

Questions Re PD 26 - PD30 From the 10/5/22 Zoom

Epicurean practice of memorizing the sayings.⁸⁰

That ancient sources were familiar with the *Kyriai Doxai* does not signify that a single collection was written by Epicurus and survived intact until it was preserved in the manuscripts of Diogenes Laertius. Given Epicurus' apparent practice of writing epitomes of his own works, it is not inconceivable that he took that practice to its logical extreme and presented some of his ideas in the

76. 10.138; trans. Bailey, *Epicurus*, 171. Elsewhere Bailey paraphrases "the crown of all Epicurus' writings and of the philosophic life" (344).

77. *De Rerum Natura* 3.9–13:

tu pater es, rerum inventor, tu patria nobis
suppeditas praecepta, tuisque ex, inclute, chartis,
floriferis ut apes in saltibus omnia libant,
omnia nos itidem depascimur aurea dicta,
aurea, perpetua semper dignissima vita.

It is possible that *aurea dicta* refers to all of Epicurus' writings, not only the *Kyriai Doxai*.

78. *De Finibus*, 2.7.20: "Epicuri *Kyrias Doxas*, id est quasi maxime ratas"; *De Natura Deorum* 1.30.85: "in illis selectis eius brevibusque sententiis, quas appellatis *Kyrias Doxas*."

79. All of these appellations are recorded by DeWitt, *Epicurus*, 111, except for *Master Thoughts*, which is Clay's recent suggestion (*Lucretius and Epicurus*, 73).

80. Laertius (10.12) writes that Diocles of Magnesia claimed that Epicureans memorized Epicurus' writings. Cicero refers twice to the memorization of the *Kyriai Doxai* in particular, at *De Finibus* 2.7.20 and *De Natura Deorum* 1.40.113.

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Kyriai Doxai was written as a forty-point creed to be memorized.

Nineteenth-century scholarship (mostly in German) rejected the ancient conception of the nature of the *Kyriai Doxai*.⁸¹ Usener formulated four main arguments against the contention that Epicurus wrote the forty sayings and published them as a distinct collection.⁸² First, if Epicurus had wanted to distribute forty “doctrines” he would have included all of his important ideas instead of omitting (as does the collection) references to the Canon and to physical theory. Second, the sayings are not preserved in any logical order, as would be expected if Epicurus had composed them as a series to be memorized.⁸³ Third, some of the maxims (*Principal Doctrines* 10, 20, and 24) appear to be excerpts from personal letters rather than succinctly formulated philosophical tenets. Fourth, there is repetition and duplication of sayings within the collection.⁸⁴

These arguments are compelling, particularly the last two, which are based not on expectations of what Epicurus would have done but on analysis of the sayings themselves. The logical conclusion is that the *Kyriai Doxai* as they appear in the manuscripts of Diogenes Laertius represent a collection that developed around a nucleus of a few sayings of Epicurus. Perhaps the original nucleus is represented by the first four sayings, which by the first century B.C.E. were called the *tetrapharmakos*.⁸⁵ Many of the additions may be extracts from the writings of Epicurus himself (or perhaps from those of Metrodorus, Polyaeus, or Hermarchus). Others represent variants that developed in the process of transmission; by the time Diogenes Laertius (or his source) obtained them, the variations on several sayings differed enough to warrant preserving more than one version in the same collection.

Despite the objections outlined by Usener, English-language scholarship generally postulates that Epicurus himself formulated and distributed a collection of *Kyriai Doxai* like that in Laertius’ text.⁸⁶ Diskin Clay, for example, endorses that approach in his recent book on Lucretius and Epicurus, although he

81. An early proponent of the theory that the collection is a florilegium is Pierre Gassendi, *Animadversiones in decimum librum Diogenes Laertii* (Paris, 1649), which I have not seen.

82. *Epicurea*, xliii.

83. As a result of the lack of an intelligible order, transpositions have been suggested by, for example, Gassendi and Giussani. See Bailey, *Epicurus*, 346.

84. *Principal Doctrine* 3 is repeated by 18; 11 and 12 by 13; and 32 by 33.

85. There are problems with this view, as I will show. The name *tetrapharmakos* (“fourfold remedy”) cannot be traced back any further than Cicero and Philodemus. See Anna Angeli, “Compendi, Eklogai, Tetrapharmakos,” 65.

86. Bailey (*Epicurus*, 344–88) is representative. A recent survey of Epicurus by Long subscribes to this view. On the contrast between the obscurities in Epicurus’ writing and the clarity of

somewhat shorter originally, and he demonstrates how some of the sayings were altered by the process of oral transmission during the centuries after Epicurus. He also acknowledges that the *Letter to Menoeceus* may have been the source for some of the *Kyriai Doxai* and that some of the “prehistory” of the sayings can be found in Epicurus’ *On Nature*.⁸⁸ In general he affirms, however, that the sayings we find in the text of Diogenes Laertius represent a book that was published by Epicurus.⁸⁹ He emphasizes the occurrence in the title of the word *kyriai*, which is shown to mean “crucial.” He also emphasizes the fact that in antiquity the *Kyriai Doxai* were considered to be the authoritative sayings of Epicurus.⁹⁰

The issue ought to have been settled a century ago, when Diogenes’ inscription and the *Voice of Epicurus* were discovered. The *Voice of Epicurus* (Ἐπι-κούρου Προσφώνησις, also known as the *Sententiae Vaticanae*) is yet another collection of Epicurean aphorisms that was found in a manuscript in the Vatican. Both Diogenes of Oenoanda and the Vatican text preserve some of the Epicurean sayings (with variations) that appear in Diogenes Laertius, along with many previously unknown sayings. When the *Kyriai Doxai* of Diogenes Laertius are compared with the *doxai* of Diogenes of Oenoanda and the *Voice of Epicurus*, it becomes apparent that the three texts represent three rather different sets of *Kyriai Doxai*. It is impossible to say which of these three versions bears the closest resemblance to the text that Alexander sent up in flames (whether the burning took place in history or only in fiction).

The Vatican manuscript contains eighty aphorisms. The first two are equivalent to the first two maxims recorded by Laertius.⁹¹ *Kyria Doxa* 3 is not preserved in it at all, and after *Kyriai Doxai* 4 and 5 (*Sententiae Vaticanae* 3 and 5) are recorded with minor changes (usually in word order), the texts diverge.

Principal Doctrines 2 and 17, Long comments: “As these passages show, Epicurus was quite capable of writing in a pithy, aphoristic style, and there can be little doubt that such statements were intended for learning by heart” (“Epicurus and Philodemus,” 628).

87. *Lucretius and Epicurus*, 72–81. His argument has met with approval; see the review by D.P. and P.G. Fowler in *CR* 35 (1985): 275–79, in which they write that “there should be no doubt that the collection stems from Epicurus’ own hand” (276). As other reviewers have recognized, Clay’s book makes an important contribution to our understanding not only of Lucretius but of the Epicurean attitude toward the texts of Epicurus.

88. *Lucretius and Epicurus*, 72. Clay describes how the oral transmission of the *Kyriai Doxai* caused them to change (176–85).

89. *Lucretius and Epicurus*, 72.

90. *Lucretius and Epicurus*, 72–74.

91. The eighty aphorisms known as the *Sententiae Vaticanae* were discovered in 1888 in a Vatican manuscript (cod. gr. 1950) and are published by C. Wörke in *Wiener Studien* 10 (1888):
