

The Dangers of Misdirected Increase of Knowledge

Post by "Cassius" of October 9, 2020 at 11:16 PM

Tonight I read Phaedo for the first time and posted some reaction [here](#).

It seems to me that the relation between Phaedo and the thread here is that the existence of these Platonic/Socratic arguments is a large part of the reason why some issues that are otherwise a total waste of time, and unproductive to pursue, must be pursued. If you are unlucky enough to get taught these Platonic arguments in school, or run into them in some other form in another part of life, you have to be able to respond to them, otherwise they will immobilize you (or at least, many people) with fear and uncertainty and doubt. And I just don't think it's effective in many cases to simply take the position of saying "don't worry about it" and use arguments like "the burden of proof is on the proponent" or "speculation is not a valid form of reasoning" such as someone like Frances Wright might argue. Some people in some situations might be able to get away with that, and if so then the result is the proof of their success, but in my experience personally, these arguments are everywhere, and unless they are met they lead to skepticism, nihilism, and even anti-intellectualism. They are just so corrosive that ignoring them is unlikely to work in most cases. (And Socrates even includes in Phaedo just such a warning, but he includes it presumably so that his listeners won't seek refuge in them, but will simply give in to his conclusions based on his dialectical logic!)