

# Dialectics and Hypothetical Questions

Post by "Cassius" of January 18, 2021 at 7:05 PM

We have been discussing hypothetical questions in the [PD10](#) thread, but I think this topic deserves a thread of its own in the end, for the additional reason that I think it is probably related to the term "dialectics." It seems to me that hypotheticals is what Socrates/Plato were dealing in extensively, and I see several sentences in Diogenes Laertius that are translated variously as "dialectics" or "logic" - Does anyone know which term is better and if so why they are interchanged? By no means are the two issues the same (Dialectics and Hypothetical Questions) but I suspect both involve very similar issues:

Again there was Timocrates, the brother of Metrodorus, who was his disciple and then left the school. He in the book entitled *Merriment* asserts that Epicurus vomited twice a day from over-indulgence, and goes on to say that he himself had much ado to escape from those notorious midnight philosophizings and the confraternity with all its secrets; **7**, further, that Epicurus's acquaintance with philosophy was small and his acquaintance with life even smaller; that his bodily health was pitiful,<sup>[12]</sup> so much so that for many years he was unable to rise from his chair; and that he spent a whole mina daily on his table, as he himself says in his letter to Leontion and in that to the philosophers at Mitylene. Also that among other courtesans who consorted with him and Metrodorus were Mammarion and Hedra and Erotion and Nikidion. He alleges too that in his thirty-seven books *On Nature* Epicurus uses much repetition and writes largely in sheer opposition to others, especially to Nausiphanes, and here are his own words: "Nay, let them go hang; for, when labouring with an idea, he too had the sophist's off-hand boast-fulness like many another servile soul"; **8**, besides, he himself in his letters says of Nausiphanes: "This so maddened him that he abused me and called me pedagogue." Epicurus used to call this Nausiphanes jelly-fish,<sup>[13]</sup> an illiterate, a fraud, and a trollop; Plato's school he called "the toadies of Dionysius," their master himself the "golden" Plato,<sup>[14]</sup> and Aristotle a profligate, who after devouring his patrimony took to soldiering and selling drugs; Protagoras a pack-carrier and the scribe of Democritus and village schoolmaster; Heraclitus a muddler,<sup>[15]</sup> Democritus Lerocritus (the nonsense-monger); and Antidorus Sannidorus (fawning gift-bearer); the Cynics foes of Greece; the Dialecticians despoilers; and Pyrrho an ignorant boor.

#### 24. Metrodorus wrote the following works:

- Against the Physicians, in three books.
- Of Sensations.
- Against Timocrates.
- Of Magnanimity.
- Of Epicurus's Weak Health.
- Against the Dialecticians.
- Against the Sophists, in nine books.
- The Way to Wisdom.
- Of Change.
- Of Wealth.
- In Criticism of Democritus.
- Of Noble Birth.

Metrodorus was a philosopher and a citizen of

31. They reject dialectic as superfluous; holding that in their inquiries the physicists should be content to employ the ordinary terms for things.<sup>[43]</sup> Now in *The Canon* Epicurus affirms that our sensations and preconceptions and our feelings are the standards of truth; the Epicureans generally make perceptions of mental presentations<sup>[44]</sup> to be also standards. His own statements are also to be found in the *Summary* addressed to Herodotus and in the *Sovran Maxims*. Every sensation, he says, is devoid of reason and incapable of memory; for neither is it self-caused nor, regarded as having an external cause, can it add anything thereto or take anything therefrom. 32. Nor is there anything which can refute sensations or convict them of error: one sensation cannot convict another and kindred sensation, for they are equally valid; nor can one sensation refute another which is not kindred but heterogeneous, for the objects which the two senses judge are not the same;<sup>[45]</sup> nor again can reason refute them, for reason is wholly dependent on sensation; nor can one sense refute another, since we pay equal heed to all. And the reality of separate perceptions guarantees<sup>[46]</sup> the truth of our senses. But seeing and hearing are just as real as feeling pain. Hence it is from plain facts that we must start when we draw inferences about the unknown.<sup>[47]</sup> For all our notions are derived from perceptions, either by actual contact or by analogy, or resemblance, or composition, with some slight aid from reasoning. And the objects presented to mad-men<sup>[48]</sup> and to people in dreams are true, for they produce effects - i.e. movements in the mind - which that which is unreal never does.