

THE ENCHIRIDION

Some things are within your power, and some are not.

If it concerns anything beyond your power, it is nothing to you.

Restrain desire. Where it is necessary for you to pursue something, do so with discretion and moderation.

Reject only the undesirable things which you can control.

With regard to things which delight the mind, remind yourself of what nature they are.

When you perform any action, remind yourself of what nature the action is.

You are not disturbed by things. Your views on those things disturb you. Do not attribute your distress to others, but to yourself and to your own views.

Do not feel pride in any achievement not immediately your own.

Things will not always happen as you want them to happen. Realize that they happen as they happen.

Sickness harms the body, not the will. Say this to yourself with regard to everything that happens.

Upon every misfortune, turn toward yourself and ask which of your faculties may offer a solution. If pain, then strength; if insult, then patience. Existence will not overwhelm you.

It is better to die of hunger, exempt from grief and fear, than to live in affluence with perturbation.

There is a price paid for peace and tranquility; and nothing is to be had for nothing.

Be content to show foolishness and dullness on the exterior. Do not desire to be thought to know anything.

If you wish your friends to live forever, you are foolish, for you wish things to be in your power which are not so. Exercise only what is in your power.

Remember that you must behave as at a banquet. Is anything brought round to you? Put out your hand and take a moderate share. Does it pass by you? Do not stop it. Has it not yet come? Wait till it reaches you.

In conversation, do not disdain to accommodate yourself to others and, if need be, to groan with them. Take heed not to groan inwardly.

You are an actor in a drama. Act well the part.

You are unconquerable if you enter into no combat in which it is not in your own power to conquer.

When you see anyone eminent in honors or power, be careful not to be confused by appearances and to pronounce them happy.

Do not desire to be held in high regard by your peers, but to be free. The only way to this is a disregard of things which are not within your own power.

Remember that it is not the person who gives abuse or blows, who insults, but the view we take of these things as insulting. When you are provoked it is your own opinion which provokes you.

Let death and exile, and all other things which appear terrible, be daily before your eyes. You will never entertain an abject thought, nor covet anything.

If you have a desire towards something, prepare yourself from the first to have the multitude laugh and sneer. If you are persistent, those persons who at first ridiculed will afterwards admire you.

If you ever happen to turn your attention to externals, for the pleasure of anyone, you have ruined your scheme of life. Be content, then, in everything.

Is anyone preferred before you at anything? If these things are good, you ought to rejoice that they have them; and if they are evil, do not be grieved that you do not have them.

If a person had delivered up your body to some passer-by, you would be angry. Do you feel no shame in delivering up your own mind to any reviler, to be confounded?

In every affair consider what precedes and what follows, and then undertake it. Otherwise you will begin careless of the consequences, and when these are developed, you will desist.

You will be everything, but nothing in earnest. You mimic all you see, and one thing after another is sure to please you, but is out of favor as soon as it becomes familiar. You have never entered upon anything considerably, but carelessly, and with a halfway zeal. Consider first what the matter is, and what your own nature is able to bear. You must be one thing. You must cultivate your own reason and apply yourself to things within you.

Begin by prescribing to yourself some character and demeanor, one you may preserve both alone and in company.

Be silent, or speak what is needful, and in few words. You may enter into discourse sometimes, when occasion calls for it. Let it not run into any of the common subjects, and especially not on other people, so as either to blame, or praise, or make comparisons.

Let not your laughter be loud, frequent, or abundant.

Avoid taking oaths as far as you are able.

Avoid public and vulgar entertainment. If ever an occasion calls you to them, keep your attention upon your mind, that you may not slide into vulgarity.

Provide things relating to the body no further than absolute need requires. Cut off those things which lean toward show and luxury.

Be not uncharitable or severe to those who seem evil, nor boast that you yourself live otherwise.

If anyone tells you that a certain person speaks ill of you, do not make excuses about what is said of you. Answer: "They were ignorant of my other faults, else they would not have mentioned these alone."

It is not necessary for you to appear often at public spectacles. If ever there is a proper occasion for you to be there, wish things to be only just as they are, for thus nothing will go against you. Abstain from derision and violent emotions. And when you come away, do not discourse a great deal on what has passed.

Be not prompt or ready to attend private functions. If you must attend, preserve your dignity, and yet avoid making yourself disagreeable.

When you are going before anyone in power, the doors may not be opened to you, and they may not notice you. If, with all this, it be your duty to go, bear what happens.

In company, avoid a frequent and excessive mention of your own actions and dangers. Avoid attempts to excite laughter, for this may slide you into vulgarity and may lower you in the esteem of your acquaintances. Approaches to indecent discourse are likewise dangerous.

If you are enticed by promised pleasure, let the affair wait your leisure. Bring to your mind both points of time—that in which you shall enjoy the pleasure, and that after you have enjoyed it.

When you do anything from a clear judgment that it ought to be done, do it, even though the world should misunderstand it. If you are not acting rightly, shun the action itself. If you are, why fear those who wrongly censure you?

At a feast, to choose the largest share is suitable to the bodily appetite, but inconsistent with the social spirit. When you eat with another, value the bodies of those things which are set before you, and your courtesy toward your host.

If you have assumed any character beyond your strength, you have lost one which you might have supported.

Take care not to hurt the ruling faculty of your mind. If you were to guard against this in every action, you should enter upon those actions more safely.

It is a mark of ignorance to spend much time in things relating to the body, as to be immoderate in exercises, and in eating and drinking. These things should be done with discretion and your main strength be applied to your reason.

When any person does ill by you, or speaks ill of you, remember that they act or speak from an impression that it is right for them to do so. If they judge from false appearances, they are the person hurt and the person deceived. You will bear with a person who reviles you, for you will say upon every occasion, "It seemed so to them."

These reasonings have no logical connection: "I am richer than you, therefore I am your superior." "I am more eloquent than you, therefore I am your superior." The true logical connection is this: "I am richer than you, therefore my possessions must exceed yours." "I am more eloquent than you, therefore my style must surpass yours." But you, after all, consist neither in property nor in style.

Does anyone bathe hastily? Do not say that they do it ill, but hastily. Does anyone drink much wine? Do not say that they do ill, but that they drink a great deal. For unless you perfectly understand their motives, how should you know if they act ill? Thus you will not risk yielding to any appearances except those you fully comprehend.

Do not discourse how people ought to eat, but eat as you ought. Do not make an exhibition before those ignorant of your principles.

When you have learned to nourish your body frugally, do not build yourself upon it. If you drink water, refrain from saying upon every occasion, "I drink water." Consider how much more frugal are the poor are, and how much more patient of hardship.

The vulgar look outwards for all help or harm.

The philosopher looks inwards for all help or harm.

Those proficient praise no one, blame no one, and accuse no one. They say nothing concerning their self as being anybody or knowing anything.

When you are hindered, accuse yourself. If you are praised, smile to yourself at the person who praises you.

Whatever rules you have adopted, abide by them as laws.

Do not regard what anyone says of you, for this is no concern of yours.

How long will you delay to demand of yourself improvements? You have received the principles with which you ought to be conversant; and you have been conversant with them. If you will be negligent and slothful, you will accomplish nothing and, living and dying, remain of vulgar mind.

This instant, then, think yourself worthy of living as a realized human being. Let whatever appears to be the best be to you an inviolable law.

If any instance of pain or pleasure be set before you, remember that now is the combat, and that by one failure or success, honor may be lost or won. And though you are not yet proficient, you ought to live as one seeking to be proficient.