

Carl Sagan's Cosmos Episode Seven "Backbone of the Night" - Good Summary of Problems with Plato

Post by "Cassius" of January 26, 2023 at 6:45 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

Sagan definitely doesn't pull any punches on Plato! Bravo! It lays out the "case against" Plato and his "ideas are better than the natural world" fallacy.

I am reminded of what Todd wrote yesterday about having this to validate what we talk about regularly. It's almost as if Carl Sagan had read many of the passages in Norman DeWitt making almost exactly the same point about Plato.

It's interesting that it seems kind of jarring: First we have this "obscure" teacher from Canada making these points about Plato that almost no one ever mentions in common conversation about Epicurus. A few of us end up almost alone considering this to be significant, while the rest of the world ignores it in favor of dwelling on the subtleties of "absence of pain." Then we find this "god of modern science," who is known for his astronomy more than anything associated with philosophy, coming from out of nowhere making exactly the same points made by DeWitt, and it becomes easier to see as if for the first time how much of Epicurus is a direct rejection of Platonic idealism.

And we shouldn't forget either that the Epicureans point out for us also, in the passage of Diogenes of Oinoanda about the flux, that Aristotle too is guilty of much the same fundamental error as Plato. And here comes Carl Sagan to second the indictment against Aristotle, a point that even fewer people today are willing to make!

Where there is smoke there is fire. And where we have found two significant figures making the same point, we will find others in history too making the same points, if we look long enough.