



ENCHIRIDION

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1

Some things we have the ability to control, and others we do not.

In our power are thought, reaction, the will to get, and the will to avoid. In a word, everything which is part of ourselves. Things generally not in our power are the body, property, reputation, and status. In a word, everything which does not genuinely belong to us.

Things in our power or control are by nature free, unhindered, pure. Things not in our power are weak, servile, subject to obstacles, and dependent on others.

If you think that what is naturally dependent is free, and what is naturally another's is your own, you will be miserable. You will blame gods and other people for everything. But if you think that only your own belongs to you, and that what is another's is indeed another's, no one will ever be able to compel or hinder you. You will blame none, you will accuse none, you will do nothing against your will, no one will harm you, and you will have no enemy, for no harm can touch you.



Aiming then at this high level, remember that to attain it requires more than ordinary effort. You will have to give up some things entirely, and put off others for the moment. And if you aim for status and wealth, it may be that you will fail to get them, while failing to attain those things which alone bring freedom and happiness.

Make it your study to confront every harsh situation with the words, 'You are but an impression, and not at all what you seem to be'.

Then test it by those rules that I've taught you, and first by this, the chief test of all:

Does it fall within my control, or does it not? Is it up to me, or is it not?

If it's not in your power to determine the outcome, be ready to say that it means nothing to you.

2

Remember that the will to get promises attainment of what you want, while the will to avoid promises escape from what you want to avoid. Failing to get what you want is unfortunate, and not escaping what you wish to avoid is also miserable.

ENCHIRIDION

If therefore you try to avoid only what is outside of you and yet within your control, you will escape from what you don't want. But if you try to avoid disease or death or poverty, which are not in your control, you will fall into misery.

Let your will to avoid have no concern with what is not in your power. Direct it only to things in your power that seem wrong and that you can act on. But for the moment you must utterly remove desire or the will to get. Because if you desire something not in your power, you are bound to fail. Even things in your power that may be honourable to get, you may not get.

Impulse to act and not to act, these are your concern. Yet exercise them gently and without strain, and with detachment.

3

When anything is attractive or useful or an object of affection for you, remember always to say to yourself, 'What is its nature?'

If you are especially fond of a jug, admit 'I am fond of a jug'. Then you will not be disturbed if it gets broken.



If you kiss your child or your wife, say to yourself that you are kissing a mortal human being. Then if death strikes them, you will not be so shocked.

4

When you are about to take some action, remind yourself what is involved.

If you are going to bathe at the bathhouse, keep in your mind what normally happens there—water being poured and splashed, people jostling and arguing, others stealing.

You will be calmer if you say to yourself, ‘I want to bathe, and I also want to keep my will in harmony with nature. I won’t keep it if I lose my temper at what happens’.

Adopt this way of thinking in everything you do.

5

What disturbs our minds is not events but our judgements of events.

For instance, death is nothing dreadful, or else Socrates would have thought it so. No, the only dreadful thing about it is people’s judgement that it is

ENCHIRIDION

dreadful. And so, when we are hindered, or disturbed, or distressed, let us never lay the blame on others, but on ourselves – that is, on our own judgements.

To accuse others for one's own misfortunes is a sign of ignorance. To accuse oneself shows that one's enlightenment has begun. To accuse neither oneself nor others shows that one's enlightenment is complete.

6

Don't be elated at an excellence which is not your own.

If the horse in his pride were to say, 'I am handsome', we could just bear it. But when *you* say with pride, 'I have a handsome horse', then you are claiming the qualities of the horse as your own.

So, you ask: what *can* you call your own? The answer is: the way you deal with your impressions. When you perceive the true nature of things, then you have a right to be proud, for your pride will be in something which you genuinely own.

7

Imagine you are on a voyage, and your ship is at anchor. You disembark to get fresh water and you pick up a small shellfish or a truffle while on shore.

But you must keep your attention fixed on the ship, and keep looking towards it constantly, to see if the captain calls you.

If he does, you have to leave everything, *or* be bundled on board like livestock, with your legs tied like a sheep.

So it is in life. If you are fortunate to have a dear wife or child, they are nevertheless the same as the shellfish or the truffle. If the captain calls, run back to your ship, leaving everything, and do not look behind you. And if you are old, never go far from the ship, so that when you are called you will not fail to appear.

