

On Epictetus  
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Epictetus (50-135 AD) is the best-known philosopher associated with the orientation to living known as stoicism. I assume most people have a basic idea of what stoicism is about, and I won't attempt a shorthand definition of it in this opening paragraph; I think it best to let readers define it for themselves as they read through the many Epictetus quotes included in this thought. Epictetus' name is pronounced in a couple ways --I've decided on Epic-TEE-tus. He was born a slave in what is now Turkey and granted his freedom by his master in 69 AD, which was shortly after the death of the Roman emperor Nero. After studying with Stoic teachers, Epictetus set up his own school in Rome until he was banished along with most other philosophers by the Roman emperor Domitian in the year 89 AD. He then traveled to Nicopolis in Greece where he opened a school and taught philosophy through his lectures and life example until his death in 135 AD. Epictetus wrote nothing down, but one of his students, Flavius Arrianus (also known as Arrian) issued two books about his ideas compiled from lecture notes, *Discourses* and *Enchiridion* (check Amazon for these books as well as other writings about Epictetus).

Over the years, I've picked up bits and pieces about Epictetus and stoicism here and there. An example, prisoner of war and Medal of Honor winner James Stockton who was shot down over North Vietnam and held prisoner for seven-and-a-half years said Epictetus' thought helped him endure that experience. Artists who have integrated Epictetus' ideas into their work, so I've read, include the writers James Joyce, Tom Wolfe, and V. S. Naipaul, the poet John Berryman, and the playwright David Mamet. The prominent psychologist Albert Ellis said that his theory of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy was grounded in Epictetus. Overall, I've gotten the idea that you are in the know if you take to Epictetus.

I've tried reading books about Epictetus and stoicism, and while I got something out of them, I'd get bogged down and quit. The last week or so, though, I found a web site called Goodreads, which contains

fourteen pages of Epictetus quotes culled from various sources. <https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/13852.Epictetus> In this thought, I offer my commentaries on the Epictetus quotes in the Goodreads site that elicited responses from me (the great majority of them did). The format is an Epictetus quote—set in and in smaller type—and then my analytical and/or evaluative response to that quote. For me, all of this adds up to an attempt to find out what the Epictetus fascination is about and to figure out what I think about his ideas.

You can add your thinking to Epictetus' and mine by reacting to each quote/response with your own ideas. Besides any value that may come out of that process for you, I hope doing it in this instance will encourage you to have a conversation of sorts with everything you read or hear. Don't just take in uncritically what comes at you; speak back to it, as it were. Be a participant in the creation and assessment of knowledge and assertions about correct behavior, not just an audience for what others have concluded.

I've employed this quote/response format several times in this site, including in the first two thoughts I authored for the site, "On Foucault" (June, 2007) and "On Mishima" (July, 2007), and in the 2009 writing "Ralph Waldo Emerson on Self-Reliance." As I wrote my reactions to the Goodreads Epictetus material over three days in late January of 2017, I became increasingly taken by the similarity of my overall responses to Epictetus and Emerson. I recommend you read the 2009 Emerson writing when you are finished with this Epictetus thought.

So, Epictetus quotes followed by my responses. And again, add your own best thinking to these quote/response pairs.

There is only one way to happiness, and that is to cease worrying about things which are beyond the power or our will.

The absolute language here—*only one way* to happiness—doesn't set right with me. A way to happiness is to cease worrying, stewing, obsessing over things that are beyond one's control. But achieving happiness involves more than resolving the issue of what is and isn't beyond the

power of one's will—such as giving and receiving love, finding meaningful and gratifying work, getting into the best possible physical and mental health, and achieving peace of mind.

As for things that are beyond the power of our will, I'm trying to think of examples. It doesn't seem to me we are ever completely powerless. Even if we can't change a situation, most often we can leave it; go somewhere else, get away from it. And even if we can't change something or escape it, we can say "No" to it; we always have control of our posture, our bearing, in relation to our circumstance, which includes the people in it. Even if we are about to be burned at the stake and there is nothing we can do about it, we can stand tall and proud and say, or just reflect in our manner, "I don't agree with this, this isn't right, you aren't right. No." And that's power, and it has an impact on the world and on ourselves. To be sure, there are times when we have more and less power, and different kinds of power, and we ought to be in touch with reality enough to be aware of the limits of our efficacy. But--so it seems to me sitting here on this leather coach in my living room at this moment in time --we are never powerless. Our job is to identify our power and manifest it.

Man is not worried by real problems so much as by his imagined anxieties about real problems.

I'm not sure man is worried *more* about imagined than real problems. It's enough for me to conclude that, indeed, some of my worries aren't warranted, aren't grounded in reality, and it's a good idea to become aware of when that's what is going on. What complicates matters is that some worrying about imagined problems makes sense, like being careful where I walk alone late at night. Indeed, imagined anxieties can serve us. Don't ignore them; they may have lessons to teach you.

First say to yourself what you would be, and then do what you have to do.

Yes, imagine yourself being as you most prefer—in mind and body, in

relationships and accomplishments, in the totality of your existence—and then identify the best things you can think of to do that will move you in that direction, and then do them. There's no guarantee that you'll get where you want to go; none of us is omnipotent. But we have control of what we focus on in our lives, what we give priority and attend to, and we have control over our purposes, and our behavior, and our actions, and we can see how things turns out and, if necessary, change our focus, purposes, and behavior and see how that goes; and keep doing that for as long as we have the gift of energy (I'm finding mine waning with each passing year of old age) and life itself.

The key is to keep company only with people who uplift you, whose presence calls forth your best.

I'm near the end of a long life, and for one reason or another I've spent a lot of time in the company of people who neither uplifted me nor called forth my best. I spent my career in teaching, first at the secondary school level and then in universities; I retired last year. Especially for us sensitive types, teaching involves being around people--I'm referring to students--who are not there to build teachers up. In fact, many of them, and they are good at it, take it upon themselves to bring teachers down. It's not that students are malicious or malevolent; rather that's just the game that's on their table as they see it. A couple of books that get at what I'm talking about: John Updike's 1963 novel *The Centaur*, which in large part was based on his father, a teacher; and the recent book, 2016, by the writer Nicholson Baker, *Substitute*, which recounts his experience as a substitute teacher for a month. Teaching has many rewards, which are well documented. What isn't surfaced is the fact that teachers spend day after day, month after month, year after year, with students who view the class and the teacher as a target for derision and diminishment. That month in the classroom took its toll on Baker; imagine what five or ten or twenty years of it—or in my case, so help me, fifty years--will do to someone like, well, me.

