

Was There For Socrates a Particular Greek God of Reason / Rationality / Or Specifically "Wisdom"?

Post by "Cassius" of April 17, 2021 at 9:19 AM

This morning I was thinking about the passages excerpted below from [Philebus](#), especially the last one I have underlined. In these passages, Plato has Socrates talking as if the battle of identifying the greatest good was between specific patron gods and goddesses. In these passages the patron god(dess) of pleasure is clearly Aphrodite / Venus, and we can see that identification carried on by the Epicureans at least through Lucretius.

However I am unclear as to who stands as the patron god for Socrates' position, especially if we conclude that Socrates' position comes down to "reason" or "rationality" or "wisdom" or "logic."

Was there a particular Greek god who symbolized those characteristics distinctly more than any other? If not, does the absence of such a distinctive figure play into why Socrates talked about being influenced by his "daemon" rather than being talked to by a particular god?

I ask this question in the context of triangulating on the Epicureans' use of the very broad term "Pleasure" as the goal of life without spending a lot of time identifying the particular pleasures being referenced. It seems to me that part of this terminology is that Epicurus was responding to the ongoing philosophic debates that distilled the ultimate goals down into high-level concepts such as "virtue" or "the good" or "reason" or "wisdom." Given a culture in which people were being asked to choose their allegiance among and between such high-level words, then "pleasure" seems to correspond nicely to that level of discussion. So therefore in that context, I am wondering if in identifying pleasure with Venus/Aphrodite that the Epicureans were facing one or more corresponding patron god(s) from the Academy / Peripatetics / or later, the Stoics.

So at this time the specific question is: Was there a patron god or goddess identified with Socrates' position, from which we can infer the same as to Plato? If that answer is somewhere else in [Philebus](#) I seem to be overlooking it.

Here are the excerpts from [Philebus](#):

Quote

SOCRATES: Then let us begin with the goddess herself, of whom [Philebus](#) says that she is called Aphrodite, but that her real name is Pleasure.

PROTARCHUS: Very good.

SOCRATES: The awe which I always feel, Protarchus, about the names of the gods is more than human—it exceeds all other fears. And now I would not sin against Aphrodite by naming her amiss; let her be called what she pleases. But Pleasure I know to be manifold, and with her, as I was just now saying, we must begin, and consider what her nature is. She has one name, and therefore you would imagine that she is one; and yet surely she takes the most varied and even unlike forms. For do we not say that the intemperate has pleasure, and that the temperate has pleasure in his very temperance,—that the fool is pleased when he is full of foolish fancies and hopes, and that the wise man has pleasure in his wisdom? and how foolish would any one be who affirmed that all these opposite pleasures are severally alike!

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SOCRATES: And now have I not sufficiently shown that [Philebus](#)' goddess is not to be regarded as identical with the good?

[PHILEBUS](#): Neither is your 'mind' the good, Socrates, for that will be open to the same objections.

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SOCRATES: Nor would pain, [Philebus](#), be perfectly evil. And therefore the infinite cannot be that element which imparts to pleasure some degree of good. But now—admitting, if you like, that pleasure is of the nature of the infinite—in which of the aforesaid classes, O Protarchus and [Philebus](#), can we without irreverence place wisdom and knowledge and mind? And let us be careful, for I think that the danger will be very serious if we err on this point.

[PHILEBUS](#): You magnify, Socrates, the importance of your favourite god.

SOCRATES: And you, my friend, are also magnifying your favourite goddess; but still I must beg you to answer the question.

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