
January 5th

CLARIFY YOUR INTENTIONS

“Let all your efforts be directed to something, let it keep that end in view. It’s not activity that disturbs people, but false conceptions of things that drive them mad.”

—SENECA, *ON TRANQUILITY OF MIND*, 12.5

Law 29 of *The 48 Laws of Power* is: Plan All The Way To The End. Robert Greene writes, “By planning to the end you will not be overwhelmed by circumstances and you will know when to stop. Gently guide fortune and help determine the future by thinking far ahead.” The second habit in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* is: begin with an end in mind.

Having an end in mind is no guarantee that you’ll reach it—no Stoic would tolerate that assumption—but *not* having an end in mind is a guarantee you won’t. To the Stoics, *oiêsis* (false conceptions) are responsible not just for disturbances in the soul but for chaotic and dysfunctional lives and operations. When your efforts are not directed at a cause or a purpose, how will you know what to do day in and day out? How will you know what to say no to and what to say yes to? How will you know when you’ve had enough, when you’ve reached your goal, when you’ve gotten off track, if you’ve never defined what those things are?

The answer is that you cannot. And so you are driven into failure—or worse, into madness by the oblivion of directionlessness.