

Epicurean Emotions

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IN CONTRAST to the Stoic theory of the emotions, Epicurean theory on this topic has been somewhat neglected. This is partly because there does not seem to be much *theory* in our sources; and I shall admit at the start that the theory I find is inferred rather than read off from our sources—a frequent situation in Epicurean studies. Partly also it may be because one of our best sources is Philodemus' *On Anger*, a work that, like all Philodemus, is frequently scholastic, baffling, and difficult even to construe.¹ This fascinating treatise is nevertheless useful in many ways, for it shows us Philodemus adjusting Epicureanism to a changing philosophical climate; and his main line of analysis of the emotions is, I shall argue, an adaptation of one of Epicurus' ideas developed in a different context.

In writing an extended essay on anger, Philodemus is going beyond Epicurus, who does not devote such care to particular emotions.² By Philodemus' time the essay on anger had clearly emerged as a special genre. His debt to the Cynic diatribe is indicated by the reference to Bion's *On Anger* at col. I.15–20. It is probably from the diatribe as a genre that Philodemus derives the rhetorical and even theatrical mode of the first part of the treatise (I–XXXIII). The point, as he stresses in III–IV, is to bring the evil

¹ I shall refer to it in the new edition with translation and notes by G. INDELLI (Naples 1988 [hereafter 'Indelli']). I have also consulted the earlier Teubner edition by C. Wilke (Leipzig 1914). I take it that concentrating on Philodemus is the most useful way to proceed here. There is, of course, a great deal of interesting material for the study of Epicurean emotions in Lucretius; but it raises a host of literary issues that complicate the question. Philodemus, for all his difficulty, can be more straightforwardly studied as a philosophical text.

² The list of Epicurus' works in Diogenes Laertius (10.27f) includes a *Περὶ ἔρωτος* and a *Περὶ παθῶν δόξαι πρὸς Τιμοκράτην*; it is especially sad that we do not have the latter, but there is little reason to think that it anticipated later essays on particular emotions. The title of Philodemus' book is probably *Περὶ παθῶν ὁ περὶ ὀργῆς*, not *Περὶ ἠθῶν* as suggested by Wilke; see Indelli 36–39.

vividly before our eyes, as doctors do in describing physical ills; and this is certainly what we find in the parade of characters—furious, spluttering, and generally out-of-control—presented in the first half of the work.³

But while the diatribe may account for many formal features of the first part of his essay, Philodemus' reference to Bion is immediately followed by one to Chrysippus' "therapeutic" book on the emotions. Study of the emotions, especially a hostile and destructive one like anger, would from the start naturally form part of a philosophy that promised, as both Stoics and Epicureans did, happiness to those who followed it. Philodemus' mention of the doctor in IV, like Chrysippus' therapeutic book, shows the importance in Hellenistic thought of the notion that philosophy can *cure* you of your problems, including emotional ones.⁴ The diatribe may inject dramatic and confrontational elements, but the need to analyze and discuss such emotions as anger is implicit in the Epicurean programme from the outset.

In the more theoretical second part of *On Anger* Philodemus turns from displaying the evils of anger to an analysis of it. He represents himself as hewing a middle way between two views (XXXVII). One of these is the Stoic position that anger is always a bad thing, and that the proper attitude to it is to remove it. The other is the Peripatetic view that there is much to be said for anger, for without

³ Philodemus' remark in VII that "we are used to doing this" for erotic desire recalls Lucretius' theatrical display in Book IV. Indelli refers to a work Περὶ ἔρωτος by Philodemus, mentioned in *P.Hercul.* 1457 (fr.23.25), and possibly contained in *P.Hercul.* 1384. Epicurus also wrote on this subject: see *supra* n.2. On Lucretius' tirade against the erotic form of love see most recently M. Nussbaum, "Beyond Obsession and Disgust: Lucretius' Genealogy of Love," *Apeiron* 22 (1989) 1–59. The way in which anger is presented in Philodemus and in later writers in the genre, such as Plutarch, Seneca, and the Christian writers quoted by Indelli in his commentary, would reward detailed comparative study.

⁴ Cf. M. Gigante, "Philosophia Medicans' in Filodemo," *CronErcol* 5 (1975) 53–61; M. Nussbaum, "Therapeutic Arguments: Epicurus and Aristotle," in M. Schofield and G. Striker, ed., *The Norms of Nature* (Cambridge 1986) 31–74. For the therapeutic model in ancient scepticism, see not only its ubiquitous use by the Pyrrhonist Sextus but the interesting statement by the Academic Philo in Arius Didymus *ap.* Stobaeus *Ecl.* 2.39.20–41.25, with the discussion of D. E. Hahm, "The Diaeretic Method and the Purpose of Arius' Doxography," in W. W. Fortenbaugh, ed., *On Stoic and Peripatetic Ethics: The Work of Arius Didymus* (New Brunswick 1983) 15–37 at 26–29. The therapeutic model also features prominently in Posidonius' polemic against Chrysippus' doctrine of the emotions: see recently, for instance, I. G. Kidd, "Euemptōsia—Proneness to Disease," in Fortenbaugh 107–13.

it we become weak and obsequious, unable to defend ourselves. Philodemus, however, is not in fact compromising between different views. His discussion is conducted throughout in terms of what the Epicurean σοφός would or would not do; the views he seems most concerned to refute in detail are those of rival Epicureans with differing interpretations of the Master's words.⁵

There is no simple answer, according to Philodemus (XXXVII), to the question whether anger is a bad thing or a good. This is because "anger" is used in two ways; in order to avoid fallacy, one must distinguish between "natural anger" (φυσικὴ ὀργή) and "empty anger" (κενὴ ὀργή).⁶ Philodemus does not explain the distinction, though he probably did so in a part of the essay now missing.

The term κενός, literally "empty," can also mean "futile, pointless" (LSJ *s.v.* I.2); thus the expression "empty anger" for a defective kind of anger is not as striking in Greek as it is in English.⁷ However, contrasting what is empty with what is *natural* is striking, and is bound to remind us, especially in an Epicurean author, of Epicurus' distinction between natural and empty *desires*:

ἀναλογιστέον δὲ ὡς τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν αἱ μὲν εἰσι φυσικαί, αἱ δὲ κεναί, καὶ τῶν φυσικῶν αἱ μὲν ἀναγκαῖαι, αἱ δὲ φυσικαὶ μόνον· τῶν δὲ ἀναγκαίων αἱ μὲν πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν εἰσὶν ἀναγκαῖαι, αἱ δὲ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἀοχλησίαν, αἱ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ ζῆν.

