

How to Live in Times of Upheaval: The Categories of Desire

Post by “Godfrey” of August 5, 2024 at 8:21 PM

During the political wackiness in the month of July 2024 in the United States, I was giving some thought to how an Epicurean might best apply the philosophy to their life when the world around them seems to be spinning out of control. But times of upheaval are many and varied: they can include political hostility or uncertainty, natural disasters, personal or family tragedies and many similar events. Following is a loose list of thoughts to hopefully stimulate thought and discussion on how the categories of desire can be useful, perhaps therapeutic, in confronting chaos. At the moment, I haven't got much further than compiling this list. And of course many of the questions will only apply to a particular type of upheaval, and the answers will be different for everyone and in each situation.

SYNOPSIS OF THE CATEGORIES OF DESIRE:

Natural and necessary desires: a) some for happiness; b) some for physical health; c) some for life itself

Natural and unnecessary desires: a) due to groundless opinion; b) don't bring pain if unfulfilled; c) require intense exertion

Unnatural and unnecessary desires: a) due to groundless opinion; b) don't bring pain if unfulfilled; c) hard to achieve; 4) seem to produce harm

EPICUREAN EXERCISES - CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, EACH AS A SEPARATE EXERCISE:

What type of desire is it to wish for my favorite sports team to win? How can I most fruitfully respond to this desire?

What type of desire is it to wish for my preferred political candidate or party to win? How can I most fruitfully respond to this desire?

What type of desire is it to wish for safety in the event of a natural disaster? How can I most fruitfully respond to this desire?

What type of desire is it to wish for the health of a loved one? How can I most fruitfully respond to this desire?

What type of desire is it to wish to live to the ripe old age of 150? How can I most fruitfully respond to this desire?

What type of desire is it to wish for a loved one to live to the ripe old age of 150? How can I most fruitfully respond to this desire?

MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS:

How much of the upheaval is hostile to me as belonging to a particular group?

What are the potential fruits and harms of looking out for the interests and/or safety of people or communities outside of my particular "tribe?"

At what point does engagement cause harm? To whom? What kind of harm: mental, physical, economic or other?

At what point does lack of engagement cause harm? To whom? What kind of harm: mental, physical, economic or other?

At what point may the upheaval affect my safety or the safety of my loved ones?

Is it natural and necessary to assure the health, safety and well-being of those who are important to me?

How can I maintain my ataraxia while still being concerned about the health and well-being of your loved one(s)? Is this the objective of Epicurean practice?

How can I maintain a balance of pleasure over pain during a particular crisis? Is this the objective of Epicurean practice?

Is my goal to maintain ataraxia, or a balance of pleasure over pain during the particular time of upheaval, or is to survive in the most prudent manner to maintain a balance of pleasure over pain over time? Or both?

What does [PD04](#) have to say about this, if anything? "*Pain does not last continuously in the flesh; instead, the sharpest pain lasts the shortest time, a pain that exceeds bodily pleasure lasts only a few days, and diseases that last a long time involve delights that exceed their pains.*" (St-Andre translation). Does this apply to mental pain as well, or does this imply that I can have a stable mental state in times of adversity?

I'm realizing that this has become fairly wide ranging.... In the event that any discussion comes of this, it might be best to manage it in various new threads which link back to this one. Anyway, that's all I've got!

Post by “Godfrey” of August 5, 2024 at 9:05 PM

So I just read through the PDs with the subject of upheaval in mind, and they appear to be written for just that. Who knew?

In the historical context, it would seem that that is exactly what they were written for.

Post by “Kalosyni” of August 6, 2024 at 9:15 AM

This is an interesting line of exploration [Godfrey](#) which may be useful in some situations. My only hesitation is that that I am thinking that certain things should be examined from the stance of whether or not they are realistic and based in reality, rather than labeling them as an "incorrect" desire (unnatural or unnecessary).

When one clearly see things for what they are -- and when one realizes that what they are wanting is not realistic or may have painful consequences -- then the desire for those things can evaporate/dissipate on its own.

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

SYNOPSIS OF THE CATEGORIES OF DESIRE:

Natural and necessary desires: a) some for happiness; b) some for physical health; c) some for life itself

Natural and unnecessary desires: a) due to groundless opinion; b) don't bring pain if unfulfilled; c) require intense exertion

Unnatural and unnecessary desires: a) due to groundless opinion; b) don't bring pain if unfulfilled; c) hard to achieve; 4) seem to produce harm

As far as I understand, only **unnatural** would be defined as due to groundless opinion.

