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EPICTETUS

Discourses, Fragments, Handbook

Translated by
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With an Introduction and Notes by
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A CHRONOLOGY OF EPICTETUS

(All dates are AD)

*c.*50	Epictetus born in Hierapolis (in Phrygia).
54	Nero becomes emperor.
57	Nero orders senators and knights to participate in his Games.
59	Nero murders his mother, Agrippina.
*c.*60	Musonius Rufus goes into exile in Asia Minor.
Date unknown	Epictetus comes to Rome; becomes a slave of Epaphroditus, a powerful freedman of Nero.
62	Musonius Rufus returns to Rome; Seneca loses his position as Nero's adviser. Nero banishes his former wife, Octavia (then murdered), and marries Poppaea Sabina.
65	Musonius Rufus exiled to Gyara; conspiracy of Piso against Nero; Plautius Lateranus executed; Seneca forced to commit suicide.
66	Thrasea Paetus forced to commit suicide.
68	Nero deposed and commits suicide; Galba becomes emperor; Musonius Rufus returns to Rome.
Between 68 and 69	Epictetus studies with Musonius Rufus; he is freed by Epaphroditus and sets himself up as a philosophy teacher at Rome.
69	Year of the four emperors (Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian).
70–9	Musonius Rufus exiled again at some point.
75	Helvidius Priscus exiled and executed.
79	Vespasian dies; Titus becomes emperor.
After 79	Musonius Rufus returns to Rome.
81	Titus dies; Domitian becomes emperor.
*c.*86	Arrian born.
89	Domitian banishes philosophers from Rome; Epictetus goes to Nicopolis in Greece and sets up philosophical school.
96	Domitian assassinated; Nerva becomes emperor.

98	Trajan becomes emperor.
*c.*100	Musonius Rufus dies.
*c.*107–9	Arrian studies with Epictetus.
117	Trajan dies; Hadrian becomes emperor.
Date unknown	Hadrian visits Epictetus' school.
121	Marcus Aurelius born.
Date unknown	Epictetus adopts a child.
*c.*135	Epictetus dies.
138	Hadrian dies; Antoninus Pius, father of Marcus Aurelius, becomes emperor.

DISCOURSES

BOOK 1

1.1 *About things that are within our power and those that are not*

[1] Among all the arts and faculties, you'll find none that can take itself as an object of study, and consequently none that can pass judgement of approval or disapproval upon itself. [2] In the case of grammar, how far does its power of observation extend? Only as far as to pass judgement on what is written. And in the case of music? Only as far as to pass judgement on the melody. [3] Does either of them, then, make itself an object of study? Not at all. If you're writing to a friend, grammar will tell you what letters you ought to choose, but as to whether or not you ought to write to your friend, grammar won't tell you that. And the same is true of music with regard to melodies; as to whether or not you should sing or play the lyre at this time, that is something that music won't tell you. [4] What will tell you, then? The faculty that takes both itself and everything else as an object of study. And what is that? The faculty of reason. For that alone of all the faculties that we've been granted is capable of understanding both itself—what it is, what it is capable of, and what value it contributes—and all the other faculties too. [5] For what else is it that tells us that gold is beautiful? For the gold itself doesn't tell us. It is clear, then, that this is the faculty that has the capacity to deal with impressions. [6] What else can judge music, grammar, and the other arts and faculties, and assess the use that we make of them, and indicate the proper occasions for their use? None other than this.

[7] It was fitting, then, that the gods have placed in our power only the best faculty of all, the one that rules over all the others, that which enables us to make right use of our impressions; but everything else they haven't placed within our power. [8] Was it that they didn't want to? I think for my part that, if they could, they would have entrusted those other powers to us too; but that was something that they just couldn't do. [9] For in view of the fact that we're here on earth, and are shackled to a body like our own, and to such companions as we have, how could it be possible that, in view of all that, we shouldn't be hampered by external things?

[10] But what does Zeus* have to say about this? 'If it had been possible, Epictetus, I would have ensured that your poor body and

petty possessions were free and immune from hindrance. [11] But as things are, you mustn't forget that this body isn't truly your own, but is nothing more than cleverly moulded clay. [12] But since I couldn't give you that, I've given you a certain portion of myself, this faculty of motivation to act and not to act, of desire and aversion, and, in a word, the power to make proper use of impressions; if you pay good heed to this, and entrust all that you have to its keeping, you'll never be hindered, never obstructed, and you'll never groan, never find fault, and never flatter anyone at all. [13] What, does all of that strike you as being of small account?' Certainly not. 'So you're content with that?' I pray so to the gods.

[14] But as things are, although we have it in our power to apply ourselves to one thing alone, and devote ourselves to that, we choose instead to apply ourselves to many things, and attach ourselves to many, to our body, and our possessions, and our brother, and friend, and child, and slave. [15] And so, being attached in this way to any number of things, we're weighed down by them and dragged down. [16] That is why, if the weather prevents us from sailing, we sit there in a state of anxiety, constantly peering around. 'What wind is this?' The North Wind. And what does it matter to us and to him? 'When will the West Wind blow?' When it so chooses, my good friend, or rather, when Aeolus chooses; for God hasn't appointed you to be controller of the winds, he has appointed Aeolus. [17] What are we to do, then? To make the best of what lies within our power, and deal with everything else as it comes. 'How does it come, then?' As God wills.

[18] 'What, am I to be beheaded now, and I alone?'

Why, would you want everyone to be beheaded for your consolation? [19] Aren't you willing to stretch out your neck as Lateranus* did at Rome when Nero ordered that he should be beheaded? For he stretched out his neck, received the blow, and when it proved to be too weak, shrank back for an instant, but then stretched out his neck again. [20] And moreover, on an earlier occasion, when Epaphroditus* came to him and asked him why he had fallen out with the emperor, he replied, 'If I care to, I'll explain that to your master.'

[21] What, then, should we have at hand to help us in such emergencies? Why, what else than to know what is mine and what isn't mine, and what is in my power and what isn't? [22] I must die; so must I die groaning too? I must be imprisoned; so must I grieve at that too? I must depart into exile; so can anyone prevent me from setting off with a

smile, cheerfully and serenely? 'Tell me the secrets.' [23] I won't reveal them; for that lies within my power. 'Then I'll have you chained up.' What are you saying, man, chain *me* up? You can chain my leg, but not even Zeus can overcome my power of choice. [24] 'I'll throw you into prison.' You mean my poor body. 'I'll have you beheaded.' Why, did I ever tell you that I'm the only man to have a neck that can't be severed? [25] These are the thoughts that those who embark on philosophy ought to reflect upon; it is these that they should write about day after day, and it is in these that they should train themselves.

