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January 27th

## THE THREE AREAS OF TRAINING

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“There are three areas in which the person who would be wise and good must be trained. The first has to do with desires and aversions—that a person may never miss the mark in desires nor fall into what repels them. The second has to do with impulses to act and not to act—and more broadly, with duty—that a person may act deliberately for good reasons and not carelessly. The third has to do with freedom from deception and composure and the whole area of judgment, the assent our mind gives to its perceptions. Of these areas, the chief and most urgent is the first which has to do with the passions, for strong emotions arise only when we fail in our desires and aversions.”

—EPICETETUS, *DISCOURSES*, 3.2.1–3a

Today, let's focus on the three areas of training that Epictetus laid out for us.

First, we must consider what we should desire and what we should be averse to. Why? So that we want what is good and avoid what is bad. It's not enough to just listen to your body—because our attractions often lead us astray.

Next, we must examine our impulses to act—that is, our *motivations*. Are we doing things for the right reasons? Or do we act because we haven't stopped to think? Or do we believe that we *have* to do something?

Finally, there is our judgment. Our ability to see things clearly and properly comes when we use our great gift from nature: *reason*.

These are three distinct areas of training, but in practice they are inextricably intertwined. Our judgment affects what we desire, our desires affect how we act, just as our judgment determines how we act. But we can't just expect this to happen. We must put real thought and energy into each area of our lives. If we do, we'll find real clarity and success.