8

Ask not that events should happen as you will, but let your will be that events should happen as they do.

Then you shall have peace.

9

Sickness is a hindrance to the body, but not to the will, unless the will consents.

Lameness is a hindrance to the leg, but not to the will.

ENCHIRIDION

Say this to yourself at each event that happens, and you shall find that though it hinders something else it will not hinder you.

10

When anything happens to you, always remember to turn to yourself and ask what faculty you have to deal with it.

If you see a beautiful boy or a beautiful woman, use the impression to exercise your restraint.

If difficulties arise, look to build endurance. If you are the subject of coarse remarks or behaviour, develop patience.

If you train yourself in this habit, you will never get swept away by your impressions.

11

Never say of anything, 'I lost it', but say, 'I gave it back'.

Has your child died? He or she was given back. Has your wife died? She was given back.

Your home and possessions have been taken from you. Were these not also given back?



But you say: 'He who took it from me is wicked.'

What does it matter to you how the Giver asked it back? As long as something is given to you, take care of it—but not as your own. Treat it as passersby treat an inn.

12

If you wish to make progress, abandon reasonings of this sort: 'If I neglect my work and business I shall have nothing to live on'; 'If I do not punish my slave, he will be wicked.'

It is better to die of hunger, when you would be free from pain and free from fear, than to live in plenty and be troubled in mind. It is better for your slave to be wicked than for you to be miserable.

Begin with little things. Is your drop of oil spilt? Is your bottle of wine stolen? Say to yourself: *So what*. Say, 'This is the price paid for freedom from passion, this is the price of a quiet mind'.

Nothing can be had without a price. When you call your slave, consider that he may not be able to hear you. And even if he hears you, he may not do what you want.

Do not entrust anyone with the means to control your peace of mind.

13

If you wish to make progress, you must be content in external matters to seem a fool and a simpleton. Do not wish others to think you know anything, and if any should think you to be somebody, distrust yourself.

It is not easy to keep your will in accord with nature and at the same time keep outward things. If you attend to one you must neglect the other.

14

It is silly to want your children and your wife and your friends to live forever, because that means that you want what is not in your control to be in your control, and what is not your own to be yours.

In the same way if you want your servant to make no mistakes, you are a fool, for you want vice not to be vice but something different. But if you don't want to be disappointed in your desires, you *can* attain to that.

Exercise yourself then in what lies in your power. Your master is the person who has authority over what you wish or do not wish, to secure the one or to take away the other.

Therefore, if you wish to be free, do not wish for anything or avoid anything that depends on others. Otherwise you are bound to be a slave.

15

Behave in life as you would at a banquet.

A dish is handed round and comes to you. Put out your hand and take it politely. If it passes you by, do not stop it. It hasn't reached you yet? Don't be impatient to get it but wait till your turn comes.

Act in the same way towards children, wife, status, wealth, and one day you will be worthy to banquet with the gods.

Even when such things are offered to you in life, consider letting them pass by. Then you shall not only be in company with the gods but will share their power. In doing just this, Diogenes and Heraclitus and men like them were called divine and deserved the name.

16

When you see a person shedding tears in sorrow for a child who's gone away or died, or for loss of property, beware that you are not carried away by the impression that it is outward ills that make that person miserable.

ENCHIRIDION

Keep this thought by you: 'What distresses him is not the event, for that does not distress another, but his judgement of the event.'

Do not hesitate to sympathize with him so far as words go, and even to mourn with him. But don't let it affect your inner being.

17

Remember that you are an actor in a play, and the Playwright chooses the way it goes. If he wants it short, it is short. If long, it is long.

If the Playwright wants you to act a poor person you must act the part with all your powers; and the same if your part be a cripple or a magistrate or a commoner. For your business is to act the character that is given you and act it well. The choice of the cast is Another's.

18

When a raven croaks with evil omen, don't let the impression carry you away, but straightaway be clear and say:

These portents mean nothing to me; but only relate to my body or property or name, or my



children or my wife. For me all omens are favourable if I decide, because whatever the issue may be, it is in my power to benefit from them.

