HANDBOOK of EPICTETUS

Translated, with introduction and annotations, by
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EPICTETUS: c. A.D. 50–130

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Introduction

Stoic philosophy, of which Epictetus (c. A.D. 50–130) is a representative, began as a recognizable movement around 300 B.C. Its founder was Zeno of Cytium (not to be confused with Zeno of Elea, who discovered the famous paradoxes). He was born in Cyprus about 336 B.C., but all of his philosophical activity took place in Athens. For more than 500 years Stoicism was one of the most influential and fruitful philosophical movements in the Graeco-Roman world. The works of the earlier Stoics survive only in fragmentary quotations from other authors, but from the Renaissance until well into the nineteenth century, Stoic ethical thought was one of the most important ancient influences on European ethics, particularly because of the descriptions of it by Cicero, through surviving works by the Stoics Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, and also Epictetus—and also because of the effect that it had had in antiquity, and continued to have into the nineteenth century, on Christian ethical views. Nowadays an undergraduate or graduate student learning about ancient philosophy in a university course may well hear only about Plato and Aristotle, along perhaps with the presocratics; but in the history of Western thought and education this situation is somewhat atypical, and in most periods a comparable student would have learned as much or more about Stoicism, as well as two other major ancient philosophical movements, Epicureanism and Scepticism. In spite of this lack of explicit acquaintance with Stoic philosophers and their works, however, most students will recognize in Epictetus various ideas that are familiar through their effects on other thinkers, notably Spinoza, in our intellectual tradition.

As one should expect in a philosophical tradition of as much as 500 years' active duration, Stoic philosophy varied a great deal, though its basic ideas remained the same. Although it is unclear to what extent Zeno was a theoretically oriented philosopher like Plato or Aristotle, or to what extent he was instead concerned mainly to dispense practical advice to people on how to live their lives, it is

clear that early Stoic philosophy, particularly as carried on by Chrysippus (c. 279–206 B.C.), the third head of the Stoic school at Athens, was very largely a theoretical and (in the modern sense) academic philosophical movement. In a philosopher like Epictetus, on the other hand, one has the sense that the practical advice-giving side dominates, and that interest in working through philosophical problems or arguments is relatively small. In varying degrees, the works of later Stoics such as Seneca (c. 5 B.C.–A.D. 65) and Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 121–180) are in this respect much like those of Epictetus. It is a difficult and interesting question whether this difference reflects a difference in philosophical doctrine between the earlier and the later writers, or rather simply a difference in the manner in which they chose to expound the same underlying doctrine.

We can both examine this question and take a first look at Epictetus' views at the same time. Perhaps the most succinct statement of his view of the best possible condition for a human being to be in is given by c. 8 of the *Handbook*:

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

Epictetus is here not claiming that if you adopt this attitude then external events in the world will go well for you, but that the best possible human condition, not being a matter of such external events but of one's state of mind, precisely *is* one of adopting just this attitude. This appears to be much the same thought that motivated the statement by Zeno that the end or *telos* of a human being's life is to be in accord or agreement with nature (cf., e.g., cc. 4, 30). The problem, however, concerns just what this thought amounts to, and whether it is really the same in Epictetus as it was in Zeno.

If we look at it in the following way, which seems to me correct, it does appear to be the same idea in both, up to a point. The basic idea is that for a human being to be in an ideal state is to lack all dissatisfaction with anything about the world, while at the same time being conscious and intelligent. One way of doing this might be to satisfy all of one's desires; but the Stoics held, not unreasonably, that a human being is by nature unable to do this, both because one's powers are so limited and because desires, at least for certain things, are unlimited by anything except life span. Therefore, in the passage quoted, Epictetus recommends against this way. The other way, rather than altering the external world to bring it into line with one's desires, is to set those desires so that they are in line with the way the external world actually is. This is the way that the Stoics recommend, and thus far Zeno and Epictetus seem to be in agreement.

The question, however, is how to put oneself into such a state, and what must be going on in one's mind, so to speak, to be actually in it. Both early and late Stoics seem to have agreed that this must be done by realizing that all events, at least in the external world, are completely determined by prior states of the universe as a whole. According to this form of determinism, anyone knowing all there is to know about the world prior to a given time would be able to predict with complete certainty what would happen at that time and later times. In addition, the Stoics seem to have viewed the world as organized by a perhaps even stronger sort of coherence than mere determination of future events by past events. For they held that the universe is an organic and perfect whole, exhibiting an orderliness that somehow links all of its parts together. As a result of these views about the coherence of the pattern exhibited by the cosmos, the Stoics believed that once one became aware of that pattern, one would see that the nature of any local occurrence was completely fixed by the rest of the pattern, so that it would be regarded as an impossibility that, the rest of the world being what it is, the local event might have been different.

Given this much, one can see something about the state of mind that the Stoics thought was involved in bringing desires into line completely with the way the world actually is. It was one of understanding fully that nothing, and notably no event that might result in dissatisfaction, could possibly be otherwise than it actually is. Given the awareness of the place of such an event in the whole pattern of the cosmos, one could be quite unable to conceive of the events being any different. It is helpful to use an example (not one that the Stoics themselves used). Given a grasp of the series of positive integers, i.e., 1, 2, 3, 4, etc., one can easily feel that it is quite impossible to conceive that, for example, 2 + 1 might have been equal to 4 or 17 or indeed anything other than 3. Given the inconceivability of any alternative, it seems reasonable to hold that there is no intelligibility in the idea of wishing or desiring that 2 + 1 might not have been equal to 3, or might have been equal to anything other than what it is equal to. It is this sort of attitude that the Stoics thought one might be able to reach with regard to all events in the world. One would understand the pattern as well as we understand the pattern of 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. (or some finite segment of it—since the Stoics

believed that the universe is finite); and so just as we cannot regard as intelligible the idea of wishing that 2 + 1 were other than 3, so too one could not regard as intelligible the idea that any event might be otherwise than it is. The inconceivability of alternatives would thus rule out dissatisfaction with things as they actually are.