So the way I would define "natural and unnecessary" - would be this: a) brings more pain than pleasure; b) produces harm; c) difficult to obtain; d) and, also at the same time as any of the previous three, it doesn't bring pain if unfulfilled.

There is a lot of interesting stuff here that may be useful, and I will linger over the list of questions for a little while longer, and then may say more.

Post by “Godfrey” of August 6, 2024 at 4:52 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

As far as I understand, only unnatural would be defined as due to groundless opinion.

That was my thinking, too, but then I read this:

[PD30](#) *Among natural desires, those that do not bring pain when unfulfilled and that require intense exertion arise from groundless opinion; and such desires fail to be stamped out not by nature but because of the groundless opinions of humankind.*

So my current understanding is that the difference between natural/unnecessary and unnatural/unnecessary desires is that the latter "seem to produce harm."

Post by “Kalosyni” of August 6, 2024 at 5:00 PM

Thanks [Godfrey](#) about referencing to [PD30](#).

What is happening for me right now is that I am mulling over the these labels for the three categories, and mulling over if the labels are helpful for me or not 🤔

Post by “Martin” of August 7, 2024 at 3:52 AM

The three categories are useful to understand Epicurus' philosophy and for prioritizing among those desires for which it is obvious into which category they fall. For natural but not necessary

desires and for desires for which the category is not obvious, e.g. because of individual preferences or circumstances, it is more useful to answer the question whether the expected pleasure is worth the expected pain from fulfilling the desire.

Post by “Cassius” of August 7, 2024 at 6:36 AM

[Quote from Martin](#)

For natural but not necessary desires and for desires for which the category is not obvious, e.g. because of individual preferences or circumstances, it is more useful to answer the question whether the expected pleasure is worth the expected pain from fulfilling the desire

I completely agree Martin. The question "whether the expected pleasure is worth the expected pain from fulfilling the desire" is the foundational starting point of every issue in the Epicurean ethics. "Natural" and "necessary" are circumstantial - even air and water and food are neither natural nor necessary at every moment of life. All can be postponed for at least a few moments in favor of some other activity that might be appropriate to preserve life or achieve a more ultimately successful life (successful in terms of the ultimate balance between pleasure and pain).

In this question for a text reference I personally always turn back to Torquatus' explanation of why the natural and necessary categories are helpful. Just like Torquatus gives useful explanations of other ethical issues that appear to us to be ambiguous, he does the same thing here by pointing out that the issue is whether a desire has a "limit" and can be gratified, or whether the desire is illogical to pursue because it can never be achieved: because "the principle of classification [is] that the necessary desires are gratified with little trouble or expense; the natural desires also require but little, since nature's own riches, which suffice to content her, are both easily procured and limited in amount; but for the imaginary desires no bound or limit can be discovered."

Quote

Nothing could be more useful or more conducive to well-being than Epicurus's doctrine as to the different classes of the desires. One kind he classified as both natural and necessary, a second as natural without being necessary, and a third as neither natural nor necessary; the principle of classification being that the necessary desires are gratified with little trouble or expense; the natural desires also require but little, since

nature's own riches, which suffice to content her, are both easily procured and limited in amount; but for the imaginary desires no bound or limit can be discovered.

Desires that can never be met are bound to fail and lead to more pain than pleasure, but by prudently selecting desires for goals which can be met, we can logically hope to experience more pleasure than pain from the selection.

To interpret this doctrine to imply that Epicurus held : "We will be better off if we set the goal of only desiring to eat bread and water and live in a cave" - which a lot of writers are not just implying but clearly stating - is a perverse misinterpretation (to put it mildly).

Post by “Godfrey” of August 7, 2024 at 2:34 PM

Unlimited seems to me to overlap with what Epicurus refers to as groundless, which can be either natural or unnatural according to the PDs as I read them.

Seeming to produce harm, in [PD30](#), could be considered a net result of pain over pleasure. But as [Martin](#) points out, that comes down to individual preferences or circumstances.

