

Can the senses be wrong?

Post by "Don" of August 9, 2020 at 7:54 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Quote

[Garden Dweller](#) : 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?

Let's not skip over this last question, either, as I think this is an EMPHATIC yes! Now I am all in favor of painkilling drugs when needed, but the senses are vital to us, and efforts to dull them in general (which is essentially what the Stoics advocate) are exactly the wrong direction. Not to mention to problems that alcohol and other mind-altering drugs can lead to. We certainly aren't talking being Puritans, but I think it is pretty clear that overindulgence in mind-altering substances can be very harmful to our overall ability to lead a life of pleasure.

I think we have to be careful here. As [Cassius](#) says we're not Puritans. [DL Lives X.119](#) says that "Even when drunk, the wise one will not talk nonsense or act silly." (my own translation of "οὐδὲ μὴν ληρήσειν ἐν μέθῃ"). This was from Epicurus's Symposium. So I think it's important to remember there is no Epicurean prohibition against drinking "strong drink" as far as we know, but, like all actions, one assesses the resulting pleasure and pain involved in moderate drinking vs overindulgence. And Epicurus reminds us to not act foolish.