

**ἘΓΧΕΙΡΙΔΙΟΝ  
ἘΠΙΚΤΗΤΟΥ**

**THE  
ENCHIRIDION  
OF EPICTETUS**

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# INTRODUCTION MOTIVATIONS AND DECISSIONS

This new translation is written in modern, conversational English. This will not only aid with understanding, it will also be more accurate to the original ΚΟΙΝὴ ΔΙΑΛΕΚΤΟΣ - KOINE DIALECTUS, the 2nd century Common Dialect of Greek that Epictetus wrote in. Previous, mostly Victorian era translations have made significant changes to the meaning of the lessons, making them less accurate, less meaningful, and less helpful to the modern reader than they really should be.

For instance, consider this line from lesson 40: Αἱ γυναῖκες εὐθὺς ἀπὸ τεσσαρεσκαίδεκα ἑτῶν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνδρῶν κυρίαὶ καλοῦνται.

Previously, this has been translated this as "Women from fourteen years old are flattered by men with the title of mistress." But this is a very inaccurate and misleading translation! "ΚΑΛΟΨΝΤΑΙ" does not mean "flatter", it means "call", as in "calling your sheep back to their pen". Flattering a person has a clearly different connotation than calling an animal. It almost comes across as a positive thing, which is very much not what Epictetus is trying to convey!

Thus a more accurate translation is "Women as young as fourteen are catcalled by men." This makes much more sense to a modern reader, and is actually applicable to your life - catcalling is still an issue, even eighteen centuries later.

With other lines, the meaning isn't significantly changed, but there are ways to phrase things that make them more easily understood: "Πᾶν πρᾶγμα δύο ἔχει λαβὰς, τὴν μὲν φορητὴν, τὴν δὲ ἀφόρητον" was previously translated as "Everything has two handles, the one by which it may be carried, the other by which it cannot" but in this



edition I translate as "For anything you try to carry, there is an effective way to bear it, and a way that is unsustainable."

What decisions did I make? No translation can be 100% faithful - if it were, it wouldn't be in a different language. Decisions must be made. There are times when I was tempted to try to update the lessons to be more in line with my own sensibilities. I did my best to resist this temptation, though just as the biases of the Victorian translations that predate this one are obvious to me, I am sure that well before the same amount of time has passed, my own biases will be obvious to whomsoever translates this text next.

For the most part, my goal was consistently to translate with as tight a connection between the literal meaning and the modern vernacular as possible. Certain decisions I made that are not quite in line with that, I feel I should list here and offer my explanations for each.

Epictetus presumed that his readers would all be married, heterosexual men,

something which may have been true in his age, but certainly isn't now. In places, he refers to the reader's ΓΥΝΗ, "woman", or ΓΥΝΗΚΑ, "wife", sometimes even ΓΥΝΗΚΑΡΙΟΝ with the diminutive suffix -ΙΟΝ, a term that in other forms of Greek can be almost disrespectful, but in ΚΟΙΝὴ ΔΙΑΛΕΚΤΟΣ, the 2nd century Greek Epictetus wrote in, was a term of endearment . I have translated this as "partner". Amusingly, the -ΙΟΝ suffix is the same as in the title of this book, the ΕΓΧΕΙΡΙΔΙΟΝ - literally, "small thing in a hand", or more commonly, "handbook".

The word ἄΝΘΡΩΠΕ translates most literally as "man" and is in the form used for addressing someone by that title. I have translated it as "my dude", because I think that captures the spirit of the form of address, and because I find it amusing to imagine Epictetus saying it.

Finally, I made the decision near the end of the translation process to go back and (in most places) change my translation of ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΟΣ from the extremely literal "philosopher" (which is literally just the word


rewritten in English letters and -os ending changed to -er; a literal translation would be "lover of wisdom") to "Stoic".

While Epictetus might disagree on whether are any other valid philosophies, I think that, given that this is specifically a book of Stoic wisdom, intended to teach one how to be a proper Stoic, I ought to translate its lessons with that in mind. If one wants to be a better philosopher of language, or learn the philosophy of literary criticism, or brush up on their analytic philosophy, the advice that this book gives for how to be a good philosopher will not be helpful.

However, if you want to be a proper Stoic, then, good reader, you've opened the right handbook.



# LESSON ONE

ome things are in our control, and others are not. We do not control anything that is not the direct result of our actions: our genetics, physical objects, our reputations. What we do control is our actions and our perceptions.

It is important to remember this distinction. Aiming to control our own actions and perceptions leads to freedom. Aiming to control that which is outside of our control leads to frustration.

This distinction also points the other way: do not make the mistake of thinking that anyone or anything else can control you. If you try to control other people or nature, you will be hindered, get upset, get in trouble, and end up blaming the Gods. But if you only try to control yourself, your actions, and your perceptions, then you will always

be free.

Aim high. Accomplish great things. Do not let yourself be distracted by minor, less important, less worthy goals. Those are beneath you, and if you allow them to sidetrack you, you will not accomplish even them, much less the great things which are your true goal.

