

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

Post by "Cassius" of October 6, 2022 at 8:30 AM

Several related questions came up last night which would be very good for discussion. If I am missing one in this list below, someone please add it:

1. [PD26](#) and [PD30](#) are almost identical. Why are they so similar and is there a significant difference between them?
2. [PD30](#) is pretty hard to follow whether in isolation or in context. Taken alone it could easily be used by Stoic sympathizers to say that Epicurus was basically preaching not to pursue any desire (even natural desires!) which takes significant effort, regardless of the amount of pleasure thereby obtained. Probably the first and most important observation is that no single statement should be taken out of context, and there are many other texts that would not lead in that direction, including Epicurus himself saying in the letter to Menoecus that we sometimes choose pain in order to pursue greater pleasure. But mainly using the text of [PD30](#) itself, what's the best translation and way to untangle it consist with the whole?
3. Also as to [PD30](#), some translators say "natural" desires while others say "physical" desires? Why this ambiguity in the translators? Which is correct? Of the translators, which ones make the most sense and seem most consistent with the rest of the philosophy?
4. PDs 26, 29, and 30 are tightly focused on the issue of proper analysis and dealing with desires. But why were [PD27](#) and [PD28](#) as to friendship inserted in the middle of that sequence, totally (or almost totally) breaking the train of thought?
5. Given the questions above (especially question 4), what is best position to take on whether the PD's were authored in the form we have them by Epicurus himself? Did he write them in that form? Or are they like the Vatican Sayings, clearly compiled by someone else, probably after Epicurus' death? We know they were referred to as "Authorized" but does that mean by Epicurus personally, or by later heads of the school? Epicurus himself advised the use of outlines in the letter to Herodotus, and this appears to be an outline, and in an outline we do "jump around" and we don't demand the kind of strict continuity between headings that we would in a continuous presentation. But does not the issue raised in item 4 raise the objection that Epicurus himself (or maybe even any one person) would not have created such a break as was created by putting [PD27](#) and [PD28](#) in that order, when they could easily have been placed elsewhere where they would be more in context?
6. Last but not least: [Onenski](#) raised the point (after reading a chapter in Martha Nussbaum) that [PD30](#) probably includes "romance/sexual love/etc" as a natural desire that (by the wording of the doctrine) should be dispelled Does it make sense to consider romantic love as falling under [PD30](#)?

We can split these questions up later over time, if needed, but I wanted to first get them recorded.

Post by “Godfrey” of October 6, 2022 at 8:30 PM

Here are three versions of [PD30](#):

[PD30](#) *“Among natural desires, those that do not bring pain when unfulfilled and that require intense exertion arise from groundless opinion; and such desires fail to be stamped out not by nature but because of the groundless opinions of humankind.”* St.-Andre (2008)

[PD30](#) *“Those natural desires which create no pain when unfulfilled, though pursued with an intense effort, are also due to groundless opinion; and if they are not dispelled, it is not because of their own nature, but because of human vanity.”* Epicurus Wiki

[PD30](#) *“When those natural desires, which do not lead to pain if they are not satisfied, are violent and insistent, it is a proof that there is an admixture of vain opinion in them; for then energy does not arise from their own nature, but from the vain opinions of men.”* Yonge (1853)

In outline:

Those natural (or bodily, in some translations) desires which

1. don't bring pain when unfulfilled (another of Epicurus' double negatives)
2. AND
 - require intense exertion
 - (or) are pursued with intense effort
 - (or) are violent and insistent desires
3. are driven by vanity, not by their own nature

This seems like catnip for someone with an ascetic point of view. However, in plain, modern English, at least by my paraphrasing:

[PD30](#) "Say you have a natural desire, and that if you don't fulfill it, it's not a big deal to you. If you do pursue it, it's going to require a lot of effort and potential pain. Do you think that this desire is worth pursuing? It would seem that your potential gratification would be outweighed by your potential suffering. Might it be wiser to spend your limited time pursuing something

that's a bigger deal to you?" Godfrey (2022) 😊

Put this way, is this really ascetic or is it just common sense? [PD26](#) seems to confirm this view:

[PD26](#) *"The desires that do not bring pain when they go unfulfilled are not necessary; indeed they are easy to reject if they are hard to achieve or if they seem to produce harm."* St.-Andre (2008)

Post by "Godfrey" of October 6, 2022 at 8:36 PM

Since [PD30](#) and [PD26](#) seem so similar other than the inclusion of natural or bodily desires in [PD30](#), I'm curious if anyone ([Don](#)) has a fresh take on the Greek? 🤔 (But only if the gratification outweighs the effort!)

[PD26](#)

τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν ὅσαι μὴ ἐπ' ἀλγοῦν ἐπανάγουσιν ἐὰν μὴ συμπληρῶσιν, οὐκ εἰσιν ἀναγκαῖαι, ἀλλ' εὐδιάχυτον τὴν ὄρεξιν ἔχουσιν, ὅταν δυσπορίστων ἢ βλάβης ἀπεργαστικαὶ δόξωσιν εἶναι.