How long are you going to wait before you demand the best for yourself and in no instance bypass the discriminations of reason? You have been given the principles that you ought to endorse, and you have endorsed them. What kind of teacher, then, are you still waiting for in order to refer your self-improvement to him? You are no longer a boy, but a full-grown man. If you are careless and lazy now and keep putting things off and always deferring the day after which you will attend to yourself, you will not notice that you are making no progress, but you will live and die as someone quite ordinary. From now on, then, resolve to live as a grown-up who is making progress, and make whatever you think best a law that you never set aside. And whenever you encounter anything that is difficult or pleasurable, or highly or lowly regarded, remember that the contest is now: you are at the Olympic Games, you cannot wait any longer, and that your progress is wrecked or preserved by a single day and a single event.

Our minds always chatter away at us: “Those things you have set out to do are great ideas, but not today, OK? Today it’s ESPN.com and a bag of pita chips. Tomorrow we’ll get right on to the task at hand--or better, since today’s Friday and the weekend’s coming up, we’ll start fresh Monday morning.” One of my challenges, I’m finding, is to answer back to my chattering mind: “I know you mean well by me, and yes, the bag of pita chips and ESPN.com would make things better for a while, and that’s easy to do, just sit here on the leather couch, and then I could take a nap. But then I’d feel really bad, stuffed and depressed, and I’d have to deal with the increasing number on the bathroom scale in the very near future, and, well, thank you very much, but I’ve got a limited number of days in my life, and I’ll feel better tomorrow if I do what I am very sure I ought to be doing today other than what you propose, so I’m going to do that.”

It's not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters.

The way I’d put it is that *both* what happens to you and how you react to it matters. So you have to give concerted attention to what is going on in your life as well as how you respond to it, and, to the extent that it’s needed and possible, alter both of those phenomena for the better. As in so much of life, it is not a matter of *either-or*, this or that, but rather *and*, this and that. I’m picking up that Epitetus might be either-or prone.

Other people's views and troubles can be contagious. Don't sabotage yourself by unwittingly adopting negative, unproductive attitudes through your associations with others.

So true. The challenge is to find that place in ourselves, call it the conscious self or witness, that can observe how we are mirroring the negative, harmful thoughts and ways of the people we are around, and change it for the better. This is part of the larger process of achieving personal autonomy. Of course, to the degree that it's possible, it's best to stay away from people who are negative and unproductive in their lives and get around their opposites.

Freedom is the only worthy goal in life. It is won by disregarding things that lie beyond our control.

I wouldn't put freedom at the top of the list of life's goals. I'd put happiness, fulfillment, honor, decency, and integrity above freedom. I see freedom—in the sense of the absence of restraint—as an allowing condition that supports the pursuit of these higher ends. To me, true freedom is the power, the wherewithal, to identify what's truly worthwhile to achieve in one's life at any point in time and then to proceed effectively toward making that a reality. That is to say, freedom is a means to an end—living well—rather than an end in itself.

People are not disturbed by things, but by the views they take of them.

Here again, I'd say that people are disturbed by both things and their views of them. So attend to both, and where one or them needs changing, do your best to do that.

To accuse others for one's own misfortune is a sign of want of education. To accuse oneself shows that one's education has begun. To accuse neither oneself nor others shows that one's education is complete.

Sometimes accusing others for one's misfortune is justified. If somebody is unjust toward you, it makes sense to accuse them of harming you; you don't have to ignore or stay silent about that. And there are times your outlook and conduct warrants self-accusation. What really matters is

doing something positive both for yourself and others in the light of either reality. I think your education is complete when you are able to come to grips with reality, and then do what is wise in light of it.

I laugh at those who think they can damage me. They do not know who I am, they do not know what I think, they cannot even touch the things which are really mine and with which I live.

I want to do more than laugh at people who seek to damage me, because there is the possibility that those who seek to damage me will be effective at it. If the people who seek to damage me can't accomplish it, rather than laugh at them, which is giving them energy, I seek to give them indifference, no energy at all. If people who seek to damage me have the capacity to hurt me, or are actually hurting me, rather than laugh at them, I seek to thwart their efforts.

Attach yourself to what is spiritually superior, regardless of what other people think or do. Hold to your true aspirations no matter what is going on around you.

I don't know what the word "spiritually" adds to the first sentence. I seek to attach myself to what I deem superior regardless of what others may think and do, and yes, remain steadfast to that. But I wouldn't be as absolute as Epictetus and say you should do that no matter what. I can imagine giving in on my true aspirations, say when I either do that or lose my ability to sustain my existence and that of those I feel responsible for. Life is complicated; you have to know when to cave in as well as when to hold the line.

The greater the difficulty, the more glory in surmounting it. Skillful pilots gain their reputation from storms and tempests.

When things get tough, it helps to remind ourselves that if we keep plugging on in the face of it, up the line we will be proud of ourselves for doing so.

No man is free who is not master of himself.

Yes, our first challenge is self-control. I'm reminded of one of the very first professional writings I did, on Arnold Schwarzenegger no less. He said a big thing he had going for him in his life (besides a positive mental attitude and the willingness to work really hard) was that he could count on himself to do what he committed himself to do. If he said he was going to do something, he did it, period.

He is a wise man who does not grieve for the things which he has not, but rejoices for those which he has.

Again, I'm not so either-or as Epictetus seems to have the predilection to be. I'd say a wise man grieves for the truly good, valuable things he doesn't have (and uses that grief to generate work toward attaining them) as well as rejoices in what he already has and is grateful for it. These days, I find myself being grateful much more than I remember being in the past.

Caretake this moment. Immerse yourself in its particulars. Respond to this person, this challenge, this deed. Quit evasions. Stop giving yourself needless trouble. It is time to really live, to fully inhabit the situation you happen to be in now.

Yes, be in this moment, cherish it, make the most of it. But also be aware of its continuity with the past and the future. What is going on now came from somewhere and will lead to somewhere; don't lose sight of that and what it teaches about how to live in the present.

Do not try to seem wise to others.

I'd put it, just be yourself at your best, and if that's seen as wise, that's fine, and if it isn't, that's fine too.

A ship should not ride on a single anchor, nor life on a single hope.

