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January 10th

**IF YOU WANT TO BE STEADY**

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“The essence of good is a certain kind of reasoned choice; just as the essence of evil is another kind. What about externals, then? They are only the raw material for our reasoned choice, which finds its own good or evil in working with them. How will it find the good? Not by marveling at the material! For if judgments about the material are straight that makes our choices good, but if those judgments are twisted, our choices turn bad.”

—EPICTETUS, *DISCOURSES*, 1.29.1–3

**T**he Stoics seek steadiness, stability, and tranquility—traits most of us aspire to but seem to experience only fleetingly. How do they accomplish this elusive goal? How does one embody *eustatheia* (the word Arrian used to describe this teaching of Epictetus)?

Well, it’s not luck. It’s not by eliminating outside influences or running away to quiet and solitude. Instead, it’s about filtering the outside world through the straightener of our judgment. That’s what our reason can do—it can take the crooked, confusing, and overwhelming nature of external events and make them orderly.

However, if our judgments are crooked because we don’t use reason, then everything that follows will be crooked, and we will lose our ability to steady ourselves in the chaos and rush of life. If you want to be steady, if you want clarity, proper judgment is the best way.