

Dialectics and Hypothetical Questions

Post by "Cassius" of January 18, 2021 at 7:05 PM

We have been discussing hypothetical questions in the [PD10](#) thread, but I think this topic deserves a thread of its own in the end, for the additional reason that I think it is probably related to the term "dialectics." It seems to me that hypotheticals is what Socrates/Plato were dealing in extensively, and I see several sentences in Diogenes Laertius that are translated variously as "dialectics" or "logic" - Does anyone know which term is better and if so why they are interchanged? By no means are the two issues the same (Dialectics and Hypothetical Questions) but I suspect both involve very similar issues:

Again there was Timocrates, the brother of Metrodorus, who was his disciple and then left the school. He in the book entitled *Merriment* asserts that Epicurus vomited twice a day from over-indulgence, and goes on to say that he himself had much ado to escape from those notorious midnight philosophizings and the confraternity with all its secrets; **7**, further, that Epicurus's acquaintance with philosophy was small and his acquaintance with life even smaller; that his bodily health was pitiful,^[12] so much so that for many years he was unable to rise from his chair; and that he spent a whole mina daily on his table, as he himself says in his letter to Leontion and in that to the philosophers at Mitylene. Also that among other courtesans who consorted with him and Metrodorus were Mammarion and Hedra and Erotion and Nikidion. He alleges too that in his thirty-seven books *On Nature* Epicurus uses much repetition and writes largely in sheer opposition to others, especially to Nausiphanes, and here are his own words: "Nay, let them go hang; for, when labouring with an idea, he too had the sophist's off-hand boast-fulness like many another servile soul"; **8**, besides, he himself in his letters says of Nausiphanes: "This so maddened him that he abused me and called me pedagogue." Epicurus used to call this Nausiphanes jelly-fish,^[13] an illiterate, a fraud, and a trollop; Plato's school he called "the toadies of Dionysius," their master himself the "golden" Plato,^[14] and Aristotle a profligate, who after devouring his patrimony took to soldiering and selling drugs; Protagoras a pack-carrier and the scribe of Democritus and village schoolmaster; Heraclitus a muddler,^[15] Democritus Lerocritus (the nonsense-monger); and Antidorus Sannidorus (fawning gift-bearer); the Cynics foes of Greece; the Dialecticians despoilers; and Pyrrho an ignorant boor.

24. Metrodorus wrote the following works:

- Against the Physicians, in three books.
- Of Sensations.
- Against Timocrates.
- Of Magnanimity.
- Of Epicurus's Weak Health.
- Against the Dialecticians.
- Against the Sophists, in nine books.
- The Way to Wisdom.
- Of Change.
- Of Wealth.
- In Criticism of Democritus.
- Of Noble Birth.

Metrodorus was a philosopher and a student of Epicurus. He was a native of Athens and was known for his works on ethics and politics. He was also a student of the philosopher Timocrates.

31. They reject dialectic as superfluous; holding that in their inquiries the physicists should be content to employ the ordinary terms for things.^[43] Now in *The Canon* Epicurus affirms that our sensations and preconceptions and our feelings are the standards of truth; the Epicureans generally make perceptions of mental presentations^[44] to be also standards. His own statements are also to be found in the *Summary* addressed to Herodotus and in the *Sovran Maxims*. Every sensation, he says, is devoid of reason and incapable of memory; for neither is it self-caused nor, regarded as having an external cause, can it add anything thereto or take anything therefrom. 32. Nor is there anything which can refute sensations or convict them of error: one sensation cannot convict another and kindred sensation, for they are equally valid; nor can one sensation refute another which is not kindred but heterogeneous, for the objects which the two senses judge are not the same;^[45] nor again can reason refute them, for reason is wholly dependent on sensation; nor can one sense refute another, since we pay equal heed to all. And the reality of separate perceptions guarantees^[46] the truth of our senses. But seeing and hearing are just as real as feeling pain. Hence it is from plain facts that we must start when we draw inferences about the unknown.^[47] For all our notions are derived from perceptions, either by actual contact or by analogy, or resemblance, or composition, with some slight aid from reasoning. And the objects presented to mad-men^[48] and to people in dreams are true, for they produce effects - i.e. movements in the mind - which that which is unreal never does.

Post by “Elayne” of January 18, 2021 at 7:32 PM

As I understand it (leaving out later meanings such as in Marxism), it meant using logical arguments to arrive at the truth. That doesn't mean all discussions are dialectical, and IMO the difference is that we would use evidence, including referring to feeling, in our discussion. We are not using flights of logic to get an answer but referring to our experiences and how we feel about things. Predicting how we might feel about possible future events (hypotheticals) is not the same as using logic, because we are drawing on our experience.

I think Plato also used it in reference to discussion of ideals. Which we aren't doing.

Post by “Cassius” of January 18, 2021 at 7:42 PM

[Don](#) (who likes to dive into the Greek) I was taken aback when I pasted this because I was going to paste from the Bailey version I have here, and I see Bailey used "logic" and "logicians" rather than dialectics / dialecticians. The pastes above are from Wikisource which is [Hicks](#)

Any thoughts?

Dialectic

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

For varieties of language, see [Dialect](#). For electrical insulators, see [Dielectric](#).

Dialectic or **dialectics** (Greek: διαλεκτική, *dialektikḗ*; related to [dialogue](#)), also known as the **dialectical method**, is at base a [discourse](#) between two or more people holding different [points of view](#) about a subject but wishing to establish the [truth](#) through [reasoned](#) methods of [argumentation](#). Dialectic resembles [debate](#), but the concept excludes [subjective](#) elements such as [emotional appeal](#) and the modern [pejorative](#) sense of [rhetoric](#).^{[1][2]} Dialectic may thus be contrasted with both the [eristic](#), which refers to [argument](#) that aims to successfully dispute another's argument (rather than searching for truth), and the [didactic method](#), wherein one side of the conversation teaches the other. Dialectic is alternatively known as *minor logic*, as opposed to *major logic* or *critique*.

Within [Hegelianism](#), the word *dialectic* has the specialised meaning of a [contradiction](#) between ideas that serves as the determining factor in their relationship. [Dialectical materialism](#), a theory or set of theories produced mainly by [Karl Marx](#) and [Friedrich Engels](#), adapted the Hegelian dialectic into arguments regarding traditional [materialism](#).

Dialectic tends to imply a [process](#) of evolution and so does not naturally fit within [formal logic](#) (see [Logic and dialectic](#)). This process is particularly marked in Hegelian dialectic, and even more so in Marxist dialectic, which may rely on the evolution of ideas over longer time periods in the real world; [dialectical logic](#) attempts to address this

Post by “Don” of January 18, 2021 at 8:16 PM

Metrodorus's book is entitled:

Πρὸς τοὺς διαλεκτικούς.

Pros tous dialektikous

Here's the LSJ for that:

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=dialektikou%2Fs&la=greek&can=dialektikou%2Fs0&prior=tou>

Post by “Charles” of January 18, 2021 at 8:18 PM

Other translations, specifically Yonge and Thayer also use the word dialectic instead of logic. I would say that using the former is much more appropriate, as not only does it make more sense when we compare it to the sophists and Socrates/Plato, in that the Socratic Method is itself a form of dialectic. Not only that, but as often as we dismiss formal logic, using the word

"Logic" itself is very challenging and difficult given how many definitions and interpretations of what it exactly means and is defined, something we know well from the PD 10 Discussion and the most recent podcast episode.