

ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHY

INSTRUCTOR | Edward Tingley, PhD

READING FOR SECTION 12 LESSONS 1-3

Excerpts from:

Epictetus, The Discourses of Epictetus [D]

Trans. George Long, 1890. In *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. R.M. Hutchins, vol. 12 (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), 105–245

[Http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text)

Epictetus, Discourses [D2]

In Epictetus, *Discourses, Fragments, Handbook*, trans. Robin Hard (Oxford University Press, 2014)

Epictetus, The Enchiridion [E]

Partly trans. Richard Hooker.

Otherwise trans. Nicholas White (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983)

[Http://www.nyu.edu/classes/calhoun/conwest-fall2001/epic.html](http://www.nyu.edu/classes/calhoun/conwest-fall2001/epic.html)

Epictetus, The Golden Sayings of Epictetus [GS]

Trans. Hastings Crossley, in *The Harvard Classics* (Danbury: Grolier, 1980), 117–90

[Http://www.bartleby.com/2/2/](http://www.bartleby.com/2/2/)

These works are from the 1st C AD

1

Who then is a Stoic – in the sense that we call that a statue of Phidias which is modelled after that master’s art? Show me a man in this sense modelled after the doctrines that are ever upon his lips. Show me a man that is sick – and happy; in danger – and happy; on his deathbed – and happy; an exile – and happy; in evil report – and happy! Show me him, I ask again. So help me Heaven, I long to see one Stoic!

Nay, if you cannot show me one fully modelled, let me at least see one in whom the process is at work – one whose bent is in that direction. Do me that favour! Grudge it not to an old man, to behold a sight that he has never yet beheld. Think you I wish to see the Zeus or Athena of Phidias, bedecked with gold and ivory? – Nay, show me, one of you, a human soul, desiring to be of one mind with God, no more to lay blame on God or man, to suffer

nothing to disappoint, nothing to cross him, to yield neither to anger, envy, nor jealousy – in a word, why disguise the matter?

One that from a man would fain become a God; one that while still imprisoned in this dead body makes fellowship with God his aim. Show me him! – Ah, you cannot!

GS, 78

CONTROL

2

[What is and is not in our power] These are the things which the philosophers should meditate upon, which they should write daily, in which they should exercise themselves.

D, 106

3

Do not seek to have events happen as you want them to, but instead want them to happen as they do happen, and your life will go well.

E, 8 White trans.

4

Some things are within our power and some things are beyond our power.

Those things within our power include opinions, goals, desires, and aversions, in other words, whatever affairs belong to us. Those things beyond our power include our bodies, property, reputation, and public office, that is, whatever does not properly belong to us.

Those things within our power are naturally free, unlimited, and unhindered; however, those things beyond our power are naturally dependent, weak, and foreign to us.

Therefore, remember that if you ascribe freedom to things that are naturally dependent and take for yourself what belongs to others (such as your reputation), you will face obstacles, you will be full of

regrets and unfulfilled wishes, and you will continually blame both the gods and men.

But if you take for your own only that which properly is your own and regard what belongs to others as belonging to others, then you will never be coerced or restricted, you will not find fault with others, you will not blame others, and you will do nothing unwillingly; you cannot be hurt, you will have no enemies, you will suffer no harm....

E, 1 Hooker

5

Some things are up to us and some are not up to us.

Our opinions are up to us, and our impulses, desires, aversions – in short, whatever is our own doing. Our bodies are not up to us, nor are our possessions, our reputations, or our public offices, or, that is, whatever is not our own doing.

The things that are up to us are by nature free, unhindered, and unimpeded; the things that are not up to us are weak, enslaved, hindered, not our own.

So remember, if you think that things naturally enslaved are free or that things not your own are your own, you will be thwarted, miserable, and upset, and will blame both gods and men.

But if you think that only what is yours is yours, and that what is not your own is, just as it is, not your own, then no one will ever coerce you, no one will hinder you, you will blame no one, you will not accuse anyone, you will not do a single thing unwillingly, you will have no enemies, and no one will harm you, because you will not be harmed at all.

As you aim for such great goals, remember that you must not undertake them by acting moderately, but must let some things go completely and postpone others for the time being. But if you want both those great goals and also to hold public office and to

be rich, then you may perhaps not get even the latter just because you aim at the former too; and you certainly will fall to get the former, which are the only things that yield freedom and happiness.

From the start, then, work on saying to each harsh appearance, “You are an appearance [*phantasia*], and not at all the thing that has the appearance.” Then examine it and assess it by these yardsticks that you have, and first and foremost by whether it concerns the things that are up to us or the things that are not up to us. And if it is about one of the things that is not up to us, be ready to say, “You are nothing in relation to me.”

E, 1 White

6

Being naturally constituted noble, magnanimous, and free, [man] sees that the things which surround him are of two kinds. Some are free from hindrance and in the power of the will. Others are subject to hindrance, and depend on the will of other men. If then he place his own good, his own best interest, only in that which is free from hindrance and in his power, he will be free, tranquil, happy, unharmed, noble-hearted, and pious; giving thanks for all things unto God, finding fault with nothing that comes to pass, laying no charge against anything.

