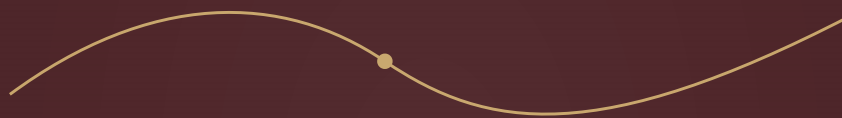


U N D E R C U R R E N T



The Human Question

A W R I T I N G B O O K F R O M A T H E N S T O R O M E

M M X X V I



EPHESUS · 5TH CENTURY BCE

The River

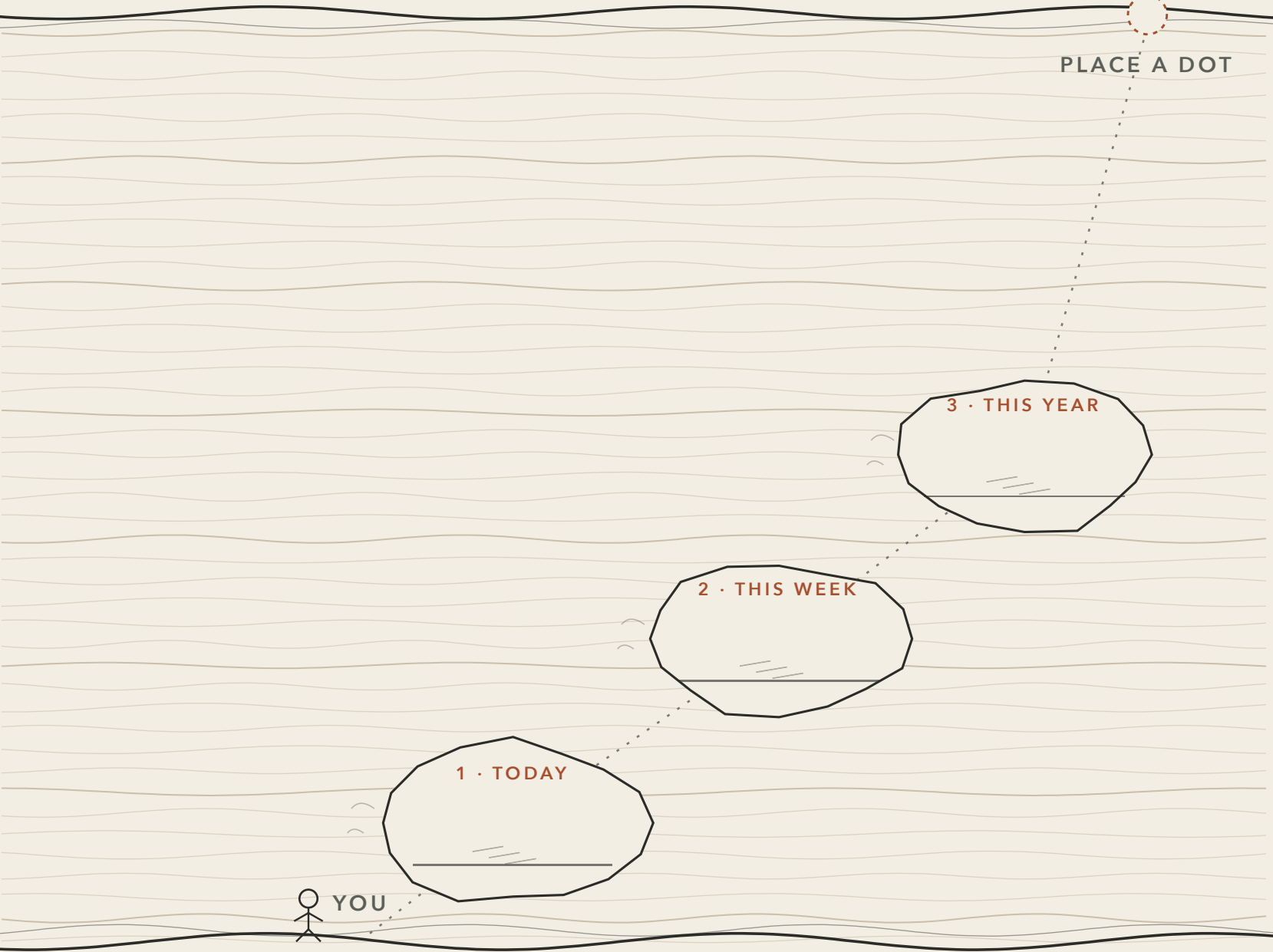
“ You cannot step twice into the same rivers; for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you.