[26] Thrasea* was in the habit of saying, 'I'd rather be killed today than be sent into exile tomorrow.' [27] So what did Rufus* say in reply? 'If you choose death as being the heavier misfortune, what a foolish choice that is; if you choose it as being the lighter, who has granted you that choice? Aren't you willing to be content with what is granted to you?'

[28] So what was it that Agrippinus* used to say? 'I won't become an obstacle to myself.' The news was brought to him that 'your case is being tried in the Senate'. [29] —'May everything go well! But the fifth hour has arrived'—this was the hour in which he was in the habit of taking his exercise and then having a cold bath—'so let's go off and take some exercise.' [30] When he had completed his exercise, someone came and told him, 'You've been convicted.'—'To exile,' he asked, 'or to death?'—'To exile.'—'What about my property?'—'It hasn't been confiscated.'—'Then let's go away to Aricia and eat our meal there.' [31] This is what it means to train oneself in the matters in which one ought to train oneself, to have rendered one's desires incapable of being frustrated, and one's aversions incapable of falling into what they want to avoid. [32] I'm bound to die. If at once, I'll go to my death; if somewhat later, I'll eat my meal, since the hour has arrived for me to do so, and then die afterwards. And how? As suits someone who is giving back that which is not his own.

1.2 *How one may preserve one's proper character in everything*

[1] For a rational being, only what is contrary to nature is unendurable, while anything that is reasonable can be endured. [2] Blows are not by nature unendurable.—'How so?'—Look at it in this way: Spartans will put up with a beating in the knowledge that it is a reasonable punishment. [3] —'But to be hanged, isn't that past bearing?'—When someone feels it to be reasonable, though, he'll go off and hang himself. [4] In short, if we look with due care, we'll find that there is nothing by which the rational creature is so distressed as by that which is contrary to reason, and that, conversely, there is nothing to which he is so attracted as that which is reasonable.

[5] But these concepts of the reasonable and unreasonable mean different things to different people, as do those of good and bad, and the profitable and unprofitable. [6] It is for that reason above all that we have need of education, so as to be able to apply our preconceptions of what is reasonable and unreasonable to particular cases in accordance with nature. [7] Now, to determine what is reasonable or unreasonable, not only do we have to form a judgement about the value of external things, but we also have to judge how they stand in relation to our own specific character. [8] It is thus reasonable for one person to hold out a chamber pot for another simply in view of the fact that, if he fails to do so, he'll get a beating and no food, but will suffer no rough or painful treatment if he does hold it; [9] whereas, for another person, it won't just seem intolerable to hold out a pot himself, but even to allow someone else to do so for him. [10] If you ask me, then, 'Shall I hold out the pot or not?', I'll reply that it is of greater value to get food than not to get it, and a worse thing to be beaten than not to be beaten, so if you measure your interests by these standards, you should go and hold out the pot. [11] 'Yes, but that would be beneath me.' It is for you to take that further point into consideration, not me, since you're the one who knows yourself, and knows what value you set on yourself, and at what price you'll sell yourself; for different people sell themselves at different prices.

[12] That's why, when Florus was considering whether he should attend Nero's show to perform some part in it himself, Agrippinus* said to him, 'Go!'; [13] and when Florus asked him, 'Then why aren't you going yourself?', he replied, 'Because I've never even considered it.' [14] For as soon as anyone begins to consider such questions, assessing and comparing the values of external things, he comes near to being one of those people who have lost all sense of their proper character. [15] What are you asking me, then? 'Is death or life to be regarded as preferable?' I answer: Life. [16] 'Pain or pleasure?' I answer: Pleasure. 'But if I don't agree to play a role in the tragedy, I'll lose my head.' [17] Go and play that role then, but I won't play one. 'Why?' Because you regard yourself as being just one thread

among all the threads in the tunic. 'So what follows?' You should consider how you can be like other people, just as one thread doesn't want to be marked out from all the other threads. [18] But for my part, I want to be the purple,* the small gleaming band that makes all the rest appear splendid and beautiful. Why do you tell me, then, to 'be like everything else'? In that case, how shall I still be the purple?

[19] Helvidius Priscus* saw this too, and having seen it, acted upon it. When Vespasian sent word to him to tell him not to attend a meeting of the Senate, he replied, 'It lies in your power not to allow me to be a senator, but as long as I remain one, I have to attend its meetings.' [20] —'Well, if you do attend, hold your tongue.'—'If you don't ask for my opinion, I'll hold my tongue.'—'But I'm bound to ask you.'—'And I for my part must reply as I think fit.' [21] —'But if you do, I'll have you executed.'—'Well, when have I ever claimed to you that I'm immortal? You fulfil your role, and I'll fulfil mine. It is yours to have me killed, and mine to die without a tremor; it is yours to send me into exile, and mine to depart without a qualm.'

[22] What good, you ask, did Priscus achieve, then, being just a single individual? And what does the purple achieve for the tunic? What else than standing out in it as purple, and setting a fine example for all the rest? [23] Another man, if he'd been told by Caesar to stay away from the Senate in such circumstances, would have replied, 'Thank you for excusing me.' [24] But Caesar wouldn't have tried to stop such a man from going to the Senate in the first place, knowing that he would either sit there like a jug, or else, if he did speak, would say exactly what he knew Caesar would want him to say, piling on plenty more in addition.

[25] It is in this way that a certain athlete behaved too, when he was in danger of dying if his genitals* weren't cut off. His brother (who was a philosopher) came to him and said, 'Well brother, what are you planning to do? Are we to cut off this part of you and go to the gymnasium as usual?' But the athlete wouldn't submit to that, but set his mind against it and died. [26] When someone asked, 'How did he do that? Was it as an athlete or as a philosopher?', Epictetus replied: As a man, and as a man who had been proclaimed as victor at Olympia, and had fought his corner there, and had passed his life in such places, rather than merely having oil smeared over him at Baton's training ground. [27] But another man would be willing even to have his head

cut off, if it were possible for him to live without a head. [28] This is what is meant by acting according to one's character, and such is the weight that this consideration acquires among those who make a habit of introducing it into their deliberations. [29] 'Come now, Epictetus, shave off your beard.'* If I'm a philosopher, I'll reply: I won't shave it off. 'Then I'll have you beheaded.' If it pleases you to do so, have me beheaded.