19

You can be invincible if you never enter a contest where victory is not in your power.

When you see a person raised to honour or great power, do not let your impression carry you away. Because if the reality of good lies in what is in our power, there is no room for envy or jealousy.

Do not wish to be praetor, or prefect, or consul, but to be free. And there is only one way to freedom—to despise what is not in your power.

20

Remember that foul words or blows in themselves are no outrage to you, but your judgement that they are so.

So, when anyone makes you angry, know that it is your own thought that has angered you. Beware the need to immediately stop your impressions carrying you away.

Give yourself a little space before you react, and you will find it easier to control yourself.

21

Keep before your mind everyday death and exile and all things that seem terrible, but death most of all.

Then you will not have sad thoughts and will never desire anything too much.

22

If you set your desire on philosophy, you must at once prepare to meet with ridicule and the jeers of many who will say, 'Here he is, turned philosopher now. Where has he got these proud looks?'

Don't come over as proud, but hold fast to what seems best to you, in confidence that God has set you at this activity.

And remember that if you stay true to your path, those who first laugh at you will one day admire you. If you give way to them, you will get doubly laughed at.

23

If you get diverted to things external, and desire to get others' approval, you will know that you have lost your principles.



Be content then always to be a philosopher. If you wish to be regarded as one, *show* yourself that you are one and you will be able to achieve it.

24

Don't let thoughts such as these afflict you: 'I shall live without honour or success, and never amount to much.'

Because if lack of success or distinction is an evil, only you can involve yourself in evil any more than in shame. Is it your business to gain status or to be invited to an important event?

Certainly not.

Where then is the dishonour you talk of? How can you be 'of no account anywhere', when you should try to be successful only in those matters which are in your power, where you may achieve the highest worth?

'But I won't be able to help my friends', you say.

So, you won't be able to give them money or make them Roman citizens. Who told you that these things were in your power, and not dependent upon others? Who can give to another what is not his to give?

ENCHIRIDION

‘If I gain wealth, everyone can share in it’, you say.

If I can get such things and keep my self-respect, honour, and magnanimity, show me the way and I will do so.

But if you ask me to lose the good things that are mine, in order to win things that are not good, look how unfair and thoughtless you are. And which do you really prefer? Money, or a faithful, modest friend? Help me rather to keep these qualities, and do not expect from me actions which will make me lose them.

‘But I won’t be able to help my community’, you say.

Again I ask: What help do you mean? You can’t provide colonnades or baths. The blacksmith doesn’t provide shoes, and the shoemaker doesn’t provide arms. It is enough if each citizen fulfils their own function. Is it not enough that you can be a faithful and modest citizen?

‘Yes.’

Well, then, you are not useless to your community.

‘What place then shall I have in the city?’



Whatever place you can hold while keeping your character, honour, and self-respect. But if you are going to lose these qualities in trying to ‘benefit’ your city, what real benefit are you giving it when in the process you lose your principles?

25

Has another person been given preference to you at an event or a special dinner, or been asked to give advice instead of you?

If these things are good, you ought to be glad that the other person got them. If they are evil, do not be angry that you did not get them yourself. Remember that if you want to get what is not in your power, you cannot earn the same reward as others unless you act as they do.

A person who does not flatter the great cannot expect to get the same results as one who does. You will be unjust then and insatiable if you wish to get these privileges for nothing, without paying their price. What is the price of a lettuce? One coin perhaps. If then a person pays their coin and gets their lettuce, and you do not pay and do not get it, do not think you are defrauded. Just as they now have the lettuce, so you now have the coin you did not give.

ENCHIRIDION

The same principle holds good too in conduct. You were not invited to someone's grand party? The reason is that you did not give the host the price for which he sells his dinner. He sells it for compliments, to get attention. Pay the admission and go then, if it will benefit you. If you still want to go and yet not pay for the ticket, you are a fool.

But what if you do not go to the dinner at all, aren't you left with nothing?

No, you still have something: you have not praised the man you did not want to praise, and you have not had to face the rudeness and judgement of his staff when you enter his house.

26

It is in our power to discover the will of Nature by looking into those matters on which we all agree.