Heraclitus, fr. 41-42 · Burnet, 1908

THE MOVE

Three stones to the far bank. On each, one word for something that changed — today, this week, this year. Start with today.

THE FAR BANK



THE NEAR BANK

FIG. 1 – THE RIVER, CROSSED ONCE

* Cross once. The water keeps moving.



MARONEIA → ATHENS · C. 325 BCE

The Loom and the Argument

THE MOVE

Four picks across the warp. One short line in each. The last pick is the one you say out loud.

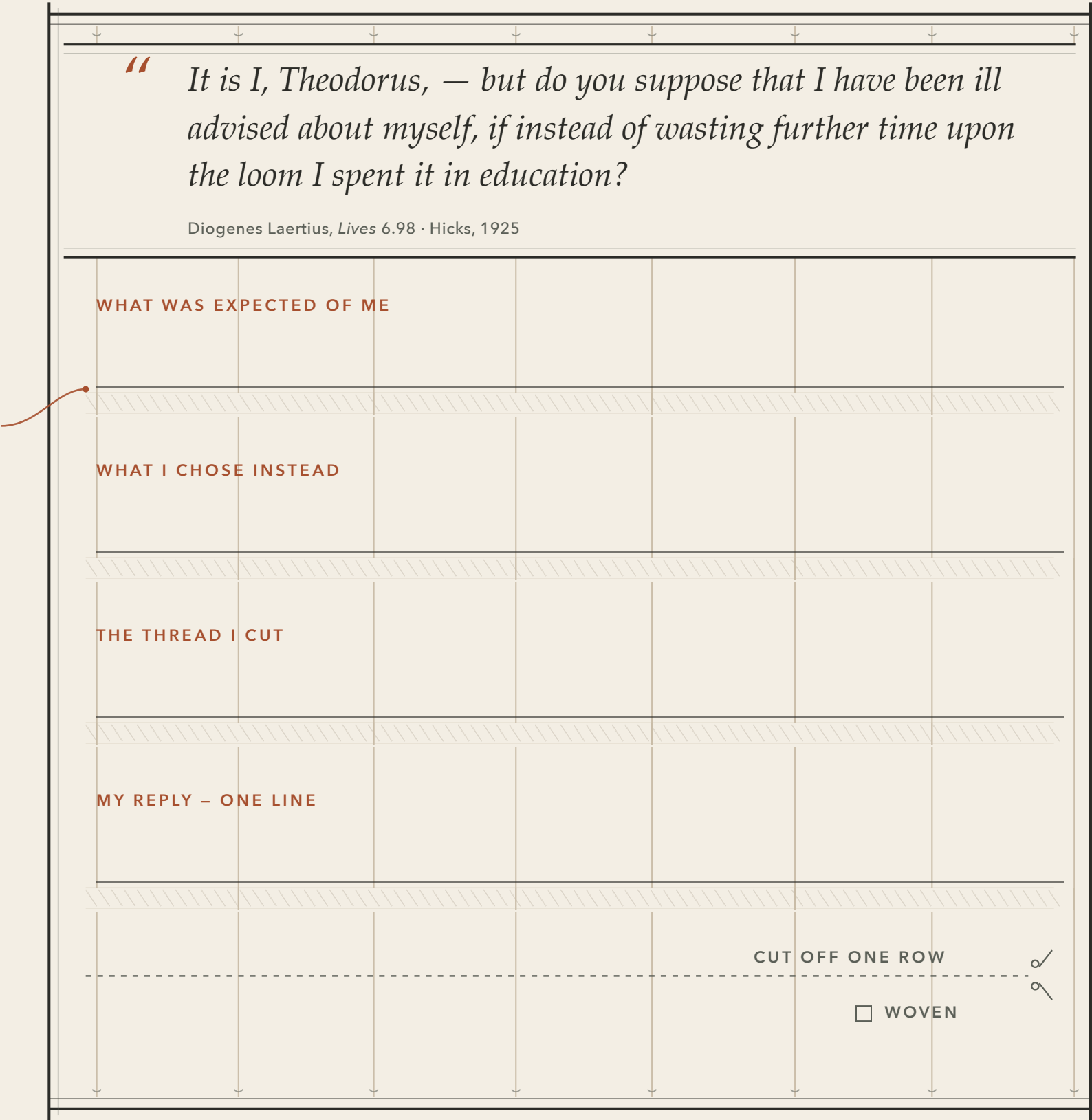


FIG. 2 – THE LOOM, FOUR PICKS

* Cut the thread. Say it once.