But the question then arises, once we have gone this far, what sort of understanding of the pattern of nature would be required for a person to reach this complete lack of dissatisfaction. For example, would it suffice merely to be convinced that—in just these words—the universe is a perfectly organized whole governed by determinism? Or would one have to be familiar with, or even consciously aware of, a great many details of the pattern, or even of all of the details of it? (Likewise one can ask how well one would have to understand the series of natural numbers to be unable to conceive of alternatives to, say, its being the case that 67 + 475 is equal to 542, and so on for more complicated facts.) There may have been some disagreement among the Stoics on this question. Some of them (in all likelihood Chrysippus and his predecessor Cleanthes) may well have thought that to be in a fully ideal and dissatisfaction-free state of mind, one would have to possess a completely detailed knowledge of all aspects of the organization of the cosmos, including a great deal of physics and also logic (it is possible that Cleanthes stressed the former and Chrysippus the latter). Alternatively, it may have been held by others—perhaps including Aristo of Chios, the somewhat heretical Stoic contemporary of Chrysippus, and quite possibly also many later Stoics, and perhaps even Epictetus (see c. 49)—that a simple acceptance of the proposition that the universe is an organized whole subject to determinism would be enough. If this is so, then perhaps there is an important disagreement within the Stoic movement on the nature of the ideal state of mind for a human being.

On the other hand, it is possible to suppose that the disagreement was not such a basic disagreement about doctrine, but was rather a matter of emphasis and intended audience. Even if one believed that the ideal state of mind—as sometimes attributed to the paragon of perfection, the Stoic "sage"—required a completely detailed knowledge of all aspects of the cosmic pattern, one could still hold that there were various different approaches to, or approximations of, that ideal state; and that important among them, especially for ordinary people, would be the simple acceptance of the idea, without all of the details, that the universe is a perfectly organized whole. If Epictetus is interpreted in this way, he would be regarded not as having differed with the earlier Stoics in matters of basic doctrine about the ideal state of a human being, but as having a preference for concentrating on how ordinary people might begin to approximate it, rather than on describing the details of the state itself. (Indeed, as c. 49 suggests, one could reasonably think that the latter sort of description might actually get in the way of the former effort.)

Even when looked at sympathetically, the Stoic view has a number of features that are open to objections, as was pointed out by critics in antiquity and since. (1) For one thing, it has seemed to many that the Stoic belief in determinism raises problems, essentially the same problems familiar from present-day discussions of determinism. It is held, for example, that determinism is incompatible with ordinary notions of moral responsibility, and with the possibility of praise and blame. It is also held that if determinism is true, then there is no point in anyone's making any effort to do anything or to accomplish any goals. The Stoics maintained that these objections could be met, and indeed many philosophers nowadays agree (though many also do not) that determinism is in fact compatible with moral responsibility, and with the making of effort. Cicero's *De Fato* contains an account of Stoic views about this issue, though unfortunately not all of that work has come down to us. (2) Another objection to the Stoic view is that, given their position on what the ideal state is for a human being, they had to regard all particular states of the external world as "indifferent," i.e., neither good nor bad (see cc. 32 and 1), since the best state to be in was one of not being dissatisfied with any external state at all. This view has seemed paradoxical to some opponents, who have held that some external states of the world themselves have positive or negative value. For example, some philosophers have believed that it is better if people increase each other's happiness than if they do not, or better if the world is beautiful than if it is not—and such philosophers have found it implausible to maintain, with the Stoics, that such states of the external world are neither good nor bad. (3) In another way, too, opponents have seen a difficulty in the Stoic contention that external states are "indifferent." For such a contention might make it seem senseless, once again, to put any effort into doing anything to affect the external world, if nothing of genuine value could thereby be produced. The Stoics, however, generally denied that their view made ordinary human efforts pointless, and tried to explain how one might simultaneously both (a) regard all external states of affairs as indifferent, and (b) engage in efforts and actions as human beings ordinarily do. There is room for disagreement over how successful their explanation was. The reader of Epictetus' *Handbook* will

perhaps see in it a tension over this very issue. On the one side, he denies that anything not "up to us" is of value; but on the other side, although he presses us to accept this idea, he does not recommend that we refrain completely from all normal human efforts. The reader will find it interesting to ask whether there really is a conflict here. (4) A further difficulty resembles the previous two, but is perhaps even more acute. The Stoics apparently regarded as "indifferent" not only states that are plainly external to one's consciousness, but also many states of consciousness as well, including such feelings as pleasures and pains, to which most people are strongly inclined to assign some value or the contrary. On the Stoic view, these states are part of what is determined by the organization of the cosmos, and so are to be regarded as unchangeable and not appropriately to be desired to be otherwise than they are. Very roughly, if one feels a pain, then no matter how intense or severe it is, one is ideally supposed to be able to adopt the attitude that, given one's understanding of the organization of the cosmos, the pain really does not *matter*—that is, it is not really appropriately wished otherwise. Hedonists will obviously disagree, but one does not have to be an out-and-out hedonist to feel that there is something difficult to accept in this view. It seems to involve a dissociation of one's judgments of value from one's normal affective responses, and even from one's normal responses to those responses. It is rather difficult, and many would say impossible, to regard this dissociation as a part of an ideal human condition, or even perhaps of a conceivable one. The Stoic reaction was generally to emphasize that what they were describing was very much an ideal, and not a state that many or even any actual people have attained or can even imagine attaining, but this reaction has not always been felt to be satisfactory.

In spite of the possibility of these objections, the Stoic view has been felt to have strength arising from a number of considerations. One is that, as a matter of psychological fact, we often do find ourselves able to bear discomfort or pain apparently because of the thought that after all, the pain is not really important in the overall scheme of things. However one may be inclined to explain this phenomenon, it is not hard to see why the Stoics would have been tempted to extrapolate from it, to the conclusion than an ideal state would involve looking at all events in the world in this way. In addition, it is not inexplicable why they might have thought that this attitude could be maintained, as I have explained, by an understanding of the organization of the universe. There is something tempting in the idea, which has been taken very seriously by philosophers as considerable as Plato and Spinoza and Kant, that the way to judge matters of value correctly is by abstracting radically from all of the particularities of one's own situation, and looking at matters from a purely impersonal point of view. The Stoics pressed this line of thought strongly, and insisted not only that this was the standpoint to adopt in correctly judging matters of value, but also that doing so constituted the best state of an individual human being. Indeed, they maintained that the ideal state of a human being was divine, in the sense that it was the point of view that ought to be ascribed to a god. The Stoic idea of the ideal human condition, therefore, can be fairly well approximated by saying that it attributes to that condition many of the characteristics that many people attribute to God. This description of course raises questions about whether it can then be described as an ideal *human* condition, but at least it does indicate the line of thought that the Stoics were following.