[30] Someone asked, 'Then how will each of us come to recognize what is appropriate to his own character?' How is it, replied Epictetus, that when a lion attacks, the bull alone is aware of its own might, and hurls itself forward on behalf of the entire herd? Isn't it clear that the possession of such power is accompanied at the same time by an awareness of that power? [31] And in our case too, if someone possesses such power, he won't fail to be aware of it. [32] And yet a bull doesn't become a bull all at once, any more than a man acquires nobility of mind all at once; no, he must undergo hard winter training, and so make himself ready, rather than hurl himself without proper thought into what is inappropriate for him.

[33] Only, consider at what price you're willing to sell your power of choice. If nothing else, make sure, man, that you don't sell it cheap. But what is great and exceptional is perhaps the province of others, of Socrates* and people of that kind.

[34] 'Why is it, then, if we are fitted by nature to act in such a way, all or many of us don't behave like that?'

What, do all horses become swift-running, or all dogs quick on the scent? [35] And then, because I'm not naturally gifted, shall I therefore abandon all effort to do my best? Heaven forbid. [36] Epictetus won't be better than Socrates; but even if I'm not too bad,* that is good enough for me. [37] For I won't ever be a Milo* either, and yet I don't neglect my body; nor a Croesus, and I don't neglect my property; nor in general do I cease to make any effort in any regard whatever merely because I despair of achieving perfection.

1.3 *How, from the idea that God is the father of human beings, one may proceed to what follows*

[1] If only one could be properly convinced of this truth, that we're all first and foremost children of God,* and that God is the father of

both human beings and gods, I think one would never harbour any mean or ignoble thought about oneself. [2] Why, if Caesar were to adopt you, no one would be able to endure your conceit; so if you know that you're a son of God, won't you be filled with pride? [3] As things stand, however, we don't react in that way, but since these two elements* have been mixed together in us from our conception, the body, which we have in common with the animals, and reason and intelligence, which we share with the gods, some of us incline towards the kinship that is wretched and mortal, and only a few of us towards that which is divine and blessed. [4] Now since everyone, whoever he may be, is bound to deal with each matter in accordance with the belief that he holds about it, those few who think they were born for fidelity, for self-respect, and for the sound use of impressions will never harbour any mean or ignoble thought about themselves, whereas the majority of people will do exactly the opposite. [5] 'For what am I? A poor wretched man,' they say, or 'This miserable flesh of mine'. [6] Miserable, to be sure, but you also have something better in you than that poor flesh. Why do you neglect that, then, and attach yourself to what is mortal?

[7] It is because of this kinship with the flesh that some of us who incline towards it become like wolves, perfidious, treacherous, noxious creatures; or others like lions, wild, savage, and untamed creatures; or in most cases like foxes, or something even more ignominious and base. [8] For what else is a slanderous and ill-natured person than a fox, or something even more unfortunate and base. [9] Watch out, then, and take care that you don't end as one of these wretched creatures!

1.4 *On progress*

[1] One who is making progress, having learned from the philosophers that desire has good things for its object, and aversion bad things, and having also learned that serenity and freedom from passion can be achieved only by one who is neither frustrated in his desires nor falls into what he wants to avoid—such a person, then, has rid himself of desire* altogether and put it aside for the present, and feels aversion only towards those things that lie within the sphere of choice. [2] For if he tries to avoid anything that lies outside the sphere of choice, he

knows that he'll run into some such thing one day, in spite of the aversion that he feels for it, and so be unhappy. [3] Now, if virtue promises to enable us to achieve happiness, freedom from passion, and serenity, then progress towards virtue is surely also progress towards each of these states. For it is invariably the case that, [4] whatever the end may be towards which perfection in anything definitively leads, progress marks an approach towards that end.

[5] How does it come about, then, that when we agree that virtue is something of this kind, we seek and display progress elsewhere? What does virtue achieve for us? Serenity. [6] Who is making progress, then? Someone who has read many treatises by Chrysippus?* [7] For if that is the case, virtue assuredly consists in nothing else than in having gained a knowledge of Chrysippus. [8] As things are, then, while acknowledging that virtue achieves one result, we're yet declaring that the approach to virtue, namely progress, produces another. [9] 'That person', someone says, 'is already able to read Chrysippus on his own.' By the gods, man, you're making excellent progress, what wonderful progress! [10] 'Why are you making fun of him?' And you, why are you diverting him from an awareness of his own failings? Aren't you willing to show him what virtue achieves, so that he may learn where to look for progress? [11] Look for it, wretch, where your proper task lies. And where is that? In desire and aversion, so that you may neither fail to attain what you desire, nor fall into what you want to avoid; in motivation to act or not to act, so that you may not go wrong in that; and in assent and the withholding of assent, so that you may not be deceived. [12] The first two areas of study come first, as the most essential. But if you're still afraid and trembling as you seek to avoid falling into what you want to avoid, how, I ask, can you make any progress?

[13] Come now, show me what progress you're making in this regard. Suppose I were talking with an athlete and said, Show me your shoulders, and he were to reply, 'Look at my jumping-weights.'* That's quite enough of you and your weights! What I want to see is what you've achieved by use of those jumping-weights. [14] 'Take the treatise *On Motivation* and see how thoroughly I've read it.' That's not what I'm seeking to know, slave, but how you're exercising your motives to act and not to act, and how you're managing your desires and aversions, and how you're approaching all of this, and how you're applying yourself to it, and preparing for it, and whether in

harmony with nature or out of harmony with it. [15] If in harmony, give me evidence of that, and I'll tell you whether you're making progress; but if out of harmony, go away, and don't be satisfied merely to interpret those books, but also write some books of that kind yourself. And what good will that do you? [16] Don't you know that the whole book costs only five denarii?* So do you suppose that someone who interprets it is worth more than five denarii? [17] Never look for your work in one place, then, and your progress in another.

[18] So where is progress to be found? If any of you turns away from external things to concentrate his efforts on his own power of choice, to cultivate it and perfect it, so as to bring it into harmony with nature, raising it up and rendering it free, unhindered, unobstructed, trustworthy, and self-respecting; [19] and if he has come to understand that whoever longs for things that are not within his power, or seeks to avoid them, can neither be trustworthy nor free, but must necessarily be subject to change, and be tossed in all directions along with those things, and is inevitably placing himself under the domination of other people, namely, those who can secure or prevent such things; [20] and if, finally, when he gets up in the morning, he holds in mind what he has learned and keeps true to it, if he bathes as a trustworthy person, and eats as a self-respecting person, putting his guiding principles into action in relation to anything that he has to deal with, just as a runner does in the practice of running, or a voice trainer in the training of voices [21] —this, then, is the person who is truly making progress; this is the person who hasn't travelled in vain!