[PD30](#)

ἐν αἷς τῶν φυσικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν μὴ ἐπ' ἀλγοῦν δὲ ἐπαναγουσῶν ἐὰν μὴ συντελεσθῶσιν, ὑπάρχει ἡ σπουδὴ σύντονος, παρὰ κενὴν δόξαν αὗται γίνονται, καὶ οὐ παρὰ τὴν ἑαυτῶν φύσιν οὐ διαχέονται ἀλλὰ παρὰ τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κενοδοξίαν.

Post by "Eikadistes" of October 6, 2022 at 9:08 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

I'm curious if anyone has a fresh take on the Greek?

XXVI (26)

ALGOUN - ΑΛΓΟΥΝ - ἀλγοῦν - /a:l.'gu:n/ the present contracted neuter infinitive participle ἄλγος (*álgos*, "pain"), meaning "suffering", "illness", "hardship", "**physical** pain".

ANAGKAIAI - ΑΝΑΓΚΑΙΑΙ - ἀναγκαῖαι - /a:nag.'kai.jai/ - the singular feminine form of ἀναγκαῖος (*anagkaîos*) from ἀνάγκη (*anánkē*, “necessity”) + -ιος (-ios) meaning “**necessary**”.

APERGASTIKAI - ΑΠΕΡΓΑΣΤΙΚΑΙ - ἀπεργαστικά - /a:per.'gas.ti:kai/ - related to ἀπεργαστικός (*apergastikós*, “fit for finishing”) meaning “**produce**”, “cause”, “lead to”.

BLABES - ΒΛΑΒΗΣ - βλάβης - /'bla.be:s/ - the genitive singular inflection of βλάβη (*blábi*), “hurt”, “damage”) meaning “**harm**”, “injury”.

DOXOSIN - ΔΟΞΩΣΙΝ - δόξωσιν - /'dok.sɔ:si:n/ - related to δοκέω (*dokéo*, “expect”, “form an opinion”) sharing the same root δοξα (*doksa*) as *Doxai* (as in the *Kuriai Doxai*), meaning “thing desired”, “unnecessary desires”, “**object of desire**”, “desired objects”.

DYSPORISTON - ΔΥΣΠΟΡΙΣΤΩΝ - δυσπορίστων - /dy:spo.'ri:stɔ:n/ - the genitive plural inflection of δυσπόριστος (*dusporistos*, “gotten with much labor”, “hard to come by” or “procure”) meaning “**difficult to procure**”, “hard to acquire”.

EKHOUSIN - ΕΧΟΥΣΙΝ - ἔχουσιν - /'e.khu:si:n/ - the third-person plural present active indicative inflection of ἔχω (*ékhō*) meaning “**possess**”, obtain”, “attain”, “have”, “gain”.

EPANAGOUSIN - ΕΠΑΝΑΓΟΥΣΙΝ - ἐπανάγουσιν - /e:pa.'na.gu:si:n/ - related to ἐπανάγω (*epanágo*, “stir up”, “excite”) meaning “**lead**”, “bring”, “create”.

EPITHYMION - ΕΠΙΘΥΜΙΩΝ - ἐπιθυμιῶν - /e:pi.'thy:mi:ɔ:n/ - the genitive plural inflection of επιθυμία (*epithumía*, “desire”, “yearning”, “appetite”, “wish”, “longing”) meaning “passion”, “striving”, “interest”, “**desires**”.

EUDIAKHUTON - ΕΥΥΙΑΧΥΤΩΝ - εὐδιάχυτον - /eu.di:'a.khy:ton/ - from the word εὐδιάχυτος (*eudiákhytos*, “easily diffused”, “easily relieved”) meaning “easily got rid of”, “easily dispelled”, “easily thrust aside”, “easily diffused”, “**easily dissolved**”.

OREXIN - ΟΡΕΞΙΝ - ὄρεξιν - /'o:rek.si:n/ - an inflection of ὄρεξις (*órexis*) from ὀρέγω (*orégō*, “I stretch”) + -σις (-sis) meaning “the thing **desired**”, “the craved object”.

SYMPLEROSIN - ΣΥΜΠΛΗΡΩΣΙΝ - συμπληρῶσιν - /sy:m.ple:'rɔ:si:n/ - from συν- (*syn-*, “with”, “together”) + πληρόω (*plerōō*, “to fill”, “to full”, “to finish”, “to complete”, “to fulfill”) meaning “gratified”, “**fulfilled**”, “satisfied”.

XXX (30)

ALGOUN - ΑΛΓΟΥΝ - ἄλγοῦν - /a:l.'gu:n/ the present contracted neuter infinitive participle ἄλγος (*álgos*, “pain”), meaning “suffering”, “illness”, “hardship”, “physical **pain**”.