It should be said at this point that there was within the Stoic movement, particularly during the Second and First Centuries B.C., an apparently strong tendency to qualify in some way this extreme account of the completely impersonal and non-self-referential character of the ideal viewpoint of the Stoic sage, and to suggest ways in which different people might aim at different ideals, each appropriate to one's own actual endowments and circumstances in life. This idea is particularly associated with the philosopher Panaetius (c. 185–105), some of whose views are expounded in Cicero's *De Officiis*. Panaetius especially emphasized the idea that the appropriate actions vary from circumstance to circumstance. It is not clear whether he thereby meant to be denying that there was a single, unitary ideal human condition, though some have taken him in this way. He may, for example, simply have been pointing to variations in the ways in which this ideal may be approximated, or variations in the ways in which a person in this single ideal condition might manifest it in action. If this is so, then he would, like Epictetus, have been emphasizing not the description of the Stoic ideal, but aspects of how to act in the condition in which one actually finds oneself. But it does appear that he, more than Epictetus, stressed the differences that might obtain among various people all aiming at the same ideal. For although Epictetus is concerned, as I have said, with giving advice to imperfect human beings, he tends to assume that generally speaking the same advice will do pretty well for all of us.

A word should be said about one of the better-known slogans of Stoic ethics, "Nothing is good except moral virtue," *nihil bonum nisi honestum*. It is misleading, especially when reading Epictetus, to think

of the Stoic ethical position as perfectly characterized by this saying, especially if it is taken in the way that we find natural. For the Stoics, early and late, identified living in accordance with virtue as living in accordance with nature, meaning by this the *telos* of human life that I have described in the first few pages of this introduction, and which is expressed in c. 8 of the *Handbook* (see, e.g., Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers*, VII. 87). Thus, in propounding the Greek sentence translated by, "Nothing is good except moral virtue," they were not expressing the view that we might express by that sentence, but rather the claim, which I have said is characteristic of their view, that nothing is of value except an attitude adapted to the natural organization of the cosmos. They believed, in fact, that a person having such an attitude would in general live in accordance with established moral standards (though they allowed exceptions). But their main point was not this, but rather the contention about the ideal state of a human being that I have described.

* * *

As I have implied, Epictetus' own view has some features that do and some features that do not reflect the strict Stoic view of the ideal condition of a human being. To a great extent, he is interested mainly in explaining to people, not how they should understand an ideal condition, but how they can make their own condition somewhat better than it is. For this purpose, he adopts the strategy of persuading them that they should adjust their desires and their attitudes toward them in certain ways, which seem largely to be ways of setting their sights lower, not expecting to have certain desires satisfied, and living with the idea that such desires were not worth satisfying anyway. In many situations, of course, this is a sensible strategy, and Epictetus' remarks are often interesting in that light. Epictetus himself was a slave during the earlier part of his life, and must have known something of what it was like to have no other strategy available. At the same time, however, his advice is heavily influenced by his belief in the earlier Stoic view of the ideal condition for a human being, and will be regarded by many as open to the same objections to which that earlier view is open.

We do not possess any works actually written by Epictetus. What we do have is four books of *Discourses* compiled by Flavius Arrianus, some fragments reported by others, and the *Handbook* or *Manual* or *Encheiridion* translated here, which is made up of extracts from the *Discourses*. It appears that Epictetus wrote nothing for publication, and that his activity was almost entirely as a teacher, mostly in Nicopolis on the northwest coast of Greece, after banishment from Rome by the emperor Domitian in A.D. 89 or 92. Someone who wants to get the flavor of his style and personality should read the *Discourses*, which reveal more about them than the highly condensed *Handbook*.

I have tried to translate the *Handbook*, in Oldfather's text, into a fairly straightforward sort of English, while staying quite close to the wording and phraseology of the Greek. Epictetus' style is not formal or ornate, but neither is it loose or easygoing; and although it is conversational and occasionally colloquial, it is the exact and careful colloquialism of the schoolteacher, with frequent use of verbal repetition to make its point clear and definite. The effect is inevitably a bit stiff, though not in a bad way, and although I have tried to keep the tone from being archaic, I have equally tried not to impose on it a casualness that would have been misleading.

This is not the place for a large bibliography, and so I shall merely indicate where the interested reader may start in order to find out more about Epictetus and Stoic philosophy. For alternative ways of translating the *Handbook*, one should look particularly at the version by Oldfather (London, 1928), which is printed in the Loeb Classical Library edition along with the *Discourses*. One should also look at the translation by Matheson (Oxford, 1916), which is reprinted in Jason L. Saunders, *Greek and Roman Philosophy after Aristotle* (New York, 1966). This book also contains a very useful brief selection of fragments of the earlier Stoics in translation, and is the best way now available for readers of English to read those fragments. For a general introduction to Stoic philosophy in its earlier form, one should read Ch. 4 of A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy* (New York, 1974); some later developments are discussed in Ch. 5. For brief accounts of the major Stoic philosophers, the most efficient course is to read the following articles in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York, 1967): "Zeno of Cytium" (c. 336–c. 265 B.C.); "Cleanthes" (c. 331–232); "Chrysippus" (c. 279–206); "Panaetius of Rhodes" (c. 185–c. 105); "Posidonius" (135–c. 51); "Seneca" (c. 5 B.C.–A.D. 65); "Epictetus" (c. 50–A.D. 130); "Marcus Aurelius Antoninus" (121–180). All of these articles give bibliographical information. Two recent collections of essays that give some idea of the range and interest of Stoic thought are A. A. Long, ed., *Problems in Stoicism* (London, 1971), and John M. Rist, ed. *The Stoics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1978). A recent collection of fragments of Stoic writings, translated into English, along with helpful

discussions of Stoic thought, is to be found in A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley 1987, *The Hellenistic Philosophers,* Vol. 1 (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press).

I am grateful to Professor Paul Woodruff for reading this translation and for making very helpful suggestions which led to its improvement. Of course, any remaining deficiencies are my responsibility.

Handbook of Epictetus

1. Some things are up to us and some are not up to us. Our opinions are up to us, and our impulses, desires, aversions—in short, whatever is our own doing. Our bodies are not up to us, nor are our possessions, our reputations, or our public offices, or, that is, whatever is not our own doing. The things that are up to us are by nature free, unhindered, and unimpeded; the things that are not up to us are weak, enslaved, hindered, not our own. So remember, if you think that things naturally enslaved are free or that things not your own are your own, you will be thwarted, miserable, and upset, and will blame both gods and men. But if you think that only what is yours is yours, and that what is not your own is, just as it is, not your own, then no one will ever coerce you, no one will hinder you, you will blame no one, you will not accuse anyone, you will not do a single thing unwillingly, you will have no enemies, and no one will harm you, because you will not be harmed at all.