Life is multi-dimensional. It's not just about a successful career. How many people do well at their work and feel empty at the end of the day? Life is about concurrently pursuing several hopes—in love and work and health and family and friendships—and since your time and energy are

limited, to think things through and get clear enough to pursue the ones that, at the end of life, will justify your feeling gratified that, yes, you made the best use of your opportunity to live.

Most of what passes for legitimate entertainment is inferior or foolish and only caters to or exploits people's weaknesses. Avoid being one of the mob who indulges in such pastimes. Your life is too short and you have important things to do. Be discriminating about what images and ideas you permit into your mind. If you yourself don't choose what thoughts and images you expose yourself to, someone else will, and their motives may not be the highest. It is the easiest thing in the world to slide imperceptibly into vulgarity. But there's no need for that to happen if you determine not to waste your time and attention on mindless pap.

If I had it to do over, I would have spent far less time with talk shows and football games than I did.

God has entrusted me with myself. No man is free who is not master of himself. A man should so live that his happiness shall depend as little as possible on external things. The world turns aside to let any man pass who knows where he is going.

I especially picked up on this last sentence. It's a benevolent universe; I really believe that. If you know where you are going, and truly intend to get there, the world will support you in reaching your destination.

If you would cure anger, do not feed it. Say to yourself: "I used to be angry every day; then every other day; now only every third or fourth day." When you reach thirty days offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the gods.

I think there is a time and place for every emotion—including being mad as hell. The trick is knowing the proper time and place for a particular emotion.

Know you not that a good man does nothing for appearance sake, but for the sake of having done right?

I do say to myself, “Do what’s right, not what’s going to make you look good; don’t play to the crowd.” But as you move forward that way, be willing to live with the crowd’s disapproval.

Asked, “Who is the rich man?” Epictetus replied, “He who is content.”

I can imagine someone realizing ten or twenty years up the line, “I was content with the life I lived back then, but ignorance was bliss; I sure wish I could have a do-over.” All to say, don’t trust contentment as the standard for a life well lived.

Remember, it is not enough to be hit or insulted to be harmed, you must believe that you are being harmed. If someone succeeds in provoking you, realize that your mind is complicit in the provocation. Which is why it is essential that we not respond impulsively to impressions; take a moment before reacting, and you will find it easier to maintain control.

It takes two to tango: both the abuser and the abused. We may not be able to stop the abuser, and no matter what we do, it may hurt us. But we can mitigate that hurt, and rob the abusers of whatever satisfaction they get from whatever they are doing to us, by standing tall and refusing to go along with what they are doing. By “going along,” I mean being diminished by it, and/or allowing it to deflect us from our true path in life.

So you wish to conquer in the Olympic Games, my friend? And I too. . . . But first mark the conditions and the consequences. You will have to put yourself under discipline; to eat by rule, to avoid cakes and sweetmeats; to take exercise at the appointed hour whether you like it or not, in cold and heat; to abstain from cold drinks and wine at your will. Then, in the conflict itself you are likely enough to dislocate your wrist or twist your ankle, to swallow a great deal of dust, to be severely thrashed, and after all of these things, to be defeated.

The body is our instrument for getting through life. We need to hone our body: diet, exercise, getting rid of habits that diminish our capacity, mental clarity (meditation, calmness; see the world, look at it, don’t turn away).

And no matter what we do, Epictetus has a point, we still might be defeated by our opponent. But even in that event, if we do our best, we'll feel good about ourselves.

No great thing is created suddenly.

Patience, persistence, seeing how a little thing done today and another little thing tomorrow, and tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow, adds up to a big thing.

Nothing is by its own nature calamitous--even death is terrible only if we fear it.

I don't think we will realize it when death comes. We will only know life. While we shouldn't fear death, as much as we are able to manage it—oblivion for eternity is a frightening prospect—we should be aware of death approaching, so that we will know to cherish life while we still have it.

Tentative efforts lead to tentative outcomes. Therefore, give yourself fully to your endeavors. Decide to construct your character through excellent actions and determine to pay the price of a worthy goal. The trials you encounter will introduce you to your strengths. Remain steadfast . . . and one day you will build something that endures, something worthy of your potential.

If you are going to do, DO it. To the extent you can, make whatever you do YES. Don't just watch the movie; WATCH the movie. Don't just look out for the ones you love and who need you; REALLY look out for them.

On the occasion of every accident that befalls you, remember to turn to yourself and inquire what power you have for turning it to use.

Try to make a gift of every hit in life. Use it to become better, more capable, more decent and generous and good, to more fully approximate a

human being in his or her most exemplary form.

As part of the universal city that is the universe, human beings have a duty of care to all fellow humans. The person who followed these precepts would achieve happiness.

I don't know that I have a responsibility to care for all human beings. But I do feel a responsibility to care for some particular human beings I could name, and I'm going to do my best with that, and not because it will make me happy, but rather because, now, very late in life, I am finally coming to understand what it means to be a human being.

Who are those people by whom you wish to be admired? Are they not these whom you are in the habit of saying that they are mad? What then? Do you wish to be admired by the mad?

I realize now that I have spent too much time trying to impress the wrong audience. The audience I should have been trying to impress in the past, and now, is myself in my very best manifestation.

Do not afflict others with anything that you yourself would not wish to suffer.

The standard I believe best to apply to what I do to others isn't whether or not I would want that done to me but rather whether, by my highest insights and values, it is a worthwhile and decent thing to do.

When any person harms you, or speaks badly of you, remember that he acts or speaks from a supposition of what appears so to himself. Therefore, if he judges from a wrong appearance, you will say upon every occasion, "It seemed so to him."

What is true of me may not align with what others think or say about me. It's been a struggle for me to keep that in mind. If indeed I am what I am and not what others conclude I am, if I hold that firmly in mind, I won't feel compelled to chase after others' approbation in order to feel good

about myself.

Is freedom anything else than the right to live as we wish? Nothing else.

Freedom is being able to live as I wish. But even more, it is the opportunity to live as I truly am. As I think back on my life, I can identify times when I lived as I wished but, now I realize, I wasn't living as the person I am, and that's why, even though I didn't understand what the problem was, I wasn't happy.

Imagine for yourself a character, a model personality, whose example you determine to follow, in private as well as in public.

In his lengthy letter, which when published was called *De Profundis*, Oscar Wilde made the point that he couldn't get away with private transgressions, the one's no one else knew about, because he was an audience to himself, and even though no one else knew what he was doing, he did, and thus he couldn't escape his own self-disdain.

