

Epicurus' Hierarchy of Needs

Post by “Don” of June 3, 2025 at 7:02 AM

[Quote from Rolf](#)

You know, this has me thinking: At least for those of us who are already familiar with the philosophy, using the abbreviations NN, NU, and UU would be a lot cleaner and clearer. 🤔

I can appreciate your desire for conciseness, but I'm not a fan of in-group abbreviations. I don't even like referring to Epicurean philosophy as EP. I would also offer that the term "unnecessary" doesn't actually in at least one exposition of the categories of desires, that in the letter to Menoikeus:

Quote

Furthermore, on the one hand, there are the natural desires; on the other, the 'empty, fruitless, or vain ones.' And of the natural ones, 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. *(This is my own literal translation)*

In this categorization, Epicurus is only concerned with natural (φυσικὰ), necessary (ἀναγκαῖαι), and empty (κενά) categories. I would still 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.