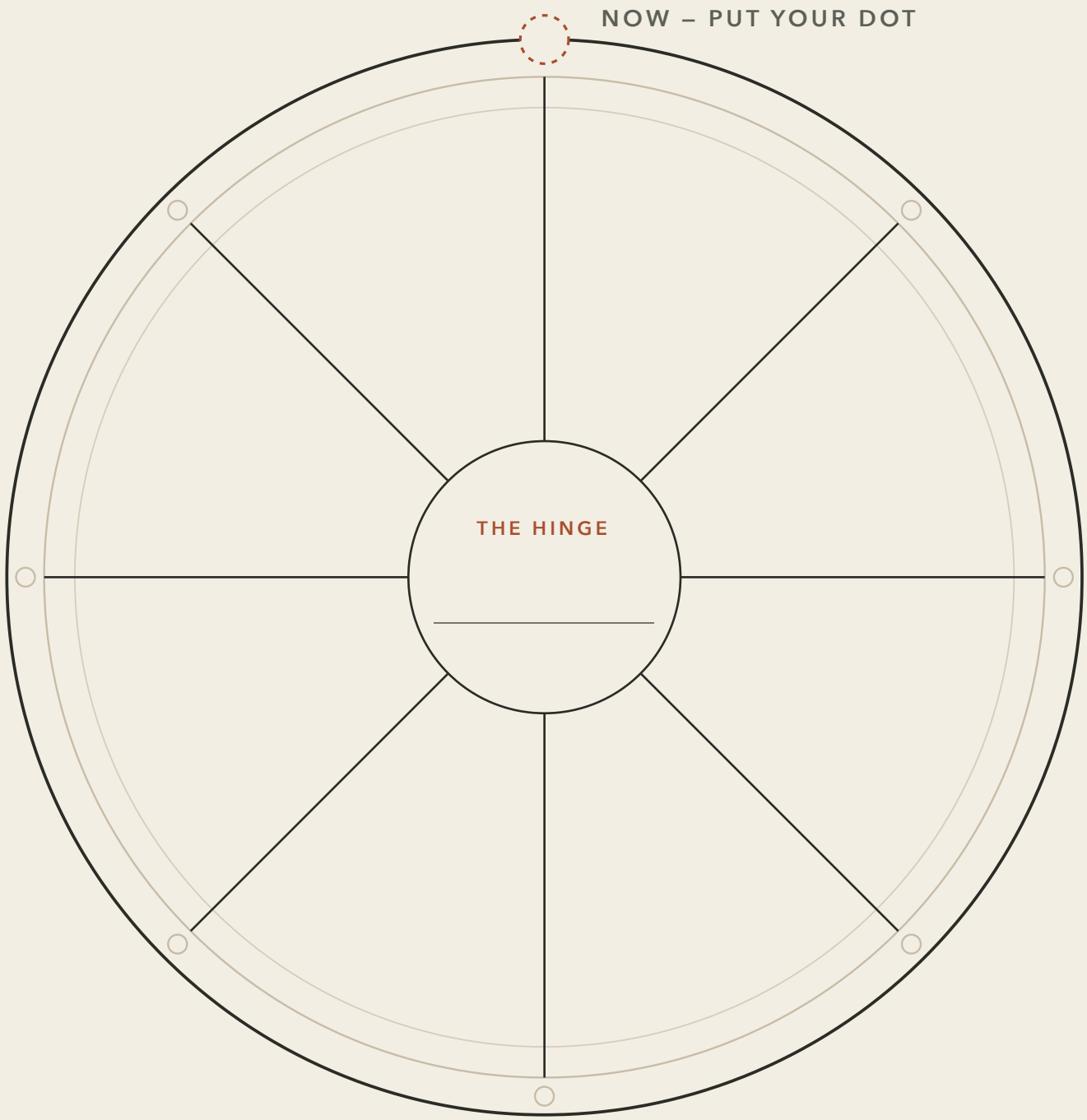


ROME · C. 524 CE

Fortune's Wheel

THE MOVE

Put a dot on the rim where you are now. Tick three spokes Fortune has turned. At the hinge, one word that does not turn.



So true is it that nothing is wretched, but thinking makes it so, and conversely every lot is happy if borne with equanimity.

Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* II.4 · James, 1897

* *The rim turns. Keep the centre.*



CHALCIS, SYRIA · C. 300 CE

The Prayer Ladder

“*For the consciousness of our own nothingness, when we compare ourselves with the Gods, causes us to betake ourselves spontaneously to suppliant prayer.*

Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries* I.15 · Taylor, 1895

THE MOVE

Five rungs, one line each. The fourth rung is a silence: tick it, and write nothing.

THE TOP

Place a dot when you stop climbing.

