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Meditation by Marcus Aurelius Written 167 AD Translation by George LongThe Meditation was divided into the following sections: Download: 238k text only version available for download. Meditation is perhaps the only document of its kind ever made. These are the personal thoughts of the most powerful person in the world, giving himself advice on how to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of his posts. Trained in stoic philosophy, Marcus Aurelius stopped almost every night to practice a series of spiritual exercises - reminders designed to make him humble, patient, empathetic, generous and strong in the face of everything he dealt with. It is inevitably readable and quite accessible. You can't read this book and not get away with a phrase or line that will be useful to you the next time you're in trouble. Read it, this practical philosophy is embodied. So, who is Marcus? Roman emperor from 161 to 180 BC Marcus practiced stoicism and wrote about his stoic practice in his diaries. It is worth remembering that Marcus is one of the most exemplary leaders in history and one worth emulating in our own lives. Matthew Arnold, an essayist, noticed in 1863 that in Marcus we find the man who held the tallest and most powerful station in the world, and the universal verdict of the people around him was that he proved he was worthy of it. Machiavelli considers the reign under Marcus to be a golden time and his last of the Five Good Emperors. Machiavelli also described Marcus Aurelius as modest, a lover of justice, hateful cruelty, sympathetic and kind.Despite his privileges as emperor, Marcus Aurelius had a difficult life. The Roman historian Cassius Dio mused that Marcus had not met the luck he deserved because he was not strong in his body and was involved in many troubles throughout his reign. But throughout this struggle he never gave up. It is an inspiring example for us to think about this morning if we are tired, frustrated, or dealing with some crisis. And in those years of struggle, especially when he was in charge of military campaigns, Marcus wrote twelve books of his private magazines, which were estimated to be between 170 and 180 years of our lives. They have become one of the most influential philosophical books in the history of the world. The meditations had no original name and were written by Marcus Aurelius for his own benefit, not for the audience. And it's funny to think that his works can be as special as they are because they were never meant for us to read. Almost every other literary work is a kind of performance - it is made for the audience. Meditation is not. In fact, their original name (Τὰ εἰς ἑαυτὸν) roughly translates as To Himself.It precisely for this reason that Marcus Aurelius it's a somewhat unfathomable book-it was for personal clarity, not public benefit. Recording stoic exercises has been and is also a form of their practice, just as a repetition of a prayer or hymn can be. This is a book of short statements, ranging from a sentence or two, to a long paragraph. It's not organized on the topic, but some ideas keep popping up all over, pointing out that he thought they were most important to him (and therefore us) to understand and incorporate in how we live. The fact that Marcus goes on the same topic illustrates how much stoicism is essentially logging and going over the same ideas. You have to constantly remind yourself of the standards you set for yourself, who you aspire to be, and this is especially important when you are missing. This is a book of action tips and his teachings were to be practiced and used. When Marcus talks about the certainty of death and how relatively soon it will come, he does not idly philosophize. He recommends that this fact be advising our decisions and how we view events in our lives. Instead of being theoretical about what we should do if either there is a guiding intelligence in the universe, or if it's all just atoms, it prescribes one point of view that usually follows stoic thinking, and explains why both possible truths will lead to the same best actions and beliefs. The first book of Meditation consists of Marcus thanking the people who have had a positive impact on his life, with a focus on those who instilled in him traits characteristic of a good stoic. These include the assessment of reason above all else, not absorbed by trivia, restriction of passions and desires, sober decision-making followed by a firm commitment to choice, honesty and never secretive, cheerfulness in the face of obstacles, and avoid superstitions and the influence of sophistry. The character traits he lists throughout this first book include many examples worth following and should be given close attention. Below are some of the main themes that are repeated throughout the book. The five main themes in this book are: change, death and the brevity of life; the role and importance of a rational mind and will; To deal with others and recognize their shortcomings; Avoiding the pursuit of pleasure and glory; and live up to nature and fully accept its course.1. The evil that people hurt you only if you do evil in ResponseMarcus reminded yourself not to get upset about the misdeeds of others and correct them if possible, but if they were stubborn and would not