We should reflect that of desires some are natural, some empty. Of the natural, some are only natural and some are necessary. Of the necessary, some are necessary for happiness, some for comfort of the body, and some for life itself (*Ep. ad Men.* 127).

⁵ I follow Indelli in taking this to be the position of the obscure Timasagoras and Nicasicrates (for the relevant literature see Indelli on VII and XXXVII). Cf. XLV in particular for later Epicureans squabbling over the correct interpretations of Epicurus and the other early Masters; Philodemus criticizes his rivals for claiming to be scholarly (βιβλιακοί, "bookish") but failing to study the texts closely enough.

⁶ Cf. XLIII ff, where Philodemus repeats the point that there is a difference between the anger of the Epicurean σοφός and other kinds of anger, not marked by a difference of word; and where he likewise distinguishes uses of θυμός, one in which it answers to the uses of ὀργή and therefore can be compatible with being σοφός, and the commoner one in which it implies frenzy and fury, which are not so compatible. These points show that here the Epicureans were not following common usage, in which their crucial distinctions are completely unmarked. They do not introduce new terms either; they are engaged in persuasive redefinition.

⁷ Cf. Soph. *El.* 330f: θέλεις θυμῷ ματαίῳ χαρίζεσθαι κενά.

τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν αἱ μὲν εἰσιν φυσικαὶ καὶ ἀναγκαῖαι, αἱ δὲ φυσικαὶ καὶ οὐκ ἀναγκαῖαι, αἱ δὲ οὔτε φυσικαὶ οὔτε ἀναγκαῖαι, ἀλλὰ παρὰ κενὴν δόξαν γινόμεναι.

Of desires, some are natural and necessary, some are natural but not necessary, and some are neither natural nor necessary, but come about depending on empty belief (*KD* 29).⁸

Epicurus is working with two distinctions: natural *vs* empty, and necessary *vs* non-necessary. He combines these to produce a three-fold classification, but they are best examined separately.

Natural desires are opposed to empty desires, which are dependent on an empty belief. Empty beliefs are at least false, but not all false beliefs are not called empty; to be empty a false belief has to be harmful, a mistaken opinion about matters of importance to one's life. Natural desires ought then to be desires that depend only on true beliefs; but this seems too weak. As we would expect from their being called natural, they are the desires that come from human nature. Now, it is surprising to find Epicurus relying on a notion of nature and what a thing's nature requires. His philosophy of science, unlike Aristotle's, has no careful investigation of scientific concepts such as change and nature; there is little or nothing between very high-level principles of atomism and low-level scientific explanations. Thus we find in Epicurus nothing like Aristotle's idea that a thing's nature is its internal source of active and passive change. Nonetheless, Epicurus does work with a notion of nature, not only for what is objectively there⁹ but for a thing and the way it is, as opposed to its qualities and relations.¹⁰ He uses "the nature of *x*" or "the *x* nature" in a way that verges on periphrasis

⁸ Cf. the scholion to *KD* 29, *VS* 21, *KD* 30, Usener 469, *KD* 15.

⁹ *KD* 7: if people who are in fact wrong were right, they would have got τὸ τῆς φύσεως ἀγαθόν; cf. *KD* 25, Usener 471, 423; *KD* 31, τὸ τῆς φύσεως δίκαιον; *Ep. ad Men.* 133; *VS* 25; G. Arrighetti, *Epicuro: Opere*² (Torino 1973) [37] [35]: if the μέτρον is not ἐμ φύσει, then we should not even consider time to exist.

¹⁰ Cf. Arrighetti [24] [48] 7, 17; [24] [49] 4, 8, 27: the εἶδωλα are "natures" that are "full of void"; *Ep. ad Her.* 71: we should not deny the existence of qualities on the ground that they lack "the nature of the whole"; συμπτώματα do not have the rank (τάγμα) of nature καθ' ἑαυτά; 68: we cannot conceive of συμβεβηκότα like natures καθ' ἑαυτάς; 40 and 48: the καθ' ὅλας φύσεις are contrasted with both συμπτώματα and συμβεβηκότα.

for “*x*”;¹¹ a thing’s nature is what it is, as opposed to what merely happens to be true of it or is true of it only by virtue of its relation to something else. This is an intuitive enough distinction, and Epicurus probably regarded it as common-sense. Atoms constitute the nature of the soul, he says (*Ep. ad Her.* 65); body has its own nature (69); nature is weak towards evil, but not towards good, for it is sustained by pleasures but broken up by pains (*VS* 37). We have no trouble accepting these points, though doubtless Epicurus thought that a true view of our, or anything’s, nature depends upon a comprehensive understanding of Epicurean theory.

A desire is necessary if we cannot be happy or healthy or even alive if we do not have the object of that desire (*Ep. ad Men.* 127). The desire is called necessary because it is necessary for us to have its object; that is, its object is something that we *need* rather than simply want. It is tempting to link this to the scholion to *KD* 29, which describes natural and necessary desires as those that bring *pain* if not satisfied. It is clear that a desire can be not necessary and still natural, still spring from human nature without resting on false beliefs.

Epicurus puts together the two distinctions by specifying three kinds of desire: natural and necessary, natural and not necessary, and neither natural nor necessary—these last are identified with empty desires.¹² Cicero (*Fin.* 2.26f) faults this division, complaining that Epicurus should not put all three on the same level, since *natural* is the genus of which *necessary* and *not necessary* are species. Cicero’s own objection is easily met, by simply regarding *natural* and *not natural* (empty) as two genera, with *necessary* and *not necessary* as species of the genus *natural*; but a problem with Epicurus’ classification does emerge from consideration of *KD* 30:

ἐν αἷς τῶν φυσικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν μὴ ἐπ’ ἀλγοῦν δὲ ἐπαναγουσῶν ἐὰν μὴ συντελεθῶσιν, ὑπάρχει ἢ σπουδὴ σύντονος, παρὰ κενὴν δόξαν

¹¹ Plutarch, *Mor.* 1122E (Usener 76), comments on this usage. Cf. Arrighetti [29] [5], where “air’s nature”=“air”; [34] [21] 4, 11, 16: the nature of the atoms has not contributed to the bad dispositions of some; Usener 84: “immortal natures” for the gods; *Ep. ad Pyth.* 97, 113: “the divine nature” for the gods.