[22] But if he has directed his efforts to what is contained in books, and that is what he toils away at, and it was for that that he has travelled abroad, I would ask him to return home at once and no longer neglect his affairs there, [23] because he has made his journey for no purpose; no, what is truly worthwhile is to study how to rid one's life of distress and lamentation, and of cries of 'Ah, what sorrow is mine!' and 'Poor wretch that I am!', and of misfortune and adversity; [24] and to learn what death, banishment, prison, and hemlock really are, so that one may be able to say in prison like Socrates, 'My dear Crito,* if it pleases the gods that this should come about, so be it!', rather than, 'Alas, poor old man that I am, this is what was kept in store for my grey hairs!' [25] Who speaks in such terms? Do you think

that I'll mention some obscure man of humble origin? Doesn't Priam talk like that? Doesn't Oedipus? Is there, indeed, any king who doesn't? [26] For what else is tragedy than the portrayal in tragic verse of the sufferings of men who have attached high value to external things? [27] If one has to be deceived into learning that external things that lie outside the sphere of choice are nothing to us, I for my part would willingly undergo such deception, if it would enable me to live a life of undisturbed serenity from that time onward; but as to what you wish for, it is for you to look to that.

[28] What does Chrysippus offer us, then? 'So that you may know', he says, 'that those thoughts are not false from which serenity comes to us and freedom from passion, [29] take my books and you will know that they are true and in harmony with nature, the thoughts that render me free from passion.' Oh, what great good fortune! And how great is the benefactor* who shows us the way! [30] People everywhere have raised shrines and altars to Triptolemus* for having given us cultivated crops for our nourishment; [31] but to him who discovered, and brought to light and communicated to all, the truth that enables us not merely to keep alive, but to live a good life—who among you has ever raised an altar in his honour, or a temple or statue, or bows down to God to thank him for this benefaction? [32] For having granted us corn or the vine, we offer up sacrifices to the gods, and yet when they have brought forth such a wonderful fruit in the human mind, by setting out to reveal to us the truth about happiness, shall we fail to offer thanks to God for that?

1.5 *Against the Academics*

[1] If someone, says Epictetus, refuses to accept what is patently obvious, it is not easy to find arguments to use against him that could cause him to change his mind. [2] And the reason for this lies neither in his own strength, nor in the weakness of the one who is trying to instruct him; but the fact is that when someone who has been driven into a corner turns to stone, how can one hope to deal with him any further through argument?

[3] Petrifaction of this kind takes two forms, the one being a petrifaction of the intellect, and the other of moral feeling, when someone who is in the line of battle is willing neither to grant assent

Whatever difficulty may trouble us, we must bring forward the appropriate remedy to apply against it. If it is the sophisms of the Pyrrhonists and Academics* that trouble us, let us bring forward our remedies against them; [3] if things have a specious appeal that makes them appear good when they're not, we must seek the remedy that is applicable in that area. If it is a habit that troubles us, we must endeavour to find a remedy to use against it. [4] What remedy can be found, then, to use against a habit? The contrary habit. [5] You hear uneducated people saying, 'Oh dear, the poor fellow's dead, his father's heartbroken, and his mother too; he's been struck down before his time, and in a foreign land!' [6] Listen to the opposing arguments, pull yourself away from these expressions, counter a habit by setting a contrary habit against it. Against sophistic arguments we should apply logical reasoning, and train ourselves in such reasoning so as to become familiar with it. Against specious appearances, we should apply clear preconceptions, keeping them well polished and ready for use.

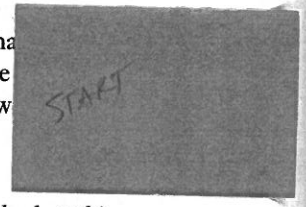
[7] When death appears to be an evil, we should have at hand this thought, that it is our duty to avoid evils, and yet death is something that is inescapable. [8] So what can I do? Where can I flee to escape it? Let's suppose that I'm Sarpedon,* son of Zeus, so that I may declare in the same noble spirit, 'I set off with the desire either to distinguish myself in battle or to give someone else an opportunity to do so; for if I can't succeed in something myself, I shan't grudge another the honour of performing some noble deed.' Granted that such nobility is beyond us, doesn't it fall within our power to accept this line of thought? [9] And where can we go to escape from death? Point me to the place, show me to what people I should go who lie beyond the reach of death, show me a charm that is effective against it. Otherwise, what would you have me do? I can't escape death; [10] but is it beyond my power to escape the fear of death, and must I die grieving and trembling? For this is the origin of passion, to wish for something that cannot come about. [11] So if I can change external circumstances according to my wish, I change them; if not, I want to rip out the eyes of whoever is standing in my way. [12] For such is human nature, we cannot bear to be deprived of the good, and cannot bear to fall into what is bad. [13] And so in the end, when I can neither alter things nor rip out the eyes of the man who is standing in my way, I sit down and groan, and hurl abuse where I can, at Zeus and the rest of the gods.

For if they fail to take care of me, what are they to me? [14] 'Yes, you'll fall into impiety.'

Can things get any worse for me, then, than they already are? In brief, one must keep this point in mind, that unless piety and self-interest go hand in hand, piety cannot be safeguarded by anyone. Doesn't this line of argument seem conclusive? [15] May a follower of Pyrrho or an Academician step forward to oppose it. For my part, I have no leisure for such disputes, nor can I offer myself as an advocate of common sense. [16] Even if I had a case to pursue about a bit of land, I would call in someone else to plead my cause. With what argument should I be satisfied, then? With such as is appropriate to the matter in question. [17] As to how sensation is produced, whether through the mind as a whole or just a part of it, I'm unable to defend one position rather than the other, and both perplex me. But that you and I are not one and the same person, that I know with full certainty. [18] And how so? Why, when I want to swallow a piece of food, I never carry it to your mouth, but to my own. When I want to get some bread, I never pick up a broom, but go straight to the bread as though to a target. [19] And do you yourselves, who deny the evidence of the senses, do anything different? Which of you, when he wants to go to a bath house, goes to a mill instead?

[20] 'Well then, shouldn't we devote every effort to defending this position or safeguarding common sense, while shoring ourselves up against the arguments that would seek to oppose it?'

