

Natural versus Unnatural

Post by “Matt” of December 30, 2020 at 8:54 AM

It's been sometime since I've been exploring the philosophical cornucopia that is online...but recently I had a chance to visit some pages and groups of other philosophical schools.

One thing that becomes immediately noticeable is the line of questions that come from people looking for advice about living a certain type of life. The Stoics for example who advocate for living in accord with nature seem to be almost paralyzed by their philosophy. Paralyzed without constantly reviewing what the sages have to say about every possible situation in life.

Questions about “what's the proper virtuous way to react to something?” “Should I not date someone who isn't a stoic even though I'm in love?” “Should I drink coffee for the sake of pleasure?” Etc.

It seems to me that a philosophy that continually causes a person to second guess their behavior at every turn and choice that they make would seem to be the opposite of living in accord with nature. In fact, in my humble opinion, sounds more like bondage than freedom.

Conversely, we come to Epicurus who provides knowledge of the Canon for us. He leaves us with our senses and our own prudence to do what we know our natural desires are. He tells us there are unnatural desires, but let's us choose whether those desires are worth the pain or trouble to attain them. Our human nature, which already is in accord with nature by being firmly fixed on pleasurable experiences drives us.

So when we look at philosophies which claim to be living in accord with nature and those that seem to be extremely unnatural, it becomes very apparent when we see how the philosophy is applied to daily life.