

Order of Natural & Necessary Desires in Menoeceus

Post by “Pacatus” of December 24, 2024 at 3:04 PM

“And of the natural ones [i.e., desires], on the one hand, are the necessary ones; on the other, the ones which are only natural; then, of the necessary ones: on the one hand, those necessary for *eudaimonia*; then, those necessary for the freedom from disturbance for the body; then those necessary for life itself.” *Letter to Menoikeus*, 127; Don Boozer translation. [<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/wcf/filebase/download/97/>]

On the one hand, it is clear here that “necessary” does not mean strictly required for survival, but for *eudaimonia* (the proper translation of which is oft-argued – e.g. well-being / the feeling of well-being / happiness / a well and happy life ...).

With that said, I find the order here interesting: one might normally think that “for life itself”, being the most basic, would be the first one to consider in an ascending order (viz. [Don](#) ‘s reference in his notes to Maslow’s hierarchy). But the first one brought to mind by Epicurus is *eudaimonia*; then a body free from disturbance; and only then “life itself.”

I suspect this is not accidental, Epicurus being a careful writer. Thoughts?

[Note: I skimmed the other thread here, and didn't see anything on this particular -- overly pedantic? -- question.]

Peter St. Andre translation, for comparison:

“ ... among the necessary desires some are necessary for happiness, some for physical health, and some for life itself.” With this note, re “physical health”: “[5] Literally the Greek text says ‘to keep the body untroubled’ (in fact ‘for the untroubledness of the body’), which might mean keeping the body healthy or perhaps even relaxed or stress-free.”

[Letter to Menoikos, by Epicurus](#)

BTW: Wishing a well and happy holiday season to all! 😊