Whereas if he place his good in outward things, depending not on the will, he must perforce be subject to hindrance and restraint, the slave of those that have power over the things he desires and fears; he must perforce be impious, as deeming himself injured at the hands of God; he must be unjust, as ever prone to claim more than his due; he must perforce be of a mean and abject spirit.

GS, 151

7

How can it be that one who has nothing, neither raiment, nor house, nor home, ... nor

servant, nor city, should yet live tranquil and contented? Behold God has sent you a man to show you in act and deed that it may be so.

Behold me! I have neither city nor house nor possessions nor servants: the ground is my couch; I have no wife, no children, no shelter – nothing but earth and sky, and one poor cloak. And what do I yet lack?

Am I not untouched by sorrow, by fear? Am I not free? When have I complained to either God or Man? Have any of you seen me with a miserable face?

GS, 114

8

We should act as we do in seafaring. “What can I do?” – Choose the master, the crew, the day, the opportunity. Then comes a sudden storm. What matters it to me? my part has been fully done. The matter is in the hands of another – the Master of the ship. The ship is foundering. What then have I to do? I do the only thing that remains to me – to be drowned without fear, without a cry, without upbraiding God, but knowing that what has been born must likewise perish. For I am not Eternity, but a human being – a part of the whole, as an hour is part of the day. I must come like the hour, and like the hour must pass!

GS, 186

9

True instruction is this: – to learn to wish that each thing should come to pass as it does. And how does it come to pass? As the Disposer has disposed it. Now He has disposed that there should be summer and winter, and plenty and dearth, and vice and virtue, and all such opposites, for the harmony of the whole.

GS, 26

10

Keep in mind that you are merely an actor in a play which the Author has chosen. If

the play is short, then it's short; if the play is long, then it's long. If the Author chooses that you play a beggar, or a cripple, or a king, or a subject, your job is to act the part well. This is your only business ¶ act your part well ¶ for choosing what part you play belongs to another.

E, 17 Hooker

11

Never say about anything, "I have lost it," but instead, "I have given it back." Did your child die? It was given back. Did your wife die? She was given back. "My land was taken." So this too was given back. "But the person who took it was bad!" How does the way the giver asked for it back concern you? As long as he gives it, take care of it as something that is not your own, just as travelers treat an inn.

E, 11 White

12

Seeing this then, and noting well the faculties which you have, you should say, – "Send now, O God, any trial that Thou wilt; lo, I have means and powers given me by Thee to acquit myself with honour through whatever comes to pass!" – No; but there you sit, trembling for fear certain things should come to pass, and moaning and groaning and lamenting over what does come to pass. And then you upbraid the Gods. Such meanness of spirit can have but one result – impiety.

Yet God has ... given us these faculties by means of which we may bear everything that comes to pass without being crushed or depressed thereby.... Though possessing all these things free and all your own, you do not use them! you do not perceive what it is you have received nor whence it comes, but sit moaning and groaning;

Yet what faculties and powers you possess for attaining courage and greatness of heart, I can easily show you....

GS, 20

13

Give me but one young man, that has come to the School with this intention, who stands forth a champion of this cause, and says, "All else I renounce, content if I am able to pass my life free from hindrance and trouble; to raise my head aloft and face all things as a free man; to look up to heaven as a friend of God, fearing nothing that may come to pass!" ... And when our champion has duly exercised himself in this ..., I hope he will come back to me and say: "What I desire is to be free from passion and from perturbation; as one who grudges no pains in the pursuit of piety and philosophy, what I desire is to know my duty to the Gods, my duty to my parents, to my brothers, to my country, to strangers."

GS, 73

DESIRE

14

Keep in mind that desire always demands the attainment of that which you desire, and aversion demands the avoidance of that which you shun; everyone who fails to attain the object they desire is disappointed; everyone who acquires the object they shun is miserable.

If you shun only those things which you can control, you will never acquire what you are averse to; but if you try to avoid sickness, or death, or poverty, you will eventually be miserable. Cease trying to avoid those things you have no power over, and apply your effort to those undesirable things which are in your power. For the present, restrain your desire. If you desire anything not within your power, you are sure to be disappointed....

E, 2 Hooker

15

To you, all you have seems small: to me, all I have seems great. Your desire is insatiable, mine is satisfied. See children thrusting their hands into a narrow-necked jar, and

striving to pull out the nuts and figs it contains: if they fill the hand, they cannot pull it out again, and then they fall to tears. – “Let go a few of them, and then you can draw out the rest!” – You, too, let your desire go! covet not many things, and you will obtain.

GS, 95

16

Remember that it isn't the love of power and wealth that sets us under the heel of others, but even the love of tranquility, of leisure, of change of scene – of learning in general. It doesn't matter what the outward thing may be – to set store by it is to place yourself in subjection to another.

Where is the difference between desiring to be a Senator, and desiring not to be one: between thirsting for office and thirsting to be free of it? Where is the difference between crying, Woe is me, I don't know not what to do, bound hand and foot as I am to my books so that I cannot stir! and crying, Woe is me, I have not time to read! As though a book were not as much an outward thing and independent of the will, as office and power and the receptions of the great.

Or what is your reason (tell me) for desiring to read? For if you aim at nothing beyond the mere delight of it, or gaining some scrap of knowledge, you are only a poor, spiritless knave. But if you desire to study to its proper end, what else is this than a life that flows on tranquil and serene? And if your reading does not secure you serenity, what good is it?