¹² *KD* 29, quoted *supra* 148; cf. the scholion *ad loc.*: φυσικὰς καὶ ἀναγκαίας ἡγεῖται ὁ Ἐπίκουρος τὰς ἀληθοῦς ἀπολυούσας, ὡς ποτὸν ἐπὶ δίψους· φυσικὰς δὲ οὐκ ἀναγκαίας δὲ τὰς ποικιλοῦσας μόνον τὴν ἡδονὴν, μὴ ὑπεξαιρουμένας δὲ τὸ ἄλγημα, ὡς πολυτελεῖ σιτία· οὔτε δὲ φυσικὰς οὔτ’ ἀναγκαίας, ὡς στεφάνους καὶ ἀνδριάντων ἀναθέσεις.

αὐται γίνονται, καὶ οὐ παρὰ τὴν ἑαυτῶν φύσιν οὐ διαχέονται ἀλλὰ παρὰ τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κενοδοξίαν.

When there is an intense effort in those natural desires which lead to no pain if not gratified, these come about in a way that depends on empty belief, and they fail to be dispelled, not because of their own nature, but because of the person's empty opinionating.

Here it is clear that one and the same desire can be either natural and not necessary, or empty, depending on the agent's attitude and other beliefs. We could say, for example, following the scholion on *KD* 29, that desire for an expensive food such as lobster is a natural but not necessary desire—one which merely *varies* the agent's pleasure. But if the agent *cares* very much about lobster—makes efforts to get it, sulks if it is not on the menu—then the desire becomes an empty one, for it now depends on the belief that getting lobster, as opposed to something else to satisfy one's hunger, is something worth caring about, and this is an empty belief, false and dysfunctional. Thus the same desire (desire for lobster) can be, depending on the agent's attitudes and beliefs, either natural but not necessary, or not natural at all. We can understand the idea that it might to some extent depend on circumstances whether a desire is necessary or not necessary; our needs may be more or less basic (*Ep. ad Men.* 127). But there seems to be something wrong with the classification when we reflect that it can depend on the agent's beliefs whether a desire is natural but not necessary, or not natural at all.

Another characterization of natural desires may help us here. They are, for example, supposed to be *easy* to fulfill (Stob. *Ecl.* 17.23 = Usener 469; cf. also *KD* 15):

Χάρις τῇ μακαρίᾳ φύσει, ὅτι τὰ ἀναγκαῖα ἐποίησεν εὐπόριστα, τὰ δὲ δυσπόριστα οὐκ ἀναγκαῖα.

Thanks to [our] blessed nature, which has made what is necessary easy to provide, and what is hard to provide not necessary.

But one could retort that it is easy to fulfill the desire for lobster—if you have plenty of money; likewise easy to fulfill the desire for political office—if you have power and means; and so on. On its own this does not get us any further.¹³

¹³ Similarly with the ideas that natural desires are limited (*KD* 15) and that they vary the pleasure produced, rather than increasing it (*Σ ad KD* 29). In isolation these claims likewise are open to obvious counterexamples. As parts of Epicurean

The key to a coherent understanding of Epicurus' theory of natural and empty desires is, I suggest, an assumption that is nowhere made explicit in the texts. What we need is some way of marking off the natural desires of humans in such a way that they contrast in the right way with empty desires, and divide in the right way into necessary and not necessary. We can do this, I think, if we make the assumption that desires which are for humans natural and necessary are *generic*. That is, they are desires *for food, for shelter*, and so on, without specification of *what kind* of food, shelter, and so on. My desire for food springs from my nature as a self-maintaining organism that periodically needs to replenish itself; and it is necessary that I fulfill this desire if I am to continue as such a being at all—and *a fortiori* as a healthy and happy such being. (Hence if I do not fulfill it I will be in pain, and fulfilling it removes this pain.) If natural and necessary desires are generic—for food rather than for any particular kind of food—then they contrast in the right way with empty desires, for they do not rest on any false beliefs. Since I *need* food, drink, *etc.*, my desires for them do not involve me in any mistakes. They will also contrast in the right way with natural and not necessary desires if these are taken to be *specific*, specifications of generic desires. Thus the desire *for lobster* will be a specification of the desire *for food*. It is not necessary, because as a human being I do not have a *need* for lobster. I have a need for food, but not for that kind of food, as opposed to food in general. However, consuming lobster is plausibly taken as varying the pleasure of fulfilling the desire for food—even if according to Epicurus' theory it never increases it.¹⁴

If, among the natural desires, the difference between necessary and not necessary is that between generic and specific, we can see why Epicurus would end up with a threefold classification, even though (as Cicero points out) two of the items in it are species of one genus. For while it is true that all natural desires contrast with empty ones in involving no false belief, there is a crucial difference between the necessary and the not necessary ones. The generic desire for food cannot involve false belief; desiring food is some-

theory they are not; but then we lack any independent way of understanding what natural desires are.

¹⁴ This interpretation is supported by the scholion to *KD* 29 (quoted *supra* n.12) and the examples it gives.

thing I have to do, given my nature, and does not rest on any belief. But the specific desire for lobster, while it need not, can nevertheless involve false belief—for, as Epicurus points out, I can come to have the wrong attitude towards lobster, and instead of merely regarding it as a kind of food, a way of nourishing myself, I can come to care about having *it*. If I do, I have the empty belief that there is something about lobster worth caring about in its own right, and not just as a means to nourishment. Hence it is important to stress both the difference between natural and empty desires and the difference between the necessary (generic) and not necessary (specific) natural ones. Epicurus' threefold classification is therefore needed and not the result of a muddle.

Further, we can see why Epicurus need not be disconcerted by finding that a given desire could fall into either the natural and not necessary or the empty category; for it is only when what we desire is a specification of what we have a need for that false beliefs can give it undue importance.¹⁵ Thus the suggestion that necessary desires are generic, and that not necessary desires are specifications of them, makes good sense of the way Epicurus deploys the contrast between natural and empty desires. Empty desires contrast with natural ones; but it is only on the specific level that empty beliefs can corrupt the not necessary desires and make them into empty ones.¹⁶

¹⁵ The suggestion also makes sense of other points, for example that natural desires are easy to fulfill. Natural and necessary, generic desires will be easy to fulfill, since they can be met *via* many specifications; and natural and not necessary desires will be easy to fulfill as long as one has no empty beliefs about the importance of particular specific objects of desire.