Take the timely example of Olympic athletes: the effort of training and intensity of competition may leave them with various degrees of debilitating injuries and no guarantee of success. But, for whatever reason, these athletes have determined that the pleasure will outweigh the pain. Maybe that pleasure is in following the dream, maybe in reliving memories of the pleasures of competing at the highest level. And maybe in reliving these memories while they hobble around on artificial joints.

Post by “Cassius” of August 7, 2024 at 3:24 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

But, for whatever reason, these athletes have determined that the pleasure will outweigh the pain. Maybe that pleasure is in following the dream, maybe in reliving memories of the pleasures of competing at the highest level. And maybe in reliving these memories while they hobble around on artificial joints.

I agree with the implication of your post that I too would never see the Olympic reward as worth the effort. But I also think the point of overriding importance is that Epicurus would not have made that judgment for other people, and the evidence is against that he did so, and so to interpret "natural and necessary" to day that an ascetic life is "better" would be (in my mind) to drive a stake through the heart of the philosophy.

I know I beat this drum despite my confidence that you don't advocate that - the problem is there are far too many people that do. And for there to be a vigorous Epicurean community in the future, it will be necessary to show the vigorous people who could make such a community that vigor is welcomed, not looked down upon. You don't create a world changing philosophy, and stand up to the oppression of religion, as Epicurus did, without being vigorous.

Post by “Godfrey” of August 7, 2024 at 4:06 PM

I guess my wording wasn't very accurate, as I wasn't trying to imply that at all. There can be great mental pleasure in reliving memories of past pleasures and accomplishments when one is infirm. But everyone has different ideas. There's the half-joking phrase "pain is pleasure," which for some may ring true but for others is sheer lunacy. I read today of an ultra-marathoner speaking of her "pain cave." Not sure what to make of that!

I recently met a former (1980s) Mr. Olympia and Mr. Universe of bodybuilding. He was really quite inspiring: amazing energy and joie de vivre, and a true mentor to innumerable bodybuilders. It was a real eye opener for me, although I have no plans to take up bodybuilding.

Anyway, I'm off to tune iinto some Olympic volleyball 😊

Post by “Cassius” of August 7, 2024 at 7:56 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

I guess my wording wasn't very accurate, as I wasn't trying to imply that at all.

It's me. I tend to be on high alert for Buddhism/Stoicism lurking under every bed. 😊

(But that's NOT a reference to you; it's a valid reference to the "outside world." 😊)

Post by “Kalosyni” of August 8, 2024 at 11:36 AM

I made this chart as I was contemplating the various categories of desires. I came up with a few new labels, but these labels may or may not work for others. Everyone might want to consider if these labels or other labels help with cognition and clarity.

Drives

(Desires)

Instinctual (coming from nature)	Wealth, Power, Fame (coming from inculcated societal ideas)
Essential (necessary) - Survival - Health - Happiness - Cause pain when unfulfilled, but do not require wealth, power, or fame to acquire.	Untenable (unnecessary) Cause pain or are difficult to achieve, while at the same time do not cause pain when unfulfilled.
Superfluous (unnecessary) Cause pain or are difficult to acquire, while at the same time do not cause pain when unfulfilled.	

- See PDs 15, 21, 26, 29, and 30 and Letter to Menoeceus -

Any thoughts or further ideas?

* Updated chart Aug. 9th 1:22 pm ET

** Second update Aug.10th 10:52 am ET

Post by “Kalosyni” of August 8, 2024 at 12:57 PM

I should add to the above chart...that essential drives cause pain when unfulfilled (and they may or may not be easy to acquire).

* Have now updated chart

Post by “Cassius” of August 8, 2024 at 1:02 PM

Ok I am coming here after the [pig latin](#) discussion so I may be off on a tangent but in regard to that chart in the last post, or any chart, it seems to me the basic ground rules are:

(1) Nature give us ONLY two criteria to use for deciding what to choose and to avoid, and those criteria are pleasure and pain.

(2) I perceive that in some minds, this statement of only two criteria sounds like Epicurus was referring to "the pleasures of the moment" and "the pains of the moment." **I do *not* see that as a correct inference and I do not think Epicurus was saying that.** To me it is very clear that Epicurus is saying that each decision much consider *all* pleasure and pain (mental and bodily) over *all* periods of time (now, tomorrow, for as a long as we live) and that each decision must evaluate *every possible* ramification before you can conclude that the action should be taken or avoided. Of course it is not possible to do an extensive analysis every moment about every decision, and you have no guarantee that your assessment will be correct, because you cannot have total control over the future. But doing our best to make such an analysis *is* essentially what we are doing by internalizing all the considerations and learning to adjust our conduct over time according to the results that our actions bring.

