

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

Post by "Don" of May 16, 2026 at 6:16 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Does that mean that the true defining criteria of what should be classified as natural or unnatural is not whether the desire in question is with us at birth, but something about the way we pursue it?

Yes. (Added: something about the way we pursue it to clarify a question noted by [Cassius](#) below)

Maybe it's specificity. The desire for food and drink is natural and necessary and leads to pleasure. The desire for occasional variety or novelty in food and drink is natural but unnecessary and maintains pleasure. The desire for "an endless string of drinking parties and festivals" is unnatural and unnecessary does not lead to pleasure in the end but rather leads ultimately to more pain than pleasure.

I would go so far as to say the desire for an occasional drinking party or festival is a natural but unnecessary desire. However. I find it interesting that Epicurus uses the word πότος (potos) and not συμπόσιον (symposium) "symposium, drinking-party." He wrote a book or dialogue entitled Symposium in which he wrote "Even when drunk, the wise one will not talk nonsense or act silly." So, Epicurus didn't seem to oppose drinking wine or attending drinking-parties. There seems to be a distinction between πότος and συμπόσιον, possibly with the difference being one of emphasis on drinking versus conviviality.

A κῶμος is "a village festival: a revel, carousal, merry-making, Latin: comissatio." They seem to have involved crowned revelers parading the streets, bearing torches, singing, dancing, and "playing frolics."

Note that he doesn't say you can't attend a drinking party or take part in village festivals! He's saying life shouldn't be an "endless string" of them (οὐ συνέροντες "not stringing together"). That's going to lead to more pain than pleasure in the end.

That might not hold up in every natural/unnatural desire situation, but I would be interested to see if others hold up under this paradigm.

And just to remind everyone: natural/unnatural & necessary/unnecessary refers to desires and not pleasure. This reminder is as much for myself as the the thread.