

Marcus aurelius-the inner guidance

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Introduction

In life you must find your way, the real reason of your existence, and not depend as a puppet of what others think, say or do. You have to have clear ideas of what you want and get away from the distractions and do not act because of hypocrisy or selfishness, believing to adapt to 'souls' of others, which in reality you do not know (probably you do not even know yours). This is the direction in which you should work, Marcus Aurelius keeps in his *Meditations*. It's your soul which you must find and you should go; you must respect primarily the soul that belongs to you and not depend on the souls of others, although you also have to want to understand them, but you need to know the movements of yours first, and from these those of others. The main goal of our life is to know the real nature of our soul, and its place in the souls of other people around us.¹

"At all hours, deal with resolve, to do what you have in your hands with timely and sincere gravity, with love, freedom and justice, and find yourself a time to free yourself from all other distractions. And you will get your way, if you run each action as if it were the last of your life, devoid of thoughtlessness, of all passionate aversion that will keep you from realm of reason, of all hypocrisy, selfishness and despair with what it is associated with destiny. You're seeing are few principles to be mastered to live a positive life course and of respect for the gods. Because gods nothing will claim to who observes these precepts." (Meditations, II, 5).

"Life is brief for everyone! You practically have consumed it without respect for the soul that belongs to you, and yet, you cause depend your soul of good fortune of others." (Meditations, II, 6).

"Do not let external accidents drag you; find yourself a time to learn something good and stop yet turning like a top. Henceforth you should also guard against another deviation. Because they rave too, amid so many occupations, who are tired of living and have no target toward to direct every impulse and, ultimately, their imagination." (Meditations, II, 7).

"It's hard to see a man unhappy for not having stopped to think what happens in the soul of another. But those who are not closely watching the movements of their own soul they will be necessarily unhappy." (Meditations, II, 8).

"We must always remember this: what is the nature of the whole and what is mine, and how it behaves compared to that and what part of what set it is; keep in mind also that nobody prevents you to do and to say what is consistent with the nature, of which you are part." (Meditations, II, 9).

We are part of nature, which, contrary to what we usually think (and to what 'books say'), is very simple: We are just flesh, breath of life and inner guide. These are the three components. Blood, bones and tissues, in themselves are inert matter. The breath of life is what gives them life, it is the 'wind' that moves them, which is always changing because, at every breath, the life-giving air is never the same. The inner guide is consciousness and intelligence, and it is above all, but

must strive to not be swayed by the movements caused by the breath in the flesh (the instincts), and to accept the smallness of life, if one aspires to live with some freedom and happiness.

"That's all I am. Some flesh, a brief breath of life, and the inner guidance. Leave the books! Do not let yourself be distracted; it is not allowed to you. But in the idea that you are already a dying, despise the flesh: blood and dust, bones, nervous tissue, tiny veins and arteries. See also what the breath of life is: wind, and not always the same, as in all times it is vomited and sucked again. Thirdly, then, you have the inner guidance. Ponder this: you're old, do not let any longer it to be a slave, nor still following being shackled as a puppet by selfish instincts, nor that it still gets angry with present destiny nor be wary of future." (Meditations, II, 2).

Our nature is nature as any other. It is pure nature. And it becomes flowing from a common origin with the whole universe, with the transformations of the elements of both simple and compounds. Neither fortune nor even our will will be separated from it at all.

"The works of the gods are full of providence, the Fortune ones are not separated from nature or from weft and interlacing of things governed by Providence. From there flows all. Necessary and convenient for the whole universe is added, from which you are part. To any part of nature is good what works with the nature of the whole and what can to preserve it. And both transformations of simple elements and compounds they kept the world. These reflections are enough for you, if they are basic principles. Put away your thirst for books, to not die growling, but truly resigned and grateful to the gods." (Meditations, II, 3).

"Remember how long you differ this and how many times you have received advanced notices of the gods and you have not used them. It is necessary that from this moment you realize what world you are part and what ruler of the world you proceed as an emanation and you will understand that your life is confined to a limited period of time." (Meditations, II, 4).

In short, what we need is to be smart. Knowledge of the nature, of our own nature (and that of the gods, who are also part of it), is

the inner guidance, is what allows us to understand ourselves and be consistent with the rest of nature. Anything else is missing our way. Going against nature, in the best case, is a waste of time. And Aurelius especially highlights a very important “detail” in relation to time: nature acts in the present, our life becomes exclusively in the fleeting moment of the present. The past has been lived yet and nothing can be done with it, and no one knows the future. We cannot be controlled by them, then. The reality is purely present.

“Venerate the intellectual faculty. In it resides all, because never exists in your inner guidance an opinion inconsistent with the nature and with the disposition of rational being. It really guarantees the absence of precipitation, the familiarity with men and the compliance with the gods.” (Meditations, III, 9).

“Reject, therefore, everything else and retain only a few precepts. And keep in mind that each one lives only the present, the fleeting instant. The rest, or has been lived or is uncertain; the life of each one, therefore, is insignificant, and also is insignificant the little corner of the earth where he lives.” (Meditations, III, 10).

“Delete the imagination. Stop the drive of puppet. Limit yourself to the present moment. Understand what happens to you or someone else.” (Meditations, VII, 29).

The daily businesses often make us lose perspective and tranquility, because they hide the natural order of things (the nature as it is) to our reason. We must move away from the worries of everyday life, from time to time, and serve only our ‘soul’, detached from the immediate worldliness, to recover reason and to return back the right way. We must not forget that the vital breath causes continuous movements in our instincts, which drag and mislead our thinking, and we have to realize, at least when removed, the nature of these movements, to understand them and not be subject to them perennially.

“Nowhere man retires with greater confidence and calm than in his own soul. Especially one who possesses inside these goods, when he leans toward them immediately gets a total tranquility. And I call tranquility exclusively to the good order. Realize, then, surely, this recall and recover yourself. Being briefs and basic principles when you have located so soon, they will be sufficient to retreat in all your soul and to give you back again, without anger, those things in life

which you retire from. (...) Realize that thought does not mix with the vital breath that moves soft or violently, once it has recovered and it has understood its peculiar power.” (Meditations, IV, 3).

We all have an inner guide, consciousness, intelligence, in common. We all have a reason that orders the perception of the world, whereby we know what to do or avoid, conveniently. So we all have a common natural law and participate in a shared ‘citizenship’. All manifestations of the human soul come in first instance from a common natural place.

“If intelligence is common to us, also the reason, according to which we are rational, we have in common. Admitted this, reason that orders what to do or avoid, is also common. Granted this, also the law is common. Agreed this, we are citizens. Accepted this, we participate in a citizenship. If so, the world is like a city. Well, what else common citizenship may say that all humankind participates? From there, the common city, come intelligence itself and the reason and the law. Or from where? Because in the same way that the portion of earth that is in me has been separated from some earth, wet part from another element, the part that breathes life, from a certain source, and the warm and igneous part from a particular source (so nothing comes from nothing, nor nothing leads to what not is), likewise also the intelligence comes from somewhere.” (Meditations, IV, 4).

“To rational being the same act is consistent with nature and with reason.” (Meditations, VII, 11).

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References

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