As you aim for such great goals, remember that you must not undertake them by acting moderately,[1] but must let some things go completely and postpone others for the time being. But if you want both those great goals and also to hold public office and to be rich, then you may perhaps not get even the latter just because you aim at the former too; and you certainly will fail to get the former, which are the only things that yield freedom and happiness.[2]

1. This may mean simply that the proposed undertaking is difficult (Oldfather's translation suggests this), or it may mean (as I believe) that the aim cannot be achieved by the Aristotelian policy of pursuing a mean or middle course between extremes.

2. Epictetus recommends aiming to have one's state of mind in accord with nature, in the sense explained in the previous paragraph and in c. 8 (cf. Introd.). His point here is that if you aim for that and also simultaneously for certain "externals" like wealth, you will probably have neither and clearly will not have the former.

From the start, then, work on saying to each harsh appearance,[3] "You are an appearance, and not at all the thing that has the appearance." Then examine it and assess it by these yardsticks that you have, and first and foremost by whether it concerns the things that are up to us or the things that are not up to us. And if it is about one of the things that is not up to us, be ready to say, "You are nothing in relation to me."

2. Remember, what a desire proposes is that you gain what you desire, and what an aversion proposes is that you not fall into what you are averse to. Someone who fails to get what he desires is *un*fortunate, while someone who falls into what he is averse to has met *mis*fortune. So if you are averse only to what is against nature among the things that are up to you, then you will never fall into anything that you are averse to; but if you are averse to illness or death or poverty, you will meet misfortune. So detach your aversion from everything not up to us, and transfer it to what is against nature among the things that are up to us. And for the time being eliminate desire completely, since if you desire something that is not up to us, you are bound to be unfortunate, and at the same time none of the things that are up to us, which it would be good to desire, will be available to you. Make use only of impulse and its contrary, rejection,[4] though with reservation, lightly, and without straining.

3. In the case of everything attractive or useful or that you are fond of, remember to say just what sort of thing it is, beginning with the least little things. If you are fond of a jug, say "I am fond of a jug!" For then when it is broken you will not be upset. If you kiss your child or your wife, say that you are kissing a human being; for when it dies you will not be upset.

4. When you are about to undertake some action, remind yourself what sort of action it is. If you are going out for a bath, put before

3. The word "appearance" translates *phantasia*, which some translators render by "impression" or "presentation". An appearance is roughly the immediate experience of sense or feeling, which may or may not represent an external state of affairs. (The Stoics held, against the Sceptics, that some appearances self-evidently do represent external states of affairs correctly.)

4. Impulse and rejection (*hormē* and *aphormē*) are, in Stoic terms, natural and non-rational psychological movements, so to speak, that are respectively toward or away from external objects.

your mind what happens at baths—there are people who splash, people who jostle, people who are insulting, people who steal. And you will undertake the action more securely if from the start you say of it, "I want to take a bath and to keep my choices in accord with nature;" and likewise for each action. For that way if something happens to interfere with your bathing you will be ready to say, "Oh, well, I wanted not only this but also to keep my choices in accord with nature, and I cannot do that if I am annoyed with things that happen."

5. What upsets people is not things themselves but their judgments about the things. For example, death is nothing dreadful (or else it would have appeared dreadful to Socrates), but instead the judgment about death that it is dreadful—*that* is what is dreadful. So when we are thwarted or upset or distressed, let us never blame someone else but rather ourselves, that is, our own judgments. An uneducated person accuses others when he is doing badly; a partly educated person accuses himself, an educated person accuses neither someone else nor himself.

6. Do not be joyful about any superiority that is not your own. If the horse were to say joyfully, "I am beautiful," one could put up with it. But certainly you, when you say joyfully, "I have a beautiful horse," are joyful about the good of the horse. What, then, is your own? Your way of dealing with appearances. So whenever you are in accord with nature in your way of dealing with appearances, then be joyful, since then you are joyful about a good of your own.

7. On a voyage when your boat has anchored, if you want to get fresh water you may pick up a small shellfish and a vegetable by the way, but you must keep your mind fixed on the boat and look around frequently in case the captain calls. If he calls you must let all those other things go so that you will not be tied up and thrown on the ship like livestock. That is how it is in life too: if you are given a wife and a child instead of a vegetable and a small shellfish, that will not hinder you; but if the captain calls, let all those things go and run to the boat without turning back; and if you are old, do not even go very far from the boat, so that when the call comes you are not left behind.

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

9. Illness interferes with the body, not with one's faculty of choice,[5] unless that faculty of choice wishes it to. Lameness interferes with the limb, not with one's faculty of choice. Say this at each thing that happens to you, since you will find that it interferes with something else, not with you.

10. At each thing that happens to you, remember to turn to yourself and ask what capacity you have for dealing with it. If you see a beautiful boy or woman, you will find the capacity of self-control for that. If hardship comes to you, you will find endurance. If it is abuse, you will find patience. And if you become used to this, you will not be carried away by appearances.

11. Never say about anything, "I have lost it," but instead, "I have given it back." Did your child die? It was given back. Did your wife die? She was given back. "My land was taken." So this too was given back. "But the person who took it was bad!" How does the way the giver[6] asked for it back concern you? As long as he gives it, take care of it as something that is not your own, just as travelers treat an inn.

12. If you want to make progress,[7] give up all considerations like these: "If I neglect my property I will have nothing to live on," "If I do not punish my slave boy he will be bad." It is better to die of hunger with distress and fear gone than to live upset in the midst of plenty. It is better for the slave boy to be bad than for you to be in a bad state. Begin therefore with little things. A little oil is spilled, a little wine is stolen: say, "This is the price of tranquillity; this is the price of not being upset." Nothing comes for free. When you call the slave boy, keep in mind that he is capable of not paying attention, and even if he does pay attention he is capable of not doing any of the things that you want him to. But he is not in such a good position that your being upset or not depends on him.

5. "Faculty of choice" translates "*proairesis*", which designates a rational faculty of the soul (cf. n. 4).

6. The "giver" can be taken to be nature, or the natural order of the cosmos, or god, which the Stoics identified with each other.

7. "Making progress" (*prokoptein*) is the Stoic expression for movement in the direction of the ideal condition for a human being, embodied by the Stoic "sage" (cf. Introd. and c. 15, n.).

13. If you want to make progress, let people think you are a mindless fool about externals, and do not desire a reputation for knowing about them. If people think you amount to something, distrust yourself. Certainly it is not easy to be on guard both for one's choices to be in accord with nature and also for externals, and a person who concerns himself with the one will be bound to neglect the other.