Whenever a problem arises in your life, ask yourself this: is this something I can control, or not? If so, then control it. If not, then it is of no concern to you.

This is the first lesson: know what you can control, and care only for that. Then your happiness and success will be entirely in your hands.

# LESSON TWO



Remember this: your desires and aversions will determine your happiness in life.

It is crucial to desire only things which you have control over, and similarly, to be averse only to things you can prevent. Otherwise, you will always be disappointed.

This can be hard to accept, because we naturally want to avoid things like death, sickness, and poverty, but those things are not entirely within our control.

If you say "I will only be happy if I never get sick", then, being mortal, when you inevitably fall ill, you will also be unhappy.

But if you say "I will only be happy when I act virtuously and do my best" then even when calamity befalls you, you will still be happy.







# LESSON THREE



When you like something, you need to know the truth about it, and keep it in mind.

Say you have a favorite coffee mug. You may like it because it reminds you of a treasured memory. But the mug isn't the memory: it's just a mug. If it breaks, think to yourself, "this isn't a big deal. Mugs break."

This extends even to the most important things in your life. Your friends, relatives, and loved ones, are only human. Just as it is natural for mugs to break, it is natural for humans to fall ill.

If your friend gets sick, don't let this disturb you: it is in the nature of humans to get sick, which means it is outside of your control, which means you shouldn't let it upset you.

# LESSON FOUR



hen you are going about any action, remind yourself what the nature of the action is.

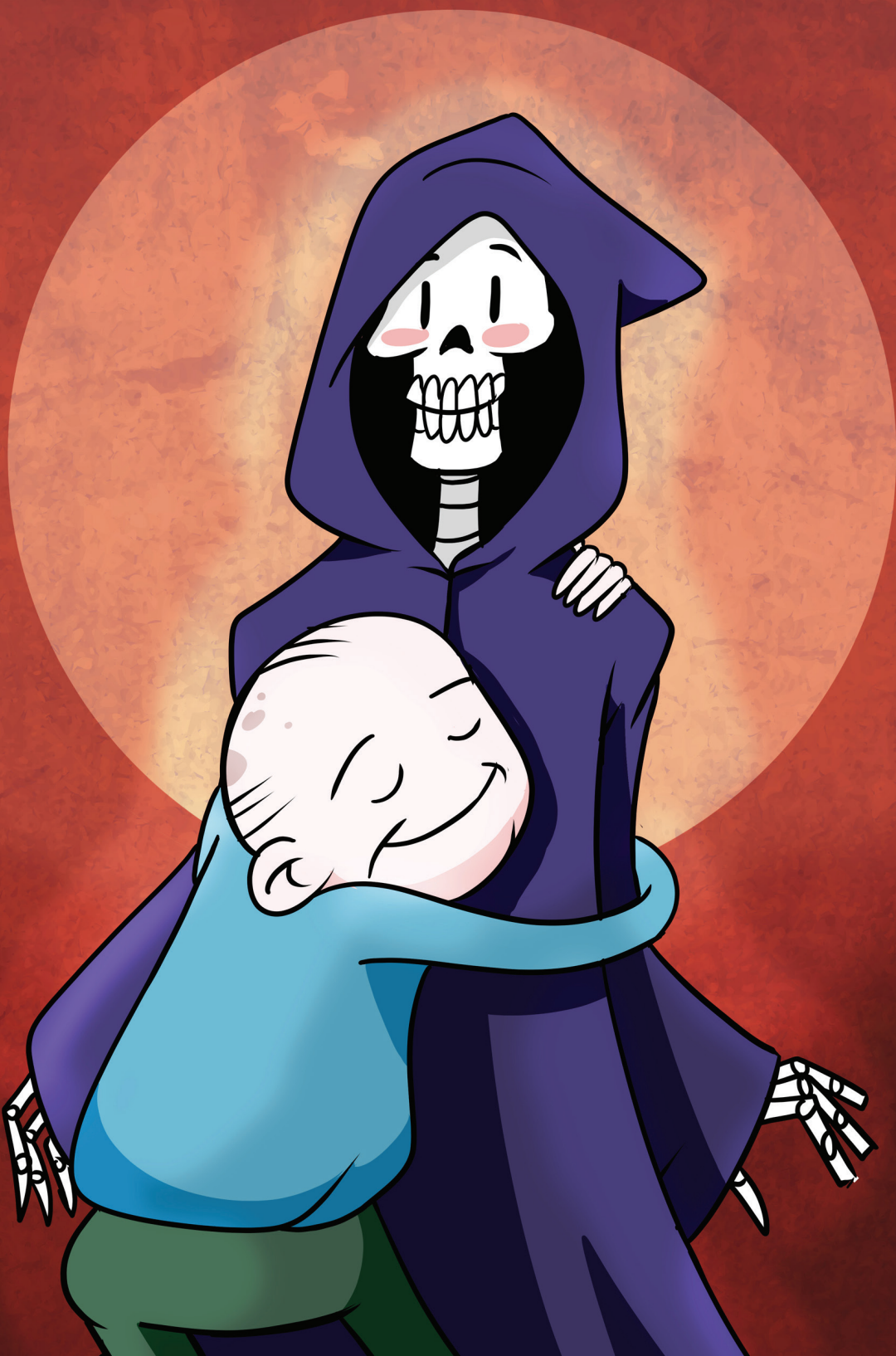
If you are going to bathe in a public bath, picture to yourself the things which usually happen in the bath: some people splash the water, some push people around, some use abusive language, and others steal.

