

# Order of Natural & Necessary Desires in Menoecus

Post by “Don” of December 25, 2024 at 4:54 PM

Chiming in...

While the "then's" could be taken as hierarchical, they could also just be identifying three co-equal kinds of desires: for eudaimonia, for freedom of disturbance for the body, and for life.

The life one is interesting, because I could also take the "natural" desires as a desire for things like food, shelter, etc.

For those who don't want to go to the trouble of downloading my paper, here is the pertinent section. And all of this is open to further discussion:

127g. καὶ τῶν φυσικῶν αἱ μὲν ἀναγκαῖαι, αἱ δὲ φυσικὰ μόνον·

"And of the natural ones, on the one hand, are the necessities; on the other hand, the natural ones only."

ἀναγκαῖαι "necessary, essential; (if a plural noun as here) necessities"

127h. τῶν δ' ἀναγκαίων αἱ μὲν πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν εἰσὶν ἀναγκαῖαι,

"then, of the necessary ones: on the one hand, there are those necessary for eudaimonia;

Those necessary for eudaimonia are open to interpretation but must be based on Epicurus's philosophy.

127i. αἱ δὲ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἀοχλησίαν, αἱ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ ζῆν.

ἀοχλησία "freedom from disturbance"

σώματος genitive singular of σῶμα

σῶμα "the body; one's material body or existence"

"then, those [necessary] for the freedom from disturbance for the body; then those [necessary] for life itself."

There are some translations that interpret αἱ δὲ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἀοχλησίαν to mean only things like clothing and shelter - those things that provide "freedom from disturbance" for the body, that is for one's physical existence. That isn't literally what is written so that is simply one interpretation. Those kinds of things - clothing and shelter - would seem to fall under the final category of those necessary for life. So, this category should catch those between eudaimonia and those necessary for life. This is an interesting category.

I would contend that those "necessary for life itself" are those essentials at the base of Maslow's hierarchy of needs: food, water, shelter, sleep, air, etc. Again, clothing and shelter would seem to fall into this category.