Don't live by your own rules, but in harmony with nature

There are rules of nature, of existence, and if we violate them, we pay a price. What we have worked up in our minds as being a good idea isn't going to work out well if it isn't in alignment with nature. Too often, when we do something that seems a good thing but really isn't, we conclude that where we went wrong was we didn't do that bad/dumb/unnatural (un-nature-able) thing well enough, and so we do more of it trying to do it better, and in the process make things even worse. If what we are doing isn't achieving good outcomes, we should give attention to whether we are operating contrary to nature's rules.

We must not believe the many, who say that only free people ought to be educated, but we should rather believe the philosophers who say that only the educated are free.

I've known a lot of people who have been enchained, not liberated, by their education. We need to distinguish true education from the training, indoctrination, mind management, and co-optation, which too often passes for it.

Never depend on the admiration of others. There is no strength in it. Personal merit cannot be derived from an external source. It is not to be found in your personal associations, nor can it be found in the regard of other people. It is a fact of life that other people, even people who love you, will not necessarily agree with your ideas, understand you, or share your enthusiasms. Grow up! Who cares what other people think about you!

I must admit that I care about what other people think about me. But I'm working on having other, higher, standards, to judge my worth.

The essence of philosophy is that a man should so live that his happiness shall depend as little as possible on external things.

I'm working on distinguishing what external things affect my happiness, and in what way and to what extent, so I'm not caught up chasing after an external thing that, even if I do attain it, turns out not to make me happy.

Your happiness depends on three things, all of which are within your power: your will, your ideas concerning the events in which you are involved, and the use you make of your ideas.

My three would be the areas of life you choose to focus on; your goals in those areas; and taking concerted action consistent with the accomplishment of those goals.

If you want to improve, you must be content to be thought foolish and stupid.

I doubt highly whether I will ever be content with appearing foolish or stupid. But in order to live my life rather than the one someone else

dictates, I have to be willing to endure, even celebrate, being viewed as foolish and stupid by some people.

Everyone's life is a warfare, and that long and various.

Life isn't to be equated with warfare, but there are times when it is necessary to go to war with others, and with circumstances, in order to live well. And yes, as I look back on life now, near the end, it has been long and various. People tell me life is short. I have experienced it as very long indeed. I hope I still, now in my seventies, have a ways yet to go.

Those who are well constituted in the body endure both heat and cold, and so those who are well constituted in the soul endure both anger and grief and excessive joy and the other affects.

That point again about the necessity to hone our instruments, our bodies, and our minds too, so that we can live honorably and well, in a way that is responsible to the gift of life we are given for the finite time we possess it.

Epictetus, being asked how a man should give pain to his enemy answered, "By preparing himself to live the best life that he can."

I would offer that, to the extent possible, don't bother trying to give pain to your enemy. Prepare yourself to live well as an end in itself.

Wherever I go it will be well with me, for it was well with me here, not on account of the place, but of my judgments which I shall carry away with me, for no one can deprive me of these; on the contrary, they alone are my property, and cannot be taken away, and to possess them suffices me wherever I am or whatever I do.

I think place matters. Try to get yourself in a place and with people who support you in being who you are at your truest and best.

As a man, casting off worn out garments takes new ones, so the dweller in the body, enters into ones that are new.

I think we can develop our bodies, enhance them, but I don't think we ever take on new ones. That child of three and six, and that young adult at twenty and thirty, that physical entity at forty and fifty and sixty and seventy and now seventy-six has always been the same—it's been me every step of the way, and it will always be me. I don't dwell in my body; I *am* my body. Even what I call my mind is my body, and it will cease to be when my body ceases to be. At the same time I value change and growth, I also acknowledge, and honor, my changelessness.

Keep the prospect of death, exile and all such apparent tragedies before you every day – especially death – and you will never have an abject thought, or desire anything to excess.

I think we are advised to live our lives with death sitting on our shoulders, as it were, with the constant awareness that this will end, so whatever we are going to do, we realize the need to get on with it.

What are we to do, then? To make the best of what lives within our power, and deal with everything as it comes.

Agreed.

When you do anything from a clear judgment that it ought to be done, never shrink from being seen to do it, even though the world should misunderstand it; for if you are not acting rightly, shun the action itself; if you are, why fear those who wrongly censure you?

There are good reasons to fear, or at least keep your eye on, those who might censor you. Because they could cost you your job, get your kids put down in school, get your supervisor to harass you or make sure you don't get that pay raise, cause your co-workers and friends to shun you, make you the subject of ridicule . . . oh, I'll stop here. These always-and-never rules to live by Epictetus hands out don't hold up in life as it is actually lived. You need to be savvy to get by in this world. Sometimes it's good to be seen doing something; and, depending on the situation, sometimes

you need to lay low.

If thy brother wrongs thee, remember not so much his wrongdoing,  
but more than ever that he is thy brother.

It sounds good to see everyone as my brother, but my long life has made it clear that most of my so-called brothers are indifferent to my existence, and some among them would blot me off the face of this earth if they thought they could get away with it. This is not going to play as well as Epictetus' high-minded advice, but my version of this idea would be to remember well others' wrongdoings and figure out how to keep them from doing it again, whatever that involves.

Freedom is not procured by a full enjoyment of what is desired, but by controlling the desire.

What's hitting me as I respond to these quotes is how often I have strong reservations about them, from seeing them as simplistic, sophomoric, to flat-out wrong. My take on this one is that a challenge in life is not to control desire but rather to determine what is to be desired, and obtaining it and then enjoying it to the fullest

Reading should serve the goal of attaining peace; if it doesn't make you peaceful, what good is it?

There are lots of good reasons to read besides attaining peace from it. To name three: to experience good art, to become more informed, and to have fun.

We are at the mercy of whoever wields authority over the things we either desire or detest. If you would be free, then, do not wish to have, or avoid, things that other people control, because then you must serve as their slave.

If they won't give you whatever it is you want and you think you absolutely have to have it, yes, you are under their thumb. But it seems to

me worth your while, if you think it's at all possible, to try to get whatever you want from them. If it turns out they aren't forthcoming, and you value your own autonomy highly (some people want to give it up because it seems that it would make life easier to let someone else be in charge of their existence), it would be a good idea to think seriously about getting distance between you and this person. Life comes down to making judgment calls taking into account the likely outcomes of various courses of action in light of your purposes rather than simply following rules to live by.

