Reading / EN

What is within my reach?

Epictetus · Enchiridion · Handbook

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What is within my reach?

Judgement, influence and the next deliberate step. A guide to Epictetus' Handbook.

The starting idea

Epictetus distinguishes our judgements and actions from things such as reputation, possessions and other people's behaviour. His Handbook asks where we direct our efforts. This includes examining an impression before accepting it. This ancient perspective is an exercise in judgement. For our reading, the pause between noticing something and responding is especially useful.

Encheiridion §§ 1, 5, 20

An example: the unanswered message

Fictional example: you ask someone about a shared project. By evening, no reply has arrived. The observation is simply that there is no reply yet. You might immediately assume deliberate disregard. Other explanations remain possible: the person is busy or needs time. You can follow up politely and set a deadline for your own planning. That does not

determine whether a reply arrives in time. Making this distinction preserves room to act while taking your request seriously.

A practical distinction

For a small everyday situation, write down three areas: what can I do myself now, what can only be influenced together, and what cannot currently be changed? This three-part distinction is our contemporary exercise. Then write down one next step and the information you still lack. Later, check whether your first explanation still holds. Reading becomes a reviewable action rather than a demand to remain calm at every moment.

The limits of this guide

External conditions, power relations and unjust treatment remain real. Examining your attitude does not replace changing those conditions. A spontaneous feeling is not a moral defeat either. The editorial exercise aims to make the next possible step visible. It promises neither complete self-control nor an explanation that makes people responsible for everything that happens to them.

Questions

What did I actually observe?

What other explanation is possible?

What is my next reviewable step?

About this edition

An independent Bib editorial introduction to selected ideas from the work. Examples, exercises and the AdL reading are editorial additions. The linked source editions are in English.

In the editorial AdL reading, the person, message and project are elements. Relations connect them; missing information forms part of the conditions. A follow-up can change what happens next. Feedback tests the first interpretation. This mapping is our application of the metamodel to the example.

Sources

Epictetus · Encheiridion · George Long
Encheiridion §§ 1, 5, 20

Epictetus · Enchiridion · Elizabeth Carter
§§ 1, 5, 20