¹⁶ I should admit at once that this suggestion runs counter to the only ancient source that interprets the classification of desires in terms of degrees of specificity, the scholion to Arist. *Eth.Nic.* 1118b8, quoted in Usener 456. The scholiast gives as examples of a necessary desire, the desires for food and for clothing; as an example of a natural and not necessary desire, the desire for sex; and as an example of desires that are neither, "the desire for such-and-such (τοιῶνδε) food or such-and-such (τοιᾶσδε) clothing or such-and-such (τοιῶνδε) sex." We have, however, no reason to give this scholion authority; and this explanation quite fails to accommodate *KD* 30, with its clear implication that a desire can be either natural and not necessary, or empty (on the scholiast's view it would be both generic and specific). The scholion also makes the necessary/not necessary distinction artificial; we have as plausible a need for sex as for clothing. One can defend the view that all natural desires are unspecific (as Martha Nussbaum does), on the grounds that empty beliefs come in only when the agent wants one thing or kind of thing rather than

Epicurus' distinction between kinds of desires seems to have its place not in discussion of desires for its own sake, but as a way of seeking to give the aspirant Epicurean a way of achieving happiness. For, as Epicurus uncompromisingly says (VS 71):

πρὸς πάσας τὰς ἐπιθυμίας προσακτέον τὸ ἐπερώτημα τοῦτο· τί μοι γενήσεται ἂν τελεσθῆι τὸ κατὰ ἐπιθυμίαν ἐπιζητούμενον; καὶ τί ἂν μὴ τελεσθῆι;

To all our desires we should pose this question: What will I get out of it if what I seek through this desire is achieved? And what if it is not?

Finding the desires that are natural is part of trying to achieve our final end of ἀταραξία or static pleasure, which is natural.¹⁷ But even if this is the context in which the distinction was introduced, it is obviously capable of wider application, and in Philodemus' discussion of natural and empty anger we seem to find just such an extension, in a discussion of the emotions aimed at discovering what the emotions are.

Anger and emotions in general are not of course desires: but they do involve desires. Anger is described in VIII.20–27 as ὡσπερὶ συνκείμενον ἐξ ἐκπυρώσεως καὶ διοιδή[σ]εως καὶ διερεθισμοῦ καὶ βριμώσεως καὶ δεινῆς ἐπιθυμίας τοῦ μετελθεῖν καὶ ἀγωνίας, εἰ δυνήσεται (“a kindling, swelling, irritation, and indignation, together with a fierce desire¹⁸ to pursue and contend with the person, if one can”). This recalls the Stoic definition of anger as a “desire for retaliation against the person seeming to have wronged one contrary to what is due”¹⁹—though, given Stoic theory, bodily states are excluded—as well as Aristotle's definitions of anger, which include

another on the grounds that it is irreplaceable, the good Epicurean's view being that all objects of natural desire are replaceable, and attachment to particular objects irrational and dysfunctional. On this view, however, *KD* 30 has to be taken as saying that intense attachment *replaces* one kind of desire with another, an interpretation I find implausible.

¹⁷ See Olympiodorus *On Phlb.* 294 Stallbaum (=416 Usener); Plut. *Mor.* 1088c (=417 Usener).

¹⁸ The phrase δεινὴ ἐπιθυμία is used by Plato at *Resp.* 9.573D to describe the desires that torture the tyrant. For another Epicurean use see the ethical treatise (*P. Hercul.* 346) edited by M. Capasso, *Trattato etico epicureo* (Naples 1982) ix.21ff.

¹⁹ Arius Didymus *ap.* Stob. *Ecl.* 2.91.10f.

both a bodily state and a desire for revenge.²⁰ We can best understand natural and empty anger as kinds of anger that rest upon natural and empty desires respectively. Of course this does not imply that the desire for retaliation is all that there is to anger. A lot of the vivid word-painting in the first part of Philodemus' essay concentrates on the unlovely physical states produced in angry people; an emotion is at least a complex of desire and the physical state of the agent. But it is the desire part of the emotion that allows one to classify the emotion as natural or empty.²¹

Empty anger is the more straightforward. It is mentioned only twice in the parts of the essay that we have,²² but the contrast of empty and natural anger at XXXVIIIff makes some points clear. Empty anger "comes about from a really bad disposition" (ἀπὸ διαθέσεως γίνεται πα(μ)πονήρου). Empty anger, it is repeatedly said, is an evil, κακόν, not just in itself, by being unpleasant, but because of the many evils it brings, which are so luridly described in Philodemus' first part.

What is the relation between having false beliefs and having a bad disposition? and what kind of false beliefs are in question? Two are mentioned in XXXVII—at least they are mentioned as what natural anger lacks, and it is reasonable to take this to be what empty anger involves. They are false beliefs in comparing losses and in the punishments of those who do harm (ψευδοδοξεῖν ἐν ταῖς σ[υ]μμετρήσεσι τῶν ἐλα[ττ]ωμάτων καὶ ταῖς κολάσεσι τῶν βλαπτόντων). These are both examples of bad judgment, but the second seems to

²⁰ *De an.* 403a24–b7; *Rh.* 1378a30–b10.

²¹ I cannot here discuss the important matter of the exact structure of the emotions. The Epicureans seem in general vague: it is clear that a desire—and hence an emotion—depends on a belief, in the sense that if the belief is changed (by the agent's becoming convinced by Epicurean argument, for example), the desire disappears and is replaced by another desire. But it is not clear whether the belief is a part of the emotion or its cause. At the end of the essay, Philodemus raises a related issue (XLVII.18–41, XLIX.27–L.8). The belief that you have been harmed is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of becoming angry "unless someone can show that the supposition of harm is also an effective cause (δραστικὸν αἴτιον) of anger." The idea that we need a cause that is effective, one that *does* something, is suggestive of Stoic ideas of cause (Indelli cites Posidonius for similar use of δραστικός); and the general emphasis on the agent's disposition suggests the influence of the Stoic picture of emotion: an emotion results from the agent's total present state together with the belief formed as a result of the way the world now impinges on the agent.