Thus you will more safely go about this action if you say to yourself, "I will now go bathe, and keep my own mind in a state conformable to nature."


And in the same manner with regard to every other action.

For thus, if any hindrance arises in bathing, you will have it ready to say, "It was not only to bathe that I desired, but

to keep my mind in a state conformable to nature; and I will not keep it if I am bothered by things that happen."



# LESSON FIVE

eople are not troubled by the way the world is, but by the way they perceive it.

For instance, dying is not in and of itself scary (or else Socrates would have been scared of dying). The reason people are afraid of death is because of the ideas they have about it.

When we find our progress blocked, or feel troubled, or are grieving, don't ask who caused it: what matters is your perception of it.

An unenlightened man blames others for his problems, one approaching enlightenment blames himself, and an enlightened one blames nobody.



# LESSON SIX



Don't be proud of someone else's virtues.

If a horse is proud of being beautiful, that's okay. But if you have a beautiful horse, you must not be proud of the horse's beauty, because that is the horse's virtue, not your own.

What is yours, then?

Your actions. If you do good things, you can be proud of that - and you'll be proud of something all your own.







# LESSON SEVEN



Life is like a journey on a ship.

When the ship is docked, you may go ashore and admire seashells, or enjoy some entertainment, but you should always pay attention to the ship.

If the captain were to call, and you were not ready to set these things aside and board the ship, then you would have to be dragged back on board like a sheep.

If you have a partner or a child, it is good to care for them while you are alive - but when the captain calls, and you need to return to the ship, be ready to leave them behind in a good state.

Also, if you are old, be sure to stay nearer to the ship, or else you might not make it back in time.



# LESSON EIGHT



Don't expect things will always happen the way you want.

Instead, want things to happen the way you expect they will. Then you can live without anxiety.





# LESSON NINE



isease is an impairment of the body, not of the mind, unless the mind so chooses.

Lameness is a disability of the body, not of the mind, unless the mind so chooses.

Whenever something bad happens, remember that it might be an impediment to something else, but never to your true self - your mind.

# LESSON TEN



Whenever something happens to you, remember what virtues you have that this is an opportunity to exercise.

If you see someone sexy, exercise the virtue of chastity.

If you have a difficult task ahead of you, exercise the virtue of perseverance.

If someone insults you, exercise the virtue of patience.

If you get in this habit, you will not be swept up and made unhappy, no matter what happens.

# LESSON ELEVEN



Whatever you have, think of it not as something you own or are owed, but as something you have borrowed from the universe. Then you will never say "I have lost it", but "I have returned it".

Has your child died? You have returned them.

Has your partner died? You have returned them.

Did you lose your home? You returned it.

Was something stolen from you? What does it matter, how the universe took something back - it was never yours in the first place, so you have no cause to complain.

While you are in possession of anything, you do not own it - no more than you own a hotel room just because you're staying there.





# LESSON TWELVE



If you want to improve, don't think anything like this: "if I stop working, I won't be able to make a living. If I don't punish my children or employees, they won't work well."


It is better to die of hunger without grief or fear, than to have plenty of money yet be depressed, and it is better that your children should be unproductive than that you be unhappy.

Try doing this with small things first. Did someone finish your bottle of wine without permission, or did you spill some cooking oil? Think to yourself "putting up with this is the price I'm paying for peace and tranquility, which is very valuable, and I can't get anything for free."

If you ask someone to do something, consider that they might not do what you ask when you ask it. But even so, they don't have the power to upset you: that is under your control.



# LESSON THIRTEEN


 If you want to improve, be prepared to look foolish.

It's okay to look ignorant: everyone is, and anyone who looks like they know everything is faking it.

It is more important to focus on actually learning what you don't know than to show off what you already know.

It is difficult to maintain both the appearance of knowledge and actually try to learn: if you focus on one, you will necessarily neglect the other.

# LESSON FOURTEEN

f you hope for your family and friends to live forever, you are a fool, for you do not have that power.

You should only desire that which is in your power to control.

If you wish for your employees to do exactly what you say, you are a fool, for you cannot directly control their actions.

But if you wish to never be disappointed, that you can do.

Focus on what you can actually control.

If your desires are only about things you can control, then you will never be disappointed, but if your desires depend on other people, you will always be a slave to their whims.

# LESSON FIFTEEN



Life is like being in line at a buffet.

Suppose that there's something you want and that is within your reach. Go ahead and reach for it, politely.

Suppose you pass it without being able to grab it: don't hold up the line.

