

# Issues In The Meaning And Definition of Logic

Post by “Don” of August 25, 2021 at 10:52 PM

Here's one section of DeWitt that addresses what I remembered about Socrates and about dialectic. Interestingly, logic doesn't appear in the index to Epicurus and His Philosophy:

## Quote

As for the third branch of Platonic studies, dialectic, the evidence for Epicurus' familiarity with it is the express and almost total rejection of it. The grounds of this rejection were both ethical and intellectual. It is on record that he condemned the irony of Socrates.<sup>50</sup> It is not difficult to discern the reasons for this. The pretence of ignorance is a form of dishonesty and inconsistent with that absolute frankness (*parresia*) by which Epicurus set great store, as will be shown under the head of the New Virtues. Yet even assuming that Socrates felt himself to be genuinely ignorant of the nature of piety or justice, he was deliberately concealing his mastery of a devastating skill in debate, which could only result in the humiliation of the hapless interlocutor in the presence of witnesses. This was totally opposed to that disinterested concern (*kedemonia*) for the good of the instructed which was required of the Epicurean teacher. If Cicero disagreed with Epicurus about the condemnation of irony, this was but natural, because, whether as trial lawyer or political orator, the ability to make his victim writhe under mental punishment was a precious part of his equipment. In the judgment of Epicurus the Second Philippic of Cicero and the speech of Demosthenes On the Crown would have seemed to represent oratory at its ethical worst, whether because of cruelty of intention on the part of the speakers or the love of havoc on the part of the listeners. A second evil of dialectic was the tendency to become eristic and argue for victory instead of truth. This was incompatible with the Epicurean considerateness (*epieikeia*) for the feelings of others, which fore-shadowed the Golden Rule of Christianity. It was thus no accident that Epicurus, in the manifest division of labor which prevailed in the mature organization of the Garden School, reserved for himself the task of refuting the Megarians,<sup>51</sup> with whom eristic was a specialty. Only the head of the school seemed capable of dealing with methods so contrary in spirit to the new philosophy. The intellectual grounds for rejecting dialectic were equally fundamental. Epicurus denied categorically each of its four assumptions, first, that reason was the criterion, second, that sensations were undependable, third, that phenomena were shifting and deceptive, and fourth, that the only real and eternal existences were the ideas. The reality of the ideas he denied on the ground that nothing exists except atoms and empty space. In place of reason he declared Nature to furnish criteria of truth and he held the Sensations, supplemented by the Feelings and innate notions (*Anticipations*), to be direct and immediate contacts with external

reality, whether physical or social. Thus dialectic became a superfluity. The rejection of Plato's teachings is almost total.