[21] And who says any different? But only one who ha
and the leisure should make this his concern; as for one
with fear, who is troubled, whose heart is broken w
should devote his time to something else.



1.28 *That we should not be angry with others; and what things are small, and what are great, among human beings?*

[1] For what reason do we give our assent to something? Because it appears to us to be the case. [2] If something appears not to be the case, it is impossible for us to give our assent. And why so? Because that is the nature of our mind, that it should agree to things that are true, not accept things that are false, and suspend its judgement with regard to things that are uncertain. [3] What is the proof of that? 'Form the impression, if you can, that it is night at present.' That is

impossible. 'Put aside the impression that it is day.' That is impossible. [4] So whenever anyone assents to what is false, one may be sure that he does not willingly give his assent to falsehood ('for every mind is deprived of the truth against its will', as Plato observes), [5] but rather that what is false seemed to him to be true. Well then, in the realm of action, have we anything that corresponds to truth and falsehood in the realm of perception? What is fitting and not fitting, beneficial and not beneficial, appropriate for me and not appropriate for me, and so on.

[6] 'A person can't think something to be of benefit to him, then, and yet not choose it?

He can't.

[7] 'So how can Medea say,

> *I know that what I intend to do is bad,*
> *But anger is master of my plans?'* *

Because she regarded this very thing, the gratification of her anger and exacting of vengeance against her husband, as being more beneficial than keeping her children safe.

[8] 'Yes, but she is mistaken.'

Show her clearly that she is mistaken and she won't follow that course; but as long as you haven't shown it, what else can she do than follow what seems best to her? Nothing else. [9] Why should you be angry with her, then, because, poor wretch, she has gone astray on matters of the highest importance, and has changed from a human being into a viper? Shouldn't you, if anything, take pity on her instead? And just as we pity the blind and the lame, shouldn't we also take pity on those who have become blinded and crippled in their governing faculties?

[10] Whoever keeps this fact clearly in mind, then, that for human beings the present impression is the measure of every action—an impression that may, besides, be well or badly formed; if well, that person is beyond reproach; if badly, he himself pays the penalty, since it is impossible that one person should go astray and another pay the penalty for it—whoever keeps this in mind, then, will never be angry with anyone, and will never abuse, never criticize, never hate, and never offend anyone.

[11] 'Do such great and terrible deeds also have their origin in this, in appearances?'

[12] Yes, in that and nothing else. The *Iliad* consists of nothing more than impressions and the use of impressions. An impression prompted Paris to carry off the wife of Menelaus, and an impression prompted Helen to go with him. [13] If an impression, then, had prompted Menelaus to feel that it was a gain to be deprived of such a wife, what would have come about? Not only the *Iliad* would have been lost, but the *Odyssey* too!*

[14] 'Can such great issues depend on such small causes?'

What do you mean by great issues? Wars and civil strife, the loss of many human lives, the destruction of cities? And what is great in all of that?

'You call that nothing?'

[15] Why, what is great in the death of a multitude of sheep and cattle, and in the burning and destruction of countless nests of storks and swallows?

[16] 'But are the two cases at all similar?'

Perfectly similar. In one case, the bodies of human beings are destroyed, and in the other, the bodies of sheep and cattle. In the one case the little dwellings of human beings are destroyed, and in the other, the nests of storks. [17] What is great or terrible in that? Or show me how a human house differs from a stork's nest. Except that we build our houses from planks, tiles, and bricks, while storks build theirs from twigs and clay?

[18] 'Are a stork and a human being similar in nature?'

How do you mean? At a bodily level, entirely similar.

[19] 'So a human being is no different from a stork?'

Far from it, but they're no different in this respect.

'In what respect do they differ, then?'

[20] Enquire, and you'll find that the difference lies elsewhere. See whether it doesn't lie in the fact that a human being understands what he is doing; see whether it doesn't lie in his sense of fellowship, in his fidelity, in his sense of shame, his steadfastness, his intelligence. [21] So where in human beings is the great good and evil to be found? In that which distinguishes them as human; and if that is preserved and kept well fortified, and if one's self-respect, and fidelity, and intelligence are kept unimpaired, then the human being himself is safeguarded; but if any of these are destroyed or taken by storm, then he himself is destroyed. [22] All that is great in human affairs turns on this. Did Paris suffer his great disaster when the Greeks arrived and ravaged Troy, and when his brothers perished? [23] Not

at all, since no one comes to grief as the result of another person's actions; no, that amounted to nothing more than the laying waste of storks' nests. His true undoing was when he lost his sense of shame, his loyalty, his respect for the laws of hospitality, his decency. [24] And when did Achilles come to grief? When Patroclus died? Far from it. But rather, when he himself yielded to anger, when he wept over a young girl, when he forgot that he was there, not to acquire mistresses, but to make war.* [25] These are the ways in which human beings are brought to grief, this is the siege, this the razing of the citadel, when right judgements are overturned, when they are destroyed.

[26] 'But when women are led away and children are reduced to slavery, when the men themselves are slaughtered, is it really the case that these are not evils?'

[27] Where did you acquire this further notion? Please tell me.

'No, it's for you to explain how you can say that they're not evils.'

[28] Let's take recourse to our standard, bring forth your preconceptions. This is why one cannot be sufficiently amazed at how people act in this regard. When we want to make a judgement with regard to weights, we don't judge at random; when we want to judge whether things are straight or crooked, we don't do so at random; [29] in short, when it is important to know the truth in any case, none of us ever does anything at random. [30] But when it comes to the first and only cause of acting rightly or in error, of succeeding or failing, of being unfortunate or fortunate, there alone we act in a random and precipitate way. Nowhere anything like a balance, nowhere anything like a standard, but no sooner does some impression strike me than I immediately act upon it. [31] Am I any better than Agamemnon and Achilles, to be satisfied by impressions alone, when they caused and suffered such evils by following their impressions? [32] What tragedy has had any other origin than this? What is the *Atreus* of Euripides? All a matter of impressions. The *Oedipus* of Sophocles? Impressions. The *Phoenix*? Impressions. The *Hippolytus*?* Impressions. [33] What do you call those who follow every impression that strikes them? Madmen! What about us, then; do we act any differently?