“Nay, but it does so,” he answers, “and that is precisely why I complain of being deprived of it.”

Well what serenity is that that stands at the mercy of every passer-by? ... The life serene has no more certain mark than this, that it ever moves with constant unimpeded flow.

GS, 145

17

Asked, Who is the rich man? Epictetus replied, “He who is content.”

GS, 182

18

Fortify thyself with contentment: that is an impregnable stronghold.

GS, fragment 17

19

When I see a man anxious, I say, What does this man want? If he did not want some thing which is not in his power, how could he be anxious? For this reason a lyre player when he is singing by himself has no anxiety, but when he enters the theatre, he is anxious even if he has a good voice and plays well on the lyre; for he not only wishes to sing well, but also to obtain applause: but this is not in his power.

Accordingly, where he has skill, there he has confidence. Bring any single person who knows nothing of music, and the musician does not care for him. But in the matter where a man knows nothing and has not been practised, there he is anxious. What matter is this? He knows not what a crowd is or what the praise of a crowd is. However he has learned to strike the lowest chord and the highest; but what the praise of the many is, and what power it has in life he neither knows nor has he thought about it. Hence he must of necessity tremble and grow pale.

I cannot then say that a man is not a lyre player when I see him afraid, but I can say something else, and not one thing, but many. And first of all I call him a stranger and say, This man does not know where in the world he is, but though he has been here so long, he is ignorant of the laws of the State and the customs, and what is permitted and what is not; and he has never employed any lawyer to tell him and to explain the laws. But a man does not write a will, if he does not know how it ought to

be written,.... But he uses his desire without a lawyer's advice, and aversion, and pursuit (movement), and attempt and purpose.

How do you mean without a lawyer? He does not know that he wills what is not allowed, and does not will that which is of necessity; and he does not know either what is his own or what is another man's; but if he did know, he would never be impeded, he would never be hindered, he would not be anxious.

How so? – Is any man then afraid about things which are not evils?

No. – Is he afraid about things which are evils, but still so far within his power that they may not happen?

Certainly he is not. – If then the things which are independent of the will are neither good nor bad, and all things which do depend on the will are within our power, and no man can either take them from us or give them to us, if we do not choose, where is room left for anxiety?

D, book 2, ch 13, slightly amended

THE HUMAN GOOD, HAPPINESS, THE WILL, THE END

20

But I have one whom I must please, to whom I must be subject, whom I must obey: ¶ God, and those who come next to Him [i.e., "good and just men"]. He hath entrusted me with myself: He hath made my will subject to myself alone and given me rules for the right use thereof.

GS, 4

21

For what else is tragedy [i.e., the dramatic form] than the perturbations of men who value externals exhibited in this kind of poetry? But if a man must learn by fiction that no external things which are independent of the will concern us, for my part I should like this fiction, by the aid of which I should live happily undisturbed.

22

But what saith God? – “Had it been possible, Epictetus, I would have made both that body of thine and thy possessions free and unimpeded, but as it is, be not deceived: – it is not thine own; it is but finely tempered clay. Since then this I could not do, I have given thee a portion of Myself, in the power of desiring and declining and of pursuing and avoiding, and in a word the power of dealing with the things of sense. And if thou neglect not this, but place all that thou hast therein, thou shalt never be let or hindered; thou shalt never lament; thou shalt not blame or flatter any. What then? Seemeth this to thee a little thing?” – God forbid! – “Be content then therewith!”

GS, 6

23

To Triptolemus all men have erected temples and altars, because he gave us food by cultivation; but to him who discovered truth and brought it to light and communicated it to all, not the truth which shows us how to live, but how to live well, who of you for this reason has built an altar, or a temple, or has dedicated a statue, or who worships God for this? Because the Gods have given the vine, or wheat, we sacrifice to them: but because they have produced in the human mind that fruit by which they are designed to show us the truth which relates to happiness, shall we not thank God for this?

D, 110

24

[How do you answer someone who says to you,] “Say then, what things are matters of indifference?”

“Things that are not in our power.”

“Say then, what follows?”

“That things which are not in our power are nothing to me.”

“Say also what things you hold to be good.”

“A will such as it ought to be, and a right use of the things of sense.”

“And what is the end?”

“To follow Thee!”

GS, 51

THE SOURCE OF TROUBLE

25

Whenever you find fault with providence, just give the matter some thought and you'll recognize that what came about was in accordance with reason.

‘Yes, but someone who is unjust comes off better.’

In what? In money. For in that regard he has the better of you because he flatters people, because he has no shame, because he stays awake at night. Is there anything surprising in that? But look to see whether he is better than you in being trustworthy and honest. Because you'll find that not to be the case; but rather, in those things in which you're superior to him, you'll find that you're the one who is better off.

I said one day to someone who was indignant at the prosperity of Philostorgus: Would you have been willing to go to bed with Sura? – ‘Heaven forbid’, he replied, ‘that such a day should ever arrive!’ – Why are you indignant, then, if he gets some reward for what he sells? Or how can you account a man happy if he acquires his prosperity through means that you abhor? What wrong is providence committing if it gives the better things to the better people? Or isn't it better to be honourable than to be rich? The man agreed. So why are you indignant, man, if you have what is of greater worth? Always remember, then, and keep in mind that it is a law of nature that one who is superior has the advantage

over one who is inferior in the respect in which he is superior, and you'll never again have cause for indignation.