²² XXXVIII.1, XXXIX.8. The first reference is missing in Indelli's index.

indicate faultiness of character far more plausibly than the first does. Further, neither bears much obvious relation to the kind of wrong desire, based on false belief, that Philodemus discusses at some length in XLII, where he is exploring the structure of the two kinds of anger. There he says (22–34),

τό τε [δ'] ἐπιθυμῆν τῆς κολάσεως καθάπερ ἀπολαυστοῦ τινος, ὃ συνέζευκται ταῖς μεγάλαις ὀργαῖς, μάταιόν ἐ[σ]τιν, οἰομένων μέγιστον ἀγαθὸν εἶναι καὶ καταστρεφόντων ὡς εἰς δι' αὐτὸ αἰρετὸν καὶ κολάσε[ι]ν οὐκ ἄλλως νομιζόντων, καὶ ἀνημέρω συμπλέκεται διαθήσει, κα[θ]άπερ ὑπεδεῖ ξ' ἄμεν καὶ προϊόντες ἔτι παραστήσομεν.

Desiring to punish, as though it were something enjoyable, a desire that is coupled with great anger, is silly, and is characteristic of people who think that this is the greatest good and turn to it as though to something choiceworthy in itself and think that otherwise they could not punish people, and it is entwined with a harsh disposition, as we have shown and will display again as we proceed.

Here the belief that is connected with the bad, harsh disposition is not a simple mistake as to consequences or amount of punishment, but appears as the more fundamental belief that retaliation and punishment are good and enjoyable in themselves. If anger involves a desire to retaliate, this mistake is clearly a mistake about the object of this desire; it ascribes to it an importance and attraction that it does not, according to Philodemus, have.

We might pause to ask *why* retaliation is not worthwhile and enjoyable in itself. In defining anger, Aristotle (*Rh.* 1378b3) observes that “a certain pleasure always accompanies anger,” tracing this to the pleasure we take in expecting to achieve our aims and to the pleasure of dwelling on the thought of retaliation. An Epicurean would argue that these are not pleasures the agent should pursue, because retaliation leads to greater pains: both those of threat, insecurity, *etc.*, from those on whom retaliation is taken, and, more fundamentally, those accruing to the agent from the loss of *ataraxia* involved. Thus retaliation is not, in itself, enjoyable—that is, it produces an overall loss rather than gain of pleasure. (We should note that losing the belief that retaliation is in itself enjoyable does not lead to giving up anger; rather it leads to giving up a certain *attitude* towards anger, namely that anger is a good thing, because enjoyable. The recognition that anger is on balance painful rather than pleasant still leaves it a place in Epicurean life.)

At the beginning of his essay Philodemus says (VI.13–23),

τὰ [δ' ἐν τῇ ψ]υχῇ πάθη διὰ τῆ[ν ἡμ]ετέραν ψευδοδοξ[ία]ν παρα-
 κολουθοῦντα, τ[ι]νὰ μὲν καὶ τῶ γενεῖ, [τι]νὰ δὲ τ[ῶ]ι μεγέθει, τὸ
 συν[έ]χον [έ]χει τῆς ἀπ[ολύ]σεως²³ ἐν [τ]ῶ θεωρησ[σαι τ]ὸ μέγεθος καὶ
 τὸ πλ[ῆθ]ος ὧν ἔχει καὶ συνεπι[σπ]ᾶται κακῶν.

As for the emotions in the soul that follow along because of our false beliefs²⁴—some about kind, others about size—the crucial thing in releasing ourselves from them is to examine the size and number of the evils they contain and draw along with them.

What are these false beliefs about kind and size? They might just be mistakes in calculating consequences: I think I have been greatly damaged, but I haven't; I think a spectacular retaliation is appropriate, but it isn't. But we should note that the remedy for them lies in realizing the extent of the evils that anger entails. Getting rid of false beliefs can only come through showing that and why they are false; and focusing on the evils of anger would hardly do this to one's calculations of losses. So it is more likely that there are two kinds of false belief involved in empty anger, which Philodemus may be distinguishing here as false beliefs about kind and size. False belief about kind will be the belief that anger is a good thing, resting on the belief that retaliating is in itself enjoyable and worthwhile. Mistakes about size will be the miscalculations about loss and reaction that people make under the influence of anger.

We can see that mistakes of the first kind are more basic, and it is not surprising that in XLII these are the beliefs that are connected with having a bad disposition. The belief that retaliating is enjoyable is not a casual or isolated belief; it is deeply rooted and involves others that support it. That is why Philodemus and others write essays about anger; to shake this belief we need both the shock tactics of the theatrical first half and the analysis of the second. For the belief that anger is a good thing, because it achieves something worth having, is a paradigmatic Epicurean empty belief: it is false and it produces great damage in the agent's life. Philodemus has

²³ A convincing conjecture by Elizabeth Asmis for ἀπ[όθε]σεως (Gomperz), accepted by Indelli.

²⁴ ψευδοδοξία: the verb occurs at xxxvii.35. Philodemus uses the word also in *De dis* xiv.34, xvi.19. Polystratus uses it at *De contemptu* xvi.6. Epicurus uses not this but κενοδοξία (cf. *KD* 30), but since all empty beliefs are in fact false the difference is perhaps not very important.

nothing to say about mistakes in calculating, and presumably thinks that this tendency will be cured when, and only when, the more basic false beliefs have been removed. If I don't think retaliation worthwhile, I won't be tempted to overestimate my losses; and so on.

Empty anger, then, rests on the empty desire to retaliate. This desire in turn is empty because it rests on the empty belief that retaliation is good in itself and enjoyable. Just as Epicurus says (*KD* 30) that empty desire is marked by intense effort, so the empty desire in anger is "fierce" (δεινή). Philodemus adds the point that the empty desire driving anger comes from a disposition already gone wrong; and also adds that other false beliefs, *e.g.* miscalculations of consequences, follow it and produce further empty desires.