For instance, when another man's slave has broken the wine-cup we are very ready to say at once, 'Such things happen'. So, when your own cup is broken, you ought to behave in the same way as when your neighbour's was.

Apply the same principle to higher matters. Has another's child or wife died? No-one would say philo-



sophically, 'Such is the lot of man'. But when one's own dies, straightaway we cry 'I am in such misery!' We should think about how we behave, given that similar losses affect others all the time.

27

As a target is not set up for the archer to miss it, so there is no intrinsic evil that exists in the world.

28

If anyone trusted your body to a stranger, you would be indignant. Yet you allow your mind to be disturbed and confused if someone attacks you. Are you not ashamed this is the case?

29

In everything you do, consider what is required in advance.

It's easy to be confident about a task at first because you have not reflected on any of the consequences. As a result, when later difficulties appear, you will give up and feel ashamed at doing so.

Do you wish to win in the Olympia games? So do I, by god; it is a fine thing. But consider the first steps to it,

ENCHIRIDION

and the consequences, and be prepared to do the work. You must submit to discipline, eat the right foods, touch no sweets, train under compulsion, at a fixed hour, in heat and cold, drink no cold water, nor wine, except by order. You must hand yourself over completely to your trainer as you would to a physician, and then when the contest comes you must risk getting hacked, dislocating your hand, twisting your ankle, swallowing sand, getting a beating—and all this and still lose.

If you are aware of these risks, and still want to enter, then do it. But if you act without thought you will be behaving like a child, who one day plays at wrestling, another day at gladiators, another blowing the trumpet, and another play-acting on the stage. Like them you will be one day an athlete, another a gladiator, then orator, then philosopher, but nothing with all your soul. Like an ape, you imitate every sight you see, and one thing after another takes your fancy. When you undertake a thing you do it casually and half-heartedly, instead of measuring the situation and taking things seriously. It's like when some people, when they see a great philosopher like Euphrates speaking (indeed, who can speak as well as he?), suddenly wish to be philosophers themselves.

Consider first what it is you are undertaking. Then look at your own powers and see if you can bear it. Do



you want to compete in the pentathlon or in wrestling? Look to your arms, your thighs, see what your loins are like. Different people are born for different tasks. Do you think that you can continue to eat and drink as you do now, indulge desire and discontent just as before? No, you must sit up late, work hard, abandon your friends and family, be looked down on by a mere slave, be ridiculed by those who meet you, get the worst of it in everything—in status, in jobs, in the courts, in every area of life. Are you willing to pay this price for peace of mind, freedom, tranquillity? If not, steer clear.

Do not be, like the children, first a philosopher, then a tax-collector, then an orator, then one of Caesar's procurators. These are not your callings. You must be yourself, good or bad; you must develop either your inner purpose, or your outward abilities. Choose between the life of a philosopher, focused on the mind, or one dealing with material things.

30

How one behaves is determined by the relationship involved. You have a father. This means you are called on to take care of him, give way to him in all things, even bear with him if he insults or hits you.

‘But he is a bad father.’

Well, do you have any right to having a good father?
No, only to a father.

‘My brother has done wrong to me.’

Don’t think about what *he’s* doing, but only what *you* must do if you want to keep your integrity and retain your sense of duty. For no one can harm you without your consent; you will only be harmed when you think you are harmed. You will only discover what is proper to expect from neighbour, citizen, or praetor if you get into the habit of looking at the correct social relations implied by each role.

31

In our relationship to the gods the most important thing is this: to have right opinions about them—that they exist, and that they govern the universe well and justly.

Set yourself to obey them, and to give way to all that happens in life, following events with a free will, knowing they are guided by the highest Intelligence. Never blame the gods, nor accuse them of neglecting you.

You cannot achieve this unless you apply your conception of good and evil to those things only which are in your power, and not to those which are not in your power.

If you apply your notions of good or evil to things outside your control, then as soon as you fail to get what you want or fail to avoid what you dislike, you will be bound to blame and hate those you hold responsible. For every living creature has a natural tendency to avoid and shun what seems harmful and all that causes it, and to pursue and admire what is helpful and all that causes it.