Do not get too attached to life for it is like a sailor's leave on the shore and at any time, the captain may sound the horn, calling you back to eternal darkness.

Just the opposite: attach to life with all you have, cherish the light, because the captain will, at some time, sound the horn calling you back to eternal darkness. The inevitability of death that leads Epictetus to advise not getting too attached to life leads me to advise that you embrace it completely.

It is a universal law—have no illusion—that every creature alive is attached to nothing so much as to its own self-interest.

I would give my life if it would save my daughter's, and there is nothing at all special about me.

There is no shame in making an honest effort.

Who ever said there was?

It is time to really live; to fully inhabit the situation you happen to be in now. You are not some disinterested bystander. Participate. Exert yourself.

One of the ironies of life is that, depending on the circumstance, most often the opposite of good thing is also a good thing. It is possible that

the best course of action is to do the opposite of what is advised here: back off, let it go, just be.

Nothing great comes into being all at once, for that is not the case even with a bunch of grapes or a fig. If you tell me now, "I want a fig," I'll reply, "That takes time."

Sometimes great things happen in a flash. The moment you look in the mirror and you're new, you've broken through. Or you ask for a fig and, right then, the person gives one to you.

You will do the greatest services to the state, if you shall raise not the roofs of the houses, but the souls of the citizens: for it is better that great souls should dwell in small houses than for mean slaves to lurk in great houses.

Do what you can do well and find gratifying to do. Perhaps you put roofs on houses. Perhaps you save souls. Both are needed in this world.

In life there are some things disagreeable and hard to bear.

Sometimes the truth isn't what we would like it to be; but in the long run if not the short term, it is better to live in reality than an appealing fantasy.

It is more necessary for the soul to be cured than the body, for it is better to die than to live badly.

Let's shoot for the ideal: to be cured in both the soul and the body, and to live well.

Control thy passions lest they take vengeance on thee."

If this means direct your passions so that with they serve you rather than take vengeance on you, I am in agreement. If it means, as I think it does, clamping down on your passions, living a passionless, or passion-limited, life, I'm not in accord with this advice.

So what oppresses and scares us? It is our own thoughts, obviously. What overwhelms people when they are about to leave friends, family, old haunts and their accustomed way of life? Thoughts.

But don't assume that your thoughts are arbitrary and not linked to reality. On balance, it may be best to leave friends, family, old haunts, and accustomed ways, but that doesn't mean that negative thoughts associated with doing that have no validity or are to be suppressed. Let them be there, just don't be controlled by them; do what is the right thing for you to do.

Be free from grief not through insensibility like the irrational animals, nor through want of thought like the foolish, but like a man of virtue by having reason as the consolation of grief.

To live fully is to accept grief as, in all likelihood, inevitable in a life fully engaged. Trying to be free of grief too often diminishes the amount of joy and love and rich and heightened experience and accomplishment in one's life.

No one is ever unhappy because of someone else.

It seems to me we have to get good at two things: the kind of detachment Epictetus talks about; and altering or stopping what people are doing that gets to us, or getting away from them. What we need in both cases, and something Epictetus doesn't give us, is a technology, a methodology, ways of going about it. I'm not up to going into any detail into this here, but I'll say three things briefly: First, get as healthy physically and mentally as you can. Anything that weakens you—a habit, addiction, mannerism, anything like that—get rid of it. And clean your room. I mean that literally. Get the space you live in, your house or apartment, whatever it is, spotless, and keep it that way. That provides a foundation of self-control and self-affirmation that empowers you in all you do. And third, check out a writing I did for this web site back in November of 2007 called

“On Victoria’s Dogs.” I like it a lot, and re-read in regularly.

If you wish your house to be well managed, imitate the Spartan Lycurgus. For he did not fence his city with walls, but fortified the inhabitants by virtue and preserved the city always free. So do not cast around your house a large court and raise high towers, but strengthen the dwellers by good will and fidelity and friendship, and then nothing harmful will enter it, not even if the whole band of wickedness shall array itself against it.

I’m for good will and fidelity and friendship, but I’m also for developing the capability when it’s called for to erect boundaries and being a bad-ass s.o.b.

The condition and characteristic of a philosopher is this: he expects all advantage and all harm from himself.

I can think of one philosopher who, if he came out of the clouds, and looked hard at reality would see that advantage and harm results from external circumstances as well as from yourself. You need to learn to be self-serving as well as other-serving; and you have to learn how to figure out circumstances in light of your needs and purposes, and then either alter those circumstances or get away from them and get to contexts that are supportive and uplifting to you.

Do not wait for the clapping of hands and shouts of praise to do good, but rather be a doer of good voluntarily and you will be beloved as much as the sun.

I like the idea of doing good because that is who you are, a doer of good, and not being dependent on other people cheerleading you on to do what’s right. Don’t expect to be beloved as much as the sun, however. In the world as it is, be prepared for goodness to be met with scorn, attack, and exclusion. The challenge in that case is to keep doing good anyway, and to be proud of yourself for doing it. Learn to be your own guide and critic; take that role away from other people.

As the material of the carpenter is wood, and that of statuary bronze,  
so the subject matter of the art of living is each person's own life.

We are all artists: our medium is ourselves and the way we conduct our lives. The mastery of that art is our challenge, and how well we accomplish that is our measure.

Anytus and Melitus may put me to death: to injure me is beyond their power.

If Anytus and Melitus sign my checks or are pointing a gun at me, I'd say they have the power to injure me.

If such be the will of God, so let it be.

I've lived a very long life. If there is a God at all, much less one with a will who cares enough about what's going with me to alter my circumstance, I've missed it. To each his own, but God isn't something, (or is it someone?) that I factor into my life's equation.

Remember that the door stands open. Be as children who, when they weary of the game, cry "I will play no more" and depart.

There are times in life when the best thing to do is cash in your chips and leave the table.

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

I'd change this sentence to read, "Don't expect that everything will come about as you wish, you aren't omnipotent; but if things turn out bad, try to make the disappointment and hurt as brief as possible. As quickly as you can, get back to the business of being calm and happy and productive now, and arranging things in a way that supports you in being calm and happy

and productive in the future.

If you choose, you are free.