When it comes to natural anger, Philodemus is fuller but unfortunately more obscure as to the overall picture. xxxvii.24–xxxviii.8 give us a clear contrast with which to start. Natural anger is not simply a good or a bad thing; rather, Epicureans hold that

τὸ μὲν πάθος αὐτὸ κατὰ διάληψιν ἀποφαινόμεθα κακόν, ἐπειδὴ λυπηρόν ἐστιν ἢ ἀνάλογον λυπηρῶ, κατὰ δὲ τὴν συνπλοκὴν τῇ διαθέσει κἂν ἀγαθὸν ῥηθήσεσθαι νομίζομεν· συνίσταται γὰρ ἀπὸ το[ῦ] βλέπειν, ὡς ἡ φύσις ἔχει τῶν πραγμάτων, καὶ μηδὲν ψευδοδοξεῖν ἐν ταῖς σ[υ]μμετρήσεσι τῶν ἐλα[ττ]ωμάτων καὶ ταῖς κολάσεσι τῶν βλαπτόντων. ὥστε καθ' ὃν τρόπον ἐλέγομεν τὴν κ[ενὴν] ὀργὴν κακόν, ὅτι ἀπὸ διαθέσεως γίνεται πα(μ)πονήρου καὶ μυρία δυσχερῆ συνεπιστᾶται, δ[εῖ] λέγειν [οὐ] κακ[ὸν τῆ]ν φυσικῆ[ν ἀ]λλὰ καθὸ δηκτικόν ἐ[στ]ί τι.

The emotion in separation is a bad thing, since it is painful or analogous to something painful; but given its connexion with the disposition, we consider that it could even be called a good thing; for it results from seeing how the nature of things is, and from having no false beliefs in comparative measurements of losses, and in punishments of those who do harm. So in the same way that we said that empty anger was an evil, because it results from a really bad disposition and draws with it countless evils, we must say that natural anger is not an evil, except insofar as it is something biting.

Natural anger, then, is painful and so not wholly a good thing.²⁵ It has the advantage over empty anger in not bringing further pains

²⁵ Nicasicrates is criticized for claiming that natural anger is not only painful in its own nature, but has bad results (xxxviii.34–xxxix.9). For the vivid idea that the kind of pain involved is a "biting" one, *cf.* also xxxvii.19, xii.18–23.

and evils. We might ask how an Epicurean can consider something natural if it is painful, seeing that our nature is such as to avoid pain. The answer to this is found in XXXIX.29–31: “it is unavoidable, and is called natural for that reason.” It is part of human nature to feel a kind of anger. Further, it is not a part of human nature that ideal development would remove; Philodemus stresses that even Epicurus himself and the other Masters got angry.

Further characterization of natural anger shows that it is a kind of anger that rests only on natural desires, that is, desires that come from human nature and do not rest on any empty, *i.e.*, false and harmful, beliefs. That this is so emerges from two passages:

ἀπόχρη γὰρ ἐπιδείξαι τὸ κοινόν, ὅτι συσχεθήσεταιί τισιν ὀργαῖς ὁ σοφός. καὶ φήσεται τις· ἀλλ’ εἰ διὰ τὸ βλάπτεσθαι καθ’ ἐκούσιον τρόπον ὀργίζεται, βλάπτεται δ’ ὑπὸ τινων εἰς τὰ μέγιστα, πῶς οὐχὶ καὶ μεγάλην ὀργὴν ἀναδέξεται καὶ σφοδρὰν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔξει τοῦ μετελθεῖν; πρὸς ὃν ἐροῦμεν, ὅτι τῷ βλάπτοντι τὰς τοιαύτας [β]λά[β]ας ἢ φανερωῖ [γ’ ὄν]τι. διότι μ[εγ]ά[λω]ς βλάψει, προσαλλοτριοῦνται μὲν ἄκρῶς, καὶ μισεῖ—τοῦτο γὰρ ἀκ[όλο]υθον—οὐ μέντοι γε ταρα[χ]ὴν ἀνα[δ]έχεται μεγάλη[ν]. οὐ[δ’] ἔ[στ]ιν γέ [πῶς] τ[ι] παρὰ [μέγα] τῶν ἔξωθεν, [ὄ]τ’ οὐδὲ κ[α]τὰ τὰς παρουσία[ς] τῶν μεγάλων ἀλγηδόνω[ν] μεγάλαις συνέχεται τ[αρα]χαῖς, [πο]λλῶ δὲ μᾶλλ[ο]ν κατὰ [τὰς] ὀργάς· τὸ γὰρ [ρ] δεινὰ [παθεῖν φ]ύετα[ι] ἐξ ἀνοίας.

It is sufficient to show in general that the wise person will be susceptible to anger of a kind.²⁶ But someone will say: But if it is because of being harmed in intentional fashion that he gets angry, and he is harmed by someone to the highest degree, how will he not have a strong desire to pursue the person? To this person we will say that he will be alienated in the extreme from the person who inflicts such harms on him, or is obviously going to inflict them, and he will hate him—that just follows—but that he does not experience great trouble. Nothing external is worth much,²⁷ since he is not even

²⁶ Cf. D.L. 10.117: the wise person πάθεσι μᾶλλον συσχεθήσεσθαι· οὐκ ἂν ἐμποδίσαι πρὸς τὴν σοφίαν. Bignone’s τισι to qualify πάθεσι is attractive in view of the passage in Philodemus.

²⁷ Philodemus stresses the notion that what does not matter to the Epicurean wise person is “external” to him; cf. XLVII.39–42, XLVIII.18–24 (twice; “external” goods as much as “external” evils have no great importance). This internalization of Epicurean good seems to be a development later than Epicurus, and may reflect Stoic influence, or possibly just the fact that a contrast between external goods and goods of the soul and/or body had become conventional by Hellenistic times. See

susceptible to great troubles in the presence of great pains, and much more is this so with anger. Terrible sufferings are the natural result of stupidity (XLI.28–XLII.14).

[ο]ὔτε γὰρ συντόν[οις] περιπί[π]τει πάθει το[ιού]τοις—μα[νί]α γάρ, ἐπεὶ κ[αὶ] μυρίων [γέμει κ]ακῶν [ἢ] παρ' αὐτὸ[ν] ἐπιθυμ]ία, [ἦν καὶ] φευξόμ[εθα πᾶσαν ὡς μέγιστον οὔσαν κακόν—οὔτε πρὸς τὴν κόλασιν ὀρμῆ ὡς πρὸς ἀ]πο[λαυστ]όν—οὐδὲ γὰρ ἡδ[ύ] τι προσφέρεται,—ἀλλ' ὡς πρὸ[ς] ἀναγκαιότατον, ἀηδέστατον δὲ παραγίνεται, καθάπερ ἐπὶ πόσιν ἀψινθίου καὶ τομῆν.

