicurean philosophy - it's a "feature." It's because of what Epicurus would call an incorrect philosophical position that Cicero thinks he needs to attack in this way. Cicero was ultimately in bed with the skeptics such as Plato (which as Dewitt says Epicurus considered Plato to be) and denying the possibility of confidence in knowledge based on the senses:

Quote

Hereupon Velleius began, **in the confident manner (I need not say) that is customary with Epicureans, afraid of nothing so much as lest he should appear to have doubts about anything. One would have supposed he had just come down from the assembly of the gods in the intermundane spaces of Epicurus!** "I am not going to expound to you doctrines that are mere baseless figments of the imagination, such as the artisan deity and world-builder of Plato's *Timaeus*, or that old hag of a fortuneteller the *Pronoia* (which, we may render 'Providence') of the Stoics; nor yet a world endowed with a mind and senses of its own, a spherical, rotatory god of burning fire; these are the marvels and monstrosities of philosophers who do not reason but dream.

EDIT: Stated another way, Cicero and Hitchens are implying that you can never "know" anything beyond your own lifetime based on the information provided by the senses. He is saying that you MUST either (1) intellectually disarm yourself to become a jellyfish and waffle through life, or (2) look to some other source of authority beyond the senses. So the real battlefield here is over the meaning of "to know."

And we all know (or should know) that there are LOTS of people who are happy to make these arguments against confidence in knowledge based on the senses -- because they will usher you directly into the waiting arms of religion, idealism, etc. Some people make these arguments innocently, but I don't think the people who are out there promoting them are innocent or mistaken. Someone who was innocently a skeptical jellyfish would be content to waffle around in its own corner of the ocean being a jellyfish rather than being a crusader against people who think that it is rational to have confidence in conclusions that are strongly consistent with the available evidence.

Militant jellyfishism is what we see everywhere, and it's like Diogenes of Oinoanda lamented that he saw people around him being captured by error is if like sheep.

#### Quote

Having already reached the sunset of my life (being almost on the verge of departure from the world on account of old age), I wanted, before being overtaken by death, to compose a [fine] anthem [to celebrate the] fullness [of pleasure] and so to help now those who are well-constituted. Now, if only one person or two or three or four or five or six or any larger number you choose, sir, provided that it is not very large, were in a bad predicament, I should address them individually and do all in my power to give them the best advice. **But, as I have said before, the majority of people suffer from a common disease, as in a plague, with their false notions about things, and their number is increasing (for in mutual emulation they catch the disease from one another, like sheep)**