

How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain by Lisa Feldman Barrett

Post by "Cassius" of April 19, 2021 at 4:43 PM

To state one more way, this is the "[Philebus](#)" issue. People who have fallen into the trap of the Academy or the Stoa or even the Peripatetics cannot escape the trap laid by Socrates in [Philebus](#) because they are in thrall to "logic." As such, they cannot think their way out of the implications of Socrates' questions, which boil down to the requirement that the greatest good must be describable in absolute terms as having a "limit." They presume that more pleasure is always better, so they are forced to admit that pleasure has no limit, and thereby (according to the premises they have accepted) cannot be the greatest good.

Describing the limit of pleasure as the absence of pain has little if any "practical" appeal (real people always want to know which pleasures and which pains) but it is the precise answer to the logic trap which [Philebus](#) could not escape.

I think stating the issue this way is reasonably clear, but I do not think it is possible to appreciate the significance of this without reading [Philebus](#) for oneself and seeing the trap that was laid, and how Epicurus offers the way out.

Back in Athens most people would know the story of [Philebus](#). Today very few do, so pushing this argument forward is going to require laying the foundation through [Philebus](#). The same argument appears in Seneca so the Epicurean remedy can also be illustrated there, but of course Seneca long post dated Epicurus, so the real key is [Philebus](#), which is focused on the issue of Pleasure.