14. You are foolish if you want your children and your wife and your friends to live forever, since you are wanting things to be up to you that are not up to you, and things to be yours that are not yours. You are stupid in the same way if you want your slave boy to be faultless, since you are wanting badness not to be badness but something else. But wanting not to fail to get what you desire—*this* you are capable of. A person's master is someone who has power over what he wants or does not want, either to obtain it or take it away. Whoever wants to be free, therefore, let him not want or avoid anything that is up to others. Otherwise he will necessarily be a slave.

15. Remember, you must behave as you do at a banquet. Something is passed around and comes to you: reach out your hand politely and take some. It goes by: do not hold it back. It has not arrived yet: do not stretch your desire out toward it, but wait until it comes to you. In the same way toward your children, in the same way toward your wife, in the same way toward public office, in the same way toward wealth, and you will be fit to share a banquet with the gods. But if when things are set in front of you, you do not take them but despise them, then you will not only share a banquet with the gods but also be a ruler along with them. For by acting in this way Diogenes and Heraclitus[8] and people like them were deservedly gods and were deservedly called gods.

16. When you see someone weeping in grief at the departure of his child or the loss of his property, take care not to be carried away by the appearance that the externals he is involved in are bad, and be ready to say immediately, "What weighs down on this man is not what has happened (since it does not weigh down on someone else), but his judgment about it." Do not hesitate, however, to sym-

8. Diogenes the Cynic (the one who with his lantern looked for an honest man) and Heraclitus of Ephesus, the presocratic philosopher, were along with Socrates and Zeno people whom the Stoics said might possibly have reached the perfect condition of being sages, which the Stoics took to be conceptually no different from the perfect condition of a god.

pathize with him verbally, and even to moan with him if the occasion arises; but be careful not to moan inwardly.

17. Remember that you are an actor in a play, which is as the playwright wants it to be: short if he wants it short, long if he wants it long. If he wants you to play a beggar, play even this part skillfully, or a cripple, or a public official, or a private citizen. What is yours is to play the assigned part well. But to choose it belongs to someone else.

18. When a raven gives an unfavorable sign by croaking,[9] do not be carried away by the appearance, but immediately draw a distinction to yourself and say, "None of these signs is for me, but only for my petty body or my petty property or my petty judgments or children or wife. For all signs are favorable if I wish, since it is up to me to be benefited by whichever of them turns out correct."

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

20. Remember that what is insulting is not the person who abuses you or hits you, but the judgment about them that they *are* insulting. So when someone irritates you be aware that what irritates you is your own belief. Most importantly, therefore, try not to be carried away by appearance, since if you once gain time and delay you will control yourself more easily.

21. Let death and exile and everything that is terrible appear before your eyes every day, especially death; and you will never have anything contemptible in your thoughts or crave anything excessively.

9. Most people in antiquity believed in fortune-telling of various kinds, involving bird-calls, the flight of birds, inspection of entrails, stars, and whatnot. Many Stoics, notably Chrysippus, believed in such things, not least because they saw in them manifestations of the order of the cosmos and the tight and intricate interconnections within it, and thus saw them as scientific rather than superstitious.

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

23. If it ever happens that you turn outward to want to please another person, certainly you have lost your plan of life. Be content therefore in everything to be a philosopher, and if you want to seem to be one, make yourself appear so to yourself, and you will be capable of it.

24. Do not be weighed down by the consideration, "I shall live without any honor, everywhere a nobody!" For if lack of honors is something bad, I cannot be in a bad state because of another person any more than I can be in a shameful one. It is not your task[10] to gain political office, or be invited to a banquet, is it? Not at all. How then is that a lack of honor? And how will you be a nobody everywhere, if you need to be a somebody only in things that are up to you—in which it is open to you to be of the greatest worth? "But your friends will be without help!" What do you mean, "without help?" Well, they will be without a little cash from you, and you will not make them Roman citizens. Who told you, then, that these things are up to you and not the business of someone else? Who can give to someone else what he does not have himself? "Get money," someone says, "so that we may have some." If I can get it while keeping self-respect and trustworthiness and high-mindedness, show me the way and I will get it. But if you demand that I lose the good things that are mine so that you may acquire things that are not good, see for yourselves how unfair and inconsiderate you are. Which do you want more, money or a self-respecting and trustworthy friend? Then help me more toward this, and do not expect me to do things that will make me lose these qualities. "But my country," he says, "will be without help, in so far as it depends on me!" Again, what sort of "help" is this? So it will not have porticos and baths by your efforts. What does that amount to? For it does not

10. The word translated "task" here and below is *ergon*, which might also be translated by "function."

have shoes because of the blacksmith or weapons because of the cobbler, but it is enough if each person fulfills his own task. And if you furnished for it another citizen who was trustworthy and self-respecting, would you in no way be helpful to it? "Yes, I would be." Then neither would you yourself be unhelpful to it. "Then what place," he says "will I have in the city?" The one you can have by preserving your trustworthiness and self-respect. And if while wanting to help it you throw away these things, what use will you be to it if you turn out shameless and untrustworthy?

25. Has someone been given greater honor than you at a banquet or in a greeting or by being brought in to give advice? If these things are good, you should be glad that he has got them. If they are bad, do not be angry that you did not get them. And remember, you cannot demand an equal share if you did not do the same things, with a view to getting things that are not up to us. For how can someone who does not hang around a person's door have an equal share with someone who does, or someone who does not escort him with someone who does, or someone who does not praise him with someone who does? You will be unjust and greedy, then, if you want to obtain these things for free when you have not paid the price for which they are bought. Well, what is the price of heads of lettuce? An obol, say. So if someone who has paid an obol takes the heads of lettuce, and you who do not pay do not take them, do not think that you are worse off than the one who did. For just as he has the lettuce, you have the obol that you did not pay. It is the same way in this case. You were not invited to someone's banquet? You did not give the host the price of the meal. He sells it for praise; he sells it for attention. Then give him the balance for which it is sold, if that is to your advantage. But you are greedy and stupid if you want both not to pay and also to take. Have you got nothing, then, in place of the meal? Indeed you do have something; you did not praise someone you did not wish to praise, and you did not have to put up with the people around his door.

26. It is possible to learn the will of nature from the things in which we do not differ from each other. For example, when someone else's little slave boy breaks his cup we are ready to say, "It's one of those things that just happen." Certainly, then, when your own cup is broken you should be just the way you were when the other person's was broken. Transfer the same idea to larger matters. Someone else's child is dead, or his wife. There is no one would not say, "It's the

lot of a human being." But when one's own dies, immediately it is, "Alas! Poor me!" But we should have remembered how we feel when we hear of the same thing about others.

