

Plato's Timaeus vs. On Nature, Book 14

Post by "Cassius" of January 29, 2025 at 7:50 AM

It sure would but Don that link doesn't work for me.

I like Perseus for a lot of reasons but I also like having my own standard PDF for security reasons. It bothers me that the full Jowett available more easily on Archive.org. I thought it was in the past (?) Also, the text in the old editions is often annotated in creative ways. Actually I don't know what Jowett's reputation really is. I recall my college professor sort of joking about him as the authority but I don't know if that's true or not, or if Jowett has a reputation for being unjustifiably opinionated.

I do see that Jowett's editions have very very long introductory summaries which might be useful in themselves, especially for word searching.

Benjamin Jowett (1817–1893) is one of the most well-known translators of Plato into English. His translations, first published in the late 19th century, were widely influential and helped popularize Plato's works among English-speaking audiences. However, his reputation as a translator is mixed.

Chatgpt:

Strengths of Jowett's Translation:

1. **Elegance and Readability:** Jowett's translations are often praised for their literary quality. He sought to render Plato's dialogues in smooth, flowing English that was accessible to a broad readership.
2. **Influence on Classical Studies:** His work played a crucial role in shaping the study of Plato in the English-speaking world. Many generations of students and scholars first encountered Plato through Jowett's translations.
3. **Extensive Commentary:** Jowett's introductions and notes provided valuable philosophical and historical context, making his editions useful for both students and general readers.

Criticisms of Jowett's Translation:

1. **Paraphrasing and Interpretation:** Jowett often paraphrased rather than strictly translating Plato's Greek. He sometimes imposed his own interpretations, which may not always align with the original text.
2. **Moral and Victorian Bias:** His translations reflect the moral and intellectual climate of Victorian England. Some scholars argue that he sanitized or altered certain passages to

conform to 19th-century sensibilities, particularly regarding issues like sexuality and religion.

3. **Lack of Precision:** Compared to more modern translations, Jowett's work can be imprecise, particularly in capturing the nuances of Plato's philosophical arguments.

Modern Alternatives:

While Jowett's translations remain influential and readable, many scholars prefer more recent translations that strive for greater accuracy and fidelity to the Greek text. Translations by scholars such as Thomas G. West, G. M. A. Grube, C. D. C. Reeve, and John M. Cooper (who edited *Plato: Complete Works*) are often recommended for academic study.

In summary, Jowett's translations are valuable for their literary quality and historical significance, but they should be read with awareness of their interpretative nature and potential biases.