change, accept it. By reacting to such people, we must never allow our own principles to be violated. Moreover, we should never be surprised by the wicked actions of others and avoid the desire that people are not as they are (prone to evil deeds), because then we wish He believed that to do bad things out of ignorance of what good and evil are, and that we should forgive them for their mistakes, even if they harm us. Marcus emphasizes that social animals, such as humans, must live in harmony. He compared his attitude to bad people with the fact that they are different parts of the body of the same person. Good and bad people are part of the same universal nature, and they are designed for interaction and cooperation. Marcus Aurelius, and all stoics, believed that we are part of an internally connected organism. That you can't hurt one person without hurting them all. It hurts the hive, it hurts the bee, he said. The best revenge, he said, is not to be like that. Meaning: When you hurt others, you hurt the group and hurt yourself. It is against nature to despise evil people and try to avoid them. When we find ourselves judging others, we must consider our own shortcomings first. Then we find that we are less inclined to blame them. Instead of judging and harassing others, which sets us up for frustration and suffering, we should focus on self-improvement. Marcus said: It's funny for a man not to fly from his own badness to what is really possible, but to fly away from other male evils that is impossible. Or as another translation would say: It's stupid to try to avoid other people's flaws. They are inevitable. Just try to avoid your own. And today, in a hyperlinky, information-driven world, compared to Marcus's time, we also know a lot about other people. We know about the arrivals and upcoming celebrities and politicians. We get real-time updates about everything our friends do. We see what they say on social media and we get their texts and photos. There is no doubt that this has increased the amount of so-called drama in our lives. We have opinions on whether and so should have done so, and we watch the media chatter about it. We get offended when our friends say this or that. Not a day goes by that we don't hear gossip and speculation about someone we know. It's a trap. It's distracting. Even 2,000 years ago, Marcus knew this. Other people's mistakes? Reminded himself, should be left to their creators. Forget what other people are doing, forget what they're doing wrong. You've got enough on your plate. Focus on yourself - focus on what you may be doing wrong. Fix it. Keep an eye on your own life. There's no need, and frankly, there's not enough time to spend second spying on other people. Keep in mind your business.2. Fame and Desires Not Worth PersecutionMarcus repeatedly explains why the pursuit of fame and praise is stupid, and why we especially should not care about what others think of us after our death, points out that so many famous people have been forgotten that those who will praise one posthumously will be themselves soon He explains that there are no immortal actions: Consider that, since heaps of sand piled on top of each other hide the former sands, so in life the events that happen earlier are soon covered by those that come after. Fame, no matter how great it may be, will always fade into oblivion, and the desire for it simply demonstrates its vanity. He also explains that nothing is done better than praise, the beauty of things comes from the very thing, not what people say about it. To think then that we get something by being praised is a mistake. Marcus would say: When you've done well and another has benefited from this, why, as a fool you're looking for a third thing on top-credit for a good deed or a favor in return? Marcus and Racks see that doing good is the right job of man. So why do you need a thank you or a confession for doing the right thing? It's your job. Why would you want to be famous? Because you were talented? Because you were great? Because you were successful? These things are part of the job too. The pursuit of fame is just one of the pitfalls in life. There are many other desires, all of which could potentially lead us to immoral acts. He quotes the philosopher Theophrastus, who argues that bad deeds committed out of desire are more reprehensible than the evil committed out of anger. A person to whom he was harmful was offended, while a man with strong desires ignores the well-being of others because he wants something more than he wants to be virtuous. Aspiration can also lead to despair. Marcus addresses this when he speaks of prayer, arguing that one should not ask the gods to satisfy the desire or prevent something feared, but ask them if they can remove the desire and be in order with what life gives them.3 The universe is the strongest philosophy ChangeMarcus Aurelius comes when he talks about the ever-changing nature of the universe and the acceptance of death. It reminds us that we will all die, however, we will only ever lose the present moment because that is all we have ever. No one loses more by dying early. The longest and shortest life will end in the same way and will be finished for the same eternity. It also reminds us that we can die at any moment and live to the fullest while we can still. Don't