NOTES ON EPICTETUS’ *HANDBOOK*

Epictetus (Stoic philosopher, 50-130 CE):

1. **Concern yourself with what is up to you (i.e. what is your own)**
   - *Up to us:* opinions, impulses, desires/aversions (free, unhindered, unimpeded)
   - *Not up to us:* bodies, possessions, reputations, public office (weak, enslaved, hindered, not our own) (1)
   
   *Up to us:* our way of dealing with appearances (6)

   “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.” (8)

2. **Goal**
   - Dispassion (*apatheia*) (12)
   - Non-disturbance (*ataraxia*) (12)
   - Freedom (19: road to freedom: despising what is not up to us)

3. **Method**
   - At the start, *make it a practice* to say to each harsh appearance, ‘You are an appearance and not the thing that appears.’ Then, if the thing is one of the things up to us, concern yourself with it. If it is not, be ready to say, ‘You are nothing in relation to me.’ (1)

   When you act, say of your action ‘I want two things, not just one--both to do the act and to keep my choices in accord with nature’--so that if your action is interfered with you can say, ‘oh, well, I wanted not only to do the act but also to keep my choices in accord with nature, and I cannot do that if I am annoyed with what happens,’ that is, if I am concerned with something that is not up to me. (4)

4. **Improve yourself!**
   - Understanding a teaching is nothing grand. What is grand is to carry it out. (49)
   - Improve yourself! (51)