

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

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 φύσις, form, stature, ἢ νόον ἢ τοι φύσιν either in mind or outward form, Pind.; τὸν δὲ Λαΐον, φύσιν τίν' εἶχε, φράζει Soph.; τὴν ἐμὴν ἰδῶν 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.; ἢ 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 εὔ 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.