

Plotinus and Epicurean Epistemology by Lloyd P. Gerson

Post by "Cassius" of May 31, 2023 at 11:49 AM

Not having read this thread in a while, doing so now is a good refresher.

This thread is still in "General Discussion" but we'll probably move it to a Canonics section to help reduce the nature of the disagreement to a form that is graspable. Possibly we need a full thread on Neoplatonism, if we don't have one already. And part of that would be to have an understanding of why it is referred to "Neo" as opposed to simply Platonism - seems for our Epicurean purposes they are hard to distinguish.

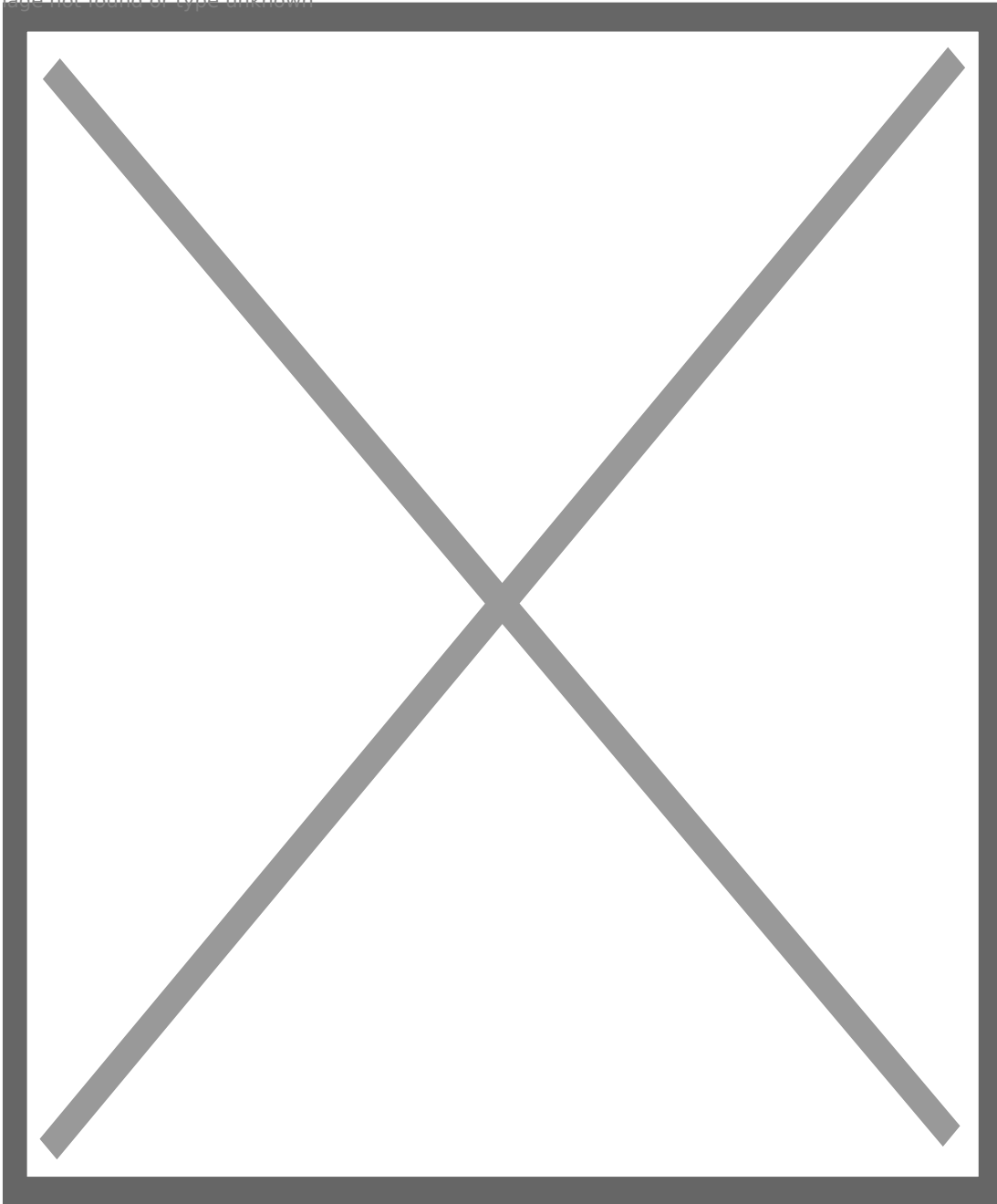
Plotinus's Relation to Plato[[edit](#)]

See also: [Allegorical interpretations of Plato](#)

For several centuries after the [Protestant Reformation](#), neoplatonism was condemned as a decadent and 'oriental' distortion of Platonism. In a 1929 essay, [E. R. Dodds](#) showed that key conceptions of neoplatonism could be traced from their origin in Plato's dialogues, through his immediate followers (e.g., [Speusippus](#)) and the neopythagoreans, to Plotinus and the neoplatonists. Thus Plotinus' philosophy was, he argued, 'not the starting-point of neoplatonism but its intellectual culmination.'^[30] Further research reinforced this view and by 1954 Merlan could say 'The present tendency is toward bridging rather than widening the gap separating Platonism from neoplatonism.'^[31]

Since the 1950s, the [Tübingen School](#) of Plato interpretation has argued that the so-called 'unwritten doctrines' of Plato debated by Aristotle and the [Old Academy](#) strongly resemble Plotinus's metaphysics. In this case, the neoplatonic reading of Plato would be, at least in this central area, historically justified. This implies that neoplatonism is less of an innovation than it appears without the recognition of Plato's unwritten doctrines. Advocates of the Tübingen School emphasize this advantage of their interpretation. They see Plotinus as advancing a tradition of thought begun by Plato himself. Plotinus's metaphysics, at least in broad outline, was therefore already familiar to the first generation of Plato's students. This confirms Plotinus' own view, for he considered himself not the inventor of a system but the faithful interpreter of Plato's doctrines.^[32]

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[Plotinus - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org)
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<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2707-plotinus-and-epicurean-epistemology-by-lloyd-p-gerson/?postID=24265#post24265>