ANTHROPOU - ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΥ - ἀνθρώπου - /a:n.'thrɔ:pu:/ - the genitive singular form of ἄνθρωπος (*ánthropos*) “human being”, “people” “man”, “**humanity**”, “mankind”.

DIAKHEONTAI - ΔΙΑΧΕΟΝΤΑΙ - διαχέονται - /di:a.'kʰe.on.taɪ/ - an inflection of διαχέω (*diakhéō*, “to pour different ways”, “disperse”, “confound”, “run through”) meaning “**dispelled**”, “dissolved”, “defused”, “stamped out”, “dissipated”

DOXAN - ΔΟΞΑΝ - δόξαν - /'dɒk.san/ - the accusative singular of δόξα (*dóxa*) from which δόξαι (*doxai*, “doctrines”) is derived (as in the *Kuriai Doxai* or “Key Doctrines” of Epicurus), meaning “expectation”, “**opinion**”, “judgment”, and “belief”.

EPANAGOUSON - ΕΠΑΝΑΓΟΥΣΩΝ - ἐπαναγουσῶν - /e:pa.na.gu:'sɔ:n/ - related to ἐπανάγω (*epanágo*, “to stir up”) meaning “satisfied”, “gratified”, “fulfilled”, “**indulged**”.

EPITHYMION - ΕΠΙΘΥΜΙΩΝ - ἐπιθυμιῶν - /e:pi:'tʰy:mi:ɔ:n/ - the genitive plural inflection of ἐπιθυμία (*epithumía*, “desire”, “yearning”, “appetite”, “wish”, “longing”) meaning “passion”, “striving”, “interest”, “**desires**”.

GINONTAI - ΓΙΝΟΝΤΑΙ - γίνονται - /'gi.non.taɪ/ - related to γίγνομαι (*gígnomai*, “to come into being”, “be born”, “be produced”) meaning “**arise**”, “arising from”, “owing to”.

HYPARKHEI - ΥΠΑΡΧΕΙ - υπάρχει - /hy:'par.kʰeɪ/ - the third-person singular present inflection of the verb υπάρχω (*hupárkhō*, “to begin”) from ὑπο- (*húpo-*, “under”) + ἄρχω (*árkhō*, “to begin”) meaning “origin” or “**beginning**”.

KENEN - ΚΕΝΗΝ - κενὴν - /ke.'nɛ:n/ the singular, feminine, accusative of κενός (*kenós*) meaning “**empty**”, “vain”, “fruitless”, “exhausted”, “void”, and “destitute”. The word κενὴν (*kenén*) describes an epistemological analogue to the physical “void” of κενῶν (*kenón*).

KENODOXIAN - ΚΕΝΟΔΟΞΙΑΝ - κenoδοξίαν - /ke.no.dok.'si:an/ - from κενὴν (*kenén*) and δόξαν (*dóxan*) meaning “liability to vain imagination”, “vanity”, “**vain opinions**”, “groundless”, “illusory”, “vain fancies”, “empty imaginings”, “beliefs”, “senseless whims”.

PHYSIKON - ΦΥΣΙΚΩΝ - φυσικῶν - /pʰy:si:'kɔ:n/ - the genitive plural form of φυσικός (*phusikós*, “natural”, “physical”) describing “**natural**” desires.

PHYSIN - ΦΥΣΙΝ - φύσιν - /'pʰy:si:n/ - a singular, nominative form of φῦω (*phúō*, “grow”) + -σις (-*sis*) meaning “**nature**”, “origin”, “birth”, “quality”, “property”.

SPOUDE - ΣΠΟΥΔΗ - σπουδῆ - /spru:'dɛ:/ - from σπεύδω (*speúō*, “to make haste”) + -η (-*ē*, verbal stem) meaning “insistent”, “**pursued**”, “effort”, “fulfilled”, “exertion”, “satisfied”.

SYNTELESTHOSIN - ΣΥΝΤΕΛΕΣΘΩΣΙΝ - συντελεσθῶσιν - /sy:n.te.les.'tʰɔ:si:n/ - from συντελέω (*sunteléō*, “bring to an end”, “complete”, “finish”, “perpetrate”, “celebrate”, “hold”, “contribute”) meaning “satisfied”, “gratified”, “**fulfilled**”, “indulged”.

SYNTONOS - ΣΥΝΤΟΝΟΣ - σὺντονος - /'sy:n.to.nos/ - meaning “strained tight”, “**intense**”, “impetuous”, “eager”, “jerking”, “violent”, “vehement”, “severe”, “earnest”.

Post by "Don" of October 6, 2022 at 10:38 PM

I'll take you up on that challenge... tomorrow 😊

But the big difference I see off the bat is that 26 just mentions desires ἐπιθυμιῶν and 30 specifically physical/natural desires τῶν φυσικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν.

More tomorrow....