‘But my wife behaves badly to me.’

Very well. If someone asks you what the matter is, reply, ‘My wife behaves badly to me.’ – ‘And nothing more than that?’ – Nothing more.

What is the matter? ‘My father doesn't give me anything.’ Must you add further in your own mind that this is something bad, and so add a falsehood too? That's why it is not poverty that we should reject, but the judgement that we hold about it, and then our life will run happily.

D2, 174-75

26

Humans are disturbed not by things, but by the views which they take of things. Thus death is not a terrible thing, or it would have appeared so to Socrates; rather, our notions of death are terrifying. Therefore, when we are blocked or troubled or grieved, let us never blame it on others but rather blame it on ourselves, that is, our own views. Ignorant people blame others for their own misfortunes; those people partially wise learn to blame themselves; the truly wise need not blame either themselves or others.

E, 5 Hooker

APPEARANCES VS. THE GOOD

27

The most important aspect of piety toward the gods is certainly both to have correct beliefs about them, as beings that arrange the universe well and justly, and to set yourself to obey them and acquiesce in everything that happens and to follow it willingly, as something brought to completion by the best judgment. For in this way you will never blame the gods or accuse them of neglecting you.

And this piety is impossible unless you detach the good and the bad from what is not up to us and attach it exclusively to what is up to us, because if you think that any of what is not up to us is good or bad, then when you fail to get what you want and fall into what you do not want, you will be bound to blame and hate those who cause this.

For every animal by nature flees and turns away from things that are harmful and from what causes them, and pursues and admires things that are beneficial and what causes them. There is therefore no way for a person who thinks he is being harmed to enjoy what he thinks is harming him, just as it is impossible to enjoy the harm itself.

Hence a son even abuses his father when the father does not give him a share of things that he thinks are good; and thinking that being a tyrant was a good thing is what made enemies of Polyneices and Eteocles [brothers in Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone*]. This is why the farmer too abuses the gods, and the sailor, and the merchant, and those who have lost their wives and children. For wherever someone's advantage lies, there he also shows piety.

So whoever takes care to have desires and aversions as one should also in the same instance takes care about being pious.

And it is always appropriate to make libations and sacrifices and give first fruits according to the custom of one's forefathers, in a manner that is pure and neither slovenly nor careless, not indeed cheaply nor beyond one's means.

E, 31 White

28

When you see someone weeping in grief at the departure of his child or the loss of his property, take care not to be carried away by the appearance that the externals he is involved in are bad, and be ready to say immediately, "What weighs down on this man is not what has happened (since it does

not weigh down on someone else), but his judgment about it." Do not hesitate, however, to sympathise with him verbally, and even to moan with him if the occasion arises; but be careful not to moan inwardly.

E, 16 White

29

You can be invincible if you do not enter any contest in which victory is not up to you. See that you are not carried away by the appearance, in thinking that someone is happy when you see him honoured ahead of you or very powerful or otherwise having a good reputation. For if the really good things are up to us, neither envy nor jealousy has a place, and you yourself will want neither to be a general or a magistrate or a consul, but to be free. And there is one road to this: despising what is not up to us.

E, 19 White

30

A money-changer may not reject Cæsar's coin, nor may the seller of herbs, but must when once the coin is shown, deliver what is sold for it, whether he will or no. So is it also with the Soul. Once the Good appears, it attracts towards itself; evil repels. But a clear and certain impression of the Good the Soul will never reject, any more than men do Cæsar's coin. On this hangs every impulse alike of Man and God.

[GS, 89]

31

God is beneficent. But the Good also is beneficent. It should seem then that where the real nature of God is, there too is to be found the real nature of the Good. What then is the real nature of God? – Intelligence, Knowledge, Right Reason. Here then without more ado seek the real nature of the Good. For surely you do not seek it in a plant or in an animal that does not reason.

GS, 59

WHAT YOU MUST DO & WHY

32

Imagine yourself on a voyage at sea, and if, while the ship is at anchor off some coast, you go ashore to get water, and begin to amuse yourself by collecting shells or mushrooms, still your thoughts need to be centered on the ship and your voyage. Should the captain call, you must leave all those trifles you've been amusing yourself with; if you're not paying attention, you might have to be carried onto the ship, tied up like some animal. Thus, in life, instead of pretty shells or mushrooms, you've been given a wife or a child, don't object; but should the captain call, run to the ship, leaving these things behind, and never look back....

E, 7 Hooker

33

Do this, do not do that, or I will cast you into prison ¶ this is not governing men like reasonable creatures. Say rather, As God has ordained, so do; or you will suffer chastisement and loss. Do you ask what loss? None other than this: To have left undone what you should have done: to have lost the faithfulness, the reverence, the modesty that is in you! Greater loss than that, seek not to find!

GS, 91

WORTH, THE GOOD

34

If you throw some nuts and cookies on a road, you will eventually see children come, pick them up, and start to fight for them. Adults would not fight for such things. And even children would not pick up the nuts' empty shells.

For a wise man, the wealth, the glory, and the rewards of this world are like sweets or empty shells on a road. Let the children pick them up and fight for them. Let them kiss the hands of the rich men, the rulers,

and their servants. For the wise one, all these are empty shells.