(3) All the discussion of "natural" and "necessary" is *contextual*, and cannot be reduced to universals that apply to all people at all times and all places. Even breathing can be postponed if by holding your breath to swim out of a cave you save your life. As Torquatus said, the classification has a principle, that things which are most natural and most necessary are

generally going to be the easiest to obtain, and therefore can generally be obtained with the least resulting pain, but that is ****not**** a general statement that nature universally demands that you **only** eat bread and drink water and live in a cave. The natural and necessary classifications can act as a general guide for those times when you don't have enough information to be confident that what you can do will be achievable. What is expected as we get smarter over time, however, is that we learn to know what is and is not possible, and at what cost of pain, so over time we move out of the cave and we start eating more than bread and drinking more than water, unless circumstances demand otherwise. And generally speaking circumstances do **not** demand otherwise, and we **can** do a lot better than bread and water and caves.

(4) The most important observation to make at this point in the analysis is that we frequently choose pain in order to gain more pleasure, and so the fact that an action may result in **some** pain is absolutely **not** a reason not to engage in it. The question is the **net result.** If the action generates more pleasure than pain, then it is justifiable to take it. Of course we frequently have lots of choices from which we can choose among, so we also have to not only compare the pleasure and pain from a single action, but we have to compare the net pleasure/pain that would result and choose from between alternatives by comparing the net amount of pleasure.

(5) As to the "emptiness" or "vanity" of some desires, it is obviously a bad idea to set your sights on achieving goals that are impossible to obtain - like living forever - because the impossible will by definition not be achievable, and you will always end up frustrated. But how do you know ahead of time whether a goal is possible or not? And exactly how long you should try to live, or exactly how much money should you should pursue, or exactly how much food should you should eat? There are no universal rules to answer these questions, so you always go back to the first and foremost point, that nature gives you only pleasure and pain by which to decide what to choose and what to avoid. You then do your very best to guide your actions by estimating -- in the long run and from the widest possible perspective - what the results of your actions are going to be in terms of net pleasure and pain. And to be clear - net pleasure and pain **that effects you.** It makes no sense to be concerned about pleasure and pain in the abstract, if they don't affect you, but it does make sense to consider the pleasure or pain of those around you to the extent that their reaction to your actions will have an impact on your own pleasure and pain (just as we evaluate in regard to our friends).

Post by “Kalosyni” of August 8, 2024 at 1:03 PM

Drives for survival, health, and happiness do not require wealth, power, or fame.

* Edit note:

[Cassius](#) I apologize for the cross-post

Post by “Cassius” of August 8, 2024 at 1:07 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Drives for survival, health, and happiness do not require wealth, power, or fame.

I would say the correctness of that statement depends entirely on how you define "wealth," "power," and "fame." Words like this have very flexible meanings with no bright lines that can be determined philosophically and out of context of the person involved. The question of "how much is enough" for those things - and any "thing" - is going to be contextual and not reducible to high-level specific rules. The only ultimate consideration is "pleasure" and "pain."

Post by “Kalosyni” of August 8, 2024 at 1:08 PM

I am going to need to ponder upon post number 14, [Cassius](#)...and will reply later.

Post by “Don” of August 8, 2024 at 5:05 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I perceive that in some minds, this statement of only two criteria sounds like Epicurus was referring to "the pleasures of the moment" and "the pains of the moment." ... etc...

Fully agree with all this in your number 2 paragraph. Well stated, Cassius. My understanding is that the "pleasures/pains of the moment" considerations are more inline with the Cyrenaic position.

Quote from Cassius

All the discussion of "natural" and "necessary" is *contextual*, and cannot be reduced to universals that apply to all people at all times and all places. Even breathing can be postponed if by holding your breath to swim out of a cave you save your life. As Torquatus said, the classification has a principle, that things which are most natural and most necessary are generally going to be the easiest to obtain, and therefore can generally be obtained with the least resulting pain, but that is ****not**** a general statement that nature universally demands that you eat bread and drink water and live in a cave. It is only a general consideration that can serve as a guide when you don't have enough information to be confident that what you can do will be achievable, but over time you learn to know what is and is not possible, so you move out of the cave and you start eating more than bread and drinking more than water, unless circumstances demand it.