Edit: Thanks, @Nate !!! I need to scroll better before I just post! Those vocabulary lists are great! Your compilation continues to be a great resource!

Post by "Don" of October 6, 2022 at 11:53 PM

Okay, my mind is rambling, I'm tired, it's late, and still getting over some illness, but I made the decision to start playing with the Greek. Here's my work in progress... But then I'm really hanging up the phone and going to sleep. Really... Really! 😊

PD30

ἐν αἷς τῶν φυσικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν μὴ ἐπ' ἀλγοῦν δὲ ἐπαναγουσῶν ἐὰν μὴ συντελεσθῶσιν, ὑπάρχει ἡ σπουδὴ σύντονος, παρὰ κενὴν δόξαν αὐταὶ γίνονται, καὶ οὐ παρὰ τὴν ἑαυτῶν φύσιν οὐ διαχέονται ἀλλὰ παρὰ τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κενοδοξίαν.

τῶν φυσικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν the "physikon" desires

φυσικός < φύσις

I. natural, native, opp. to διδασκτός ("things taught, learned"), Xen., Arist.

II. of or in the order of nature, natural, physical, opp. to ἠθικός ("morals, ethics"), Arist.

So, the φυσικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν seem to be, while usually translated just "natural desires", are those desires that arise naturally from within the needs of our bodies and from the needs within our minds, too, maybe, since Epicurus teaches that our minds are physical; from our physical nature, not those desires that we learn or are taught we *should* have. These desires arising within our minds can also come from the need for well-being and not just shelter, food, and other physical needs.

Then when saying that καὶ οὐ παρὰ τὴν ἑαυτῶν φύσιν οὐ διαχέονται "and not through their own 'nature' (φύσιν) are they not dispelled themselves." (Double negatives were common ways of emphasizing a point not the way we think of them)

Compare the last phrases:

καὶ οὐ παρὰ τὴν ἑαυτῶν φύσιν οὐ διαχέονται ἀλλὰ παρὰ τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κενοδοξίαν (διαχέονται).

-- οὐ παρὰ τὴν ἑαυτῶν φύσιν "**not** by its own nature dispelled

-- παρὰ τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κενοδοξίαν "by the empty beliefs of humans dispelled

παρὰ with the accusative case can mean "**by** which anything increases or decreases, and so of the cause according to which anything comes into existence or varies" which seems to be the intent here in this phrase.

Post by “Godfrey” of October 7, 2022 at 12:19 AM

Apparently, then, [PD30](#) is more specific than [PD26](#) in that it's saying that even natural desires can get out of hand, but that this can't be blamed on the fact that they're natural. If you put a lot of effort into something that you can be perfectly happy without, that's vanity whether the desire is a natural one or not.

Post by “Cassius” of October 7, 2022 at 6:55 AM

Don or Nate, what about the varying translations of "natural" vs "physical"? What explains that variation and which do you think is best?

Post by “Don” of October 7, 2022 at 7:06 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Don or Nate, what about the varying translations of "natural" vs "physical"? What explains that variation and which do you think is best?

I'm interested to hear Nate's take.

My initial thought would be "the whim of the translator." φυσικός is transliterated "physikos" so it looks like (and is the source of) English physical, physics, so some translators play up that similarity. Others lean on the definition instead:

I. natural, native, opp. to διδακτός, Xen., Arist.

II. of or in the order of nature, natural, physical, opp. to ἠθικός, Arist.

This is again why it is SO important to go back to the texts! Two English words in translations can imply there's something going on where in fact it's just the quirk of the individual translator pulling at different connotations of a word.

Φυσικός comes from the word φύσις physis which is even more nuanced. See below.

To address your "which is best?" The best is φυσικός 😊 but seriously they both have good points and bad points but any English word is ultimately going to bring its own semantic baggage and be looking at the texts through a glass darkly. The best we can do is be aware of this and NEVER rely on one translation like it's the King James Bible.

Φύσις

I. the nature, natural qualities, powers, constitution, condition, of a person or thing, Od., Hdt., attic

2. like φύη, form, stature, ἢ νόον ἢ τοι φύσιν either in mind or outward form, Pind.; τὸν δὲ Λαίϊον, φύσιν τίν' εἶχε, φράζε Soph.; τὴν ἐμὴν ἰδὼν φύσιν Ar.

3. of the mind, one's nature, natural bent, powers, character, Soph., etc.

4. often periphr., πέτρου φύσιν σύ γ' ὀργάνειας, i. e. would'st provoke a stone, id=Soph.; ἡ φ. αὐτοῦ for αὐτός, Plat.

II. nature, i. e. the order or law of nature, κατὰ φύσιν πεφυκέναι to be made so by nature, naturally, Hdt., etc.;—opp. to παρὰ φύσιν, Eur., Thuc.; so, προδότης ἐκ φύσεως a traitor by nature, Aeschin.:—so, in dat. φύσει, by nature, naturally, Ar., etc.:—f4usin 24exei, c. inf., it is natural that . . . , Hdt., Plat.