Cited by Leo Tolstoy, *A Calendar of Wisdom* (New York: Scribner, 1997)

35

Do not be weighed down by the consideration, "I shall live without any honour, everywhere a nobody!" For if lack of honours is something bad, I cannot be in a bad state because of another person any more than I can be in a shameful one.

It is not your task [ergon, which may also be translated 'function'] to gain political office, or be invited to a banquet, is it? Not at all. How then is that a lack of honour? And how will you be a nobody everywhere, if you need to be a somebody only in things that are up to you ¶ in which it is open to you to be of the greatest worth?

"But your friends will be without help!"

What do you mean, "without help?"

Well, they will be without a little cash from you....

Who told you, then, that these things are up to you and not the business of someone else? Who can give to someone else what he does not have himself?

"Get money," someone says, "so that we may have some."

If I can get it while keeping self-respect and trustworthiness and high-mindedness, show me the way and I will get it. But if you demand that I lose the good things that are mine so that you may acquire things that are not good, see for yourselves how unfair and inconsiderate you are. Which do you want more, money or a self-respecting and trustworthy friend? Then help me more toward this, and do not expect me to do things that will make me lose these qualities.

"But my country," he says, "will be without help, in so far as it depends on me!"

Again, what sort of “help” is this? So it will not have porticos and baths by your efforts. What does that amount to? For it does not have shoes because of the blacksmith or weapons because of the cobbler, but it is enough if each person fulfills his own task.

And if you furnished for it another citizen who was trustworthy and self-respecting, would you in no way be helpful to it? “Yes, I would be.” Then neither would you yourself be unhelpful to it.

“Then what place,” he says “will I have in the city?”

The one you can have by preserving your trustworthiness and self-respect. And if while wanting to help it you throw away these things, what use will you be to it if you turn out shameless and untrustworthy?

E, 24 White

36

Seek then the real nature of the Good in that without whose presence you will not admit the Good to exist in anything....

GS, 60

CONDITIONS OF KNOWING THE GOOD

37

“Epictetus, I have often come desiring to hear you speak, and you have never given me any answer; now if possible, I entreat you, say something to me.”

“Is there, do you think,” replied Epictetus, “an art of speaking as of other things, if it is to be done skilfully and with profit to the hearer?”

“Yes.”

“And are all profited by what they hear, or only some among them? So that it seems there is an art of hearing as well as of speaking.... To make a statue needs skill: to view a statue aright needs skill also.”

“Admitted.”

“And I think all will allow that one who proposes to hear philosophers speak needs a considerable training in hearing. Is that not so? Then tell me on what subject you are able to hear me.”

“Why, on good and evil.”

“The good and evil of what? a horse, an ox?”

“No; of a man.”

“Do we know then what Man is? what his nature is? what is the idea we have of him? And are our ears practised in any degree on the subject? Nay, do you understand what Nature is? can you follow me in any degree when I say that I shall have to use demonstration? Do you understand what Demonstration is? what True or False is?... must I drive you to Philosophy?... Show me what good I am to do by discoursing with you. Rouse my desire to do so. The sight of the pasture it loves stirs in a sheep the desire to feed: show it a stone or a bit of bread and it remains unmoved. Thus we also have certain natural desires, indeed, and one that moves us to speak when we find a listener that is worth his salt: one that himself stirs the spirit. But if he sits by like a stone or a tuft of grass, how can he rouse a man’s desire?”

“Then you will say nothing to me?”

“I can only tell you this: that one who knows not who he is and to what end he was born; what kind of world this is and with whom he is associated therein; one who cannot distinguish Good and Evil, Beauty and Foulness, ... Truth and Falsehood, will never follow Reason in shaping his desires and impulses and repulsions, nor yet in assent, denial, or suspension of judgement; but will in one word go about deaf and blind....”

GS, 81

OUR NATURE

38

What else can I that am old and lame do but sing to God? Were I a nightingale, I should do after the manner of a nightingale. Were I a swan, I should do after the manner of a swan. But now, since I am a reasonable being, I must sing to God: that is my work: I do it, nor will I desert this my post, as long as it is granted me to hold it; and upon you too I call to join in this self-same hymn.

GS, 1

39

But God hath introduced Man to be a spectator of Himself and of His works; and not a spectator only, but also an interpreter of them. Wherefore it is a shame for man to begin and to leave off where the brutes do. Rather he should begin there, and leave off where Nature leaves off in us: and that is in harmony with herself.

GS, 13

40

You journey to Olympia to see the work of Pheidias; and each of you holds it a misfortune not to have beheld these things before you die. Whereas when there is no need even to take a journey, but you are on the spot, with the works before you, you have no care to contemplate and study these?

Will you not then perceive either who you are or unto what end you were born: or for what purpose the power of contemplation has been bestowed on you?

GS, 14

41

All great things are slow of growth; nay, this is true even of a grape or of a fig. If then you say to me now, I desire a fig, I shall answer, It needs time: wait till it first flower, then cast its blossom, then ripen. Whereas then the fruit of the fig-tree

reaches not maturity suddenly nor yet in a single hour, do you nevertheless desire so quickly and easily to reap the fruit of the mind of man? – Nay, expect it not...!