Suppose it's not within reach yet. Don't spend the present eagerly anticipating it; instead, wait until it's within reach.

Do the same with respect to wanting to have kids, with wanting to find a partner, with wanting a promotion, with wanting money, and you will be worthy of partying with the Gods themselves.

But even greater than that is to not desire even the things that are within your reach, and to be an ascetic. If you do that, you will

not just be able to party like a god, but to work like one, too. This is how Diogenes and Heraclitus behaved, and is why they were so well respected.

# LESSON SIXTEEN



hen you see someone cry because they are sad, whether it's because their child just moved away from home, or even died, or perhaps they lost all of their possessions, don't get caught up by how sad they look and make the mistake of thinking that the thing they think caused their sadness actually caused it.

Remember that it is not events that cause us distress, it is our reactions to them: after all, a stranger would not be sad if they learned this person's child had moved away.


Don't be afraid to show them sympathy: you can even cry with them, if that's what they need. But don't let yourself suffer internally.








# LESSON SEVENTEEN

 All the world is a stage, and you are merely an actor in the play of life - and not the author of the play.

Whatever your role, play it well, whether it's a long or short one, a poor person, a cripple, a ruler, or a normal citizen.

This is your job, to act your part well, and it's up to the fates what role you are assigned.


# LESSON EIGHTEEN

f you see a sign of bad luck, like a raven croaking in front of you, don't let yourself get carried away by the ill omen.

Remind yourself that nothing is going to happen to the most important part of yourself.

Something unlucky might happen to your body, or your property, or your reputation, or even to your children or partner, but no matter what happens, you can find a way to benefit yourself from it, by viewing it as an opportunity to improve your virtue.

# LESSON NINETEEN

ou can be invincible, as long as you stay out of contests where victory is out of your control.

If you see someone with a lot of power, or who's very popular, don't make the mistake of thinking of them as blessed.

After all, if the only true goodness is virtue, there's no reason to be envious.

To live a good life, you shouldn't wish to hold an important office - you should only wish to be a free citizen.

And there's only one way to do that: to ignore everything that is outside of your control.

# LESSON TWENTY



Remember that it's not someone assaulting you or belittling you that insults you - only your own interpretation of their actions can make you feel insulted.

If you find yourself stressing out about these ideas, don't: "Oh, I'll never have great honor, I'll always be a nobody."

If being dishonorable is what you're worried about, know that no one can bring you dishonor, because no one can force you to behave dishonorably.

Is it your duty to be famous and invited to all the best parties? Of course not. So if you aren't famous, and you don't get invited out, does that matter?

Your duty is to take care of what really matters - the areas of life you can control. And in those areas, you can become as great as you choose.

# LESSON TWENTY ONE

**You** should hold the image of death, exile, and anything else you might be scared of in your mind's eye every day.

Most importantly, death.

Do this and you won't find yourself preoccupied with unimportant things, nor will you get caught up in unreasonable desires.






# LESSON TWENTY TWO

**I**f you want to be a Stoic, be ready for people to make fun of you, to sneer at you and say "look at mister smarty-pants, looking down on us from his ivory tower."

Don't actually look down on people; instead, focus on what's important.

Remember that if you do this well, the people who start out mocking you will eventually admire you. But if you let them rile you up with their insults, they will just double down on mockery.

# LESSON TWENTY THREE

f you ever focus on appearances for the pleasure of other people, you've lost your way.

Instead, focus on being a Stoic, and if you want to be seen a certain way, see yourself that way, and let that be enough.

# LESSON TWENTY FOUR



Don't let these ideas chafe at you: that you would have a dishonorable life, or be thought a nobody. For if being dishonorable is bad, know that nobody else has the power to make you dishonored: only you can do that.

Are you a bad person if people aren't throwing parties "in your honor"? Of course not. Then how can this actually affect your honor? And how can you be a "nobody"?

You are someone: you're you.

Your duty is only to be the best you that you can be.

"But I won't be able to help my friends!" you might worry. What do you mean, you can't help them? Maybe you can't loan them


money, or sponsor them for citizenship. But those aren't the only ways to help people.

No one can give another something they do not possess themselves.

Maybe your friends want you to get rich, so you can loan them money. Well, if you can get rich while maintaining your virtue, by all means, do it. But if getting rich would require you to give up your virtue, that's a bad trade. Besides, would you rather be rich, or have friends who value you for things other than money?

"But I must be of service to my country!" you say. Well, what kind of service? You don't buy shoes from a gunmaker or guns from a shoemaker. You must be a good person, and so your country can only ask you to do things a good person would do. If everyone in the country behaves virtuously, the country will be fine. And if you want to help your country, you must remain a good person, for how could you help it by behaving badly?

# LESSON TWENTY FIVE

o you know someone who has had a party thrown in their honour, or is regularly greeted respectfully, or asked for their advice?

If you consider those things good, then you should be happy for them, and if you consider them bad, you should be happy for yourself.