2. origin, birth, φύσει γεγονότες εὖ Hdt.; φ. νεώτερος Soph.; so, τὴν φύσιν Xen.

III. nature, universe, Plat., Arist.

IV. as a concrete term, creatures, animals (cf. φύσις), θνητὴ φ. man kind, Soph.; πόντου εἰναλία φ. the creatures of the sea, id=Soph.; θήλεια φ. woman-kind, Xen.; οἱ τοιαῦται φύσεις such creatures as these, Isocr.

V. a nature, kind, sort, βιοτῆς φύσις Soph.: species, Xen.

VI. sex, Soph., Thuc.

Post by “Cassius” of October 7, 2022 at 7:52 AM

I suppose if we did not invest the word "natural" with a positive moral judgment then "natural" and "physical" would seem much more interchangeable. So is this going on throughout the "natural and necessary" discussion?

If so that puts a whole different spin on the formula as an "ethical" doctrine and would cause one to question whether the analysis applies to purely "mental" desires.

I tend to think it does apply to both, but this highlights the view of the nature of mental activity as also being physical.

Post by “Don” of October 7, 2022 at 7:56 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

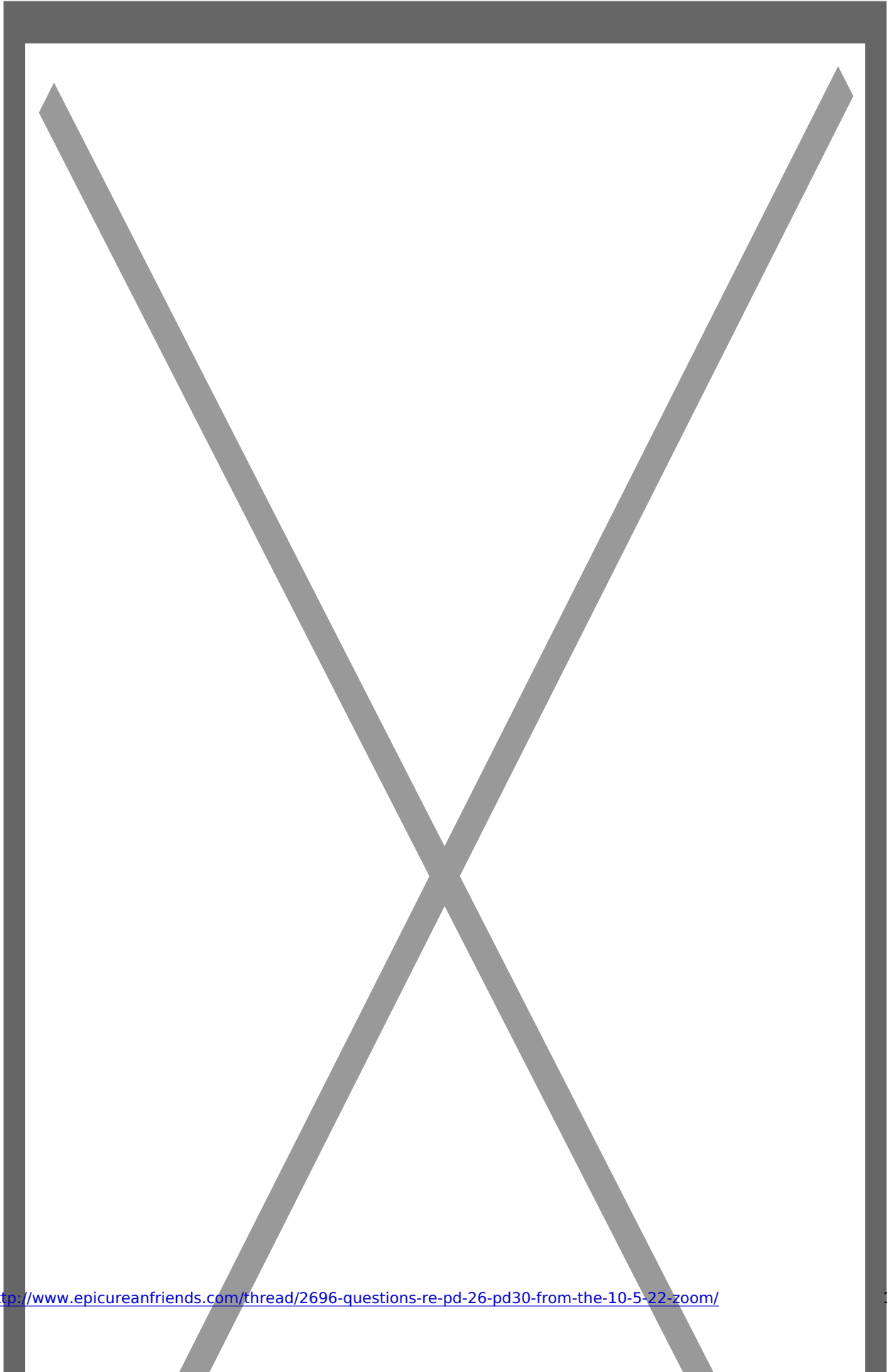
We know they were referred to as "Authorized"

I wouldn't put too much stress on that one word. What they are called are the κυριαὶ δοξαὶ kyriai doxai.