GS, 39

HOW TO BEHAVE

42

Remember that in life you should order your conduct as at a banquet. Has any dish that is being served reached you? Stretch forth your hand and help yourself modestly. Does it pass you by? Seek not to detain it. Has it not yet come? Do not send your desire forth to meet it, but wait until it reaches you.

Deal thus with children, thus with wife; thus with office, thus with wealth – and one day you will be fit to share the Banquets of the Gods. But if you do not so much as touch that which is placed before you, but despise it, then you will share not only the Banquets of the Gods but their Empire also.

GS, 159

43

Appropriate actions are in general measured by relationships. He is a father: that entails taking care of him, yielding to him in everything, putting up with him when he abuses you or strikes you.

“But he is a bad father.”

Does nature then determine that you have a good father? No, only that you have a father.

“My brother has done me wrong.”

Then keep your place in relation to him; do not consider his action, but instead consider what you can do to bring your own faculty of choice into accord with nature.

Another person will not do you harm unless you wish it; you will be harmed at just that time at which you take yourself to be

harmed. In this way, then, you will discover the appropriate actions to expect from a neighbour, from a citizen, from a general, if you are in the habit of looking at relationships.

E, 30 White

44

Set up right now a certain character and pattern for yourself which you will preserve [both] when you are by yourself and when you are with people. Be silent for the most part, or say what you have to in a few words. Speak rarely, when the occasion requires speaking, but not about just any topic that comes up, not about gladiators, horse-races, athletes, eating or drinking — the things that always come up — and especially if it is about people, talk without blaming or praising or comparing. Divert by your own talk, if you can, the talk of those with you to something appropriate.

If you happen to be stranded among strangers, do not talk. Do not laugh a great deal or at a great many things or unrestrainedly. Refuse to swear oaths, altogether if possible, or otherwise as circumstances allow.

Avoid banquets given by those outside philosophy. But if the appropriate occasion arises, take great care not to slide into their ways, since certainly if a person's companion is dirty the person who spends time with him, even if he happens to be clean, is bound to become dirty too.

45

Take what has to do with the body to the point of bare need, such as food, drink, clothing, house, household slaves, and cut out everything that is for reputation or luxury. As for sex stay pure as far as possible before marriage, and if you have it do only what is allowable. But do not be angry or censorious toward those who do engage in it, and do not always be making an exhibition of the fact that you do not.

For the most part there is no need to go to public shows, but if ever the right occasion comes do not show your concern to be for anything but yourself; that is to say, wish to have happen only what does happen, and for the person to win who actually does win, since that way you will not be thwarted. But refrain completely from shouting or laughing at anyone or being very much caught up in it. After you leave, do not talk very much about what has happened, except what contributes to your own improvement, since that would show that the spectacle had impressed you.

Do not go indiscriminately or readily to people's public lectures, but when you do be on guard to be dignified and steady and at the same time try not to be disagreeable.

When you are about to meet someone, especially someone who seems to be distinguished, put to yourself the question, "What would Socrates or Zeno have done in these circumstances?" and you will not be at a loss as to how to deal with the occasion. When you go to see someone who is important, put to yourself the thought that you will not find him at home, that you will be shut out, that the door will be slammed, that he will pay no attention to you. If it is appropriate to go even under these conditions, go and put up with what happens, and never say to yourself, "It wasn't worth all that!" For that is the way of a non-philosopher, someone who is misled by externals.

E, 33 White

46

Everything has two handles, one by which it may be borne, the other by which it may not. If your brother sin against you lay not hold of it by the handle of his injustice, for by that it may not be borne: but rather by this, that he is your brother, the comrade of your youth; and thus you will lay hold on it so that it may be borne.

GS, 174

PHILOSOPHY

47

The handling of sophistical and hypothetical arguments, and of those which derive their conclusions from questioning, and in a word the handling of all such arguments, relates to the duties of life, though the many do not know this truth. For in every matter we inquire how the wise and good man shall discover the proper path and the proper method of dealing with the matter.

D, 112

48

If what charms you is nothing but abstract principles, sit down and turn them over quietly in your mind: but never dub yourself a Philosopher, nor suffer others to call you so. Say rather: He is in error; for my desires, my impulses are unaltered. I adhere to what I did before; nor has my mode of dealing with the things of sense undergone any change.

GS, 109

49

Never call yourself a Philosopher nor talk much among the unlearned about Principles, but do that which follows from them. Thus at a banquet, do not discuss how people ought to eat; but eat as you ought.

GS, 175

50

If you crave philosophy prepare yourself on the spot to be ridiculed, to be jeered at by many people who will I say, "Here he is again, all of a sudden turned philosopher on us!" ¶ and "Where did he get that high brow?" But don't you put on a high brow, but hold fast to the things that appear best to you, as someone assigned by god to this place. And remember that if you hold to these views, those who previously ridiculed you will later be impressed with you, but if

you are defeated by them you will be doubly ridiculed.

E, 22 White

51

The beginning of philosophy is to know the condition of one's own mind. If a man recognises that this is in a weakly state, he will not then want to apply it to questions of the greatest moment. As it is, men who are not fit to swallow even a morsel, buy whole treatises and try to devour them. Accordingly they either vomit them up again, or suffer from indigestion, whence come gripings, fluxions, and fevers. Whereas they should have stopped to consider their capacity.

