

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/On\\_the\\_shortness\\_of\\_life/Chapter\\_XIV](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/On_the_shortness_of_life/Chapter_XIV)

XIV.1 Of all men they alone are at leisure who take time for *philosophy*, they alone really live; for they are not content to be good guardians of their own lifetime only. They annex every age to their own; all the years that have gone before them are an addition to their store. Unless we are most ungrateful, all those men, glorious fashioners of holy thoughts, were born for us; for us they have prepared a way of life. By other men's labours we are led to the sight of things most beautiful that have been wrested from darkness and brought into light; from no age are we shut out, we have access to all ages, and if it is our wish, by greatness of mind, to pass beyond the narrow limits of human weakness, there is a great stretch of time through which we may roam.

XIV.2 We may argue with Socrates, we may doubt<sup>1</sup> with Carneades, find peace with Epicurus, overcome human nature with the Stoics, exceed it with the Cynics. Since Nature allows us to enter into fellowship with every age, why should we not turn from this paltry and fleeting span of time and surrender ourselves with all our soul to the past, which is boundless, which is eternal, which we share with our betters?

XIV.3 Those who rush about in the performance of social duties, who give themselves and others no rest, when they have fully indulged their madness, when they have every day crossed everybody's threshold, and have left no open door unvisited, when they have carried around their venal greeting to houses that are very far apart—out of a city so huge and torn by such varied desires, how few will they be able to see?

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1. The New Academy taught that certainty of knowledge was unattainable.