

**EPICLETUS. THE DISCOURSES  
AND MANUAL, TOGETHER  
WITH FRAGMENTS OF HIS  
WRITINGS, VOL. II**

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Epicetetus. The discourses and manual, together with fragments of his writings, Vol. II by P. E. Matheson

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**P. E. MATHESON**

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# EPICTETUS

## THE DISCOURSES AND MANUAL

TRANSLATED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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FELLOW AND TUTOR OF NEW COLLEGE

IN TWO VOLUMES

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## BOOK III

### CHAPTER I

#### *On Adornment.*

WHEN a young student of rhetoric came into his lecture-room with his hair elaborately arranged and paying great attention to his dress in general: 'Tell me, said he, do you not think that some dogs and horses are beautiful and some ugly, and is it not so with every creature?

Beauty varies in different creatures: it consists in the fulfilment of their nature.

'I think so', he said.

Is not the same true of men, some are beautiful, some ugly?

'Certainly.'

Now do we give the attribute 'beautiful' to each of them in their own<sup>1</sup> kind on the same grounds or on special grounds in each case? Listen and you will see what I mean. Since we see that a dog is born for one thing and a horse for another, and a nightingale, if you like to take that, for another, speaking generally one would not be giving an absurd opinion in saying that each of them was beautiful when it best fulfilled its nature; and since the nature of each is different, I think that each of them would be beautiful in a different way, would it not?

'Yes.'

So that what makes a dog beautiful makes a horse ugly, and what makes a horse beautiful makes a dog ugly, seeing that their natures are different?

'So it seems.'

Yes, for what makes a pancratiast<sup>2</sup> beautiful does not, I imagine, make a good wrestler, and makes a very ridiculous runner; and one who is beautiful for the pentathlon makes a very ugly appearance as a wrestler?

'True', he said.

What then makes a man beautiful if it is not that which in its kind makes dog and horse beautiful?

'It is just that', he said.

What then makes a dog beautiful? The presence of a dog's virtue. What makes a horse beautiful? The presence of a horse's virtue. What makes a man beautiful? Is it the presence of a man's virtue? Therefore, young man, if you would be beautiful, make this the object of your effort, human virtue. And what is human virtue? Consider whom you praise, when you praise men dispassionately; do you praise the just or the unjust?

Therefore,  
to attain  
beauty,  
you must  
pursue  
human  
virtue.

'The just.'

Do you praise the temperate or the intemperate?

'The temperate.'

The continent or the incontinent?

'The continent.'

Therefore if you make yourself such an one, be sure that you will make yourself beautiful, but as long as you neglect this you cannot help being ugly, though you should use every device to appear beautiful.

Epictetus, But beyond this I do not know what more to say to



you ; for, if I say what I think, I shall vex you and you will go out and perhaps never return, but if I say nothing, consider what my conduct will be then ; you come to me to get good, and I shall be refusing to do you good ; you come to me to consult a philosopher, and I shall be refusing you a philosopher's advice. Besides, it is cruelty towards you to leave you uncorrected.<sup>3</sup> If some day hereafter you come to your senses you will accuse me with good reason : ' What did Epictetus find in me, that when he saw me coming in to him in such a shameful state he should do nothing for me and say never a word to me ? Did he so utterly despair of me ? Was I not young ? Was I not fit to listen to discourse ? How many other young men make many mistakes like me in their youth ? I hear that one Polemo, who had been the most intemperate of young men, underwent such a wonderful change. Grant that he did not think I should be a Polemo ; he could have set my hair right, have taken away my bangles, have stopped me pulling my hairs out, but seeing that I had the aspect of—whom shall I say ?<sup>4</sup>—he said nothing.' I do not say whose aspect this is, but you will say it for yourself when you come to look into your own heart, and you will learn what it means and what sort of men they are who adopt it.

If hereafter you bring this charge against me, what defence shall I be able to make ?

Yes, but suppose I do speak, and he will not obey ?

Did Laius obey Apollo ? Did he not go away in his drunken stupor and dismiss the oracle from his mind ? What then ? Did Apollo withhold the truth from

if he does not speak out, may fairly be blamed hereafter.

It is no excuse to say that he would not have been listened to.

him for that reason? Indeed I do not know whether you will obey me or not, but Apollo knew most certainly that Laius would not obey, and yet he spoke. Why did he speak? Nay, why is he Apollo, why does he give oracles, why has he set himself in this position, to be a Prophet and a Fountain of truth, so that men from all the world come to him? Why is 'Know thyself' written up over his shrine, though no one understands it?

Socrates took no heed of this.

Did Socrates persuade all who came to him to attend to their characters? Not one in a thousand! Nevertheless when appointed to this post, as he says, by the ordinance of God, he refused to desert it. Nay, what did he say to his judges? 'If you acquit me', he says, 'on these terms, that I cease to do what I do now, I shall not accept your offer, nor give up my ways, but I shall go to any one I meet, young or old, and put to him these questions that I put now, and I shall question you my fellow citizens far more than any others because you are nearer akin to me.'

Are you so fussy and interfering, Socrates? What do you care what we do?

'What language to use! You are my fellow and kinsman, yet you neglect yourself and provide the city with a bad citizen, your kinsmen with a bad kinsman, and your neighbours with a bad neighbour!'

The philosopher is bound to take interest in men.

'Who are you, then?'

To this question it is a weighty answer to say, 'I am he who is bound to take interest in men.' For ordinary cattle dare not resist the lion;<sup>5</sup> but if the bull comes up to withstand him, say to him, if you think fit, 'Who are

you?' and 'What do you care?' Man! in every class of creatures nature produces some exceptional specimen; it is so among cattle, dogs, bees, horses. Do not say then to the exception, 'What are you then?' If you do, he will get a voice somehow and say, 'I am like the purple in a garment: do not require me to be like the rest, nor blame my nature, because it made me different from the rest.'

He is like the purple thread in a garment.

What then? Am I fit to play this part? How can I be? And are you fit to hear the truth? Would that it were so! Nevertheless since I am condemned, it seems, to wear a white beard and a cloak, and since you come to me as to a philosopher, I will not treat you cruelly as though I despaired of you, but will say, Young man, who is it that you want to make beautiful? First get to know who you are and then adorn yourself. You are a man, that is, a mortal creature which has the power to deal with impressions rationally. What does 'rationally' mean? Perfectly, and in accordance with nature. What then is your distinctive possession? Your animal nature? No. Your mortality? No. Your power to deal with impressions? No. Your reasoning faculty is the distinctive one: this you must adorn and make beautiful. Leave your hair to Him that formed it in accordance with His will. Tell me, what other names have you? Are you man or woman?

Adorn your reason, if you would attain to beauty.

'Man.'

Adorn Man then, not Woman. Woman is born smooth and tender, and if she has much hair on her body it is a prodigy, and exhibited in Rome as a prodigy. But in

Do not make a woman of yourself,