1.29 *On steadfastness*

nce of the good is a certain disposition of our choice, and ad likewise. [2] What are externals, then? Materials for our

choice, which attains its own good or ill through the way in which it deals with them. [3] How can it attain the good? By not overvaluing the materials. For if its judgements about the materials are correct, that makes the choice good, whereas if they are twisted and perverse, that makes it bad. [4] Such is the law that God has laid down, saying, 'If you want anything good, you must get it from yourself,' while you for your part say, 'No, get it from elsewhere.' [5] So when a tyrant makes threats and summons me, I ask, 'What is he threatening?' If he says, 'I'll throw you into chains,' I'll reply, 'Then it is my hands and feet that he is threatening.' [6] If he says, 'I'll have you beheaded,' I'll reply, 'Then it is my head that he is threatening.' If he says, 'I'll throw you into prison,' I'll reply, 'Then it is my whole miserable carcase,' and if he threatens me with exile, I'll say the same.

[7] 'Then he isn't really threatening you in any way.'

In no way at all, if I feel that all these things are nothing to me; [8] but if I'm afraid about any of this, it is me whom he is threatening. Who is left for me to fear? He who holds mastery over what? Over things that are within my power? But there is no such man. Over things that aren't within my power? And what do I care about things like that?

[9] 'Do you philosophers teach us, then, to hold kings in contempt?'

Heaven forbid! Who of us teaches you to oppose them over things that are subject to their authority? [10] Take my poor body, take my possessions, take my reputation, take the people around me. If I'm urging anyone to offer resistance with regard to any of that, may someone please accuse me!

[11] 'Yes, but I also want to exercise control over your judgements.'

And who has given you that power? How can you control another person's judgement?

[12] 'By striking him with fear, I'll overpower him.'

You fail to understand that a judgement can only overpower itself, and cannot be overpowered by another person. And nothing can overpower our choice, apart from choice itself. [13] That is why this law of God is most excellent and just: 'Let that which is stronger always prevail over that which is weaker.'

[14] 'Ten men are stronger than one,' someone says.

In what respect? In throwing people into chains, taking their life, dragging them off wherever they want, stripping them of their property. Yes, ten men can assuredly prevail over one in that in which they are stronger!

I put up with that too. So why can't you bear it, then, when nature, which gave us our body, takes it away again?—'I love it,' someone says.—Well, but isn't it nature, as I was saying just now, that has given you the very love that you feel for it? But this same nature also says, 'Let it go now, and trouble yourself no longer.'

24. If someone dies young, he finds fault with the gods [because he is having to leave the world before his time, but if he remains alive when old, he finds fault with them too] because he is continuing to live when it was high time that he was at rest; but all the same, when death approaches, he wants to stay alive, and sends for the doctor, telling him to spare no trouble or effort. How extraordinary people are, he said, to be unwilling either to live or to die.

25. Before you attack anyone in an aggressive and threatening manner, remember to tell yourself that you're not a wild animal; and then you'll never commit any violent act, and will thus pass through life without having to repent or be called to account.

26. You're a little soul carrying a corpse around, as Epictetus used to say.

27. He said, too, that we must find an art of assent, and in the sphere of our motives, take good care that they're exercised subject to reservation, and that they take account of the common interest, and that they're proportionate to the worth of their object; and we should abstain wholly from desire, and exercise aversion towards nothing that is not within our power.

28. So the struggle, he said, is over no slight matter, but whether we are to be mad or sane.

HANDBOOK

1.1. Some things are within our power, while others are not. Within our power are opinion, motivation, desire, aversion, and, in a word, whatever is of our own doing; not within our power are our body, our property, reputation, office, and, in a word, whatever is not of our own doing. 2. The things that are within our power are by nature free, and immune to hindrance and obstruction, while those that are not within our power are weak, slavish, subject to hindrance, and not our own. 3. Remember, then, that if you regard that which is by nature slavish as being free, and that which is not your own as being your own, you'll have cause to lament, you'll have a troubled mind, and you'll find fault with both gods and human beings; but if you regard only that which is your own as being your own, and that which isn't your own as not being your own (as is indeed the case), no one will ever be able to coerce you, no one will hinder you, you'll find fault with no one, you'll accuse no one, you'll do nothing whatever against your will, you'll have no enemy, and no one will ever harm you because no harm can affect you.

4. Since you're aiming, then, at such great things, remember that you'll have to exert no small effort to attain them, and that you'll have to renounce some things altogether, while postponing others for the present. But if you want to have both these things and public office and riches too, you'll quite possibly not even gain the latter because you're aiming at the former too, and you'll certainly fail to get the former, through which alone happiness and freedom can be secured.

5. Practise, then, from the very beginning to say to every disagreeable impression, 'You're an impression and not at all what you appear to be.' Then examine it and test it by these rules that you possess, and first and foremost by this one, whether the impression relates to those things that are within our power, or those that aren't within our power; and if it relates to anything that isn't within our power, be ready to reply, 'That's nothing to me.'

2.1. Remember that desire promises the attaining of what you desire, and aversion the avoiding of what you want to avoid, and that he who falls into desire is unfortunate, while he who falls into what he wants

to avoid suffers misfortune. If you seek to avoid, then, only what is contrary to nature among those things that are within your own power, you'll never fall into anything that you want to avoid; but if you attempt to avoid illness, or death, or poverty, you'll suffer misfortune. 2. Remove your aversion, then, from everything that is not within our power, and transfer it to what is contrary to nature among those things that are within our power. For the present, however, suppress your desires entirely; for if you desire any of the things that are not within our power, you're bound to be unfortunate, while those that are within our power, which it would be right for you to desire, aren't yet within your reach. But use only your motives to act or not to act, and even those lightly, with reservations and without straining.

3. With regard to everything that is a source of delight to you, or is useful to you, or of which you are fond, remember to keep telling yourself what kind of thing it is, starting with the most insignificant. If you're fond of a jug, say, 'This is a jug that I'm fond of,' and then, if it gets broken, you won't be upset. If you kiss your child or your wife, say to yourself that it is a human being that you're kissing; and then, if one of them should die, you won't be upset.

4. When you're about to embark on any action, remind yourself what kind of action it is. If you're going out to take a bath, set before your mind the things that happen at the baths, that people splash you, that people knock up against you, that people steal from you. And you'll thus undertake the action in a surer manner if you say to yourself at the outset, 'I want to take a bath and ensure at the same time that my choice remains in harmony with nature.' And follow the same course in every action that you embark on. So if anything gets in your way while you're taking your bath, you'll be ready to tell yourself, 'Well, this wasn't the only thing that I wanted to do, but I also wanted to keep my choice in harmony with nature; and I won't keep it so if I get annoyed at what is happening.'