I don't think "natural" and "necessary" are as contextual as you're trying to make out. The literal translation of the pertinent Menoikeus section (127-128) is:

Quote from Epicurus - Letter to Menoikeus, 127-8

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*. [128] The steady contemplation of these things equips one to know how to decide all choice and rejection for the health of the body and for the tranquility of the mind, that is for our physical and our mental existence, since this is the goal of a blessed life.

The 'empty, fruitless, or vain ones' uses KENAI which is a form of the same exact word Epicurus uses for the void in "atoms & void."

My reading is:

1. Natural Desires

A. Natural *and* Necessary Desires

i. Necessary for Eudaimonia

ii. Necessary for "Freedom from Disturbance in the Body" (πρὸς τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἀοχλησίαν)

iii. Necessary for Living Itself (πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ ζῆν)

B. Only Natural Desires (αἱ φυσικὰ μόνον)

2. Empty, Fruitless "Void" Desires

I find that "the ones which are only natural" interesting. I'm not sure how to interpret that, honestly.

To get back to Cassius' commentary, specifically: "All the discussion of "natural" and "necessary" is *contextual*, and cannot be reduced to universals that apply to all people at all times and all places. Even breathing can be postponed if by holding your breath to swim out of a cave you save your life."

A distinction has to be made between natural/necessary behaviors and "desires." It is a universal that we mammals find breathing, eating, sleeping, and shelter necessary to continue living. Of course, we'll postpone breathing when swimming out of a cave because we can't breathe water and we desire to continue living if at all possible. I don't see that as an example of a contextual desire.

*"things which are most natural and most necessary are generally going to be the easiest to obtain, and therefore can generally be obtained with the least resulting pain, but that is ****not**** a general statement that nature universally demands that you eat bread and drink water and live in a cave."*

Your water/cave metaphor seems to be a bit of a non sequitur here. If you're living in a cave, it is going to require quite a bit of effort to obtain bread and make sure you have sufficient water stored away... unless you're living directly beside a spring and have bread delivered to you... in which case you'll need a baker who's willing to trek up the mountain... but then you'll need... and so on.

My understanding is that nature provides sufficient amounts of what we need to live - if we were to be in dire straits - which is why Epicurus, from time to time, limited his food and drink to see how much he could live on and still be satisfied. Then, after his fasting experiment, went back to living "normally" until his next experiment.

Post by “Don” of August 8, 2024 at 5:26 PM

I didn't address [Godfrey](#)'s original thesis!

I would argue that Epicurus expects his students to apply his philosophical methods in both good times and bad, in times of upheaval and in times of jubilation.

The questions you pose are intriguing and would serve as a good starting point for planning ahead in those times of upheaval that inevitably arise in our lives. They also seem to get at those aspects of our lives over which we have control and those which are subject to chance. Making the most of those parts of our lives that we do have control over - that we have agency over - seems to me a big part of Epicurus's philosophy.

Post by “Don” of August 8, 2024 at 6:37 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

πρὸς τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἀοχλησίαν

VS79 has a form of this word:

He who is as peace within himself also *causes no trouble* for others. ὁ ἀτάραχος ἑαυτῷ καὶ ἐτέρῳ ἀόχλητος. (Ho atarakhos heautō kai heterō aokhlētos)

Post by “Godfrey” of August 8, 2024 at 8:30 PM

Re post #12 graphic: also include PDs 15, 21, 26 and 29, in addition to 30.

Post by “Don” of August 8, 2024 at 8:39 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Re post #12 graphic: also include PDs 15, 21, 26 and 29, in addition to 30.

FYI:

15. Natural wealth is both limited and easy to acquire, but the riches incited by groundless opinion have no end. ὁ τῆς φύσεως πλοῦτος καὶ ὠρισται καὶ εὐπόριστός ἐστιν, ὁ δὲ τῶν κενῶν (*kenōn* < *emptiness, void*) δοξῶν εἰς ἀπειρον ἐκπίπτει.

ἄπειρον = infinity "no-limit"

Limited in this PD is [ὠρίσται](#) which includes the connotation of "limit (one thing according to another)"

"Easy to acquire" reminds me of the 3rd line of the [tetrpharmakos](#).