GS, 46

52

In the same way when some people watch a philosopher and hear one speaking ... they want to be philosophers themselves. Just you consider, as a human being, what sort of thing it is; then inspect your own nature and whether you can bear it. You want to do the pentathlon, or to wrestle? Look at your arms, your thighs, inspect your loins. Different people are naturally suited for different things.

Do you think that if you do those things you can act as you now do, drink as you now do, have the same likes and dislikes? You must go without sleep, put up with hardship, be away from your own people, be looked down on by a little slave boy, be laughed at by people who meet you, get the worse of it in everything, honour, public office, law, every little thing. Think about whether you want to exchange these things for tranquillity, freedom, calm.

If not, do not embrace philosophy, and do not like children be a philosopher at one time, later a tax-collector, then an orator, then a procurator of the emperor. These things do not go together. You must be one

person, either good or bad. You must either work on your ruling principle, or work on externals, practise the art either of what is inside or of what is outside, that is, play the role either of a philosopher or of a non-philosopher.

E, 29 White

DEATH

53

I do not think that an old fellow like me need have been sitting here to try and prevent your entertaining abject notions of yourselves, and talking of yourselves in an abject and ignoble way: but to prevent there being by chance among you any such young men as, after recognising their kindred to the Gods, and their bondage in these chains of the body and its manifold necessities, should desire to cast them off as burdens too grievous to be borne, and depart to their true kindred. This is the struggle in which your Master and Teacher, were he worthy of the name, should be engaged.

You would come to me and say:

“Epictetus, we can no longer endure being chained to this wretched body, giving it food and drink and rest and purification; indeed, and for its sake forced to be subservient to this man and that. Are not these things indifferent and nothing to us? Is it not true that death is no evil? Are we not in a manner kinsmen of the Gods, and have we not come from them? Let us depart thither, whence we came: let us be freed from these chains that confine and press us down. Here are thieves and robbers and tribunals: and they that are called tyrants, who deem that they have after a fashion power over us, because of the miserable body and what appertains to it. Let us show them that they have power over none.”

And to this I reply:

Friends, wait for God. When He gives the signal, and releases you from this service, then depart to Him. But for the present, endure to dwell in the place wherein He hath assigned you your post. Short indeed is the time of your habitation therein, and easy to those that are thus minded. What tyrant, what robber, what tribunals have any terrors for those who thus esteem the body and all that belong to it as of no account? Stay; depart not rashly hence!”

GS, 17-18

GOOD & EVIL

54

[Epictetus has just criticized a man who said he would retire from life, but who the moment he returned to Rome “has been piling one thing upon another.”] What then? do I say man is not made for an active life? Far from it!... But there is a great difference between other men’s occupations and ours.... A glance at theirs will make it clear to you. All day long they do nothing but calculate, contrive, consult how to wring their profit out of food-stuffs, farm-plots and the like.... Whereas, I entreat you to learn what the administration of the World is, and what place a Being endowed with reason holds therein: to consider what you are yourself, and wherein your Good and Evil consists.

GS, 24

55

If I show you, that you lack just what is most important and necessary to happiness, that hitherto your attention has been bestowed on everything rather than that which claims it most; and, to crown all, that you know neither what God nor Man is – neither what Good nor Evil is: why, that you are ignorant of everything else, perhaps you may bear to be told; but to hear that you know nothing of yourself, how could you submit to that?

How could you stand your ground and suffer that to be proved? Clearly not at all. You instantly turn away in wrath. Yet what harm have I done you? Unless indeed the mirror harms the ill-favoured man by showing him to himself just as he is; unless the physician can be thought to insult his patient, when he tells him: – “Friend, do you suppose there is nothing wrong with you? why, you have a fever. Eat nothing to-day, and drink only water.” Yet no one says, “What an insufferable insult!”

Whereas, if you say to a man, “Your desires are inflamed, your instincts of rejection are weak and low, your aims are inconsistent, your impulses are not in harmony with Nature, your opinions are rash and false,” he forthwith goes away and complains that you have insulted him.

GS, 67

ACHIEVEMENTS

56

A man was talking to me to-day about the priesthood of Augustus. I said to him, “Let the thing go, my good Sir; you will spend a great deal to no purpose.”

“Well, but my name will be inserted in all documents and contracts.”

“Will you be standing there to tell those that read them, That is my name written there? And even though you could now be there in every case, what will you do when you are dead?”

“At all events my name will remain.”

“Inscribe it on a stone and it will remain just as well. And think, beyond Nicopolis what memory of you will there be?”

“But I shall have a golden wreath to wear.”

“If you must have a wreath, get a wreath of roses and put it on; you will look lovelier!”

GS, 43

LIFE

57

He that has no musical instruction is a child in Music; he that has no letters is a child in Learning; he that is untaught is a child in Life.

GS, 105

58

Our way of life resembles a fair. The flocks and herds are passing along to be sold, and the greater part of the crowd to buy and sell. But there are some few who come only to look at the fair, to inquire how and why it is being held, upon what authority and with what object.

So too, in this great Fair of life, some, like the cattle, trouble themselves about nothing but the fodder. Know all of you, who are busied about land, slaves and public posts, that these are nothing but fodder!