The doxai are beliefs, doctrines, opinions, etc. This is where English gets the -dox in words like orthodox "correct/right beliefs".

Kyriai is related to the the Kyrie (vocative case of kyrios) in the Christian prayer "Kyrie, eleison" "Lord, have mercy"

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[Kyrie - Wikipedia](#)

en.wikipedia.org

The kyriai has connection to kyrios "lord, master, sir, the big kahuna, etc." So, these beliefs, doctrines, opinions are, in one sense, the *important* ones, the master doctrines, the important beliefs, the ones you're going to hold if you're an Epicurean.

Here's the definition of kyrios

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, κύριος](#)

You'll see words like power, ordained, authority/authorized/authoritative, supreme, sovereign, principal, valid, proper, etc... All are equally correct and all bring their own English baggage with them. That's why some academics simply use KD (Kyriai Doxai) to refer to them.

That's why you have SO many variations on the title of that work, which remember was NOT originally written as a numbered list!

Post by "Cassius" of October 7, 2022 at 7:59 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

To address your "which is best?" The best is φυσικός 😊 but seriously they both have good points and bad points but any English word is ultimately going to bring its own semantic baggage and be looking at the texts through a glass darkly. The best we can do is be aware of this and NEVER rely on one translation like it's the King James Bible

Yes I think that is the key point and this emphasizes the danger of taking passages out of the context of the whole philosophy. If something seems to deviate from the whole that is a big clue to look for differences in word constructions and connotations, and this to look for ways to reconcile rather than adopt a construction that conflicts with the big picture.

Post by "Cassius" of October 7, 2022 at 8:03 AM

As for the "K" in the KD issue let's also discuss our thoughts on whether this list was assembled BY Epicurus himself or assembled FROM his works by others. I am beginning to trend toward the latter view.

Post by “Don” of October 7, 2022 at 8:13 AM

Well, Diogenes includes it in Epicurus's list of works. I realize that's not definitive, but KD holds together much better than Vatican Sayings which is definitely a compilation. Could a scribal error have mixed up some sections of KD? Definitely! Does KD have it's overall organization in a work by Epicurus? That's my position. And Epicurus didn't have to call it KD though I don't see why he couldn't. But I'd want to check references to such a work in Seneca, Cicero, and Philodemus et al. before staking a flag too deep:

Such, then, in number and character are the writings of Epicurus, the best of which are the following :

Of Nature, thirty-seven books.

Of Atoms and Void.

Of Love.

Epitome of Objections to the Physicists.

Against the Megarians.

Problems.

Sovran Maxims. Κύριαι δόξαι

Of Choice and Avoidance.

Of the End.

Of the Standard, a work entitled Canon.

Chaeredemus.

Of the Gods.

Of Piety.

[28] Hegesianax.

Of Human Life, four books.

Of Just Dealing.

Neocles : dedicated to Themista.

Symposium.

Eurylochus : dedicated to Metrodorus.

Of Vision.

Of the Angle in the Atom.

Of Touch.

Of Fate.

Theories of the Feelings--against Timocrates.

Discovery of the Future.

Introduction to Philosophy.

Of Images.

Of Presentation.

Aristobulus.

Of Music.

Of Justice and the other Virtues.

Of Benefits and Gratitude.

Polymedes.

Timocrates, three books.

Metrodorus, five books.

Antidorus, two books.

Theories about Diseases (and Death)--to Mithras.41

Callistolas.

Of Kingship.

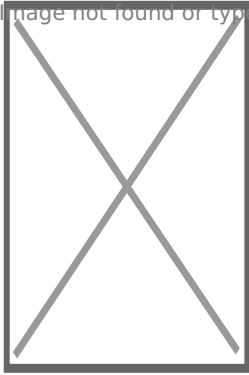
Anaximenes.

Correspondence.

Edit: Oh, his Wikipedia article lists the work as *Fundamental Propositions*. I like that!

Post by “Don” of October 7, 2022 at 8:33 AM

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[Epicurus in Lycia](#)
books.google.com

Post by “Cassius” of October 7, 2022 at 9:03 AM

Great refernce to the Lycia book. Here are key clips:

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 *Kyriai Doxas*, id est quasi maxime ratas"; *De Natura Deorum* 1.30.85: "in illis selectis eius brevibusque sentiis, quas appellatis *Kyriai 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* (Ἐπικούρου 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):

Post by “Cassius” of October 7, 2022 at 9:09 AM

Again thanks to Don for finding that material in the Lycia book. My thoughts are definitely parallel with those of Usener to the effect that this was a collection that seems very unlikely to have been arranged by Epicurus himself, but which likely constitutes a series of quotes from Epicurus' writings. The result of that reasoning would be that the material is authentic to Epicurus himself, but not the collection or arrangement, and that brings into play important limitations in how we "read between the lines" from this single document.

