April Meeting Primer

An optional read-ahead and quick reference, about 10 minutes

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Guiding Question: What did this person do — and what have I added?

At the Meeting

- **Today's reading: Epictetus, *Enchiridion* 45**. We'll bring it into discussion question 1.
- **The shared case:** An interruption prompts a judgment about a colleague. Everyone can reason from these facts, whether or not they have done the weekly practice.

Before You Judge Someone

Someone interrupts you twice, and you think they have no respect for what you say. The interruptions happened. The conclusion about respect adds something you may have grounds to believe, but have you examined those grounds?

April begins the quarter on justice through the Discipline of Assent. We ask how we can judge people with fairness and understanding. A pattern matters when the evidence supports it. So do the limits of our knowledge about another person's intentions. We can judge conduct firmly while asking whether a label has turned that conduct into our whole account of the person.

The exercise brings those judgments into view. You can examine a motive, a verdict about what someone deserves, or a sweeping label. Give the claim the confidence its grounds warrant. Keep the person within the fairness you would expect a sound judgment to provide.

The readings offer different ways to understand that task. *For ancient texts, use any translation you like.*

Optional Reading (about 8 minutes)

1. **Epictetus, *Enchiridion* 45** (2 minutes) This is the passage we'll read together. What additional knowledge does Epictetus ask for before moving from a description to an evaluation?
2. **Epictetus, *Enchiridion* 43** (1 minute) Epictetus names a brother's injustice alongside their relationship. What other true and relevant consideration could help you judge a conflict more fully?
3. **Seneca, *On Anger* 1.9** (2 minutes) Seneca distinguishes a reasoned consequence from anger's desire to inflict it. What would make the same consequence serve justice or payback?
4. **Seneca, *Letters* 95.51–53** (3 minutes) How does shared human membership affect what fairness asks of us when we criticize someone's conduct?

Think About

The shared case is enough to participate. We explore reasons and alternatives before using the application steps.

- Where does describing the interruption become judging the person?
- What other true fact deserves a place beside the conduct?
- What fairness is still owed to someone whose conduct you rightly oppose?

Application at the Meeting

Application after discussion: Examine Your Impressions. Use the steps once to test the understanding developed together.

1. **Describe.** What did they do, and what have I added?
2. **Test.** What supports my judgment? What else is true and relevant?
3. **Keep it fair.** What can I conclude while keeping their claim to fairness in view?

Compare two judgments: “He repeatedly prevents people from finishing” and “Nothing anyone says matters to him.” Ask what grounds each would need. Use Describe → Test → Keep it fair once, then introduce the pattern if useful. Finish by asking what criticism remains justified and what wider claim should change.

The test is the accuracy, scope, and fairness of the judgment. A complaint or boundary can be mentioned, but performing it is not the measure of understanding.

Key Terms

For reference during the meeting. No need to memorize these.

Impression (*phantasia*). How something appears to you, often with a judgment already attached.

Assent (*synkatathesis*). Accepting what an impression presents as true. You can reconsider an assent you gave too quickly.

Bracketing. Separating what happened from the judgment you added. It makes the added claim available for examination.

Fair-mindedness. Giving relevant evidence its due, including evidence of wrongdoing and evidence that limits a conclusion.

Two Handles. Epictetus’s image for taking hold of a conflict through another true and relevant consideration. The second perspective can preserve an established wrong.

Payback. Wanting the offender to suffer in return. Examine this separately from reasons for protection, repair, or accountability.

Human community. The shared standing that gives us reason to judge people fairly even when their conduct deserves firm criticism.

The Discipline of Assent. Training what we accept, revise, reject, or leave unsettled. April’s question is *How can I judge other people with fairness and understanding?*