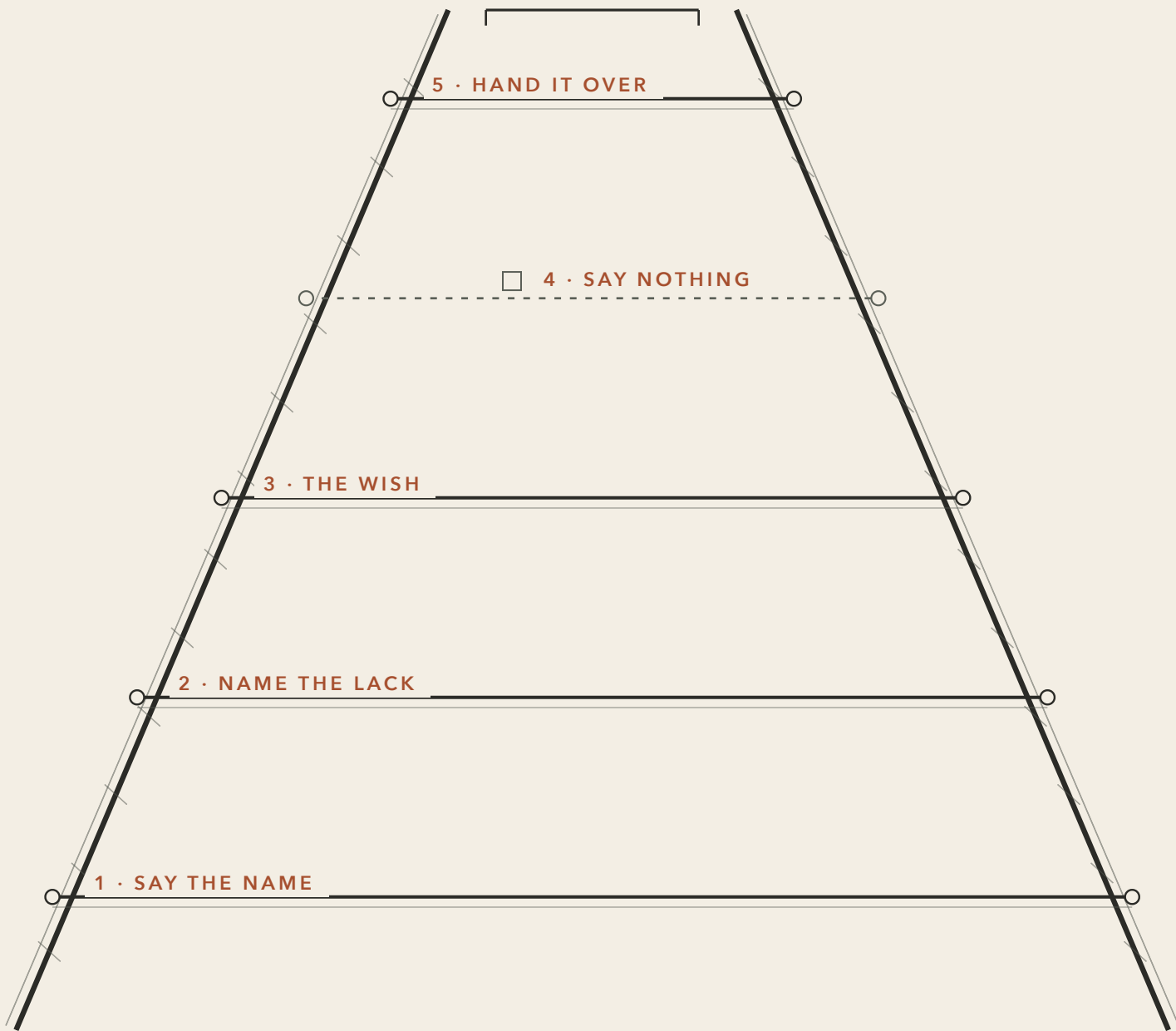


FIG. 4 – FIVE RUNGS, ONE LADDER

* *Climb down. The ladder stays.*



ROME · 1ST CENTURY CE

The Folded Letter

EVENING LETTER

TO BE READ ONCE

“ *What bad habit of yours have you cured to-day? what vice have you checked? in what respect are you better?* ”

Seneca, *Of Anger* 3.36 · Stewart, 1889

1 · THE HABIT I CURED TODAY

2 · THE VICE I CHECKED

3 · WHERE I AM BETTER

ONE SENTENCE TO CARRY TO TOMORROW

CLOSE THE DAY

☐ FOLDED TWICE

☐ SEAL PRESSED

☐ LAMP OUT

ADDRESS

my own tomorrow

FOLD HERE

S

fold the corners to the centre, then press the seal.