If you want those things, you will have to pay the price for them. People won't think as much of you if you don't visit them regularly, don't help them out, and don't compliment them as much as someone else does. If you expect to get something without paying the price for it, you're going to be disappointed.

For instance, what is the price of a head of lettuce? Say it's a dollar. If you and someone else each have a dollar, and they use their dollar to buy a head of lettuce and you don't, they don't have more than you:

you still have your dollar.

Similarly, imagine you aren't invited to a party because the host only invites guests who flatter him. If you want to go, you'll have to flatter the host.


You can't have the good (going to the party) without paying the price (flattering the host); to think otherwise is ridiculous and selfish.

Do you think you didn't get anything in exchange for not going?

You did; you don't have to put up with the host.



# LESSON TWENTY SIX

f your neighbor breaks one of their mugs, you'll probably say "these things happen."

If you break one of your own mugs, then, you should be affected the same amount.


Now apply this same principle to more important matters.

If your neighbor's partner dies, you probably think "everyone must die, eventually". But if it's a member of your own family who dies, you probably think


"Woe is me! What misery!"

But we ought to remember how we react when we hear it has happened to someone else.


# LESSON TWENTY SEVEN

ust as a target is not  
set up to be missed,  
in the same way,  
there is nothing in the world  
that is intrinsically evil.

# LESSON TWENTY EIGHT

f someone enslaved you  
and sold you to a stranger,  
you would be angry.  
But if you let a stranger upset you,  
you are allowing them  
to enslave your mind.  
Shouldn't you be ashamed of that?

# LESSON TWENTY NINE

efore doing anything, think about the causes and consequences of that action.

If you don't, you'll be eager to get started, and then ashamed of yourself once you see the consequences of your actions.

Say you want to compete at the Olympics. That's a good thing to want!

But think it through. Know what is necessary, and what will come of it, before you commit to doing it.

You will have to obey the rules, eat properly, exercise a great deal whether it's burning hot or freezing cold, stop drinking soda and alcohol, obey your personal trainer the way you would your doctor, and only after all that can you compete.

And then, in the competition, you might twist your ankle, or land facedown in the dust, get your ass kicked, get insulted, and still lose.

If, after thinking about all that, you still want to compete, then go for it.

But if you don't take that seriously, then you'll be like a child, pretending to be an athlete. A kid might one day pretend to be a warrior, then a musician, then an actor, then a public speaker, then a Stoic, but they aren't actually any of those things. If you don't take what you do seriously, you will be like a child imitating serious people, "monkey see, monkey do", without understanding how to actually accomplish your supposed goals - just mindlessly having fun, not really getting anything done.

Some people go and see Euphrates speak (and who is as good a speaker as him?) and immediately want to become a Stoic.

My dude, before deciding to do that, think about what it's actually like to be a Stoic, and if that is in accordance with your nature. If you wanted to be an athlete or fighter, you would have to examine your body and see if you're fit enough to even try.

Similarly, if you want to be a Stoic, do you think you would be able to eat the same as you currently do, drink the same, and have the same biases? No, you will have to endure annoyances, long nights, hard work, you'll have to travel far from your friends and family, people will look down on you and laugh at you, you'll have to accept when you get no honours or titles, and when life is unfair in every little way. You will need to accept these consequences, in order to achieve the Stoic peace of mind, tranquility, and true freedom.

Otherwise, you'll be like a child, jumping from career to career, now a Stoic, now a demagogue, now a politician. These things are not in harmony with each other.



You must be one person, good or bad.  
You can either focus on your internal state,  
or the external world. You can change  
yourself, or you can try to change others.

You can either be a Stoic, or not.

# LESSON THIRTY



uties are always measured by  
relations.

Consider your father: you should listen to him, respect to his judgment, and pay attention to his advice, even when it's critical. But suppose he is a bad father. Well, does everyone get a good father?

No, just a father.

Suppose your brother is a jerk. You should still maintain your relationship. What he does shouldn't matter to you; only what you do, to maintain your virtue.

If your happiness depends only on your own virtue, no one else can hurt you.

If you think this way when deciding how to interact with your neighbors, fellow citizens, boss, or anyone else, you will be able to determine your duty in each circumstance.

# LESSON THIRTY ONE



To be properly pious to the Gods,  
this is what you must be sure of:

they exist,

they govern the universe justly and well,

you must obey their rules,

yield to them,

and do so willingly,

as you would any wise ruler.

In this way, you will never blame the  
Gods, nor accuse them of neglecting you.

In order to do this properly, you will need  
to limit your conception of what is good  
and what is bad to things that are under  
your control. Otherwise, eventually you will  
be disappointed in something, and hate and  
blame whatever caused it.

In nature, all creatures flee from what they expect to harm them, and pursue what they expect to help them.

Therefore, if a father doesn't give his son what the son considers a fair share, the son would revile the father. That's what made Polynices and Eteocles enemies: they each thought it would be good for them to become king.

Unlucky farmers, sailors, merchants, those who have lost a partner or child, they all may revile the Gods. People's religiousness is bound up with their personal interest.

