

A TED Talk on How The Mind Assembles What We Perceive

Post by "Cassius" of December 26, 2018 at 8:06 PM

Thanks to [JAWS](#) for finding and posting this video. I agree with her that most of the discussion is very consistent with Epicurean theory.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyu7v7nWzfo&fbclid=IwAR10ce-cYQR0uASjsqdznlBmFntHx1Pb8toQ5SzWNdq8eVwn2uxXjBqyGU>

Notes:

- My main concern is that his use of the term "hallucinate" has a negative connotation. If the point is that the brain "assembles" our conscious reality from the perceptions provided by the senses, then on the face of it I would think that would agree. No doubt we don't "create reality" in the sense that our minds don't create rocks and trees, but certainly our brains do assemble our awareness of them.... (?)'

- "instead of perception depending largely on signals coming into the brain from the outside world, it depends at least, if not more, on perceptual predictions flowing in the opposite direction...." The world we experience comes as much from the inside out, as outside in..... ---- Sounds like related to anticipations to me!


- The final conclusion at the very end is great, plus I think Epicurus would fully agree with what he said at 15:44 to the effect that we can't be uploaded to AI - ****just making things smarter does not make them sentient****"

- The only thing I DISAGREE with is his insistence on using the word "hallucination." I think that creates the negative inference that our lives are not worth worrying about since we are really just "hallucinating" anyway. I think a lot of people, especially the most vulnerable to depression, will hear that kind of talk in terms of the definition I clipped below - as if nothing in the world exists outside their minds.

Hallucinations and hearing
voices
Medical condition

Hallucinations are where someone sees, hears, smells, tastes or feels things that don't exist outside their mind.

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I agree that almost everything in this talk is consistent with Epicurus, and most all of it also is derived from easy to observe tests that Epicurus himself could have done in his garden. So Epicurus himself could well have been thinking exactly along these lines - that our minds assemble the senses into the ongoing movie in our minds that is our self and our lives.

But Epicurus was always careful to stress how important this movie is to us, that life is desirable, that we don't have time to waste, and that we should do all we can to say at the end of our life that we have lived well. That's still the emphasis that needs to be coupled with discussions like this.

Final general comment: It's always seemed to me that what can get lost in epistemology discussions is the **importance** of getting it right. The TED talk was - to me - was right on with every technical conclusion that he was making, but he still insisted on calling the whole thing an "hallucination." Whenever I hear someone talk like that, it makes me think that no matter how correct he may be on the details, he's essentially a sad hopeless kind of guy who is really "digging" the technical processes because in the end he doesn't think that his own life is worth very much. What I hear is a chain that goes from "everything's a hallucination" straight to "so nothing really matters" --- but I think that's the furthest thing from the truth. Everything that we experience may in fact be a movie assembled in our minds, but that doesn't mean that the people and things outside us don't exist, and it doesn't mean that we totally create our own reality. It means this is the way Nature made us and we darn well better make the best use of our time because we aren't going to have any more after we are dead!