FIG. 5 – A LETTER, FOLDED TWICE

* *Put out the lamp. The page is sent.*

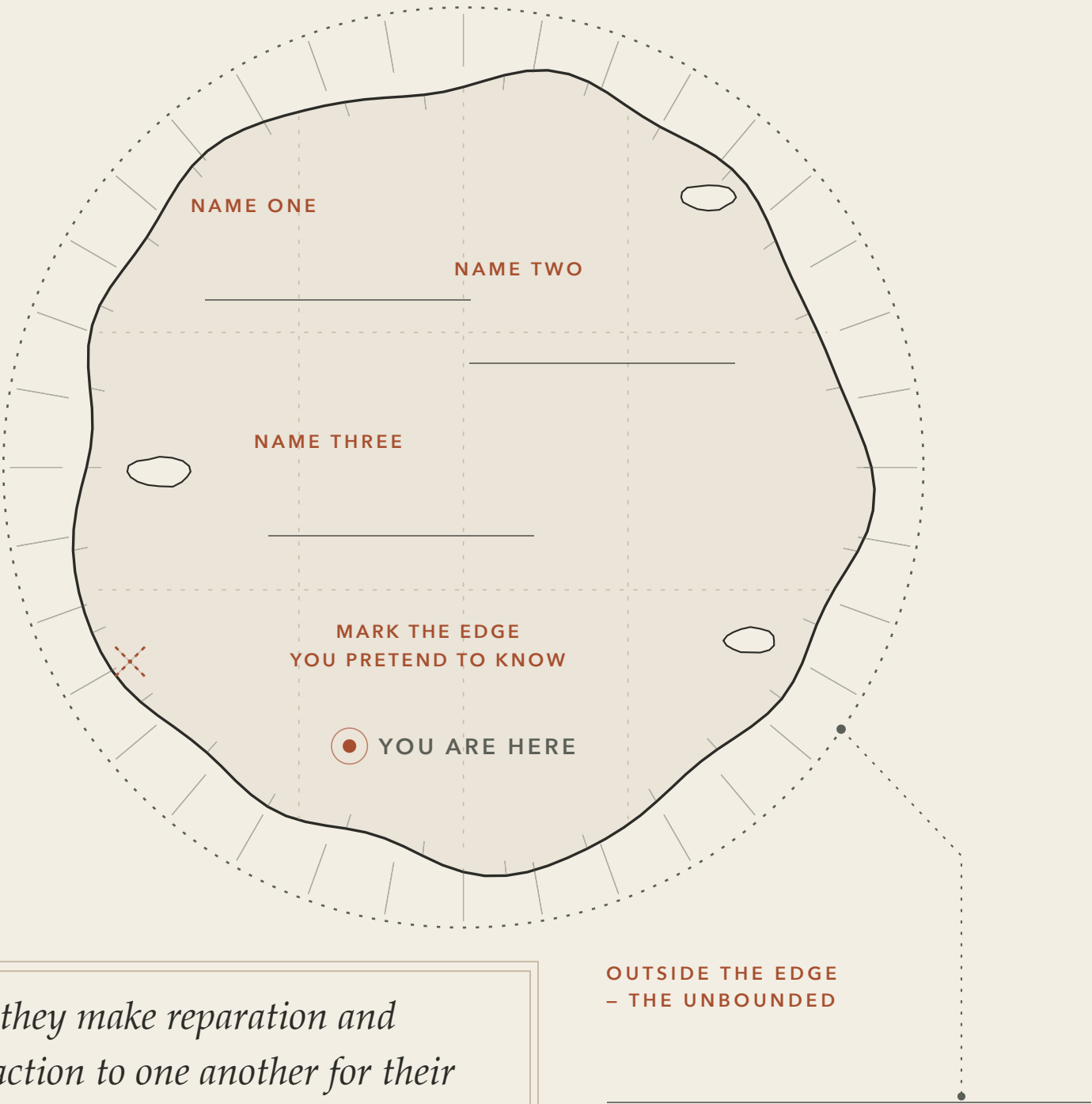


MILETUS · 6TH CENTURY BCE

The Edge of the Map

THE MOVE

Three names inside the circle. One thing you cannot name, outside. Then mark the edge you pretend to know.



“...for they make reparation and satisfaction to one another for their injustice according to the appointed time.

Anaximander, fr. 1 · Burnet, 1908

OUTSIDE THE EDGE
– THE UNBOUNDED

☐ EDGE MARKED

Diogenes Laertius says he was the first to draw the outline of land and sea, and to make a globe (*Lives* 2.2).

FIG. 6 – THE EDGE OF THE MAP

* Mark the edge. Leave the rest unlabelled.