

“WE GOT BEEF! (A Disembowelment of the Dialectic...)”

Post by “Eikadistes” of January 20, 2026 at 12:06 AM

Happy Eikas! I hope everyone is keeping warm.

I just wanted to share a reflection I published through the Society of Friends of Epicurus that reviews the dialectic, rhetoric, oratory, and political propoganda, “[...A Disembowelment of the Dialectic, Politics, and Other Organs of Bullshit](#)”. It’s partly an analysis of Philódēmos’ work *On Rhetoric*, and partly an honest attempt to manage my feelings about civics right now.

I personally struggle to cope with other peoples’ politics (especially in my area). The noise of seedy narratives is **way** too loud right now, and difficult to avoid, whether its bumper stickers or my LinkedIn feed, so I wanted to see how my friends in the ancient world dealt with manipulative rhetoric, weak dialecticians, shallow orators, and self-serving politicians. Anyway, I managed to finish the article without naming any names or projecting my own, partisan frustrations, so I’ll call it a win. *...though, I do mention the Chewbacca Defense (about which, I am sure, Philódēmos would have had a lot to say...)*.

[I also started a Twentiers Discord server](#) to consolidate the resources I share on [TWENTIERS.COM](#)! Both friends and Epicureans alike are invited to pay our digital Garden a visit. (Please at least help us water Diódōros the Garden Tree. He’s a thirsty boy.)

Post by “Cassius” of January 20, 2026 at 7:25 AM

Oh this is excellent Ekiadistes thank you!

As to these first comments let me say:

1 - It's a long article.

2 - It's a difficult subject.

3 - It examines Philodemus' "On Rhetoric" which I find very difficult to process despite it existing in fairly well preserved form.

4 - Since I haven't really digested Philodemus on this topic I can't say that I've processed very well what Eikiadistes says here either.

However I will say that I don't think at least on first glance that it gets anywhere near violating our "No Politics" rule.

Seems to me this is a topic that deserves much more attention over time so I'll probably move it to some subforum of "Ethics" where we can eventually begin to deal with whatever implications the ancients found to be so interesting in this topic of "Rhetoric."

Post by "Cassius" of January 20, 2026 at 7:32 AM

For the time being we'll move this to "On Rhetoric" because on first read that seems to me to be the focus of much/most of it.

Thanks again Eikadistes for writing so much about this. Maybe this will help in the "jelling" of exactly what it is that Philodemus' "On Rhetoric" is all about.

I think we have more of a fix on "Dialectic" being damaging because of it being an effort to allege that truth can be determined separately from the senses, just by playing word games and bouncing words off each other.

I don't think I can summarize what is meant by "Rhetoric" (or even whether "all rhetoric is bad(?)" nearly so easily. On that latter point, it seems Epicurus is pretty negative toward "dialectic" across the board (correct? maybe not?).

Is Epicurus also so negative about most/all aspects of "rhetoric?" Or is there "good/useful rhetoric" and "bad/destructive rhetoric?"

Post by "Cassius" of January 20, 2026 at 7:37 AM

One more thought / question on this point:

If we were to add a separate subforum on "Rhetoric" at some point (and not just under Philodemus) would that be clearly more appropriate for the "Ethics" section, or is it possible that it should be considered under "Canonic?"

That in itself is possibly an interesting discussion. Is part of the problem with "rhetoric" that it is being asserted to be a standard of truth? Or is it clearly and distinctly an issue of Ethics/Politics?

Post by “Eikadistes” of January 20, 2026 at 9:09 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

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I think I'd put it with "Rhetoric" because I break down some technical vocabulary that Philódēmos employs. It could be both: I portray politics as a sort of antagonist to the truth of sensation.

Post by “Eikadistes” of January 21, 2026 at 3:35 PM

While I'm at it, I recommend another essay with a similar tone on a similar topic, "[On Bullshit](#)" by Dr. Harry Frankfurt from Princeton University. You can find it [here](#).

Post by “Matteng” of January 22, 2026 at 1:20 PM

@Eikadistes

Great work, especially how you turn topics for which Epicureans are often criticized and are seen as weaknesses in strengths:

-the arts against what really matters

- political engagement vs civic engagement and against manipulation

You go very deep, I also like Philodemus he is for me what for the Stoics is Seneca

Have you ever written an essay on Stoicism vs. Epicurean Philosophy?

I wish I could find such an essay from someone like you with your knowledge and depth ☐☐