

Ongoing Discussion of Jack Gedney's "Untroubled" Substack Blog

Post by "wbernys" of May 15, 2026 at 11:21 PM

Quote

For instance, "natural" desires for food or sex are biologically determined and probably can't be eliminated. To argue for their elimination would be foolish, so instead we should try to manage those desires prudently. In contrast, unnatural desires (which are culturally learned, rather than innate) are more likely candidates for elimination: the desires to be portrayed in public statues or to have a billion dollars, for instance, are clearly not innate, and so it seems plausible to remove those desires through the cognitive training of philosophy.

Here's something i really disagree with on with the Tim O'Keef, and i've been curious about other's opinion on this for a long time.

Does Epicurus mean natural as innate or natural as in nature approves of it? I think Tim O'Keefe misreads natural desires as meaning innate, whereas it actually means "actually helps with pleasure", this is why natural desires can turn into vain or unnatural desires if they become sources of stress or likely to cause harm. It's natural and should be pursued when bringing more pleasure than pain but unnatural when not and should be shunned. There is also the fact that i think Epicurus just outright disagrees that sex or lavish food is necessary for happiness and can't be eliminated and he seems to say the opposite below.

[PD30](#): Those natural desires which create no pain when unfulfilled, though pursued with an intense effort, are also due to baseless opinion; and if they are not dispelled, it is not because of their own nature, but because of human vanity.

Emily A. Austin seems to agree with me on this btw.

Quote

While both necessary and extravagant desires earn Epicurus' endorsement as "natural," corrosives desires are both unnatural and unnecessary. Recall that when Epicurus says "unnatural" here, he doesn't mean "artificial". Instead he means contrary to our nature, or not conducive to human well-being. (Pg.50)