It is not possible then for one who thinks they are harmed to take pleasure in what they think is the author of the harm, any more than to take pleasure in the harm itself. That is why a father is reviled by his son when he does not give his son a share of what the son regards as good things. Consider Polynices and Eteocles,* who became enemies by each wanting to be king. It is why the farmer, and the sailor, and the merchant, and those who lose a wife or children, revile the gods. For a person's religion is always bound up with their own personal interest. What I want to

*The twin sons of Oedipus.

ENCHIRIDION

underline is that a person who carefully watches their desires and aversions is also a pious person.

You can still make libations and sacrifices and offer first-fruits according to the custom of our fathers. But do so with purity of intent and not in a slovenly or unthinking way, and do not overspend doing it.

32

When you make use of prophecy or divination, remember to keep an open mind; you are there to learn from the oracle. The philosopher has the right frame of mind going into divination, knowing that if the event foretold is not in their control, it can be neither good nor evil.

Therefore, do not bring with you to the oracle a strong desire or aversion, and do not approach him with trembling, but with your mind made up: that the whole issue is indifferent to you and does not affect you. Whatever happens, it will be in your power to make good use of it, and no one shall stop you in this.

Confidently approach the gods as counsellors, and when the advice is given to you, remember whose advice it is, and who you will be disregarding if you disobey. Consult the oracle, as Socrates thought



people should, only when the whole question or event lies in the balance. Don't go to the oracle for things that reason can help you decide on. For example, when it is your duty to risk your life with friend or country, do not ask the oracle whether you should risk your life. Because if the oracle warns you that the sacrifice means death or exile or injury to some part of your body, reason still requires that you must stand by your friend and share your country's danger. Remember the greatest prophet, Apollo, who cast out of his temple the man who did not help his friend when his friend was being attacked.

33

Lay down for yourself from the first a definite stamp and style of conduct, which you will maintain both when alone and when with others. Be silent for the most part, or, if you speak, say only what is necessary and in a few words. Talk if required, but do not talk of ordinary things—of gladiators, or horse-races, or athletes, or food or drink. These are topics that arise everywhere. Above all do not engage in gossip talk where you blame or praise or compare others. If you can, turn the conversation to some better subject. If you find yourself in the company of strangers, be silent. Do not laugh much, nor at many things, nor without restraint.

ENCHIRIDION

Refuse to take oaths where possible. Or do it only as far as circumstances require.

Refuse the entertainments of strangers and the vulgar. But if occasion arises to accept them, then strain every nerve to avoid lapsing into the state of the vulgar. If the vulgar person has a stain on him, then all who associate with him must share the stain, even though they are clean in themselves.

Consume or use only so much as your bare need requires, such as food, drink, clothing, house, servants, but cut down all that tends to luxury and outward show.

Do your utmost to avoid sex before marriage, and if you indulge your passion, let it be done lawfully. But do not be offensive or censorious to those who indulge it, and do not be always bringing up your own chastity.

If someone tells you that so-and-so speaks ill of you, do not try to defend yourself, but answer: 'He does not know the rest of my faults! If he did, he would have mentioned them.'

It is not necessary for the most part to go to the public games. But if you do, show that your first concern is



for yourself. Meaning, wish only to happen which does happen, and for the winners to be those who deserve to win. Then you will keep your peace of mind. Refrain entirely from applause, or ridicule, or prolonged excitement. And when you leave, do not talk much of what happened there, except so far as it tends to your improvement. For to talk about it implies that the spectacle captured you and excited your wonder.

Do not go lightly or casually to hear lectures. If you do go, maintain your gravity and dignity, and do not make yourself offensive. When you are going to meet anyone, and particularly some person of apparent eminence, keep before your mind the thought, 'What would Socrates or Zeno have done?' and you will not fail to make proper use of the occasion.

When you go to visit some great man, prepare your mind by thinking that you will not find him in, that you will be shut out, that the doors will be slammed in your face, that he will pay no attention to you. And if, in spite of all this, you still think you should go, accept what happens and never say to yourself, 'It was not worth it!' For that shows a vulgar mind and one at odds with reality.

In your conversation, avoid boasting about your acts or adventures. Others do not take the same pleasure

ENCHIRIDION

in hearing what has happened to you as you take in recounting it.

