

Sources For Text and Commentary on Philebus - The Jowett Edition

Post by "Cassius" of January 9, 2022 at 9:29 PM

The plan is complicated, or rather, perhaps, the want of plan renders the progress of the dialogue difficult to follow. A few leading ideas seem to emerge: the relation of the one and many, the four original elements, the kinds of pleasure, the kinds of knowledge, the scale of goods. These are only partially connected with one another. The dialogue is not rightly entitled 'Concerning pleasure' or 'Concerning good,' but should rather be described as treating of the relations of pleasure and knowledge, after they have been duly analyzed, to the good. (1) The question is asked, whether pleasure or wisdom is the chief good, or some nature higher than either; and if the latter, how pleasure and wisdom are related to this higher good. (2) Before we can reply with exactness, we must know the kinds of pleasure and the kinds of knowledge. (3) But still we may affirm generally, that the combined life of pleasure and wisdom or knowledge has more of the character of the good than either of them when isolated. (4) To determine which of them partakes most of the higher nature, we must know under which of the four unities or elements they respectively fall. These are, first, the infinite; secondly, the finite; thirdly, the union of the two; fourthly, the cause of the union. Pleasure is of the first, wisdom or knowledge of the third class, while reason or mind is akin to the fourth or highest.

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elp:

(5) Pleasures are of two kinds, the mixed and unmixed. Of mixed pleasures there are three classes—(a) those in which both the pleasures and pains are corporeal, as in eating and hunger ; (β) those in which there is a pain of the body and pleasure of the mind, as when you are hungry and are looking forward to a feast ; (γ) those in which the pleasure and pain are both mental. Of unmixed pleasures there are four kinds : those of sight, hearing, smell, knowledge.

The one and the many.

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(6) The sciences are likewise divided into two classes, theoretical and productive : of the latter, one part is pure, the other impure. The pure part consists of arithmetic, mensuration, and weighing. Arts like carpentering, which have an exact measure, are to be regarded as higher than music, which for the most part is mere guess-work. But there is also a higher arithmetic, and a higher mensuration, which is exclusively theoretical ; and a dialectical science, which is higher still and the truest and purest knowledge.

Philebus.

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TION.

(7) We are now able to determine the composition of the perfect life. First, we admit the pure pleasures and the pure sciences ; secondly, the impure sciences, but not the impure pleasures. We have next to discover what element of goodness is contained in this mixture. There are three criteria of goodness—beauty, symmetry, truth. These are clearly more akin to reason than to pleasure, and will enable us to fix the places of both of them in the scale of good. First in the scale is measure ; the second place is assigned to symmetry ; the third, to reason and wisdom ; the fourth, to knowledge and true opinion ; the fifth, to pure pleasures ; and here the Muse says ‘ Enough.’