Anyone who is mindful of their own desires is also being properly pious.


They should remember to also make sacrifices of drinks and burning food with a mind to being careful, clean, and not extravagant, as is tradition.







# LESSON THIRTY TWO

henever you consult with an oracle, remember, you don't know what is to come: that's why you're consulting them in the first place.

But you do know what sort of thing will come (or at least, you do if you are a true Stoic). If it is outside of your control, it is necessarily neither good nor bad.

Don't bring a feeling of fear or desire with you to the oracle, but rather with a feeling of determined indifference: no matter what the truth is, you will be able to use the information to your advantage; no one can stop you from this, and you will have the Gods as your advisors.

Pay attention to the advice you receive, and remember who you will be ignoring if you disregard it. And as Socrates advised,


you should only consult an oracle when  
your own powers of reason have failed you.

For instance, if your duty compels you  
into a dangerous situation, don't ask the  
oracles if you should do it: even if the oracle  
foretells death and sacrifice, that doesn't stop  
it from being your duty.

Recall the story about the two people who  
were going to the oracle at Delphi when they  
were assaulted by a group of strangers:

one of the men fled,  
abandoning his friend,  
and hid in the temple,  
but the oracle cast him out.

# LESSON THIRTY THREE

ou should follow these rules like you carved them in stone, so that you follow them whether you're in public or alone.

For the most part, stay silent, speaking only a little when necessary. If occasion calls for it, you can talk more at length, but even then, don't talk about ordinary things like fights, horse races, food or drink, that is, things people talk about everywhere - and most of all, don't gossip about your fellows. If people are talking about that, and you are able, change the topic of conversation.

If you are in another culture, however, keep quiet.

When you laugh, don't be too loud, and don't do it too often or too much.

As much as possible, avoid making promises.

Avoid vulgar entertainment. If you do find yourself at such an event, pay attention, so that you don't accidentally start behaving like a vulgar person. Anyone whose companions are vulgar is likely to end up vulgar themselves: no matter how pure you are, dirt will still rub off on you.

Provided you have all that is necessary, like food, drink, clothing, a house, family, you should avoid luxuries.

As much as you can, before marriage, keep yourself from the luxuries of Aphrodite. If you do indulge, do so in a lawful manner. But don't be mean to people who do indulge in those things, and don't brag about how you abstain.

If you hear that someone is speaking ill of you, don't make excuses about what they've been saying, but instead reply "they must not know about my other flaws, or else they would have mentioned those as well!"

You don't have to go to public spectacles,

but if you do, don't go as a fan of anyone but yourself. Wish for things to be the way they are, and for the best person to win, and everything will go the way you want. Don't start drama, and when you leave, don't dwell on what just happened, unless focusing on it will help you improve. Otherwise, you'll look like you just got dazzled by the spectacle.

Avoid watching speeches, but if you do go, remain dignified and respectable, and don't cause a scene.

When you're going to talk to someone, especially to a superior, ask yourself, "what would Socrates or Zeno do?" and you'll be able to figure out how to behave.

When you're going to talk to anyone in power, remember that they might not be home, you might not be allowed in, they might not even notice when you knock on their door. If you still think it would be good to go, then go, but don't get upset if any of those things happen. If you say "it wasn't worth going after all" you are being vulgar, and allowing outside forces to upset you.

When you're with company, avoid telling stories of dangers and adventures you've been through. Other people aren't as interested in them as you are.

Beware of trying too hard to make other people laugh; it is easy to slip into being vulgar, and might make your conversational partners think less of you.

Likewise with using disgraceful language. In fact, if someone else uses foul language around you, and you have a good opportunity, correct them. Otherwise, show your disapproval by staying silent, keep a serious look on your face, and maybe blush a little.

# LESSON THIRTY FOUR



If you find yourself looking forward to some pleasure, guard yourself against getting carried away.

Wait for the thing to happen.

Think about these two moments: when you get the thing and enjoy it, and afterwards, when you may reproach yourself for having enjoyed it.

Then contrast that with how much you would enjoy and be proud of yourself had you abstained.

Even if it would be fashionable and enjoyable to do the thing, you can still stop yourself from doing it, and think how much better it would be to have the victory of self-control.



# LESSON THIRTY FIVE



Whenever you decide that something would be a good idea to do, don't avoid being seen doing it, regardless of what other people might think of you.

If it's the wrong thing to do, you shouldn't be doing it in the first place, but if it is the right thing to do, why are you afraid of those who mistakenly think it's wrong?

# LESSON THIRTY SIX



f you say "it is day **or** it is night", that makes perfect sense, but if you say "it is day **and** it is night", that doesn't make sense.

Similarly, if you're eating dinner with friends and you take the largest share for yourself, that might make your own body feel good, but it's rude to your dinner guests.

Remember, when you eat a meal with other people, pay attention not only to your own appetite, but also to proper courtesy towards everyone else there.



# LESSON THIRTY SEVEN

**I**f you pretend to be more powerful than you really are, you will not only embarrass yourself, you might miss an opportunity to gain or use the power you do have.





