

What Is An Example of a Natural But Not Necessary Desire?

Post by "Cassius" of March 14, 2021 at 1:25 AM

Thanks for bumping this thread Titus after almost for years - it is of continuing interest for the reasons that you say. Skimming over what I wrote four years ago I would say basically the same thing, but I think today I have a greater appreciation of the "natural and necessary" discussion being a useful teaching and application method. My concerns have always been more targeted on how I think the observation is used nowadays more than anything else. Sort of like my view of the tetracharmakon, my concerns are not so much that there are things lacking in the way they were originally presented as much as how attitudes I think are prevalent today encourage their misinterpretation.

Even though no specific list that fits everyone everywhere and all the time is practical, certainly the idea of evaluating our choices according to whether the choice is necessary for life, and whether it stems from needs that are "natural" to all of us, will be of assistance in calculating expected costs and benefits from selecting particular choices. My concern that people should not expect to discover a "magical" list does not take away from the real benefit that someone who approaches the questions properly can gain from the analysis. I do still think that this is one area that Cicero relayed pretty faithfully, and that it is accurate to say that "the principle of classification [is] that the necessary desires are gratified with little trouble or expense; the natural desires also require but little, since nature's own riches, which suffice to content her, are both easily procured and limited in amount; but for the imaginary desires no bound or limit can be discovered."