5. It isn't the things themselves that disturb people, but the judgements that they form about them. Death, for instance, is nothing terrible, or else it would have seemed so to Socrates too; no, it is in the judgement that death is terrible that the terror lies. So accordingly, whenever we're impeded, disturbed, or distressed, we should never

blame anyone else, but only ourselves, that is to say, our judgements. It is the act of an ill-educated person to cast blame on others when things are going badly for him; one who has taken the first step towards becoming properly educated casts blame on himself; while one who is fully educated casts blame neither on another nor on himself.

6. Don't pride yourself on any excellence that is not your own. If a horse were to say in its pride, 'I'm beautiful,' that would be bearable; but when you exclaim in your pride, 'I have a beautiful horse,' you should be clear in your mind that you're priding yourself on a good quality that belongs to a horse. What is your own, then? The use of impressions.* So when you're in harmony with nature through the right use of impressions, you should then be proud of yourself; for then you'll be taking pride in some good of your own.

7. When you're on a voyage and your ship has set anchor, if you should go ashore to fetch water, you may pick up a little shellfish or bulb on the way, but you have to keep your attention directed towards the ship, and turn round constantly in case the captain calls you back; and if he does, you must cast these things aside, if you don't want to be thrown on board trussed up like a sheep. So in life too, if in place of some little bulb or shellfish, a little wife and child should be granted to you, there is nothing wrong with that; but if the captain calls, you must give up all of these things and run to the ship, without even turning around to look back. And if you're an old man, you shouldn't even wander any distance from the ship, so as not to be missing when the call comes.

8. Don't seek that all that comes about should come about as you wish, but wish that everything that comes about should come about just as it does, and then you'll have a calm and happy life.

9. Disease is an impediment to the body, but not to choice, unless choice wills it to be so. Lameness is an impediment to the leg, but not to choice.* And tell yourself the same with regard to everything that happens to you; for you'll find that it acts as an impediment to something else, but not to yourself.

10. With regard to everything that happens to you, remember to look inside yourself and see what capacity you have to enable you to deal

with it. If you catch sight of a beautiful boy or woman, you'll find that you have self-control to enable you to deal with that; if hard work lies in store for you, you'll find endurance; if vilification, you'll find forbearance. And if you get into the habit of following this course, you won't get swept away by your impressions.

11. Never say about anything, 'I've lost it,' but rather, 'I've given it back.' Your child has died? It has been given back. Your wife has died? She has been given back. 'My farm has been taken from me.' Well, that too has been given back. 'Yes, but the man who took it is a rogue.' What does it matter to you through what person the one who gave it to you demanded it back? So long as he entrusts it to you, take care of it as something that isn't your own, as travellers treat an inn.

12.1. If you want to make progress, reject such thoughts as these: 'If I neglect my affairs, I'll have nothing to live on,' or, 'If I don't punish my slave-boy, he'll turn out badly.' For it is better to die of hunger, but free from distress and fear, than to live in plenty with a troubled mind; and it is better that your slave should be bad than that you should be unhappy. Make a start, then, with small things. 2. A drop of oil is spilled, a little wine is stolen; say to yourself, 'Such is the price at which equanimity is bought; such is the price that one pays for peace of mind.' For nothing can be acquired at no cost at all. When you summon your slave-boy, keep in mind that he may not obey, and even if he does, he may not do what you want; but he is hardly so well placed that it depends on him whether you're to enjoy peace of mind.

13. If you want to make progress, put up with being thought foolish and silly with regard to external things, and don't even wish to give the impression of knowing anything about them; and if some people come to think that you're somebody of note, regard yourself with distrust. For you should recognize that it isn't easy to keep your choice in accord with nature and, at the same time, hold onto externals, but if you apply your attention to one of those things, you're bound to neglect the other.

14.1. If you want your children and wife and friends to live for ever, you're a fool, because you're wanting things that aren't within your power to be within your power, and things that aren't your own to be your own. And likewise, if you want your slave-boy never to commit a fault, you're an idiot, because you're wanting badness not to be badness, but something else. If you make it your wish, however, not to fail in your desires, that lies within your power. So exercise yourself in that which you can achieve. 2. Everyone is subject to anyone who has power over what he wants or doesn't want, as one who is in a position to confer it or take it away. If anyone wants to be free, then, let him neither want anything nor seek to avoid anything that is under the control of others; or else he is bound to be a slave.

15. Remember that you should behave in life as you do at a banquet. Something is being passed around and arrives in front of you: reach out your hand and take your share politely. It passes: don't try to hold it back. It has yet to reach you: don't project your desire towards it, but wait until it arrives in front of you. So act likewise with regard to your children, to your wife, to public office, to riches, and the time will come when you're worthy to have a seat at the banquets of the gods. And if you don't even take these things when they're in front of you, but view them with contempt, then you'll not only share in the banquets of the gods, but also in their rule. For it was by acting in such a way that Diogenes, and Heraclitus,* and others like them, deservedly became divine and were called so.

16. When you see someone weeping in sorrow because his child has gone away, or because he has lost his possessions, take care that you're not carried away by the impression that he is indeed in misfortune because of these external things, but be ready at once with this thought, 'It isn't what has happened that so distresses this person—for someone else could suffer the same without feeling that distress—but rather the judgement that he has formed about it.' As far as words go, however, don't hesitate to sympathize with him, or even, if the occasion arises, to join in his lamentations; but take care that you don't also lament deep inside.

17. Remember that you're an actor in a play, which will be as the author chooses, short if he wants it to be short, and long if he wants it to be long. If he wants you to play the part of a beggar, act even that part with all your skill; and likewise if you're playing a cripple, an official, or a

private citizen. For that is your business, to act the role that is assigned to you as well as you can; but it is another's* part to select that role.

18. When a raven croaks* inauspiciously, don't allow yourself to be carried away by the impression, but immediately draw a distinction within your mind, and say, 'None of these omens apply to me, but only to my poor body, to my paltry possessions, or my reputation, or my children, or my wife. But for me every omen is favourable for I want it to be so; for whatever may come about, it is within my power to derive benefit from it.'

19.1. You can be invincible if you never enter a contest in which the victory doesn't depend on you. 2. So whenever you see someone being preferred above you in the awarding of honours, or holding great power, or enjoying high repute in any other way, take care that you don't get carried away by the outward impression and count him as happy; for if the nature of the good is one of the things that lie within our power, there can be no place for either envy or jealousy, and you yourself won't want to be a praetor or senator or consul, but a free man. Now there is one path alone that leads to that: to despise everything that doesn't lie within our own power.