# LESSON THIRTY EIGHT

**J**ust like how when you walk you take care not to step on nails or twist your ankle, similarly you should take care not to hurt your brain.

If you always keep your guard up, you will be safer.







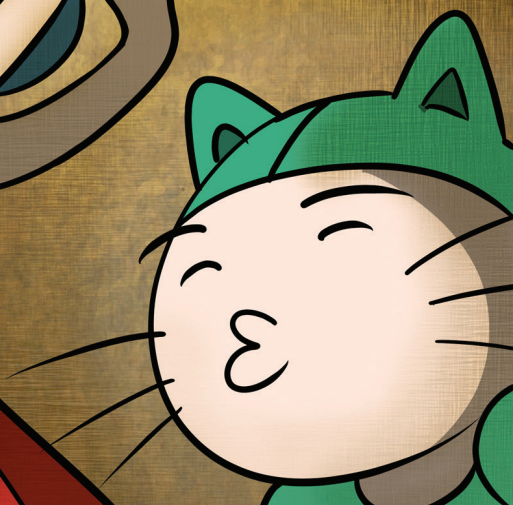
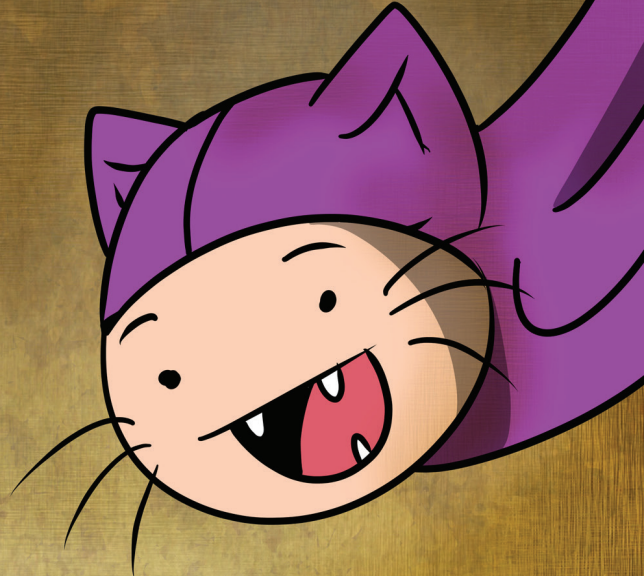
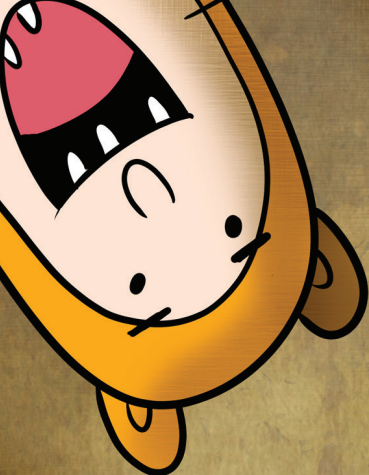
# LESSON THIRTY NINE




You should judge your possessions by how well they serve your bodily needs, just as you judge a shoe by how well it serves your foot.

If you stop at fulfilling your needs, you will be fine, but if you move beyond that, you are starting down a slippery slope, like how if you go beyond getting a comfortable, well fitting shoe, to one that is gilded, then purple, you may end up with one that is entirely too fancy altogether.

Once you go beyond a sensible limit, there's no telling where you'll finally stop.



# LESSON FORTY

omen as young as fourteen are catcalled by men.

This can give them the impression that the only thing they're good for is sex, and so they put all their hopes into making themselves look good.

Instead, you should compliment women on their behavior and virtue.

# LESSON FORTY ONE



It is a mark of a lack of virtue to spend too much of your time on the actions of your body, like spending too much time exercising, eating, drinking, resting too much, or having too much sex.

None of these should be your main focus in life: instead, concentrate on living a life of the mind.

# LESSON FORTY TWO



Whenever someone is rude to you of says bad things about you, remember that they are only doing what they think is right.

You can't expect people to always do what you think is right: they will only do what they think is right.

Therefore, if they are wrong, they are only hurting themselves.

Whether or not they think you are good does not affect whether or not you are good.

So when someone thinks ill of you, remind yourself - that's just what they think.





# LESSON FORTY THREE



For anything you try to carry, there is an effective way to bear it, and a way that is unsustainable.

If your brother does something bad, and you think of him as "the person who did that bad thing", you may find it grows unbearable.

But if you think of him as "your brother", and remember that you are on the same team, you will be able to bear it.





# LESSON FORTY FOUR



These ideas don't make any sense:  
"I'm richer than you, therefore I'm  
better than you." or "I'm a better debater than  
you, therefore I'm better than you."

All that you can definitely say is "I'm  
richer than you, therefore I've acquired more  
wealth than you," or "I'm a better debater  
than you, therefore I'm more eloquent than  
you."

You are not, after all, your wealth, or your  
voice.





# LESSON FORTY FIVE



Do you know someone who takes short showers?