I like the connotation of ὁ τῶν κενῶν δοξῶν εἰς ἄπειρον ἐκπίπτει. Those based on empty beliefs εἰς ἄπειρον ἐκπίπτει. [ἐκπίπτει](#) has a meaning "to fall out, fall down" but also to be cast ashore or suffer shipwreck, to be driven out or banished, etc. εἰς ἄπειρον "into infinity." So, to me, this has the underlying meaning of having an empty desire for limitless wealth is like being banished to search for satisfaction in your wealth into the infinite void with no end in sight forever.

Post by "Titus" of August 9, 2024 at 1:25 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

At the moment, I haven't got much further than compiling this list. And of course many of the questions will only apply to a particular type of upheaval, and the answers will be different for everyone and in each situation.

I would like to emphasize Cassius' famous phrase: "Don't be a Stoic in disguise!" 🤔

The point is not to ask what's in my power and what is beyond my capabilities and to examine everything that comes to my mind according to this procedure. The key is to actually focus on what's important in life, what does have priority and what is established by nature as the foundation of life.

1. everything that natural, either necessary like to stay hydrated or 2. a tasty soft drink derived from that need what one could call not necessary. 3. Not necessary desires which are not to focus on.

I like this classification because it gives positive statements what to pursue. I know there is space for interpretation and to some degree in modern consumer society there is plenty of food, drink and clothing available. But perhaps this is exactly the trap: Thinking the easy things don't matter because they seem to be too easy to achieve!

In your case the message could be: Focus on a healthy diet, focus on your corporeal well-being, focus on your social interactions. Strengthen the foundation. So you don't get distressed by

what's going on on the screens. The direct response you receive is that you (hopefully!) have plenty of food, drink and shelter as well as friends available and that is it what is first and what matters foremost.

This is to experience in our everyday lives. As the natural desires usually give a direct response related to our senses, hopefully this can be a strategy to go skip the abstract fears in one's head.

(I've just mentioned the very essentials of life, but this doesn't mean to not focus on other pleasurable experiences. This is just a personal preference.)

Fill yourself up with the fullness of pleasure, so the emptiness of the world cannot enter!

Post by “Kalosyni” of August 9, 2024 at 10:53 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Re post #12 graphic: also include PDs 15, 21, 26 and 29, in addition to 30.

Thanks Godfrey... I updated it 😊

Post by “Godfrey” of August 9, 2024 at 12:02 PM

[Titus](#) it's interesting that you mention the Stoic "what's in my power." As I was thinking about the desires in my first post above, that kept popping into my head. Much to my discomfort! Thanks for reminding me of the benefits of the categories, with which I firmly agree.

But there comes a point where the fullness of pleasure is elusive, and not due to imaginary fears or social media. And even when our basic needs are safely met and the flowers smell nice and the zip lines are well greased. Life is full of fears and disturbances beyond the gods and the afterlife and I think Epicurus was addressing those as well. Sometimes simple pleasures and having met our needs is sufficient for the fullness of pleasure. Sometimes additional reasoning in the midst of upheaval (of whatever type) is called for.

[PD16](#) *Chance steals only a bit into the life of a wise person: for throughout the complete span of his life the greatest and most important matters have been, are, and will be directed by the power of reason.* (St-Andre)

Post by “Don” of August 9, 2024 at 12:34 PM

[Quote from Titus](#)

The point is not to ask what's in my power and what is beyond my capabilities and to examine everything that comes to my mind according to this procedure. The key is to actually focus on what's important in life, what does have priority and what is established by nature as the foundation of life.

I would agree that for the most part; however, the Stoics have no monopoly on what is usually ascribed to them:

Quote from Epicurus, letter to Menoikeus

whom do you consider is better or more powerful than one who holds pious beliefs concerning the gods; one who has absolutely no fears concerning death; one who has rationally determined the τέλος of one's natural state; and the one who grasps that, on the one hand, good things (namely pleasures) are both easily attained and easily secured, and, on the other hand, evil things (or pains) are either short in time or brief in suffering; someone who laughs at Fate which is introduced onto the stage of life by many as the mistress of all things? *For that person, even though some things happen by necessity, some by chance, and some by our own power, for although necessity is beyond our control, they see that chance is unstable and there is no other master beyond themselves, so that praise and its opposite are inseparably connected to themselves.*