

No Supernatural Entities, Forces, or Powers and No Ghosts

Post by “Kalosyni” of September 24, 2024 at 9:06 AM

This morning I saw a headline in the Washington Post about [libraries loaning out ghost hunting kits](#). 😞

Here is the USA, as we head into the "Halloween Season" time of the calendar (which seems to get longer and "bigger" each year) I have been thinking about how important it is to be grounded in a realistic worldview of matter and phenomenon having natural causes. Back in the September first Monday Zoom, we discussed what this worldview should be labeled, and the consensus in that meeting was the label "materialism". However I see a problem with that label because it has a double meaning (the belief that money and material possessions are the most important thing in life - which is not what Epicureans believe at all) and wondering if we could come up with a better label. I think that the "philosophical materialist worldview" is a very important aspect of Epicurean philosophy for many reasons.

I found this article about a poll of 1000 people in which 41% said that they believe in ghosts. Here is an excerpt:

Quote

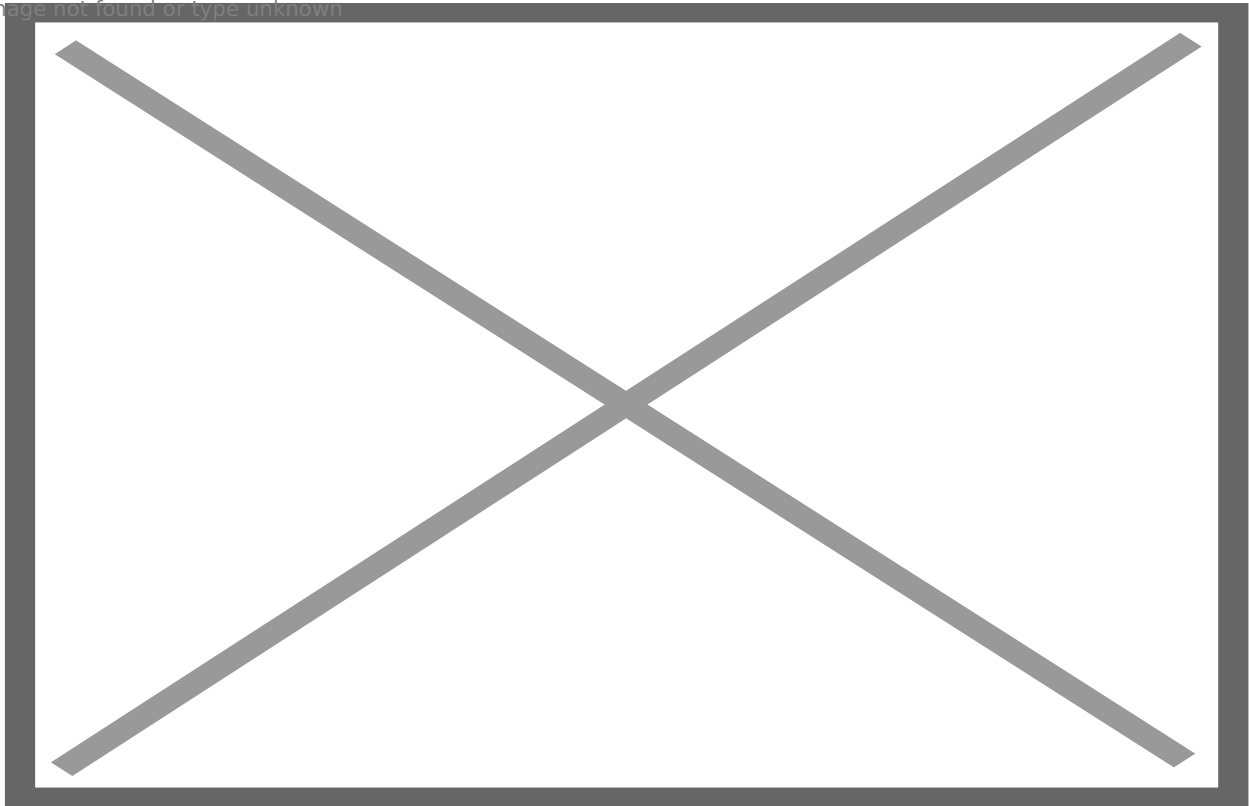
Never before in history have people recorded so many ghost encounters, thanks in part to mobile phone cameras and microphones. It seems there would be great evidence by now. [But scientists don't have it](#).

Instead, there are lots of ambiguous recordings sabotaged by bad lighting and faulty equipment. But popular [television shows on ghost hunting](#) convince many viewers that blurry images and emotional reactions are proof enough.

As for [all the devices](#) ghost hunters use to capture sounds, electrical fields and infrared radiation - they may look scientific, but [they're not](#). Measurements are worthless without some knowledge of the thing you're measuring.

