

# Enchiridion of Epictetus

By Epictetus

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5 46. Don't ever describe yourself as a philosopher or talk much among ordinary people about  
your philosophical principles; simply do what the principles prescribe. At a dinner party, for  
instance, don't discuss manners, just eat nicely. Keep in mind that Socrates was so unostenta-  
tious that people came to him when they wanted him to introduce them to philosophers, and he  
took them along, so little did he mind being unacknowledged himself. If the conversation turns  
to a philosophical point, stay mainly silent, since there's a great risk that you will immediately  
10 spew up what you haven't fully absorbed. When your silence is taken for ignorance and you  
don't react, then believe me, you have made a real start on the philosophical enterprise. Sheep  
don't show how much they have eaten by bringing their fodder to the shepherds; they digest it  
inside their bodies, and on the outside produce wool and milk. Don't then, in your case, show  
off your philosophical principles to ordinary people, but show the actions that come from them  
once the principles have been absorbed.