[The wise person] does not fall prey to such intense emotions—for that is madness, since the relevant desire is full of countless evils, and we shall flee it entirely as being the greatest of evils. Nor does he go for punishing [the other person] as something enjoyable—for nothing pleasant is offered—but as something most necessary, and what results is most unpleasant, as with drinking wormwood, and surgery (XLIV.9–22).

The person subject to natural anger does not think that retaliation is good in itself or a source of enjoyment; she does it because she has to do it. Thus she will feel anger, but not a fierce desire for revenge. And hence although she cannot avoid feeling some pain, she will not be subject to “troubles” (ταραχαί), the upsets in life that the Epicurean avoids above all, for the Epicurean aim in life is ἀταραξία.²⁸ Natural anger thus seems to be the anger that you feel if you have no empty beliefs and act only on relevant desires that come from human nature.

Philodemus does not employ Epicurus' other distinction, that between necessary and not necessary. Some passages do, however, suggest something like it. The person with natural anger seeks revenge only as something necessary (XLIV.15–23); natural anger is unavoidable for human nature (XXXIX.30–32). Natural anger, then, is something necessary, something that we cannot avoid. It is part of human nature to resent, and to desire to retaliate against, perceived

also Philodemus *Rhetoric*, ed. S. Sudhaus, II (Leipzig 1896) fr.20.5–10: τὸ δὲ μὴθὲν εἶναι παρὰ μέγα τῶν ἔξωθεν εἶπερ ὀρθῶς λέγεται καὶ τὸ μυρίῳ μείζονα τὰ φυσικὰ τῶν ἄλλων ὑπάρχειν, where external goods are opposed to goods of the soul; *Peri charitos* 2.5f: τῶν ἔξω ρεόντων; Diogenes of Oenoanda fr.1–3 Chilton: τὸ κεφάλαιον τῆς εὐδαιμονίας ἢ διάθεσις, ἧς ἡμεῖς κύριοι.

²⁸ Compare the life of the angry person, subject to constant troubles, at xxvi. 10–25.

slights and frustrations. (Doubtless there are good reasons for this in the strategies that humans have evolved for survival.) In itself, “by its own nature,” this tendency is a source of pain, just as desires for food and drink are; we have to satisfy them or we shall suffer. Just like the desire for food and drink, a given desire to retaliate nags and “bites” at us until we satisfy it. There is, however, no point in trying to get rid of this desire, any more than in trying to get rid of the desire for food or drink; you won’t succeed, because it is part of what you are, one of your human needs.²⁹

The desire to retaliate can, however, take many different forms. And it is at this point that false beliefs can enter in. We have seen that this happens in two ways: I may be wrong about how much retaliation is appropriate, or I may more fundamentally be wrong about what retaliation *is*; I may think that it is not just something that I have to do, but something admirable and attractive. And if the form taken by my desire to retaliate does in fact get infected by such false beliefs, which are empty since they are harmful, then my anger ceases to be natural and becomes empty. Again, the important contrast is between natural and empty; but the distinction between necessary and not necessary is important too, for it is only when we are dealing with what is not necessary about my desire to retaliate (the form it takes, not its existence) that falsity, and so emptiness, can come in.

This is not quite the same as Epicurus’ distinction between necessary, generic desires and not necessary, specific desires. It is clear that my desire to retaliate can take a good or a bad form, and that false belief is responsible for its taking a bad form. False beliefs do not, however, attach the desire to retaliate to a specific object, as false beliefs attach the desire to eat to lobster in particular. Rather, false beliefs make the desire to retaliate too intense, and cause the agent to enjoy what should be seen merely as a necessity.

So Philodemus has not simply taken over Epicurus’ distinction between kinds of desires; and he is right not to do so, for the situation

²⁹ The point that natural anger is a human need, although a producer of pain, was obviously felt as a difficulty; Philodemus feels that he has to argue for it (XL.26–XLI.8). Anger must be *ἀλλότριον* to us, he claims, for it would be forced to call it *ἀδιόφορον*, and senseless to call it *οἰκεῖον*. This strange use of Stoic terminology shows either that Philodemus was hopelessly muddled about Stoicism, or that Stoic terminology had become a philosophical *lingua franca* in which the terms had lost their original precise meanings.

is not precisely the same. There is a structural similarity, however, and we can credit Philodemus with intelligent perception of a real analogy. When we are angry, something is necessary and unavoidable: we will get angry in some way or another. But something depends on us and is not necessary. If we have false beliefs (of the kinds we have seen), we will become intensely angry and derive from it a short-term pleasure later to be outweighed by pain. But if we do not have these false beliefs, our anger will be expressed without pleasure or intensity; it will be no more than we are bound to feel. It is still true that it is only at the specific level that false beliefs can come in and corrupt anger into empty anger, and that what happens at this level is not necessary; all that is necessary is that we feel anger in some way or other. The main point of disanalogy with the case of desires is that false beliefs do not attach the desire to retaliate to a particular object but instead affect than the specific way in which it is expressed.

If something like the above is right, the Epicurean account of emotions has interesting features. One is that it is highly revisionary of our everyday beliefs about the emotions. This is notably so in the contention that only false beliefs lead us to enjoy the expression of an emotion. We may be ready to accept this in the case of anger; it does not sound very attractive to think anger and retaliation enjoyable and a good thing. But Philodemus accepts parallel consequences for gratitude. The argument that the wise person will be angry at voluntary harms, since he is grateful for voluntary benefits, Philodemus meets by the striking comment that in both cases he will not react very strongly; just as he will not be very angry, so he will not be very grateful, since external things do not matter very much to him whether they are evil or good.³⁰ What our own assessment is of any redefined Epicurean emotion will depend on our assessment of the demands of Epicurean theory in that area; revisions of belief that are welcome when they cool down anger are not so obviously a good thing when they leave us cold in other areas.

It is also interesting that the tendency to anger is accepted as natural on the grounds that it is inevitable. Part of our rational nature, involving belief and desire, is accepted as a given, no less than such biologically inevitable desires as those for food and drink.

³⁰ XLVI.18–40, XLVIII.3–32; cf. XLIII.22–25.

It is not therefore intractable, of course; the essay is meant to help us to control and improve it.