You can read more about it:

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[Millions of Americans Believe in Ghosts. An Expert Reveals Why.](#)

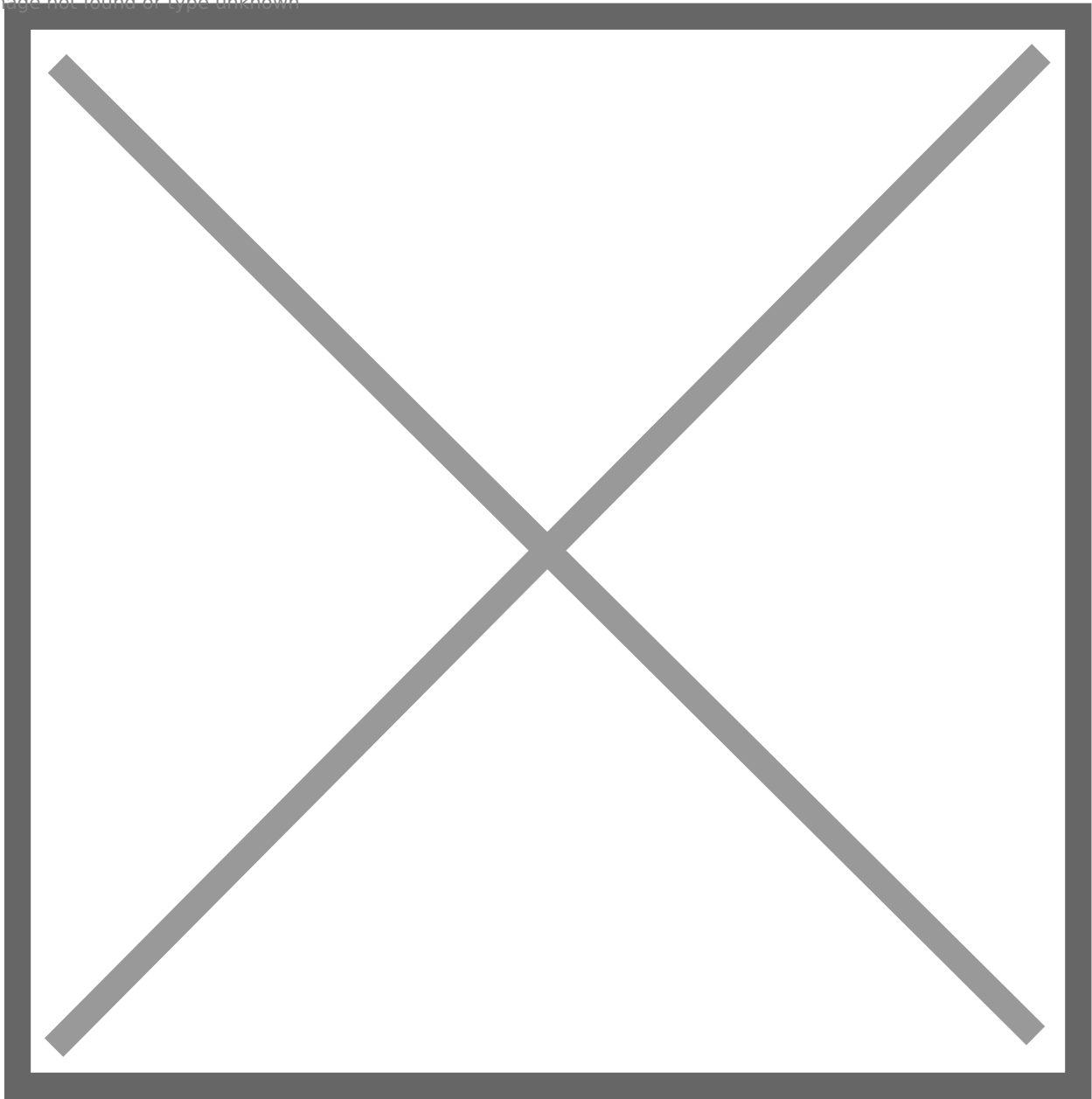
Certainly, lots of people believe in ghosts – a spirit left behind after someone who was alive has died.

www.sciencealert.com

Post by “Kalosyni” of September 24, 2024 at 9:31 AM

Plus this article:

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[Spirit in the Stacks | American Libraries Magazine](#)

Public libraries across the US are lending out ghost-hunting kits to patrons.
americanlibrariesmagazine.org

Post by “Cassius” of September 24, 2024 at 9:48 AM

Unfortunately any single term (other than "Epicurean" itself) is going to have its own set of difficult associations. Hopefully over time the situation will improve as people talk about Epicurean philosophy more in "normal" circles.

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

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As for the "ghosts" issue, that strikes me as an example of how - despite the decrease in organized religion, at least in the USA - we still have a lot of people who refuse to give up on more generic "spiritual" ideas.

Post by “kochiekoch” of September 24, 2024 at 2:25 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

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There IS a better label Kalosyni! 😊

[Physicalism - Wikipedia](#)

>>In [philosophy](#), **physicalism** is the view that "everything is [physical](#)", that there is "nothing over and above" the physical,^[1] or that everything [supervenes](#) on the physical.^[2] It is opposed to [idealism](#), according to which the world arises from mind. Physicalism is a form of ontological [monism](#)—a "one [substance](#)" view of the nature of [reality](#), unlike "two-substance" ([mind-body dualism](#)) or "many-substance" ([pluralism](#)) views. Both the definition of "physical" and the meaning of physicalism have been debated.