27. Just as a target is not set up to be missed, in the same way nothing bad by nature happens in the world.[11]

28. If someone turned your body over to just any person who happened to meet you, you would be angry. But are you not ashamed that you turn over your own faculty of judgment to whoever happens along, so that if he abuses you it is upset and confused?

29. For each action, consider what leads up to it and what follows it, and approach it in the light of that. Otherwise you will come to it enthusiastically at first, since you have not borne in mind any of what will happen next, but later when difficulties turn up you will give up disgracefully. You want to win an Olympic victory? I do too, by the gods, since that is a fine thing. But consider what leads up to it and what follows it, and undertake the action in the light of that. You must be disciplined, keep a strict diet, stay away from cakes, train according to strict routine at a fixed time in heat and in cold, not drink cold water, not drink wine when you feel like it, and in general you must have turned yourself over to your trainer as to a doctor, and then in the contest "dig in,"[12] sometimes dislocate your hand, twist your ankle, swallow a lot of sand, sometimes be whipped, and, after all that, lose. Think about that and then undertake training, if you want to. Otherwise you will be behaving the way children do, who play wrestlers one time, gladiators another time, blow trumpets another time, then act a play. In this way you too are now an athlete, now a gladiator, then an orator, then a philosopher, yet you are nothing wholeheartedly, but like a monkey you mimic each sight that you see, and one thing after another is to your taste, since you do not undertake a thing after considering it from every side, but only randomly and half-heartedly.

In the same way when some people watch a philosopher and hear

11. According to the Stoic view, the universe as a whole is perfect (cf. Introd.), and everything in it has a place in its overall design, so that nothing can exist or occur that is bad in its relation to that overall design.

12. Nobody knows just what this expression means in this context.

one speaking like Euphrates[13] (though after all who can speak like him?), they want to be philosophers themselves. Just you consider, as a human being, what sort of thing it is; then inspect your own nature and whether you can bear it. You want to do the pentathlon, or to wrestle? Look at your arms, your thighs, inspect your loins. Different people are naturally suited for different things. Do you think that if you do those things you can eat as you now do, drink as you now do, have the same likes and dislikes? You must go without sleep, put up with hardship, be away from your own people, be looked down on by a little slave boy, be laughed at by people who meet you, get the worse of it in everything, honor, public office, law course, every little thing. Think about whether you want to exchange these things for tranquillity, freedom, calm. If not, do not embrace philosophy, and do not like children be a philosopher at one time, later a tax-collector, then an orator, then a procurator of the emperor. These things do not go together. You must be one person, either good or bad. You must either work on your ruling principle,[14] or work on externals, practice the art either of what is inside or of what is outside, that is, play the role either of a philosopher or of a non-philosopher.

30. Appropriate actions[15] are in general measured by relationships. He is a father: that entails taking care of him, yielding to him in everything, putting up with him when he abuses you or strikes you. "But he is a bad father." Does nature then determine that you have a good father? No, only that you have a father.[16] "My brother has done me wrong." Then keep your place in relation to him; do not consider his action, but instead consider what you can do to bring

13. Euphrates was a Stoic lecturer noted for his eloquence.

14. The "ruling principle" (or "governing principle"), the *hēgemonikon*, in the rather complicated psychological theory adopted by the Stoics, is that central part of the soul that can understand what is good and decide to act on that understanding. Cf. c. 38, n.

15. "Appropriate actions" are *kathēkonta*, which Cicero called *officia*, and are in English translations often called "duties," though the notion is actually somewhat different from that of duty. They are the actions that are of a type generally in accord with nature, or with a particular sort of person's place in it.

16. The idea here is, roughly, that there are certain relationships of affinity established by the natural order, and that having a father represents one of them, but that having a good father is not entailed by it.

your own faculty of choice[17] into accord with nature. Another person will not do you harm unless you wish it; you will be harmed at just that time at which you take yourself to be harmed. In this way, then, you will discover the appropriate actions to expect from a neighbor, from a citizen, from a general, if you are in the habit of looking at relationships.

31. The most important aspect of piety toward the gods is certainly both to have correct beliefs about them, as beings that arrange the universe well and justly, and to set yourself to obey them and acquiesce in everything that happens and to follow it willingly, as something brought to completion by the best judgment. For in this way you will never blame the gods or accuse them of neglecting you. And this piety is impossible unless you detach the good and the bad from what is not up to us and attach it exclusively to what is up to us, because if you think that any of what is not up to us is good or bad, then when you fail to get what you want and fall into what you do not want, you will be bound to blame and hate those who cause this. For every animal by nature flees and turns away from things that are harmful and from what causes them, and pursues and admires things that are beneficial and what causes them. There is therefore no way for a person who thinks he is being harmed to enjoy what he thinks is harming him, just as it is impossible to enjoy the harm itself. Hence a son even abuses his father when the father does not give him a share of things that he thinks are good; and thinking that being a tyrant was a good thing is what made enemies of Polyneices and Eteocles.[18] This is why the farmer too abuses the gods, and the sailor, and the merchant, and those who have lost their wives and children. For wherever someone's advantage lies, there he also shows piety. So whoever takes care to have desires and aversions as one should also in the same instance takes care about being pious. And it is always appropriate to make libations and sacrifices and give firstfruits according to the custom of one's forefathers, in a manner that is pure and neither slovenly nor careless, nor indeed cheaply nor beyond one's means.