live like you've got endless years ahead of you. Death overshadows you. As long as you're alive and capable, being good. Marcus teaches that we must act quickly to put things in order and take advantage of our fleeting existence and live well. You will soon die, and you art is not yet simple, not free from indignation, nor without suspicion of what has suffered from external things, nor kindly attitude towards all; nor dost you still place wisdom only in acting honestly. It is the way of our world that substances must change in Things. Changing something into something else never into the universe, and Marcus applies this lack of harm to all parts of the universe, including us. Nothing is evil, which is in accordance with nature, he argues. He even casts our fear of change (including our death) in a somewhat funny light, saying: Is anyone afraid of change? What could have happened without changes? What, then, is more pleasant or more suited to universal nature? And can you take a bath if the wood is changing? And can you eat if the food doesn't change? And can anything else useful be achieved without change? 4. The challenges created in MindBeing transcends pain and pleasure allowing us to fully take the course of nature and focus on being virtuous. Our perception of events as troublesome is the real source of any unhappiness we experience, not the events themselves. Marcus believed that a person could immediately erase any upsetting impressions of his mind and be in the world. He also recommended remembering the following whenever we are concerned: May not future things bother you, for you will come to them if necessary, having with you the same reason that you are now using for the present. If we do not allow events to make us worse than people, we will never suffer from them. He explains it perfectly when he says: Whatever anyone does or says, I should be good, just as if gold, or emerald, or purple always said it, whatever anyone does or says, I should be emerald and keep my color. Or as he put it in what will become one of the most symbolic quotes from Meditation: Choose not to be hurt - and you won't feel hurt. Don't feel hurt - and you weren't. Events can cause people to lose their composure and act immorally, but still they are not affected by events, and their reaction to them. And when it comes to problems, we find in Marcus a formula, an art known as turning obstacles upside down. As he wrote: Our actions may be hindered... but there can be no extinguishing of our intentions or orders. Because we can accommodate and adapt. The mind adapts and transforms into its goals an obstacle to our actions. And then he concluded with powerful words designed for maxim. The impediment to action advances action. What stands in the way becomes the way to go. Act with a reverse point so there is always a way out or another way to get to where you need to go. So failures or problems are always expected and are never permanent. Making sure that what prevents us can empower us. In his own reign of some nineteen years, he would experience an almost constant terrible plague, possible infidelity, an attempt to throne one of his closest allies, repeated and difficult journeys through the empire -- from Asia Minor to up Egypt, Greece and Austria are rapidly depleting the treasury, incompetent and greedy half-brother as co-emperor, and so on and on. It shows how some of the most successful people in history - from John D. Rockefeller to Amelia Earhart and Ulysses S. Grant to Steve Jobs - have used stoicism to overcome difficult or even impossible situations.5 Your rational mind of your greatest AssetMarcus knew that our ability to reason is what sets us apart from animals and is an important force that we must use to the fullest. He believed (like all stoics) that our minds could be used to understand the universal cause present in nature, which would lead to agreement with it, even if the events seemed harmful. Our rational minds have complete power over our opinions, and the mind suffers only when it creates a desire for a concrete result in life. Marcus, who had more control over his surroundings than most, was also the handle behind these lines: You have power over your mind - not outside of events. Realize it, and you'll find strength in yourself. Marcus teaches that our mind is a thing that is completely in control of itself and separated from the world; it cannot be affected by events unless it is affected. Each appearance is the result of what the mind will seem and the mind makes itself exactly what it is. Because this is the case, there is no reason why we should not agree with nature, because nature has provided us with the means to accept the course of events rationally, no matter where they take us. The three key takeaway lessons from meditation The most important lesson to pick up from meditation is that our mind has great strength. We can choose how we perceive events, and we can always choose to be virtuous. If we practice, we can instantly erase any bad impressions from our mind. We are in complete control of our thoughts and actions. Remember two quotes: You have power over your mind - not external events. Realize it, and you'll find strength in yourself. The obstacle to action promotes action. What stands in the way becomes the way to go. People will