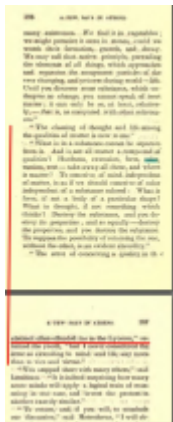


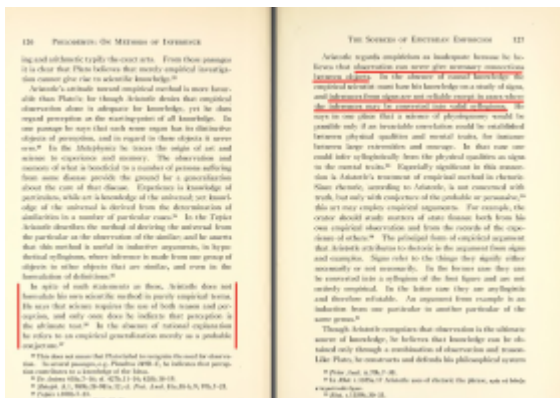
# Propositional Logic, Truth Tables, and Epicurus' Objection to "Dialectic"

Post by "Cassius" of September 17, 2021 at 6:00 AM

These excerpts from a [nearby post](#) are also relevant:



Especially this part from Philip DeLacy as to Philodemus' "On Methods of Inference" -->



The last reference I would throw into this pot is a comment by Richard Dawkins in which he seems to also place Aristotle in Plato's camp:

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2179-propositional-logic-truth-tables-and-epicurus-objection-to-dialectic/?postID=13940#post13940>

## 2014 : WHAT SCIENTIFIC IDEA IS READY FOR RETIREMENT?

10 February 2014 | 201402101201 | New Responses (0)

**Richard Dawkins**

*Evolutionary biologist, Emeritus Professor of the Public Understanding of Science, Oxford, Author, books Do Not Fear a God*

### Essentialism

Essentialism—what he called “the tyranny of the discontinuous mind”—stems from Plato, with his characteristically Greek geometer’s view of things. For Plato, a circle, or a right triangle, were ideal forms, definable mathematically but never realized in practice. A circle drawn in the sand was an imperfect approximation to the ideal Platonic circle hanging in some distant space. That works for geometric shapes like circles, but essentialism has been applied to living things and Ernst Mayr blamed this for humanity’s late discovery of evolution: as late as the nineteenth century, if the Aristotle, you treat all fish and blooded animals as imperfect approximations to an ideal Platonic rabbit, it won’t occur to you that rabbits might have evolved from a non-rabbit ancestor, and might evolve into a non-rabbit descendant. If you think, following the dictionary definition of essentialism, that the essence of rabbitness is “prior to” the existence of rabbits (whatever “prior to” might mean, and that’s a nonsense in itself) evolution is not an idea that will spring readily to your mind, and you may resist when somebody else suggests it.

Philosophers will argue passionately about whether a particular fossil is, say, Australopithecus or Homo. But any evolutionist knows there must have been individuals who were exactly intermediate. It’s essentialist folly to insist on the necessity of shoeforming your fossil into one genus or the other. There never was an Australopithecus mother who gave birth to a Homo child, for every child ever born belonged to the same species as its mother. The whole system of labeling species with obscure human names is geared to a linear view, the present, in which ancestors have been conveniently expunged from our awareness (and “Ying species” sacrificially ignored). If by some miracle every ancestor were preserved as a fossil, discontinuous naming would be impossible. Creationists are mindlessly fond of “ring gaps” as embarrassing for evolutionists, but gaps are a fortunate boon for scientists who, with good reason, want to give species discrete names. Quarrelling about whether a fossil is “really” Australopithecus or Homo is like quarrelling over whether Google should be called “Yah”. Hell’s fire foot test, doesn’t that tell you what you need to know?

Last excerpt illustrating someone who fell victim to this issue, from Heller's biography "Ayn Rand and the World She Made":

Two years earlier, she had written an inscription in Peterson's copy of *The Fountainhead* that quoted Rand's tribute to God: "You have been the one encounter in my life that can never be repeated." This was a warm commendation, conveying affection and respect. Yet it also carried a subliminal, elusive note, one that echoed Rand's mixed sympathies for Wynand. Rand was beginning to think of Peterson as stubborn, even selfish. On first moving to Hollywood, she had traded long, fond letters with Peterson. But by 1943, her side of the correspondence had cooled. In the midst of stardom, conflict had opened a narrow rift between them. God the father was one sure thing. Rand had always known that Peterson believed in God, although she also knew that the credulous individualist did not embrace any organized religion and thought that the Christian morality would one day be replaced by something better. Rand held faith of any kind to be inconsistent with rationality, the particularly despised Christianity, with its insistence on suffering and brotherhood, on "the best possible kindergarten of communism." The women had painted and dodged this issue for years. But in their letters it rose acrimoniously to the surface, with Rand at one point writing that "an omniscient being, by definition, is a totalitarian dictator. Ah, but he won't use his power! Never mind. He has it." The two also conducted a fascinating, though highly charged, argument about the limits of Aristotelian deductive reasoning. Peterson thought that Rand's use of logic sometimes resembled the airtight arguments put forward by the philosophers Rand most disliked. When such philosophers "had string some words together, in the form of a syllogism or other logical construction, they thought that [the formulation] had to be so—without seeing if the facts which constitute the necessary premises are so." Peterson wrote, "Take, for example, the logic of, 'All men are mortal. Socrates is a man; therefore Socrates is mortal. That is a good syllogism.' The wrong, 'But its truth depends on the premises being true—that man are mortal, that Socrates is a man, logic is an instrument for dealing with whatever you can get into its narrowness.' The older woman thought that God and man were both to some degree immeasurable. She argued that Rand trained deductive reasoning too much and overestimated matters that reason might identify as being worthy of investigation but that were irrational or metaphysical, at least for now. Rand thought that the alternative to a morality of reason was "the fat of revelation," and that to hypothesize entities and spheres that the human mind was by its nature incapable of understanding was at best perverse.