Avoid being the comedian. It is a habit that easily slips into vulgarity, and it may well end up causing others to respect you less.

It is dangerous too to lapse into foul language. If someone else engages in it, rebuke them or make it plain to them by your silence, or a look or a frown, that you are displeased at their words.

34

When you imagine some pleasure, beware that it does not carry you away. Wait a while, and give yourself pause. Next remember two things: how long you will enjoy the pleasure, and how long you will afterwards repent and revile yourself. And set on the other side the joy and self-satisfaction you will feel if you refrain from the act. And if the opportunity does arise to do the thing, keep in mind not to be overcome by the sweetness and attraction of it. Think instead of how you will feel in knowing you resisted it.

35

When you do a thing because you have determined that it ought to be done, never avoid being seen doing



it, even if the opinion of the multitude is going to condemn you. If your action is wrong, then avoid doing it altogether. If it is right, why fear those who will rebuke you wrongly?

36

The phrases 'It is day' and 'It is night' mean a great deal if taken separately, but have no meaning if combined. In the same way, to choose the larger portion at a banquet may be good for your body, but not so good in terms of maintaining social decencies. Therefore, when you are dining with another, remember not only to consider the value of what is set before you for your health, but also to maintain your self-respect before your host.

37

If you try to do something beyond your powers, you not only disgrace yourself in it; you give up the chance at a role which you *could* have filled with success.

38

Just as in walking you take care not to tread on a nail or to twist your foot, so you must take care not to harm your character. Act with this kind of caution in everything you do, and you will do well.

39

As the size of the foot determines the size and kind of shoe you need, so your body should determine all your needs. If you stick to this limit, you will know your limits. If you go beyond it, you are bound to get carried off a precipice. Just as with the shoe, if you go beyond what the foot requires, you end up wearing gold shoes, and soon purple and embroidered ones. When you go beyond what you need, there is no end to it.

40

Women from fourteen years upwards are called ‘madam’ by men. So, when they see that the only advantage they have is to be a wife, they become pre-occupied with their appearance and set all their hopes on marriage. We must go out of our way to make them understand that what they are really valued for is leading a life of modesty, propriety, and good taste.

41

It is a sign of a dull mind to dwell upon the cares of the body, doing lots of exercising, eating, drinking, having sex, and so on. These things are secondary. Most of your attention should be on cultivating your mind.



42

When a person says or does wrong by you, remember that they do it because they think it is right. They cannot see things as you do, and they suffer from their own deception. In the same way, if a statement of logic which is true is deemed false, it is not the statement that suffers, only the person who said it was false. If you act on this principle, you will be gentle to anyone who attacks you, saying to yourself on each occasion, 'He thought it right'.

43

Everything has two handles: one which you can use to carry, the other which you cannot. If someone wrongs you, do not take it by that handle, the handle of their wrong, because you cannot carry it by that. Rather, take the incident by the other handle—that this person is your brother or sister, who was brought up alongside you. Use this handle, and you will deal with the situation.

44

It is illogical to reason 'I am richer than you, therefore I am superior to you', or 'I am more eloquent than you, therefore I am superior to you.' It is more logical to reason, 'I am richer than you, therefore my

ENCHIRIDION

property is superior to yours', and 'I am more eloquent than you, therefore *my speech* is superior to yours.' You are something more than property or speech.

45

If someone washes quickly, do not say that they wash badly, only that they wash quickly. If a person drinks a lot of wine, do not say that they drink badly, only that they drink a lot. For until you know how a person sees the world, how do you *know* that he or she acts badly? Do as I say, and you will avoid attaching the wrong meaning to what you perceive and experience.

46

On no occasion call yourself a philosopher, nor talk at large of your principles. Only *act* on your principles. For instance, at a banquet do not say how 'people' ought to eat, just eat as *you* ought. Remember that Socrates had so completely got rid of the thought of display that when people came and wanted an introduction to philosophy, he gave them one even if they were totally ignorant.

If a group discussion starts on some philosophical principle, keep silent for the most part; for you are in great danger of blurting out some undigested thought. And when someone says to you, 'You know



nothing', and you do not react to it, then you are really on the right road. Sheep do not bring grass to their shepherds and show them how much they have eaten. They digest their fodder and then produce it in the form of wool and milk. Do the same yourself. Instead of displaying your philosophical knowledge to everyone, show them the *results* of the knowledge you have digested.

