

Possible use of the Pythagorean exercise called "evening review" for Epicurean purposes.

Post by "Daniel188" of December 19, 2025 at 3:53 PM

Hello everyone!

Today I'd like to present a method for developing self-awareness that I originally learned from the Stoics. I believe this method can be used to pursue the Epicurean telos. First, let me quote the source from which I originally got this idea:

Quote

All our senses should be educated into strength: they are naturally able to endure much, provided that the spirit forbears to spoil them. The spirit ought to be brought up for examination daily. It was the custom of Sextius when the day was over, and he had betaken himself to rest, to inquire of his spirit: "What bad habit of yours have you cured to-day? what vice have you checked? in what respect are you better?" Anger will cease, and become more gentle, if it knows that every day it will have to appear before the judgment seat. What can be more admirable than this fashion of discussing the whole of the day's events? how sweet is the sleep which follows this self-examination? how calm, how sound, and careless is it when our spirit has either received praise or reprimand, and when our secret inquisitor and censor has made his report about our morals? I make use of this privilege, and daily plead my cause before myself: when the lamp is taken out of my sight, and my wife, who knows my habit, has ceased to talk, I pass the whole day in review before myself, and repeat all that I have said and done: I conceal nothing from myself, and omit nothing: for why should I be afraid of any of my shortcomings, when it is in my power to say, "I pardon you this time: see that you never do that anymore? In that dispute you spoke too contentiously: do not for the future argue with ignorant people: those who have never been taught are unwilling to learn. You reprimanded that man with more freedom than you ought, and consequently you have offended him instead of amending his ways: in dealing with other cases of the kind, you should look carefully, not only to the truth of what you say, but also whether the person to whom you speak can bear to be told the truth." A good man delights in receiving advice: all the worst men are the most impatient of guidance. (Seneca, On Anger, 3.36)

This is one of the exercises I've been using daily for a while now, and I've noticed it can be useful for improving my performance and emotional control. It can be used for a variety of purposes. Now I will try to describe more or less how this can be done and integrated with the Epicurean goal.

1. Preliminary steps

A key factor in the effectiveness of this exercise is its consistency. It should be performed regularly and consistently. You should set aside approximately 5 to 20 minutes in the evening for this exercise. I recommend finding a quiet and peaceful spot, but you can also go for a walk and reflect while walking. Before you begin, you can calm down a bit, perhaps using a meditation technique or anything else that helps you relax.

2. Keeping your distance from yourself

The point isn't to relive or engage with emotions that surfaced during the day. The goal is to approach the situation more objectively. We should try to perceive everything as if we were observing a friend to whom we wanted to offer valuable advice, without becoming emotionally involved in what happened.

3. Reflection

At this point we move on to reflect on the course of the day and the general feelings associated with it.

We reflect on what we've accomplished from our planned tasks. We appreciate ourselves for completing them and allow ourselves to feel satisfied with our goals.

We reflect on what we didn't achieve and why. Was it due to a lack of desire, fatigue, or perhaps something that happened during the day that caused us to lose motivation? We don't rely on first impressions, which are often misleading, caused by regret or irritation. We try to calmly find the real cause of our failure.

We reflect on whether our behavior throughout the day was consistent with what we expected of ourselves and whether we made the most of the day. Perhaps we said something we later regretted? Or perhaps someone acted in a way that hurt us, and we spent a long time analyzing the situation. We recall such moments and assess what we can do in similar situations in the future.

Or perhaps we managed to break a certain pattern today and acted exactly as we intended in a difficult situation? We analyze the situation, looking for the key moment that allowed us to behave in a way we consider desirable.

After completing this reflection, we can consider the day complete. Now we can forgive ourselves for any shortcomings and unfulfilled tasks. We now have a complete analysis of why something didn't work out, so we promise ourselves that next time, using this knowledge, we will try to act in a way that will be more effective for us. We can also express gratitude for certain things at the end.

Benefits

Thanks to this exercise, I've managed to overcome some habits that were harmful to me. For example, I've managed to improve my social skills, limit my alcohol consumption, reduce some of my anxiety, and avoid making unwanted mistakes over and over again. It seems like a good way to develop self-awareness. In our hectic daily lives, sometimes things slip by if we don't reflect on them calmly.

This exercise doesn't have to be used to pursue "virtue." It can be developed specifically to improve prudence. For example, you can consider various actions using hedonistic calculus. Depending on the telos we adopt, this can be used in various ways.

What do you think about all this?