Post by "Don" of October 7, 2022 at 9:29 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

My thoughts are definitely parallel with those of Usener

My thoughts parallel Diskin Clay's in that excerpt in thinking Epicurus himself formulated and distributed a work forming the basis of the KD that may have been added to and edited after his death

Post by "Kalosyni" of October 7, 2022 at 9:30 AM

The "Epicurus in Lycia" source says three different versions of KD's !!!

Post by "Cassius" of October 7, 2022 at 10:36 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

The "Epicurus in Lycia" source says three different versions of KD's !!!

That's why flexibility, insight, and willingness to think independently from the crowd are so important in studying Epicurus.

The truth is out there, but has to be dug out, and controversies abound, so I recommend wearing a helmet while digging for it= 😊

From Lucretius Book One:

[398] Wherefore, however long you hang back with much objection, you must needs confess at last that there is void in things. And besides by telling you many an instance, I can heap up proof for my words. But these light footprints are enough for a keen mind: by them you may detect the rest for yourself. For as dogs ranging over mountains often find by scent the lairs of wild beasts shrouded under leafage, when once they are set on sure traces of their track, so for yourself you will be able in such themes as this to see one thing after another, to win your way to all the secret places and draw out the truth thence.

Also:

If you know this, It only takes a very little trouble To learn the rest: the lessons, one by one, Brighten each other, no dark night will keep you, Pathless, astray, from ultimate vision and light, All things illumined in each other's radiance.

Post by “Don” of October 7, 2022 at 10:51 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

The "Epicurus in Lycia" source says three different versions of KD's !!!

It seems to me the three are more editions of the same text rather than thinking of them as three different "versions." Not saying it's not important to see the differences among the editions but I don't think we're seeing completely divergent texts.

Post by “Kalosyni” of October 7, 2022 at 11:33 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

It seems to me the three are more editions of the same text rather than thinking of them as three different "versions."

Thank you [Don](#) for clarifying that 😊

Post by “Eikadistes” of October 9, 2022 at 11:28 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Don or Nate, what about the varying translations of "natural" vs "physical"? What explains that variation and which do you think is best?

I'm interested to hear Nate's take.

Both are *generally* adequate, and, given the Greek (ΦΥΣΙΣ) and not Latin (NATVRA) source, “physical” works; *however*, “natural” in contemporary English vernacular expresses Epicurus’ nuance more appropriately than does “physical”. When we employ “natural”, we imply a contrast against the “supernatural”, which is an important criticism in Epicurean philosophy. Epicurus was responding to the supernatural propositions of metaphysicians, so invoking “nature” is appropriate. “Physical” *can* connote a contrast against “mental” or “spiritual” (within the context of contemporary English), which is inappropriate, because Epicurus sees “mental” and “spiritual” as being a subset of that which is “physical”, not an alternative to it. Additionally, there is an allusion with “physical” to Cartesian dualism, which implies that “the physical” is just one facet of reality. On top of that, it further reinforces the idea that contemporary “physics” is unable to deal with mental phenomena, and can only deal with actions between particles, whereas some “higher” knowledge is required to explain the complexities of a non-physical mind. I’ll take them both, but I *prefer* “nature”.

Post by “Don” of October 9, 2022 at 2:29 PM

As always, @Nate , a pleasure to read your insightful commentary!

Your post got me thinking again.

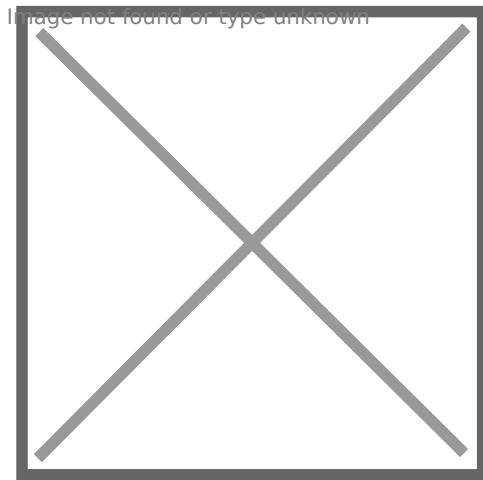
The two main categories of desires are:

φυσικοι "natural/physical"

κεναι "empty/vain/groundless/void"

I am going to assume that natural was chosen by many translators because of its nice alliteration with "necessary": natural AND necessary.

