

Philebus - Plato's Arguments Against Pleasure and Epicurean Responses

Post by "Cassius" of October 2, 2019 at 4:49 PM

Great points Godfrey. It's obvious that we would all be better off if we were life-long students of the classics with lots of degrees, and if we were we would have lots of context to bring to the discussion. Be we would also likely be "immobilized" as most academics seem to be 😊

After reading [Philebus](#) a couple of times I agree that it's really not as complicated as these dialogues have the reputation for being. These students of Greek philosophy weren't any smarter than we are now, and it seems to me that these were written for an intelligent audience, but not necessarily specialists. I think we can take the main threads of the arguments pretty much on face value and make a lot of headway in dealing with them even though we are not tenured professors.

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

For example, dialectic is something Epicurus opposed. My intuitive reaction to it has always been that, while it may have some value, it's also possible to prove, using dialectic and/or logic, that a banana is a didgeridoo or an elephant is a building.

I think this is exactly correct. Epicurus was not against "reason" or even "logic" properly employed - he was against the idea that conceptual reasoning could be divorced from the senses and used to generate conclusions that cannot eventually be validated by the senses. Epicurus / Lucretius goes on and on in "De Rerum Natura" about images and illusions, and they certainly understood that people can make mistakes in interpreting the information gleaned from the senses. But in the end "mistakes" are proven to be such because of newer, more accurate and repeated sense observations, not by a chain of conceptual reasoning that never reconnects with reality through the senses.

This is a long and detailed project but what it requires is more "time" than "training" and we can make a lot of progress even without being specialists.

In fact I think the observations we're already making about how Epicurean arguments connect to Plato / [Philebus](#) are already MUCH more practical and important than most of what you read in most modern commentaries (other than Dewitt) about what Epicurus was really talking about.