Physicalism is closely related to [materialism](#), and has evolved from materialism with advancements in the [physical sciences](#) in explaining observed phenomena. The terms "physicalism" and "materialism" are often used interchangeably, but can be distinguished based on their philosophical implications. Physicalism encompasses [matter](#), but also [energy](#), [physical laws](#), [space](#), [time](#), [structure](#), physical processes, [information](#), state, and [forces](#), among other things, as described by physics and other sciences, as part of the physical in a monistic sense. From a physicalist perspective, even abstract concepts such as [mathematics](#), [morality](#), [consciousness](#), [intentionality](#), and [meaning](#) are considered physical entities, although they may consist of a large ontological object and a causally complex structure.^[3]

According to a 2020 survey, physicalism is the majority view among philosophers,^[4] but there also remains significant opposition to physicalism.<<

Post by “Don” of September 24, 2024 at 5:42 PM

Honestly, I'm a little embarrassed for my profession. sigh. A classic example of patron-driven collection development ... gone awry, in my opinion.

(Rant complete....Steps down off soapbox)

Post by “Pacatus” of September 24, 2024 at 5:57 PM

[Don](#)

If it were not for librarians – and other free researchers – such as yourself, I long ago would have been lost in the closely closeted (or corested?) strictures of those professors, philosophers and priests who permitted no thinking outside their – corsets. (“Why are you reading *that?*!”)

From my academic student days till now. Thank you.

Post by “Joshua” of September 24, 2024 at 6:55 PM

There is an interesting remark by Stephen Greenblatt in *The Swerve* about libraries in antiquity, but I haven't been able to track down a source for the claim.

Quote

At the games in the Colosseum one day, the historian Tacitus had a conversation on literature with a perfect stranger who turned out to have read his works. Culture was no longer located in close-knit circles of friends and acquaintances; Tacitus was encountering his "public" in the form of someone who had bought his book at a stall in the Forum or read it in a library.

In any case, [This](#) article (PDF) gives an interesting look into how these texts might have been distributed in antiquity. Just in case Don needs a cheering-up!

Post by “Cassius” of September 24, 2024 at 8:56 PM

This is going to sound nit-picking but I'm just illustrating the limits of any single term.

"Physicalism," like "materialism," is a word that says nothing about:

- (1) canonicity - doesn't tell you anything much about the role of logic and reason and how to think.
- (2) ethics - doesn't tell you anything about the role of pleasure vs virtue, and really doesn't say much even about the gods, because some (even the Stoics apparently) take the position that supernatural gods are physical.
- (3) and it also doesn't tell you anything much, even in physics, about whether the universe is subject to "hard determinism" or whether there is any degree of free agency.

This kind of analysis can be done with probably any single word, because I'm not aware that anyone has come up with essentially the same (or even closely similar) combination of crucial elements that are combined into the philosophy of Epicurus.

Post by “kochiekoch” of September 25, 2024 at 11:40 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

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(3) and it also doesn't tell you anything much, even in physics, about whether the universe is subject to "hard determinism" or whether there is any degree of free agency.

Hi Cassius! 😊

No, it doesn't because all that stuff is different branches of philosophy, aside from the branch of metaphysics as the concept of physicalism.

Display More

Post by “Patrikios” of September 28, 2024 at 6:28 PM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

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[Joshua](#) , interesting question on how Epicurean texts got circulated in Ancient Greece & Italy. When I visited Greece earlier this month my tour included Olympia and Delphi, which was home to the “Pythian Games”. Each location held their games every 4 years off-set by 2 years. While the athletic games only lasted 3 or 4 days, the festival was 8 days or more.

These gatherings included opportunities for dialogue with people from around the Mediterranean. Next to the stadiums was the theater, where lectures given, along with plays and music. Many of the travelers to Olympia and Delphi paid some appropriate “alms” to the temple(s), on their way to the stadiums and theaters. Yet, many also then listened or had dialogue with teachers from Epicurean schools in Greece. While there wasn’t any direct archaeological evidence for the spreading of Epicurean discussions at these large festivals in Greece.

So, it is very likely that similar gatherings occurred around the Colosseum and Forum in Rome until around 4th century CE. My facts and memory may not be exact, but in Greece the crossroads of ideas frequently occurred around the festivals.

Here’s the Wikipedia text on Pythian Games.

“The **Pythian Games** ([Greek](#): Τα Πύθια, [translit.](#) *Ta Pythia*) were one of the four [Panhellenic Games](#) of [Ancient Greece](#). They were held in honour of [Apollo](#) at his sanctuary in [Delphi](#) every four years, two years after the [Olympic Games](#), and between each [Nemean](#) and [Isthmian Games](#). The Pythian Games were founded sometime in the 6th century BC. In legend they were started by Apollo after he killed [Python](#) and set up the [Oracle at Delphi](#). They continued until the 4th century AD.”