Don't say that they take bad showers; say they take short showers.

Do you know someone who drinks a lot of wine?

Don't say they drink too much; say they drink a lot.

For unless you know why they drink that much, how can you say that it's too much?

Don't get fooled into judging people by first impressions.

# LESSON FORTY SIX



Don't call yourself a philosopher, and don't talk too much about philosophy: instead, act based on your philosophy.

For example, if you're at a dinner party, don't lecture people about how much is proper to eat. Instead, just eat that amount.

This is how Socrates behaved. People used to ask him to show them philosophers, and he would take them to other philosophers, and not mind that he wasn't being noticed as a prominent philosopher.

If you're in a conversation with ignorant people, listen more than you talk.

Talking about philosophy is like throwing up food after you eat it, whereas acting based on philosophy is like digesting it and growing stronger.

You should be like a sheep that properly digests the grass of good philosophy, producing good acts like wool and milk, not like a sheep that gorges itself on grass and then throws up on the ignorant farmers.

# LESSON FORTY SEVEN



Once you've learned to get food frugally, don't gorge yourself, and when you drink water, don't always be saying "I drink a lot of water."


Rather, consider how much more frugal someone poorer than you is, and how much more hardship they've endured.

If you want to fast and exercise, do it for your own sake, not for appearances.

If you're thirsty, just have some water, don't go telling people about it.



# LESSON FORTY EIGHT

he core characteristic of an ignorant person is this: they don't think they can hurt or harm themselves, but rather, only things outside of them can do that.

The core characteristic of a Stoic is this: they praise no one, blame no one, accuse no one, and never talk themselves up as if they knew everything.

If something is hindering them, they blame themselves, if they are praised, they laugh at themselves, and if someone blames them, they do not speak in their own defense.

They move like a sick person, careful not to disturb anything that isn't secure.

They don't make demands, and desire only that which is good.

They are moderate in all things.

They don't care if people consider them foolish or ignorant.

They look at themselves as their own worst enemy, lying in wait to spring an ambush on themselves.

# LESSON FORTY NINE



If someone is bragging because they can understand the works of Chrysippus, think to yourself:

"This wouldn't be anything to brag about if Chrysippus had written clearly. But what do I wish?

I wish to understand and follow nature. I ask who understands nature well, and I hear that Chrysippus does. So I read what he wrote, and find it hard to understand. So I look for someone who understands Chrysippus.

So far, there's nothing for me to take pride in. When I do find a teacher, it's still up to me to actually follow the teachings - that's the only part that I should be proud about.

But if I admire the interpretation rather than the teachings, I am merely a book-lover, not a philosopher - the difference is just that I study Chrysippus instead of Homer.

Certainly, if I say I know Chrysippus and someone asks me to explain him, I had better be able to point at actions that follow his teachings, rather than just quote him, or else I would be really embarrassed."

# LESSON FIFTY




For any rules you decide to live by, you must treat them as gravely as if they were laws.

Don't pay attention to what anyone says about you; that is not under your control.



# LESSON FIFTY ONE

ow long, then, until you think of yourself as able to be the best, and able to always follow reason in your judgment?

You have seen what principles you must learn, and you have learned them. What, are you expecting a teacher to appear and tell you what to do, so that until then you have an excusing for not behaving as you know you should?

You aren't a child anymore; you're a full grown person. If you're negligent and lazy now, always putting off what you know you need to do, you may never change, and live out your whole life and then die still putting it off.

Now is the time to behave as your best - to be the grown up you know you should be.



Treat the things you know you should do as unbreakable vows that you will do those things.

If it's painful, or difficult, or something tempts you to stray from your good judgment, remind yourself that the Olympics have already begun, and you can't put off doing your best anymore - it's up to you, right now, whether you keep making progress, or fall behind.

This was how Socrates perfected himself: by treating everything as an opportunity to improve, and not following anything but his reason.

And while you aren't yet a Socrates, you should live like you are trying to become a Socrates.

# LESSON FIFTY TWO



The first and most necessary part of philosophy is the use of principles, such as "don't lie".

Second is examples, such as "here's why you shouldn't lie".

Third is reason, figuring out how the examples and principles tie together, asking "why is this a demonstration of that principle? What is a consequence of that principle? What is true? What is false?"

The third part is necessary for the second, and the second is necessary for the first. But the most necessary part is the first, so that is where we ought to focus.

But we actually focus on the third part the most, neglecting the first, so we end up readily lying, while being able to easily explain why lying is wrong.

# LESSON FIFTY THREE



Always keep these quotes in mind:

Lead me, Zeus, and you too, Prepomene,  
to wherever you have prepared for me:  
I will follow without hesitation,  
Even if not happily, I will go.

Cleanthes

Whoever obeys their fate  
we call them skilled,  
and wise in the ways of the Gods

Euripides

Well, Crito,  
if this is the Gods' will,  
then so be it.

Plato, Crito

Anytus and Melitus  
may be able to kill me,  
but they cannot harm me.

Plato, Apology of Socrates