However, I got an inclination that this somewhat skews an English-reading audience to think it's "natural" as in "It's natural to have those desires" as in:



Definition of NATURAL

based on an inherent sense of right and wrong; being in accordance with or determined by nature; having or constituting a classification based on features...

www.merriam-webster.com

1 : based on an inherent sense of right and wrong

instead of more like

5 : implanted or being as if implanted by nature : seemingly inborn

It sets up a "natural" vs "unnatural" as in acceptable vs deviant.

In thinking about "physical/material" I'm considering what it would mean if we looked at those desires as "physical and necessary" and "physical and unnecessary" in the sense of φυσικος's meaning of "physical, having to do with the study of the material world."

These are desires arising from our being part of the material world, having a physical existence.

As opposed to those desires that are empty or *void.*

This would set up a categorization of *desires* that mirrors or complements the basis of our material existence:

atoms (which are the material basis of our existence) paired with physical desires

void (which is empty space) paired with "void" desires

I don't have this fleshed out entirely, but I wanted to get it down for reaction before I forgot it!

Post by “Don” of October 9, 2022 at 3:20 PM

For your consideration:

"on the one hand, there are the desires arising from our physical, material existence; on the other, the 'empty, fruitless, or vain ones.' And of the desires arising from our physical, material existence, on the one hand, are the necessary ones; on the other, the ones which merely arise from our physical, material existence; then, of the necessary ones: on the one hand, those necessary for eudaimonia; then, those necessary for the freedom from disturbance for the body; then those necessary for life itself."

Post by “Don” of October 9, 2022 at 3:46 PM

I wonder if those three categories of physical and necessary desires have any correspondence to Aristotle's three categories of goods:

He says goods are divided into three classes:

1. External goods τῶν ἐκτὸς (ektos)
 2. Goods of the soul τῶν δὲ περὶ ψυχῆν (psykhe)
 3. Goods of the body καὶ σῶμα (soma)
-

Post by “Godfrey” of October 10, 2022 at 12:54 AM

Regarding thinking along the lines of atoms and void for the desires, I too was starting to go in that direction but I don't think that it's fruitful. It could easily lead to thinking that an urge or thought *comes from* the void, which opens the door to the supernatural.

I'm pretty certain that none of us are thinking of anything coming from the void: we all agree (right?) that everything, including desires and thoughts, are ultimately material. But I can envision all sorts of people latching on to the idea that various things come from the void. Well, I don't even have to envision it as all sorts of people already think that various things (gods, angels and all types of woo-woo) come from the void!

Referring to desires or thoughts as "empty" is completely different from relating them to the void, despite any linguistic similarity. At least as far as I can tell.

Post by "Don" of October 10, 2022 at 6:40 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

It could easily lead to thinking that an urge or thought comes from the void, which opens the door to the supernatural

Oh, no, no, no, no. I didn't mean to imply there was anything coming **from** the void. It would only be by analogy.

I'm wrestling with the idea of "why only two main categories of desires?" This led to atoms and void especially since Epicurus used the same exact word to describe the empty space in which atoms move to also describe desires that have no ground. They don't come **from** the void in some woo-woo way, but they do share the **characteristic** of being **empty** of any reason to follow them.

There's also the dichotomy of pleasure and pain. Walking down this path a little further and stream-of-consciousnessing it, the desires with a physical basis typically lead to pleasure; empty desires typically lead to pain. Still working this out.

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

all sorts of people latching on to the idea that various things come from the void. Well, I don't even have to envision it as all sorts of people already think that various things (gods, angels and all types of woo-woo) come from the void!

LOL! For me, The tendencies of the hoi polloi aren't a reason to not explore a possibility of getting behind Epicurus's ideas. The more I think about it, the more I have to think Epicurus deliberately described desires as κενός AND used the same exact word to describe the empty space in which the atoms moved THEN limited main categories of desires to two.

[PD29](#) Τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν αἱ μὲν εἰσι φυσικαὶ <καὶ ἀναγκαῖαι· αἱ δὲ φυσικαὶ> καὶ οὐκ ἀναγκαῖαι, αἱ δὲ οὔτε φυσικαὶ οὔτε ἀναγκαῖαι ἀλλὰ παρὰ κενὴν δόξαν γινόμεναι.

Of the desires/cravings, first there are those that are physical/natural and required to live, then there are those that are physical/natural but not required, and, finally, there are those that are neither physical/natural nor required which come to be along with empty beliefs (beliefs devoid of merit).(Ancient scholia/commentary: Epicurus regards as physical/natural and necessary, desires which bring relief from pain, as e.g. drink when we are thirsty ; while by physical/natural and not necessary he means those which merely diversify the pleasure without removing the pain, such as costly foods; by the neither natural nor necessary (i.e., empty) he means desires for crowns and the erection of statues in one's honor.)

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Referring to desires or thoughts as "empty" is completely different from relating them to the void, despite any linguistic similarity.

I'm still not so certain, albeit with the caveats I've laid out here.