We have to *earn* freedom; we have to put in the work to achieve it. I think we can choose to work toward becoming freer than we are. No matter how hard and well we work, we'll never be completely free. We are mortal and possess limited physical and mental capacity, and situations will always place restrictions upon us. We will diminish with time, and we will die. But within those limitations we can become freer than we would otherwise be, and that will provide the possibility of becoming a closer approximation of who we are at our best, and that really counts for something.

For I am not Eternity, but a human being—a part of the whole, as an hour is part of the day. I must come like the hour, and like the hour must pass!

Reading this, it hit me that I've never felt part of the whole. The whole is over there and I'm over here, always.

He who makes reasonable use of what has been granted to him by fortune, and bears misfortune in a noble spirit, deserves to be regarded as a good man.

The truth, that isn't what Epictetus said but rather my edit of what he said to make it what I wanted him to say. I'll try not to do that again.

You should be especially careful when associating with one of your former friends or acquaintances not to sink to their level; otherwise you will lose yourself.

Or anyway lose the version of myself that I most value.

Sickness is a problem for the body, not the mind — unless the mind decides that it is a problem. Lameness, too, is the body's problem, not the mind's. Say this to yourself whatever the circumstance and you will find without fail that the problem pertains to something else, not to you.

But my body is me, as much as my mind is. When my body has a problem, I have a problem. The best I can, I need to nurture my body.

Don't explain your philosophy. Embody it.

All these either-or declarations. Aren't there times when the thing to do is explain your philosophy, and doesn't Epictetus' own life illustrate that? He did a lot of explaining, and appropriately.

Whenever anyone criticizes or wrongs you, remember that they are only doing or saying what they think is right. They are guided by their own views, and their views may be misguided, or simply different from yours.

Sorry, I did it again, reworded what Epictetus said. I'm getting tired. How much longer is this project going to take?

It is unrealistic to expect people to see you as you see yourself.

I've never been realistic about this fact of life. I always assume that people will "get" me, especially if I explain and justify myself to them one more time. It rarely (or is it never) works.

You become what you give your attention to.

True. So pay close attention to what you are focusing upon in your life. Make a conscious effort to attend to what, at the end of your life, will support your saying, "Yes, I make good use of my chance at living."

It is always our choice whether or not we wish to pay the price for life's rewards. And often it is best for us not to pay the price, for the price might be our integrity.

There are no hard-and-fast rules in life. But now, nearing the end of life, I've decided that there'd better be a truly compelling reason—I mean,

*really* compelling—for me to compromise my integrity.

To admonish is better than to reproach, for admonition is mild and friendly, but reproach is harsh and insulting, and admonition corrects those who are doing wrong, but reproach only convicts them.

I can't say I understand this sentence; or perhaps I'm unwilling to expend the effort to understand it (it's late at night, and this thought has taken a long time to put together). But this quote does surface the issue of how best to tell someone that you don't approve of what they are doing, or to offer critique or criticism. My twelve-year-old recently asked me for my response to a story she is writing for school. How do I go about it? One way to approach this, I've decided, is to ask myself what I would want, and need, from someone about a story I had written.

Death is not dreadful or else it would have appeared dreadful to Socrates.

I've decided that death—in contrast to the realization that death is nearing—isn't dreadful, or anything else. It is nothing; and nothing, no thing, is a reality that is very hard to grasp.

Let silence be your general rule; or say only what is necessary and in few words.

There are times to speak few words or no words, and there are times—Dostoyevsky is an example—to speak many words. Do what your purposes and circumstance call for.

Who, then, is the invincible human being? One who can be disconcerted by nothing that lies outside the sphere of choice.

There is no such thing as an invincible human being—that is a contradiction in terms.

There is a time and place for diversion and amusements, but you

should never allow them to override your true purposes.

There is nothing I regret more than the vast amount of time I have devoted to watching strangers play with a ball.

Many people who have progressively lowered their personal standards in an attempt to win social acceptance and life's comforts bitterly resent those of philosophical bent who refuse to compromise their ideals and who seek to better themselves.

Just the opposite: people who have progressively lowered their personal standards in an attempt to win social approval admire (and yes, often, resent) those who haven't done that.

Don't put your purpose in one place and expect to see progress made somewhere else.

If you want something, devote your energies to consciously, purposefully, attaining it. Expect to get where you are heading.

He wants what he cannot have, and does not want what he can't refuse—and isn't aware of it.

I have spent too much time wanting what I couldn't, and shouldn't, have—and yes, I wasn't aware of it. However, I can't think of anything I couldn't, or can't now—refuse. The one power we always possess as long as we have life is the power to say no! (or no, no exclamation point, just a quiet, but firm, no). I realize that I'm repeating this point, but Epictetus keeps prompting it.

Don't concern yourself with other people's business.

These days, and I wish I had done it better earlier, I distinguish between what is and isn't my business.

If you like doing something, do it regularly; if you don't like doing

something, make a habit of doing something different.

I like hot fudge sundaes, but if I consumed them regularly, like every day, I don't think I would like them as much. If I don't like something, I could do something different; but another possibility is doing whatever it is a different way or with different people. The more I get into this exercise, the more I think Epictetus could have thought a little deeper about things. Life isn't as simple as he portrays it.

I must die; so must I die groaning too?

You may well die groaning, Epictetus, and there won't be a damned thing you can do about it.

The piety and devotion to the gods that the majority of people invoke is a lie devised by swindlers and con men.

I think the belief in gods is preposterous, but it's my impression that most people promoting it—priests, ministers, and so forth—aren't swindlers and con men. It looks to me as if they really believe in what they are selling. Which is not to say there aren't swindlers and con men in the religion business.

If they are wise, do not quarrel with them; if they are fools, ignore them.

Quarreling with people whether they are wise or not is usually a dead end. Ignoring fools seems like a good idea, though I haven't been very good at it.

When you find your direction, check to make sure that it is the right one.

If it *your* direction as opposed to *a* direction, and . . . ah, the hell with it, I'm running out of gas.

Those proficient praise no one, blame no one, and accuse no one.

I'm trying to figure out why the proficient don't do any of that. All three sound OK to me, but then again I'm not Epictetus the great philosopher.

People find particular things frightening; and it's when someone is able to threaten or entice us with those that the man himself becomes frightening.

If you do frightening things to people, and especially if you do *particular* frightening things to them (give me a minute to think of things that aren't particular), don't be surprised if people start seeing you as frightening, rather than, as you'd hoped, a warm, reassuring guy.

