

Sunday Zoom - August 3, 2025 - 12:30 PM ET - Topic: "There Is No Necessity To Live Under the Control of Necessity"

Post by "Cassius" of July 31, 2025 at 5:16 PM

This week we will return to our normal format and combine a general opening welcome with attention to a special topic, which this week will be "[There is No Necessity To Live Under the Control of Necessity.](#)"

Please join us if you can. If you're not on our current invitation list, let us know in this thread that you'd like to attend future sessions.

[A discussion outline for this topic is here.](#)

Post by "Don" of July 31, 2025 at 5:40 PM

VS9 is a clever bit of writing from Epicurus. The original Greek reads "κακὸν ἀνάγκη, ἀλλ' οὐδεμία ἀνάγκη ζῆν μετὰ ἀνάγκης." Note those three occurrences of ἀνάγκη/ἀνάγκης. The word itself means force, constraint, or necessity; so a literal translation would be something like "An evil, necessity (is); but (there is) no necessity to live in the midst of necessity." This retains the clever wordplay but is honestly a little clunky in English. To get the import of the statement, a paraphrase may be better. Consider what he is saying. Being constrained in your choices is an evil. If you have only one choice - or feel you only have one choice - that is an evil. However, we have free will, so we are not required to live having our choices curtailed and constrained. Even if we make choices we don't want to make, we are exercising our free will. "I don't want to go to work today, but I have to." No, you don't. You could quit. But are you ready to face the consequences of quitting your job? You can consciously decide today is not the day I quit. I make the decision to get up and do the work. Likewise, maybe getting a new job is the right decision. Weigh your options. Exercise your faculty of choice and rejection. You are not forced to be forced to do something. Make your choices and rejections wisely.

Post by "Bryan" of July 31, 2025 at 10:23 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4652-sunday-zoom-august-3-2025-12-30-pm-et-topic-there-is-no-necessity-to-live-under/>

[Quote from Don](#)

You could quit. But are you ready to face the consequences of quitting your job?

On this topic, I wanted to share Seneca (fl. 35 CE), Letters to Lucilius, Letter 22, sections 1-5:

"You now understand that you must be led out of those flashy and harmful occupations, but you ask how you might achieve that. Some things can only be shown by someone present... What generally happens, and what ought to be done, can be passed on and written down in universal terms: such counsel can be given not only to those who are absent, but even to future generations. but that other kind - when something ought to happen, or in what way - no one will advise from afar, since it must be deliberated with the circumstances themselves.

It is necessary not only for someone who is present, but for one who is alert, to notice the opportunity as it rushes by. So look around for this - if you see this, grab it with full force and all your strength: strive to strip yourself from those duties. And now, pay attention to the opinion I am about to give: I believe it is necessary for you to either depart from that life, or from life [*itself*]. but I think this as well: it is necessary to go by the gentle path - so that what you've badly entangled, you may untie rather than tear apart - however, if there is no other method of untying it: then do tear it apart. No one is so timid that he prefers hanging forever to falling once!

In the meantime - and this is the first thing - do not entangle yourself further: Be content with the business in which you have entered (or, as you'd rather have it seem, '[*in which*] you stumbled').

There is no reason for you to strive for greater things - otherwise, you will lose the excuse - and it will become apparent that you did not just stumble into it. Yes, those things that are usually said are false: 'I couldn't do otherwise' 'what if I hadn't wanted to?' 'It was necessary'

For no one is it is necessary to chase after happiness at a run: there is something of value - *even if not in resisting* - in stopping, and not pressing forward with fortune as she drives. Surely you would not be offended, if I not only join in counsel, but also call in men indeed wiser than I am- to whom I usually refer, when I am deciding something:

Read the letter of Epicurus that pertains to this very issue, the one addressed to Idomeneus, whom [*Epicurus*] urges to flee as much as he can and to hurry - before some greater force intervenes - and takes away the freedom to withdraw.

He nevertheless adds that nothing should be attempted unless it can be done suitably and at the right time. But when that long-awaited time finally comes: he says one must leap out.

He forbids the one thinking about this flight to fall asleep - and he hopes for a saving exit even from the most difficult things: if only we do not rush before the right time - nor delay in the

right time."

ADMIN EDIT: WIKISOURCE LINK: [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Moral let...ilius/Letter 22](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Moral_letters_of_Cicero/Book_22)

Post by “Bryan” of July 31, 2025 at 10:37 PM

Regarding the main topic, I wanted to share Epicurus, On Nature, Book 25, P.Herc. 1056 col. 21 (fr. B 43):

[Sedley] From the very outset we always have seeds: some directing us towards these, some towards those, some towards these and those actions and thoughts and characters, in greater and smaller numbers. Consequently that which we develop – characteristics of this or that kind – is at first absolutely up to us; and the things which of necessity flow in through our passages from that which surrounds us are at one stage up to us and depend upon beliefs of our own making.

Also book 25, P.Herc. 1056 col. 16 (fr. B 38):

[Sedley] ...many naturally capable of achieving these and those results fail to achieve them because of themselves, not because of one and the same responsibility of the atoms and of themselves.

Really most of book 25 is relevant to this topic.

Post by “Cassius” of August 1, 2025 at 5:26 AM

[Quote from Bryan](#)

[Sedley] ...many naturally capable of achieving these and those results fail to achieve them because of themselves, not because of one and the same responsibility of the atoms and of themselves.

That one sure reminds me of:

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4652-sunday-zoom-august-3-2025-12-30-pm-et-topic-there-is-no-necessity-to-live-under/>

[The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.](#)

Post by “Bryan” of August 3, 2025 at 1:46 PM

Adding this as well, which shows Epicurus fighting against eliminative materialism.

Epicurus, On Nature, Book 25, P.Herc. 1056 col. 6 (fr. B 28) & col. 10 (fr. B 32):

Insofar as we would refer to this aggregate as something: but also insofar as [*we would refer to an aggregate only as*] "atoms" and insofar as [*we would refer to an aggregate as*] "an aggregate" [*per se*]...

...for itself, according to what is similar and undifferentiated, [*your reasoning*] will be said to mentally perceive itself ^[1] as if it were one particular thing in what is conceived to exist [*i.e.*, "*this is my ability to reason*"], but also ^[2] in reference to itself, of itself, within [the context] of other things [*i.e.*, "*my ability to reason is based in atomic movement*"] – and in as much as [*your reasoning*] is said to perceive itself in some experience...

ἡ ἄθροισμα τόδε τι ἂν Προσαγορεύσαιμεν: ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ "ἄτόμους" καὶ ἡ "ἄθροισμα."

...[ἐ]αυτῶι κατὰ τὸ ὅμοιον καὶ ἀδιάφορον ἑαυτὸν ῥηθήσεται διανοεῖσθαι οἷον ἑνός τινος ταύτηι τοῦ νοουμένου[ν] ὄντος ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐφ' ἑαυτ[ὸ]ν ἑαυτοῦ ἐν[τὸς] ἄλλων. καθότι δ' ἐν [πά]θει τι ἐαυτὸν λέγεται διαν]οε[ῖσθ]αι...