

# Was There For Socrates a Particular Greek God of Reason / Rationality / Or Specifically "Wisdom"?

Post by "Cassius" of April 17, 2021 at 9:19 AM

This morning I was thinking about the passages excerpted below from [Philebus](#), especially the last one I have underlined. In these passages, Plato has Socrates talking as if the battle of identifying the greatest good was between specific patron gods and goddesses. In these passages the patron god(dess) of pleasure is clearly Aphrodite / Venus, and we can see that identification carried on by the Epicureans at least through Lucretius.

However I am unclear as to who stands as the patron god for Socrates' position, especially if we conclude that Socrates' position comes down to "reason" or "rationality" or "wisdom" or "logic."

Was there a particular Greek god who symbolized those characteristics distinctly more than any other? If not, does the absence of such a distinctive figure play into why Socrates talked about being influenced by his "daemon" rather than being talked to by a particular god?

I ask this question in the context of triangulating on the Epicureans' use of the very broad term "Pleasure" as the goal of life without spending a lot of time identifying the particular pleasures being referenced. It seems to me that part of this terminology is that Epicurus was responding to the ongoing philosophic debates that distilled the ultimate goals down into high-level concepts such as "virtue" or "the good" or "reason" or "wisdom." Given a culture in which people were being asked to choose their allegiance among and between such high-level words, then "pleasure" seems to correspond nicely to that level of discussion. So therefore in that context, I am wondering if in identifying pleasure with Venus/Aphrodite that the Epicureans were facing one or more corresponding patron god(s) from the Academy / Peripatetics / or later, the Stoics.

So at this time the specific question is: Was there a patron god or goddess identified with Socrates' position, from which we can infer the same as to Plato? If that answer is somewhere else in [Philebus](#) I seem to be overlooking it.

Here are the excerpts from [Philebus](#):

Quote

SOCRATES: Then let us begin with the goddess herself, of whom [Philebus](#) says that she is called Aphrodite, but that her real name is Pleasure.

PROTARCHUS: Very good.

SOCRATES: The awe which I always feel, Protarchus, about the names of the gods is more than human—it exceeds all other fears. And now I would not sin against Aphrodite by naming her amiss; let her be called what she pleases. But Pleasure I know to be manifold, and with her, as I was just now saying, we must begin, and consider what her nature is. She has one name, and therefore you would imagine that she is one; and yet surely she takes the most varied and even unlike forms. For do we not say that the intemperate has pleasure, and that the temperate has pleasure in his very temperance,—that the fool is pleased when he is full of foolish fancies and hopes, and that the wise man has pleasure in his wisdom? and how foolish would any one be who affirmed that all these opposite pleasures are severally alike!

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SOCRATES: And now have I not sufficiently shown that [Philebus](#)' goddess is not to be regarded as identical with the good?

[PHILEBUS](#): Neither is your 'mind' the good, Socrates, for that will be open to the same objections.

....

SOCRATES: Nor would pain, [Philebus](#), be perfectly evil. And therefore the infinite cannot be that element which imparts to pleasure some degree of good. But now—admitting, if you like, that pleasure is of the nature of the infinite—in which of the aforesaid classes, O Protarchus and [Philebus](#), can we without irreverence place wisdom and knowledge and mind? And let us be careful, for I think that the danger will be very serious if we err on this point.

**[PHILEBUS](#): You magnify, Socrates, the importance of your favourite god.**

**SOCRATES: And you, my friend, are also magnifying your favourite goddess; but still I must beg you to answer the question.**

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**Post by “Elli” of April 17, 2021 at 10:57 AM**

Greeks believed that the goddess of wisdom was Athena or as the Romans called her as Minerva. There is a remarkable excerpt for this, by Dimitris Liantinis in his book "Gemma".

«Minerva auxiliante, manum etiam admove» that Latin quote says. [...Homer repeats this again and again: Ulysses, he stresses, has Athena as his patron saint, the goddess of wisdom. But why are we still talking about Athena, dear reader? Why are we talking about goddesses of wisdom and hot air? His brain was his protector and patron saint. His own thoughts were Athena. His thoughts, clear in their stormy calmness, always expecting the unexpected. His thoughts, nimble like a snake, and terrifying like a panther. Did you ever see knife blades glitter in the darkness? Ulysses would assess each and every difficult situation in the blink of an eye. His brain was a massive complex super-computer. It was this that provided him with a lightning-fast solution to the problem at hand, which he would have considered thoroughly and in all its complexity until its final phase. The one solution, the unthinkable, the excellent. The concept put forward by the Greeks that he was the cleverest of all men and the favourite of Athena-wisdom, incubated exactly this meaning...]

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### **Post by “Elli” of April 17, 2021 at 11:49 AM**

Actually, Socrates did not specify of any name of a known god with that daemonion that was speaking to him the truth inside himself. As Xenophon and Plato claim, the daemonion of Socrates was himself who had the power to protect him from troubles and to protect others too, because that daemonion had revealed to him future situations. Wisdom that is based on the divine is not wisdom is prophesy. One day, as Xenophon says, Socrates went to Delphi and took an oracle that was the most wise of all men. And then became ironical with the mob speaking in the center of Agora. The most of the young persons that kept company with him, they took power and became tyrants. So, in more specific way Socrates was a kind of a prophet and martyr. Socrates was provocative and opposite to all these : the established clergy, the laws, the customs, and the mob.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of April 17, 2021 at 2:02 PM**

Thank you Elli!