If a man has reported to you, that a certain person speaks ill of you, do not make any defense to what has been told you: but reply, "The man did not know the rest of my faults, for he would not have mentioned these only."

The word "masochist" just popped into my head.

Free is the person who lives as he wishes and cannot be coerced, impeded or compelled, whose impulses cannot be thwarted, who always gets what he desires and never has to experience what he would rather avoid.

You can't say that Epictetus didn't set high standards.

Freedom is not achieved by satisfying desire, but by eliminating it.

I thought you just said that freedom was always getting what you desired. Now you are saying it is not having any desires?

Whoever chafes at the conditions dealt by fate is unskilled in the art of life. Whoever bears them nobly and makes wise use of their results is a man who deserves to be considered good.

If good in this context means reasonable, sensible, I'll go with it.

Remember from now on, whenever something tends to make you unhappy, draw on this principle: "This is no misfortune; and bearing with it bravely is a blessing."

Misfortune exists, and is to be expected, and bearing it—confronting it and staying on course in one's life—is the mark of an admirable human being. If blessing in this sentence means gift, to oneself and others, yes, it is a blessing.

Restrict yourself to choice and refusal, and exercise them carefully, with discipline and detachment.

The way I'd put it: to a great extent life comes down to saying YES and NO. YES, NO, make that call, and then live accordingly.

Don't hope that events will turn out the way you want, welcome events in whichever way they happen: this is the path to peace.

I don't know that the path to peace is being hopeless, without hope. More, I think it is being hopeful; hope-full, full of hope. Epictetus' approach rings too much of inertia to me. After going through this exercise of responding to quotes, I'm concluding stoicism, while it has its merits, on the whole is unappealing to me. I contrast it with getting on with life with resolve and a song in your heart while there is still the opportunity to do so.

Faced with pain, you will discover the power of endurance. If you are insulted, you will discover patience. In time, you will grow to be confident that there is not a single impression that you will not have the moral means to tolerate.

Yes, make a gift of the hits in life. Use them; transmute them into something positive. See them as opportunities to become, and do, better than before.

Remember to act always as if you were at a symposium. When the food or drink comes around, reach out and take some politely. If it passes you by don't try to pull it back. And if it has not reached you yet, don't let your desire run ahead of you, be patient until your turn comes.

This comes off as seeing life as taking and not giving, passivity rather than initiative.

You will never have to experience defeat if you avoid contests whose outcome is outside your control.

It can be honorable to engage in contests even though they may prove to be outside your control. Also, a good way to expand your capabilities is to take on challenges at the outer limits of, or just beyond, your reach.

Disease is an impediment to the body, but not to the will, unless the will itself chooses. Lameness is an impediment to the leg, but not to the will.

If will means the capacity to keep plugging on, yes. If will includes being able to get things done, disease can indeed be an impediment. Life is not all about mind. It's also about matter. So attend to matter; in this case, your physical health.

You're not yet Socrates, but you can still live as if you want to be him.

I'm not trying to be Socrates. Socrates was who he was, and good for him, but I'm trying to be me. Learn from the examples of others, Socrates' included, be inspired by them (as well as learn from their shortcomings), but don't try to be them. Try to be the best possible version of yourself.

Whatever your mission, stick by it as if it were a law and you would be committing sacrilege to betray it. Pay no attention to whatever people might say; this no longer should influence you.

Stick with it as long as it's working for you. If whatever you are doing to accomplish your mission can be improved upon, change it to that. And yes, pay attention to people, don't ignore them; learn from everything, including the reactions of other people, in order to inform what you are doing. Paying attention to people doesn't necessarily mean being negatively affected by it.

I have learned to see that whatever comes about is nothing to me if it lies beyond the sphere of choice.

Here I go again. I'm trying to think of anything that is outside the sphere of choice. No matter what is going on, you can always stand tall or move to Des Moines. Those are choices, and they aren't trivial, pointless ones.

You're unable to make someone change his views, recognize that he is a child, and clap as he does whatever he does.

What was your life's work about, Epictetus, at your school, other than changing the views of people?

First to the universal principle I have spoken of. You must keep it at command, and without it neither sleep nor rise nor drink nor eat nor deal with men. The principle is that no one can control another's will, and that the will alone is the sphere of good and evil.

No one can control another's will? I think the examples of Adolph Hitler and Winston Churchill refute this assertion.

To me all omens are lucky, if I will. For whichever of these things happens, it is in my control to derive advantage from it."

I wouldn't say *all* omens are lucky. Blood in one's urine is not to be equated with winning at Bingo. And I don't hold to the idea that we have the control, in every instance, to take advantage of omens; but we do have it within our control to *try* to do that.

In short, we do not abandon any discipline for despair of ever being the best in it.

Being the best at something is how they sell football games on television and the Academy Award infomercials for the movie industry (“Who’s going to win? Tune in and see!”). In our lives, however, the challenge is to do our thing the best we can and leave it at that. Learn from the best, but don’t assume that you have to match or surpass them. Let them do what they do, and you do what you do.

What is stored away is ready at hand, to be sure, to be taken out and displayed whenever you wish, but you derive no benefit from it, except that of having the reputation of possessing it.

Don’t bother storing things up, like savings or an IRA? There is no benefit to those things beyond their effect on our reputation? Please. I’m sure glad I put money away for retirement while I had the chance.

We must consider what is the time for singing, what the time for play, and in whose presence; what will be unsuited to the occasion; whether our companions are to despise us, or we to despise ourselves; when to jest, and whom to mock at; and on what occasion to be conciliatory and to whom: in a word, how one ought to maintain one's character in society.

So important to work out consciously, articulately, what character means to you, and, moment to moment, decision by decision, choice by choice, action by action, do your best to live accordingly.

The first quality of all in Socrates, and the most characteristic, was that he never lost his temper in argument, never uttered anything abusive, never anything insolent, but bore abuse from others and quieted strife.

Sounds good, except the part about “bore abuse.” I don’t think we have to

put up with abuse from anyone for a second.

It is much better to die of hunger unhindered by grief and fear than to live affluently beset with worry, dread, suspicion and unchecked desire.”

If Epictetus means die of hunger literally here, I’d go with living affluently beset by worry and dread and the rest of it. I wonder if Epictetus ever got down to concrete reality when he was passing out advice. I can envision a pretty good life if the trade off for affluence—vacations in Monaco and a Porsche and private schools for your children—is worry, dread, and unchecked desire. For that matter, I’m wondering just what unchecked desires the affluent have; name a couple of them, Epictetus.

