

Sources For Text and Commentary on Philebus - The Jowett Edition

Post by "Cassius" of January 9, 2022 at 10:10 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

doesn't even seem relevant to me!

Plato would probably sniff and say that's because you're not "golden" 😊

[Quote from Don](#)

Where's the honey on the rim of this cup of wormwood?

That one might be easy: the honey is in the pleasure you will take in looking down at the poor wandering souls who are confused and listless, and knowing (once you see through Plato) that you have the medicine that will help them. Plus of course you will have the pleasure of actually helping them.

More precisely, I will argue (but am not yet articulate enough to be convincing) that this knowledge of seeing through Plato will allow you to treat a particularly important subset of the people who are confused and listless: those who have read Epicurus but think they should pursue "tranquility" rather than "pleasure."

And of course my argument there is that once you see a very practical and important reason for Epicurus to have been concerned about arguing over whether "pleasure has a limit," you'll begin to entertain that the reason PD3, and portions of the Letter to Menoeceus, are written the way they are is to refute Plato, not to suggest that tranquility is something separate and higher than pleasure, as so many people (trying to apply their Buddhism and Stoicism) want to interpret it.

At that point I think you'll begin to entertain that:

- (1) PD1 is mainly an antidote to the contention that there are supernatural gods;
- (2) PD2 is mainly an antidote to the contention that there is life after death; and then in parallel
- (3) PD3 and PD4 are mainly antidotes to Platonic arguments that pleasure cannot be the goal of life.

Having 'pleasure is the goal of life' somewhere near the top of the [principal doctrines](#) is pretty important to making sense of them. To me, the realization that these are refutations of Plato

makes them much easier to understand and less likely to be twisted into some kind of "absence of pain as an end in itself" rabbit hole. And I am not happy to admit the "to me" part. I think that this seems significant "to me" and to others who are probably like me, is that we have previously been impressed with the Platonic/Stoic position that "logic" must rule, and we are looking for a "logical" solution to the trap that Plato has set with his arguments. My only consolation is that I think that a lot of Epicurus' students were that way too, which is the best explanation for why he wrote his material the way he did. Approaching the dispute the way he did, Epicurus is able to slap the "logic-seekers" in the face with their own logic. "Pleasure DOES have a limit, you dolts! Why did you and Protarchus and [Philebus](#)' boys ever admit to Plato that it didn't!"

Note: I am personally still unclear where [Philebus](#) himself ended up, and that's why I reference "to take the better part." Philebus, who has withdrawn from the argument, is several times brought back again (pp. 18, 19, 22, 28), that he may support pleasure, of which he remains to the end the uncompromising advocate. On the other hand, the youthful group of listeners by whom he is surrounded, 'Philebus' boys' as they are termed, whose presence is several times intimated (16 A, B, 19 D, 67 B), are described as all of them at last convinced by the arguments of Socrates. They bear a very faded resemblance to the interested audiences of the Charmides, Lysis, or Protagoras.