47

When you have adopted the simple life, do not pride yourself upon it. If you only drink water, do not say on every occasion, 'I am a water-drinker'. And if you ever want to train laboriously, keep it to yourself and do not make a show of it. Do not embrace statues.[†] If you are very thirsty, take a good draught of cold water but don't do it noisily.

48

The ignorant person's position and character is this: never looking to *themselves* as the provider of help or harm, but only to the external world. The philosopher's position and character is this: help and harm always come from within.

[†]As a kind of austerity, it was a practice among some philosophers to embrace cold statues when they were naked.

ENCHIRIDION

The signs of one who is making progress: blaming none, praising none, complaining of none, accusing none, never speaking of themselves as if they are somebody, or as if they knew anything. If anyone compliments them, they are quietly amused at the compliment. If someone blames them, they have no reaction. They go about like a convalescent, careful not to disturb their body and mind on its road to recovery, until it has its strength.

They have stopped desiring things, and avoid things only that are in their power to avoid and contrary to nature. They act with detachment. If others regard them as foolish or ignorant, they are unconcerned. In short, philosophers keep watch and guard themselves as if they were their own enemy, lying in wait for any moral failure.

49

When someone prides themselves on being able to understand and interpret the books of Chrysippus, say to yourself: 'If Chrysippus had written in a clearer way this person would have had nothing to pride themselves on.'

My aim is to understand Nature and follow her. Looking then for someone who understands her, and



having heard that Chrysippus does, I come to him. But I do not understand his writings, I just seek to interpret them. So far that is nothing to be proud of. But when I have started to understand, it still remains for me to *act* on his precepts. This and this alone is a thing to be proud of. But if I am just into the power of literary exposition, then I am a grammarian instead of a philosopher, except now I'm interpreting Chrysippus in place of Homer. So, when someone says to me, 'Read me Chrysippus', and I cannot point to actions of mine which are in harmony and correspondence with his teaching, I am just embarrassed.

50

Whatever principles you have, hold fast to them as laws which it will be unholy to transgress. Don't worry about what anyone says of you, as this is beyond your own control.

51

How long will you wait to think yourself worthy of the best and live according to reason? You have received your philosophical education. Why then do you still wait for a master, so you can keep off improving yourself until he comes? You are no longer a boy, you are

ENCHIRIDION

a full-grown man. If now you are careless and lazy and procrastinating, fixing some day in the future when you will really begin working on yourself, then whether alive or dead you will make no progress but will continue in total ignorance of truth.

Therefore, make up your mind before it is too late to live as one who is mature and proficient, and let all that seems best to you be a law that you cannot transgress. And if you encounter things that are difficult or pleasant, or glorious or inglorious, remember that the hour of struggle has come, the Olympic contest is here and you can put it off no longer. That one day and one action will determine whether the progress you have achieved is lost or maintained.

This was how Socrates attained perfection, living only according to reason in everything he did. And if you are not yet Socrates, act and live as if you were him.

52

The first and most important area of philosophy deals with the application of principles. For instance, not to lie. The second deals with proofs. For instance, *why* is it wrong to lie? The third is concerned with establishing and analysing the proofs. For instance, asking



‘Why is this a proof? What is a proof, what is a consequence, what is a contradiction, what is true, what is false?’ The third area is necessary because of the second, and the second because of the first. The first is the most necessary part, and that on which we must base ourselves. But most of the time we reverse the order: we occupy ourselves with the third, and make that our whole concern, and the first we completely neglect. So we lie, but are quick to come up with a *proof* that lying is wrong.

53

On every occasion we must have these thoughts at hand:

Lead me, Zeus, and lead me, Destiny,
To wherever you decree I go
I will follow free of doubt
Even if I resist and falter, I shall follow still
Cleanthes

Who complies with Nature
In divine matters we count him skilled
and wise
Euripides, Fragment

ENCHIRIDION

Well, Crito, if this be the gods' will, so be it.

Plato, *Crito*

Anytus and Meletus have power to put me
to death, but not to harm me.

Plato, *Apology*