The husbandman deals with land; physicians and trainers with the body; the wise man with his own mind.

Aren’t there any wise physicians and body trainers?

Whoever then would be free, let him wish nothing, let him decline nothing, which depends on others; else he must necessarily be a slave.

To depend on others is to be a slave? Every time? How about depending on others who have shown themselves to be dependable? Don’t dependable people exist?

Remember that the divine order is intelligent and fundamentally good. Life is not a series of random, meaningless episodes, but an ordered, elegant whole that follows ultimately comprehensible laws.

Could it be that the order isn’t divine, and that it’s neither good nor bad, it just is; and that it isn’t ordered, and it isn’t elegant, and much of it will never make sense?

Never say of anything that I’ve lost it, only that I’ve given it back.

I lost my checkbook, and as far as I can tell, I really did lose it and it wasn't a matter of giving it back to anything or anybody. The only thing I have learned from this checkbook loss, so far anyway, is to be more careful with my checkbook.

Who is a friend?" Epictetus' answer was, "A second self (alter ego)."

Epictetus maybe had a lot of mirrors in his apartment.

Seek not that the things should happen as you wish, but wish the things which happen to be as they are, and you will have a tranquil flow of life.

I've thought it over, and I vote for seeking to make things turn out as I wish. I'll bear up with any downsides of that posture.

Asked, "Who is the rich man?" Epictetus replied, "He who is content."

I think a rich man is someone with lots and lots of money who is also content. I don't see any inherent incompatibility between money and contentment. In fact, based on the experience of growing up low-income, I'd go so far as to say that, most often, money actually contributes to contentment.

Don't wish to be a general, or a senator, or a consul, but to be free.

How about shooting to become a free general?

Life is composed of things other than books. It is as if an athlete, on entering the stadium, were to complain that he's not outside exercising. This was the goal of your exercise, of your weights, your practice ring and your training partners.

Epictetus sets up straw men. Who argues that life is composed of only

books? Also, isn't it possible, say in retirement, that someone's life could justifiably be centered around reading the classic books he didn't read while he was pursuing a career and raising a family?

I cannot call somebody "hard-working" knowing only that they read and write. Even if "all night long" is added, I cannot say it – not until I know the focus of all this energy.

How about a scholar/writer who works day and night? What focus might he or she have—name it, Epictetus—where you could legitimately say, "No, that person isn't hard-working."

You would be victor at the Olympic Games? You must live by rule, submit to diet, abstain from dainty meats, exercise your body at stated hours and in heat or in cold; drink no cold water nor wine. In a word, you must surrender yourself wholly to your trainer, as though to a physician.

To be victor at the Olympic Games, you have to work really, really, really hard—and be really, really, really blessed with talent. Don't overlook that second part.

Of all things, the greatest, and most important, and all embracing, is this society in which human beings and God are associated together. From this are derived the generative forces to which not only my father and grandfather owe their origin, but also all beings that are born and grow on the earth, and especially rational beings, since they alone are fitted by nature to enter into communion with the divine, being bound to God through reason.

If reason has led you to a belief in God, Epictetus, you are one up on me.

If a man assents to the doctrine that we are all sprung from God, and that God is the father of men, he would never have any ignoble or mean thoughts about himself. But if Caesar should adopt you, no one could endure your arrogance.

I think I have come across some Godly people who were ignoble and who had mean thoughts about themselves, as well as people who were followers of politicians, whether it be Barack Obama or Donald Trump, who weren't arrogant.

We cannot choose our external circumstances, but we can always choose how we respond to them.

As long as we can pack up the car and move to the next town, we can choose our external circumstances.

Consider when, on a voyage, that your ship is anchored. If you go on shore you may along the way amuse yourself by picking up a shellfish or an onion. However, your thoughts and attention ought to be bent towards the ship, waiting for the captain to call you on board. You must then immediately leave all these things; otherwise you will be thrown into the ship, bound neck and feet like a sheep. So it is with life. If you are given a wife or child, that is fine, if the captain calls, you must run to the ship, leaving them, and regarding none of them.

If I've learned one thing in my long life, it's that under no circumstance do you abandon the wife and kids, and there is a lot of pain and guilt around that realization.

What makes for freedom and fluency in the practice of writing? Knowledge of how to write. The same goes for the practice of playing an instrument. It follows that, in the conduct of life, there must be a science to living well.

Day after day, month after month, year after year, from the time I was five years old, and I was still going to school at 33 years old (my Ph.D program), and the subject of how to live well never came up.

All philosophy lies in two words, sustain and abstain."

Or what about these three words: pursue, abstain, and sustain.

Try to enjoy the great festival of life with other men.

We only have one shot at life; we might as well try to enjoy it, and both alone and with other men (which I'm assuming includes women).

Man should contemplate and understand a manner of life that is in harmony with Nature.

We are creatures in Nature, part of the natural order, and we are happiest if we live in accordance, in alignment, with that reality. Human beings have the tendency to come up with what sound to be good ideas about how to conduct their lives that in fact contradict the natural order, and their nature as biological entities, and sooner or later, and it's usually sooner, they pay heavy dues for it. And often they don't realize why: "I can't understand why this is happening to me." It's happening to you because what you are doing what sounds good, but it isn't true to who you are as an organism at a point in the evolutionary process.

And what else can I do, lame old man that I am, than sing the praise of God? If I were a nightingale, I would perform the work of a nightingale, and if I were a swan, that of a swan. But as it is, I am a rational being, and I must sing the praise of God.

I too am a lame old man. As a rational being, I praise the incredible gift of life, and more than that, the long life I have been blessed with. Today, I read that the Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey circus is closing up shop; no more touring circus with the animals and the jugglers and all. Reading that, I thought of my dear parents, gone so long now, I miss them so, who, really, only had each other and me. No money, no education, no status in the world, no car, no place to go, we never once took a vacation. But we had the circus. There we were up in the balcony, anonymous, no one knew or cared that we were there, me sitting between Mother and Dad, at the circus. I couldn't have gotten there without them; they took me. I

sing their praises, not God's. Thank you Mother and Dad.

This is my work, and I accomplish it, and I will never abandon my post for as long as it is granted to me to remain in it; and I invite all of you to join me in this same song.

Increasingly as I have grown more aware, my work has become being a responsible, decent human being. I'll sing that song the best I can until I die.