always do horrible (or at least unpleasant) things, and we are only responsible for our own virtue. We can choose to be good even when we are surrounded by the wrong. When another harms us, we can respond with kindness by advising them of our mistakes if possible, but be OK with it if they ignore this advice. When the other angers us, we must immediately consider their point of view, remember that we have our flaws, and respond with positivity and indifference to any perceived harm done to us. The deepest meditation lesson is related to our mortality and the brevity of life. We will soon be replaced, and we must not waste our lives in distress We must focus on doing good others with an unfathomable amount of time we left to live. To make this a part of our lives, we must regularly reflect on the fact that we will die. This can lead to some of the most profound understandings available to humans, so death must be solved no matter how unpleasant it may be to think. We must reflect on all the people who were before us, what is left of them now, and what will remain of us. Don't waste any more time arguing about what a good person should be. Be alone. If it's wrong, don't do it, if you don't, don't say it. The mind adapts and transforms the obstacle to our action into its goals. The impediment to action advances action. What stands in the way becomes so. Focus every minute as a Roman, as a man, on doing what is before you with precise and genuine seriousness, tenderly, willingly, with justice. And to get rid of all the other distractions. Yes, you can, if you do everything as if it were the last thing you did in your life, and stop being aimless, stop letting your emotions override what your mind tells you, stop being hypocritical, self-centered, irritable. Do you see how little things you have to do to live a satisfying and reverent life? If you can handle it, that's all even the gods can ask you for. We all love ourselves more than other people, but we care more about their opinions than our own. Don't feel irritated, or defeated, or discouraged, because your days are not packed with wise and moral actions. But to go back when you don't have to celebrate yourself as a person, however imperfect, and fully accept the aspiration that you embarked on - How easy it is to reflect and erase every unpleasant or inappropriate impression, and immediately find yourself in all peace. You can die right now. Let it determine what you do, speak and think. Ambition means tying your well-being to what other people say or do... Common sense means tying it to your own actions. Drop your misconceptions. Stop twitching like a puppet. Limit yourself to the present. Meditation in popular culture Just like Frederick the Great was reportedly riding into battle with the works of stoics in saddles, as did Marine and NATO commander General James Mad Dog Mattis, who carried meditation with him on deployment in the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq. Bill Clinton reportedly reads it once a year, and one can imagine him handing over a copy of Hillary after her heartbreaking loss in the US presidential election. Lanterns on Levi's author William Alexander Percy remarked in his autobiography that there is left for each of us, regardless of whether Far defeat pierces the impregnable winter kingdom of Marcus Aurelius . . . It's not outside, but inside, and when all is lost, it stands worth Roosevelt, after his presidency, spent eight months exploring (and almost dying in) the unknown Amazon jungle, and of the eight books he brought on the journey, two were Reflections by Marcus Aurelius and Enchiridion Epicteta. Chinese leader Wen Jiabao has re-read the book countless times. Brand writing also makes a prominent appearance in Steinbeck east of Eden, in Jon Stewart Mill on the loose, and of course many people know Marcus Aurelius from the popular film Gladiator, where he is an old and wise emperor at the beginning of the film played by Richard Harris.Best Free and a paid translation of The Best Translation of Gregory Hayes's Meditation. (Sign up for our free 7-day stoicism course to watch our interview with Professor Hayes). He writes in modern simple English and understands how to make Marcus's words concise and smooth. It is highly recommended to read the Hays translation first. The best free translation, is George Long. You can find it here. It has some old English in it, with you and yours, but if you're looking to check out some of the stuff before buying a copy it's a decent place to start. Of course, The Daily Stoic also offers all-new original translations of Marcus from Meditation translated by Stephen Hanselman.Marcus Aurelius once wrote: You could leave life right now. Let it determine what you do, speak and think. It was a personal reminder to continue to live a life of virtue now, not to wait. It was a form of memento mori - an ancient practice of meditation on your mortality. We created this memento mori coin to serve as a reminder not to dwell on the little things or to try to become famous, to make more money than we could ever spend, or to make plans far in the future. All this is negated by death. It's time to stop pretending differently. Click here to learn more and purchase your own memento mori medallion. 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