32. When you make use of fortune-telling, remember that you do

17. Cf. c. 9, n. 5.

18. The story of the conflict between the brothers Polyneices and Eteocles is best known to modern readers from Sophocles' tragedy, *Antigone*.

not know what will turn out and have gone to the fortune-teller to find out, but that if you really are a philosopher you have gone already knowing what sort of thing it is. For if it is one of the things that is not up to us, it is bound to be neither good nor bad. Therefore do not bring desire or aversion to the fortune-teller and do not approach him trembling but instead realizing that everything that turns out is indifferent[19] and nothing in relation to you, and that whatever sort of thing it may be, you will be able to deal with it well and no one will hinder that. So go confidently to the gods as advisers, and thereafter when some particular advice has been given to you remember who your advisers are and whom you will be disregarding if you disobey. Approach fortune-telling as Socrates thought a person should, in cases where the whole consideration has reference to the outcome, and no resource is available from reason or any other technique to find out about the matter. So, when it is necessary to share a danger with a friend or with your country, do not use fortune-telling about whether you should share the danger. For if the fortune-teller says that the omens are unfavorable, clearly death is signified or the injury of a part of your body or exile. But reason chooses to stand by your friend and to share danger with your country even under these conditions. For this reason pay attention to the greater fortune-teller, Pythian Apollo, who threw out of the temple the man who did not help his brother when he was being murdered.[20]

33. Set up right now a certain character and pattern for yourself which you will preserve when you are by yourself and when you are with people. Be silent for the most part, or say what you have to in a few words. Speak rarely, when the occasion requires speaking, but not about just any topic that comes up, not about gladiators, horse-races, athletes, eating or drinking—the things that always come up; and especially if it is about people, talk without blaming or praising or comparing. Divert by your own talk, if you can, the talk of those with you to something appropriate. If you happen to be stranded among strangers, do not talk. Do not laugh a great deal or at a great many things or unrestrainedly. Refuse to swear oaths, altogether if possible, or otherwise as circumstances allow. Avoid banquets given

19. Things that are "indifferent" in the Stoic view are all things that are external and not up to oneself (cf. c. 1, e.g., and Introd.).

20. The idea is that one does not need a fortune-teller to tell one whether one should defend one's country or one's friends, and that this fact was recognized by the oracle of Apollo at Delphi.

by those outside philosophy. But if the appropriate occasion arises, take great care not to slide into their ways, since certainly if a person's companion is dirty the person who spends time with him, even if he happens to be clean, is bound to become dirty too. Take what has to do with the body to the point of bare need, such as food, drink, clothing, house, household slaves, and cut out everything that is for reputation or luxury. As for sex stay pure as far as possible before marriage, and if you have it do only what is allowable. But do not be angry or censorious toward those who do engage in it, and do not always be making an exhibition of the fact that you do not.

If someone reports back to you that so-and-so is saying bad things about you, do not reply to them but answer, "Obviously he didn't know my other bad characteristics, since otherwise he wouldn't just have mentioned these."

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

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

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

In your conversations stay away from making frequent and longwinded mention of what you have done and the dangers that you have been in, since it is not as pleasant for others to hear about what has happened to you as it is for you to remember your own dangers.

Stay away from raising a laugh, since this manner slips easily into vulgarity and at the same time is liable to lessen your neighbors' respect for you. It is also risky to fall into foul language. So when anything like that occurs, if a good opportunity arises, go so far as to criticize the person who has done it, and otherwise by staying silent and blushing and frowning you will show that you are displeased by what has been said.

34. Whenever you encounter some kind of apparent pleasure, be on guard, as in the case of other appearances, not to be carried away by it, but let the thing wait for you and allow yourself to delay. Then bring before your mind two times, both the time when you enjoy the pleasure and the time when after enjoying it you later regret it and berate yourself; and set against these the way you will be pleased and will praise yourself if you refrain from it. But if the right occasion appears for you to undertake the action, pay attention so that you will not be overcome by its attractiveness and pleasantness and seductiveness, and set against it how much better it is to be conscious of having won this victory against it.

35. When you do something that you determine is to be done, never try not to be seen doing it, even if most people are likely to think something bad about it. If you are not doing it rightly, avoid the act itself; if you are doing it rightly, why do you fear those who will criticize you wrongly?

36. Just as the propositions "It is day" and "It is night" have their full value when disjoined [*sc.*, in "It is day *or* it is night"] but have negative value when conjoined [*sc.*, in "It is day *and* it is night"], in the same way, granted that taking the larger portion has value for one's body, it has negative value for preserving the fellowship of a banquet in the way one should.[21] So when you eat with another, remember not merely to see the value for your body of what lies in front of you, but also to preserve your respect for your host.

37. If you undertake some role beyond your capacity, you both disgrace yourself by taking it and also thereby neglect the role that you were unable to take.

21. Very roughly, the idea is that the value of an action has to be judged from all features of the context. The parallel is that, allegedly, whether a sentence is meaningful depends in a way on its context.

38. Just as in walking about you pay attention so as not to step on a nail or twist your foot, pay attention in the same way so as not to harm your ruling principle.[22] And if we are on guard about this in every action, we shall set about it more securely.

39. The measure of possessions for each person is the body, as the foot is of the shoe. So if you hold to this principle you will preserve the measure; but if you step beyond it, you will in the end be carried as if over a cliff; just as in the case of the shoe, if you go beyond the foot, you get a gilded shoe, and then a purple embroidered one. For there is no limit to a thing once it is beyond its measure.

40. Women are called ladies by men right after they are fourteen. And so when they see that they have nothing else except to go to bed with men, they begin to make themselves up and place all their hopes in that. It is therefore worthwhile to pay attention so that they are aware that they are honored for nothing other than appearing modest and self-respecting.

41. It shows lack of natural talent to spend time on what concerns the body, as in exercising a great deal, eating a great deal, drinking a great deal, moving one's bowels or copulating a great deal. Instead you must do these things in passing, but turn your whole attention toward your faculty of judgment.[23]

42. When someone acts badly toward you or speaks badly of you, remember that he does or says it in the belief that it is appropriate for him to do so. Accordingly he cannot follow what appears to you but only what appears to him, so that if things appear badly to him, he is harmed in as much as he has been deceived. For if someone thinks that a true conjunctive proposition[24] is false, the conjunction

22. Cf. c. 29, n.14.

23. Cf. c. 29, n.14. The claim is in effect that one should be concerned wholly with the state of the ruling part of one's soul, and not with external states of affairs or with those aspects of the soul, such as one's affective feelings or desires, that are directly dependent on external states of affairs. One can see here the Stoic view, which seems paradoxical to many, that one's feelings and non-rational desires are in a crucial sense external to one's true self (cf. c. 6 and Introd.).

24. Cf. c. 36. A proposition of this sort consists of two component propositions conjoined by "and".

is not harmed but rather the one who is deceived. Starting from these considerations you will be gentle with the person who abuses you. For you must say on each occasion, "That's how it seemed to him."

43. Everything has two handles, one by which it may be carried and the other not. If your brother acts unjustly toward you, do not take hold of it by this side, that he has acted unjustly (since this is the handle by which it may not be carried), but instead by this side, that he is your brother and was brought up with you, and you will be taking hold of it in the way that it can be carried.

44. These statements are not valid inferences: "I am richer than you; therefore I am superior to you", or "I am more eloquent than you; therefore I am superior to you." But rather these are valid: "I am richer than you; therefore my property is superior to yours", or "I am more eloquent than you; therefore my speaking is superior to yours." But you are identical neither with your property nor with your speaking.