20. Remember that what insults you isn't the person who abuses you or hits you, but your judgement that such people are insulting you. So whenever anyone irritates you, recognize that it is your opinion that has irritated you. Try above all, then, not to allow yourself to be carried away by the impression; for if you delay things and gain time to think, you'll find it easier to gain control of yourself.

21. Day by day you must keep before your eyes death and exile and everything else that seems frightening, but most especially death; and then you'll never harbour any mean thought, nor will you desire anything beyond due measure.

22. If you set your desire on pursuing philosophy, prepare from that moment to be subject to ridicule, and to have many people mocking you, and saying, 'Look, he's come back to us having become a philosopher all of a sudden!' and 'Where do you suppose he picked up that supercilious air?' You shouldn't assume an air of self-importance, but should

hold fast to the things that seem best to you, as one who has been appointed by God to this post; and remember that if you hold true to the same principles, those who laughed at you will later come to admire you; but if you allow these people to get the better of you, you'll merely be laughed at twice over.

23. If it should ever come about that you turn to external things because you want to gratify another person, be clear that you've lost your plan in life. Be content, then, to be a philosopher in all that you do, and if you also want to be viewed as one, show yourself that you are, and you'll be able to achieve that.

24.1. Don't allow these thoughts to upset you: 'I'll live unhonoured, and be nobody anywhere.' For if it is a bad thing to be unhonoured, you cannot be in a bad state as a result of someone else's actions, any more than you can be brought into shame in that way. It is no business of yours, surely, to gain a public post or be invited to a dinner party? Certainly not. So how can this still be a source of dishonour? And how will you be 'nobody anywhere' if you only need to be somebody in those things that are within your own power, and in which it is possible for you to be a man of the highest worth? 2. But your friends will be left unhelped? What do you mean by 'left unhelped'? They won't receive any little payouts from you, nor will you be able to grant them Roman citizenship. Well, who told you that these are things that are within our power, rather than being other people's business? And who is able to give to another person something that he himself doesn't have? 'Then get hold of some money', a friend says, 'so that we too may have some.' 3. If I can get some while preserving my self-respect, trustworthiness, and generosity of mind, show me the way and I'll get it; but if you require me to lose the good things that I have to enable you to acquire things that aren't good, consider how unfair you're being, or how foolish. After all, what would you rather have? Money, or a faithful and self-respecting friend? So help me instead to become such a person, and don't require me to do things that would cause me to lose those qualities.

4. 'But my country', he says, 'will receive no help from me, so far as I can offer it.' Here again, what kind of help do you mean? It won't acquire any arcades or baths through your good offices. And what of that? For it doesn't acquire shoes either through the good offices of a blacksmith, or arms through those of a cobbler; it is enough that each

person fulfils his own function. And if you provide your country with another citizen who is trustworthy and self-respecting, would you bring it no benefit? 'Indeed I would.' Well then, in that case you wouldn't be of no use to it. 'What place shall I hold in the state, then?', he asks. Whatever place you can hold while maintaining your trustworthiness and self-respect. 5. But if, out of a wish to help the state, you sacrifice those qualities, what use could you be to it, when you've turned out to be shameless and untrustworthy?

25.1. Has someone been honoured above you at a banquet, or in being saluted, or in being summoned to give advice? If these things are good, you ought to rejoice if someone else has secured them; but if they're bad, don't be aggrieved that you haven't secured them. And remember, too, that if you don't resort to the same means as other people to acquire things that aren't within our power, you can't lay claim to an equal share of them. 2. For how can someone who doesn't hang around somebody's door claim an equal share with someone who does? Or if he doesn't join the man's retinue when he goes out along with the other person? Or he doesn't sing his praises along with the other person? You'll be unjust, then, and thoroughly greedy, if you refuse to pay the price for which these things are marketed, and want to get hold of them for nothing. 3. Well, at what price are lettuces sold? An obol perhaps. If someone pays the obol, then, and gets the lettuces, while you pay nothing and get nothing, don't suppose that you're worse off than the man who gets the lettuces; for while he has his lettuces, you have your obol, which you haven't given away. 4. Things follow the same course in the present case too. You haven't been invited to somebody's dinner party? Of course not, because you haven't paid the host the price at which he sells the dinner; he sells it for praise, he sells it for attention. Very well, then, pay him the price for which it is sold, if it is in your interest. But if you want to make no payment and still receive the goods, you're greedy and foolish. Do you have nothing, then, in place of the dinner? Why, of course you have: you haven't been obliged to praise a man whom you didn't want to praise, you didn't have to suffer the insolence of the people at the door.

26. The will of nature may be learned from those events in life in which we don't differ from one another. For instance, when someone else's

slave-boy breaks a cup, we're ready at once to say, 'That's just one of those things.' So you should be clear, then, that if your own cup gets broken, you ought to react in exactly the same way as when someone else's does. Transfer the principle to greater matters too. Someone else's child or wife has died; there isn't anyone who wouldn't say, 'Such is our human lot.' And yet when one's own child or wife dies, one cries out at once, 'Oh poor wretch that I am.' But we ought to remember how we feel when we hear that the same thing has happened to others.

27. Just as a target isn't set up to be missed, so nothing that is bad by nature comes into being in the universe.

28. If someone handed over your body to somebody whom you encountered, you'd be furious; but that you hand over your mind to anyone who comes along, so that, if he abuses you, it becomes disturbed and confused, do you feel no shame at that?

29. [See Discourse 3.15.1–13.]

30. Appropriate actions are measured on the whole [END] relationships. He is your father: you're obliged to take give way to him in everything, to put up with it if he scolds you or strikes you. 'But he's a bad father.' Do the ties of nature bind you, then, only to a good father? No, but to a father. 'My brother is wronging me.' Very well, maintain the relation that you have towards him; don't look to what he is doing, but to what you must do if you are to keep your choice in harmony with nature. For no one will cause you harm if you don't wish it; you'll have been harmed only when you suppose that you've been harmed. In this way, then, you'll discover the appropriate actions to expect from a neighbour, from a fellow citizen, from a general, if you get into the habit of examining your social relationships.

31.1. As regards piety towards the gods, you should know that the most important point is to hold correct opinions about them, regarding them as beings who exist and govern the universe well and justly, and to have made up your mind to obey them and submit to everything that comes about, and to fall in with it of your own free will, as something that has been brought to pass by the highest intelligence. For if