Finally, it is notable that a negative and destructive emotion like anger is frankly accepted as a given part of human nature. Of course the Epicureans think that the wise person will have enormously restructured and redirected his anger by the time he has got rid of all his empty beliefs. Anger will presumably feel very different when one no longer gets any lift, so to speak, from being angry, but merely regards fulfilling the desire to retaliate as something that has to be done.³¹ And, if the Epicureans are right, anger will be considerably relocated in the agent's life. Epicurean anger seems to show itself principally in the philosophical life of the Garden, in teaching and disputes; its scope overlaps with that of frankness, to which Philodemus devotes another work.³² Achilles' kind of anger is ruled out; one should not feel like that, principally because one should not care about the kind of thing Achilles cared about. To get into combat because of a sense of injured honor is already to have left the Garden. At bottom, however, anger is still there in the Garden. There are still sharp rebuttals of opposing views, and people take offense at frank remarks (xxxv). We are reminded of Epicurus' own notably personal and reactive style of arguing, copied by his followers.³³ We should train and direct our angry feelings, but we should not try to get rid of them, since expressing anger in *some* way is a human need. This can seem a quite realistic idea, even in an age like our own which is ambivalent about anger and other hostile emotions. We deplore anger and the violence it often leads to; yet it is widely realized that many people—women, notably—are damaged if they systematically suppress or deny their anger. It is an interesting and promising idea that we should recognize anger, and

³¹ And so presumably will gratitude feel different, when one no longer gets pleasure from being grateful, but merely regards making the appropriate return or gesture as something that has to be done.

³² See xviii.36–xix.1, xxxv.18–xxxvi.27 (where he mentions the *Peri parrhesias*), xxxix.22–27. Cf. *Peri parrhesias* xviiA, where wise teachers employ harsh remedies as clever doctors do, and there is a reference to τὸ δηκτικὸν τῆς παρρησίας, recalling the description of anger as “biting” in the *Peri orges*.

³³ See D. N. Sedley, “Epicurus and His Professional Rivals,” in *Études sur l'Épicurisme antique* (= *Cahiers de Philologie* 1 [Lille 1976]) 121–59, for important modifications to the traditional view of Epicurus as indiscriminately heaping abuse on his opponents. But even so there is a personal tone to Epicurean discussion not found in other schools.

the desire to retaliate, as inevitable for us, and concentrate not on removing it, but on removing false beliefs about its objects.

Philodemus' own development of the idea, however, is less helpful than we might have hoped. When he tries to present a positive characterization of natural anger and what the person will be like who feels only natural anger, the result is odd and has the air of a struggle:

καθόλου δὲ ἰστέον ὅτι καθαρῶς τις ὦν ἀόργητος οὐ πολὺν χρόνον ἀποδώσει φαντασίαν ὀργίλου, πλείω δὲ ἀποδιδ[ο]ύς οὐκ ἔστιν βαθύς, ἀλλὰ μόνον οὐ τ[οι]οῦτος [ο]ῖος δοκεῖ. φαί[ον]ται δ' [οὔ]ν πρὸς τόσον καὶ τὴν [έν]αντιωτά[τη]ν ἔχοντες διάθεσιν, ὥστε κἂν σοφὸς καθάπερ ἀμέ[λει] καὶ Ἐπίκουρος ἀπέ[δωκεν ἐ]νίοις τοιούτου [φαντασ]ίαν.

In general, we should know that the person who is purely unangered will give the appearance of an angry person, but not for long, and if he gives it for longer is not deeply [angry], but just not such as he seems to be. Thus those who have the completely opposite disposition [from the angry person] give the appearance to such an extent that even a wise person such as *Epicurus* gave some people the appearance of being like that [*sc.* an angry person] (xxxiv.31–xxxv.5).

Philodemus adds at xxxvi.18–28 that some σοφοί will give the appearance of anger even more than normally angry people; this is because they have *more* natural anger than others, or because they are more given to frankness, or both.

This is problematic. First, while it is clear that this is a revisionary account, it is odd to find the ideal person, who presumably feels only natural anger, described as *un*-angered, and odd to have his behavior described in terms of appearance and reality. Is the account so revisionary that feeling only natural anger amounts to feeling *no* anger in the usual sense? If so, angry behavior such as that displayed by Epicurus will be pretence, the deliberate putting-on of a show. The appearance of anger will be deceptive as to the reality. This seems unsatisfactory, however; if anger is unavoidable for human nature, then the sage ought not to be so detached from it.

Perhaps the ἀόργητος should be understood, not as a person who never feels anger, but as a person who is not angry by disposition, “not an angry person.” (The ὀργίλος, with whom the unangered person is contrasted, certainly is most naturally taken as “an angry person,” someone prone to anger and not just capable of anger on occasion.) In that case the point about appearance and reality can be taken in a less extreme way also: the point may simply be that the

ἀόργητος will act in the same way as the ordinary angry person, but will not keep it up for very long or, if he does, will not be very committed to it. But this also seems unsatisfactory. Surely our picture of the ideal Epicurean is of someone placid, balanced, and slower to react than others, not of someone who gets furious, but only for short bursts?

But two points are relevant here. One is that at this stage in his essay Philodemus is engaging in controversy with other Epicureans, who had differing views about the way anger enters into the life of the ideal wise person; sketching the ideal life is always difficult, and Philodemus' idea on the subject is not the only one, even for Epicureans. Given that all parties refer to the words of the Master, we may infer that Epicurus' own work left this point in dispute, and that different followers took up different aspects of the system to deal with it. Possibly Philodemus was impressed by Epicurus' statement that natural desires are easy to fulfill; this would suggest that natural anger, based on natural desires, is not a different kind of anger but just a more *limited* version of ordinary anger, easily satisfied.

The other point is that our ideas on this subject are not likely to be unprejudiced, either. They are likely to be influenced by hangovers from Christian tradition, in which the meek are blessed and one should turn the other cheek rather than retaliate. Even if we reject this, we have no very clear idea of what to put in its place. While Philodemus' more detailed positive account will scarcely do, Epicurean ideas on this particular emotion still retain interest for us, and we can only regret that we lack similarly rich Epicurean sources for other emotions.³⁴

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³⁴ An earlier version of this paper benefited greatly from discussion at the Duke conference; I am also grateful to Elizabeth Asmis for helpful comments.