45. Someone takes a bath quickly; do not say that he does it badly but that he does it quickly. Someone drinks a great deal of wine; do not say that he does it badly but that he does a great deal of it. For until you have discerned what his judgment was, how do you know whether he did it badly? In this way it will not turn out that you receive convincing appearances of some things but give assent to quite different ones.[25]

46. Never call yourself a philosopher and do not talk a great deal among non-philosophers about philosophical propositions, but do what follows from them. For example, at a banquet do not say how a person ought to eat, but eat as a person ought to. Remember that Socrates had so completely put aside ostentation that people actually went to him when they wanted to be introduced to philosophers, and he took them.[26] He was that tolerant of being overlooked. And if talk about philosophical propositions arises among non-philosophers,

25. A "convincing appearance" is a *kataleptike phantasia*, the sort of appearance that according to the Stoics is a self-evidently correct representation of the way things actually are (cf. n. 3). "Assent" is *synkatathesis*. Correct assent would of course be assent to self-evidently correct appearances. The line of thought here is, however, quite compressed, and the student will find it a difficult exercize to explain it.

26. The allusion is perhaps to the events in the early part of Plato's *Protagoras*.

for the most part be silent, since there is a great danger of your spewing out what you have not digested. And when someone says to you that you know nothing and you are not hurt by it, then you know that you are making a start at your task. Sheep do not show how much they have eaten by bringing the feed to the shepherds, but they digest the food inside themselves, and outside themselves they bear wool and milk. So in your case likewise do not display propositions to non-philosophers but instead the actions that come from the propositions when they are digested.

47. When you have become adapted to living cheaply as far as your body is concerned, do not make a show of it, and if you drink water do not say at every opening that you drink water. If you wish to train yourself to hardship, do it for yourself and not for those outside. Do not throw your arms around statues.[27] Instead, when you are terribly thirsty, take cold water into your mouth, and spit it out, and do not tell anyone about it.

48. The position and character of a non-philosopher: he never looks for benefit or harm to come from himself but from things outside. The position and character of a philosopher: he looks for all benefit and harm to come from himself.

Signs of someone's making progress: he censures no one; he praises no one; he blames no one; he never talks about himself as a person who amounts to something or knows something. When he is thwarted or prevented in something, he accuses himself. And if someone praises him he laughs to himself at the person who has praised him; and if someone censures him he does not respond. He goes around like an invalid, careful not to move any of his parts that are healing before they have become firm. He has kept off all desire from himself, and he has transferred all aversion onto what is against nature among the things that are up to us. His impulses toward everything are diminished. If he seems foolish or ignorant, he does not care. In a single phrase, he is on guard against himself as an enemy lying in wait.

49. When someone acts grand because he understands and can

27. According to a story in Diog. Laert. 6.23, Diogenes the Cynic did this nude in cold weather, to toughen himself. But the statues were outdoors, and Diogenes was a bit of a show-off (but cf. n. 8).

expound the works of Chrysippus,[28] say to yourself, "If Chrysippus had not written unclearly, this man would have nothing to be proud of."

But what do *I* want? To learn to understand nature and follow it. So I try to find out who explains it. And I hear that Chrysippus does, and I go to him. But I do not understand the things that he has written, so I try to find the person who explains them. Up to this point there is nothing grand. But when I do find someone who explains them, what remains is to carry out what has been conveyed to me. This alone is grand. But if I am impressed by the explaining itself, what have I done but ended up a grammarian instead of a philosopher—except that I am explaining Chrysippus instead of Homer. Instead, when someone says to me, "Read me some Chrysippus," I turn red when I cannot exhibit actions that are similar to his words and in harmony with them.

50. Abide by whatever task is set before you as if it were a law, and as if you would be committing sacrilege if you went against it. But pay no attention to whatever anyone says about you, since that falls outside what is yours.

51. How long do you put off thinking yourself worthy of the best things, and never going against the definitive capacity of reason?[29] You have received the philosophical propositions that you ought to agree to and you have agreed to them. Then what sort of teacher are you still waiting for, that you put off improving yourself until he comes? You are not a boy any more, but already a full-grown man. If you now neglect things and are lazy and are always making delay after delay and set one day after another as the day for paying attention to yourself, then without realizing it you will make no progress but will end up a non-philosopher all through life and death. So decide now that you are worthy of living as a full-grown man who is making progress, and make everything that seems best be a law that you cannot go against. And if you meet with any hardship or anything pleasant or reputable or disreputable, then remember that the contest is *now* and the Olympic games are *now* and you cannot put things off any more and that your progress is made or destroyed by a single day and a single action. Socrates became fully

28. On Chrysippus, see the Introduction.

29. In brief, the capacity of reason here is that of distinguishing different things from each other and defining them.

perfect in this way, by not paying attention to anything but his reason in everything that he met with. You, even if you are not yet Socrates, ought to live as someone wanting to be Socrates.

52. The first and most necessary aspect of philosophy is that of dealing with philosophical propositions, such as "not to hold to falsehood." The second is that of demonstrations, for example, "Must one not hold to falsehood?" The third is that of the confirmation and articulation of these, for example, "Why is this a demonstration? What is demonstration? What is entailment? What is conflict? What is truth? What is falsity?" Therefore the third is necessary because of the second, and the second because of the first; but the most necessary, and the one where one must rest, is the first. We, however, do it backwards, since we spend time in the third and all of our effort goes into it, and we neglect the first completely. Therefore we hold to falsehood, but we are ready to explain how it is demonstrated that one must not hold to falsehood.

53. On every occasion you must have these thoughts ready:

> Lead me, Zeus, and you too, Destiny,
> Wherever I am assigned by you;
> I'll follow and not hesitate,
> But even if I do not wish to,
> Because I'm bad, I'll follow anyway.
>
> Whoever has complied well with necessity
> Is counted wise by us, and understands divine affairs.
>
> Well, Crito, if it is pleasing to the gods this way, then let it
> happen this way.
>
> Anytus and Meletus can kill me, but they can't harm me.[30]

30. These four bits of poetry have the following origins. The first is by Cleanthes, who was head of the Stoic school at Athens between Zeno and Chrysippus. The second is a fragment of Euripides (fr. 965 Nauck). The third is Plato, *Crito* 43d, and the fourth is Plato, *Apology* 30c–d (slightly modified as compared with our manuscript texts), both purporting to be quotations from Socrates (cf. n. 8).