Some few there are attending the Fair, who love to contemplate what the world is, what He that administers it. Can there be no Administrator? is it possible, that while neither city nor household could endure even for a moment without one to administer and see to its welfare, this Fabric, so fair, so vast, should be administered in order so harmonious, without a purpose and by blind chance? There is therefore an Administrator.

What is His nature and how does He administer? And who are we that are His children and what work were we born to perform? Have we any close connection or relation with Him or not?

Such are the impressions of the few of whom I speak. And further, they apply themselves solely to considering and examining the great assembly before they depart. Well, they are derided by the multitude. So are the onlookers derided by the traders: indeed, and if the beasts had

any sense, they would deride those who thought much of anything but fodder!

GS, 68

THE TIMES

59

And now we are sending you to Rome to spy out the land; but it is no good to send a coward as a spy, someone who, if he hears so much as a noise and sees a shadow moving anywhere, loses his wits and comes flying back to say, The enemy are upon us!

So if you go now, and come and tell us: “Everything at Rome is terrible: Death is terrible, Exile is terrible, Slander is terrible, Want is terrible” fly, comrades! the enemy are upon us!“ we shall reply, Begone, and prophesy to yourself! we have erred in sending such a spy as you.

Diogenes, who was sent as a spy long before you, brought us back another report than that. He says that Death is no evil; for it need not even bring shame with it. He says that Fame is but the empty noise of madmen. And what report did this spy bring us of Pain, what of Pleasure, what of Want? That to be clothed in sackcloth is better than any purple robe; that sleeping on the bare ground is the softest couch; and in proof of each assertion he points to his own courage, constancy, and freedom; to his own healthy and muscular frame. “There is no enemy near,” he cries, “all is perfect peace!”

GS, 187

VIRTUE & FREEDOM

60

Freedom is the name of virtue: Slavery, of vice. [GS, fragment 10]

61

Diogenes was free. How so? Not because he was of free parentage (for that, indeed, was not the case), but because he was himself free. He had cast away every handle

whereby slavery might lay hold upon him, nor was it possible for any to approach and take hold of him to enslave him. All things sat loose upon him – all things were to him attached by but slender ties. Had you seized upon his possessions, he would rather have let them go than have followed you for them – indeed, had it been even a limb, or maybe his whole body; and in like manner, relatives, friends, and country. For he knew whence they came – from whose hands and on what terms he had received them. His true forefathers, the Gods, his true Country, he never would have abandoned; nor would he have yielded to any man in obedience and submission to the one nor in cheerfully dying for the other.

GS, 141

62

Considering all these things, the good and true man submits his judgment to Him that administers the Universe, even as good citizens to the law of the State. And he that is being instructed should come thus minded: –

How may I in all things follow the Gods; and, How may I rest satisfied with the Divine Administration; and, How may I become free? For he is free for whom all things come to pass according to his will, and whom none can hinder. What then, is freedom madness? God forbid. For madness and freedom exist not together.

“But I wish all that I desire to come to pass and in the manner that I desire.”

– You are mad, you are beside yourself. Know you not that Freedom is a glorious thing and of great worth? But that what I desired at random I should wish at random to come to pass, so far from being noble, may well be exceeding base.

GS, 29

63

Friend, lay hold with a desperate grasp, ere it is too late, on Freedom, on Tranquillity,

on Greatness of soul! Lift up thy head, as one escaped from slavery; dare to look up to God, and say: – “Deal with me henceforth as Thou wilt; Thou and I are of one mind. I am Thine: I refuse nothing that does not seem good to Thee; lead on whither Thou wilt; clothe me in what garb Thou pleasest; wilt Thou have me a ruler or a subject – at home or in exile – poor or rich? All these things will I justify unto men for Thee. I will show the true nature of each....”

Who would Hercules have been had he loitered at home? no Hercules, but Eurystheus. And in his wanderings through the world how many friends and comrades did he find? but nothing dearer to him than God. Wherefore he was believed to be God’s son, as indeed he was. So then in obedience to Him, he went about delivering the earth from injustice and lawlessness.

But thou art not Hercules, thou sayest, and canst not deliver others from their iniquity – not even Theseus, to deliver the soil of Attica from its monsters? Purge away thine own, cast forth thence – from thine own mind, not robbers and monsters, but Fear, Desire, Envy, Malignity, Avarice, Effeminacy, Intemperance. And these may not be cast out, except by looking to God alone, by fixing thy affections on Him only, and by consecrating thyself to His commands. If you choose anything else, with sighs and groans you will be forced to follow a Might greater than your own, ever seeking Tranquility without, and never able

to attain her. For you seek her where she is not to be found; and where she is, there you seek her not!

GS, 71

64

Nevertheless a man should also be prepared to be sufficient unto himself – to dwell with himself alone, even as God dwells with Himself alone, shares His repose with none, and considers the nature of His own administration, intent upon such thoughts as are meet unto Himself. So should we also be able to converse with ourselves, to need none else beside, to sigh for no distraction, to bend our thoughts upon the Divine Administration, and how we stand related to all else; to observe how human accidents touched us of old, and how they touch us now; what things they are that still have power to hurt us, and how they may be cured or removed; to perfect what needs perfecting as Reason would direct.

GS, 98

65

Give thyself more diligently to reflection: know thyself: take counsel with the Godhead: without God put thine hand unto nothing!

GS, 115