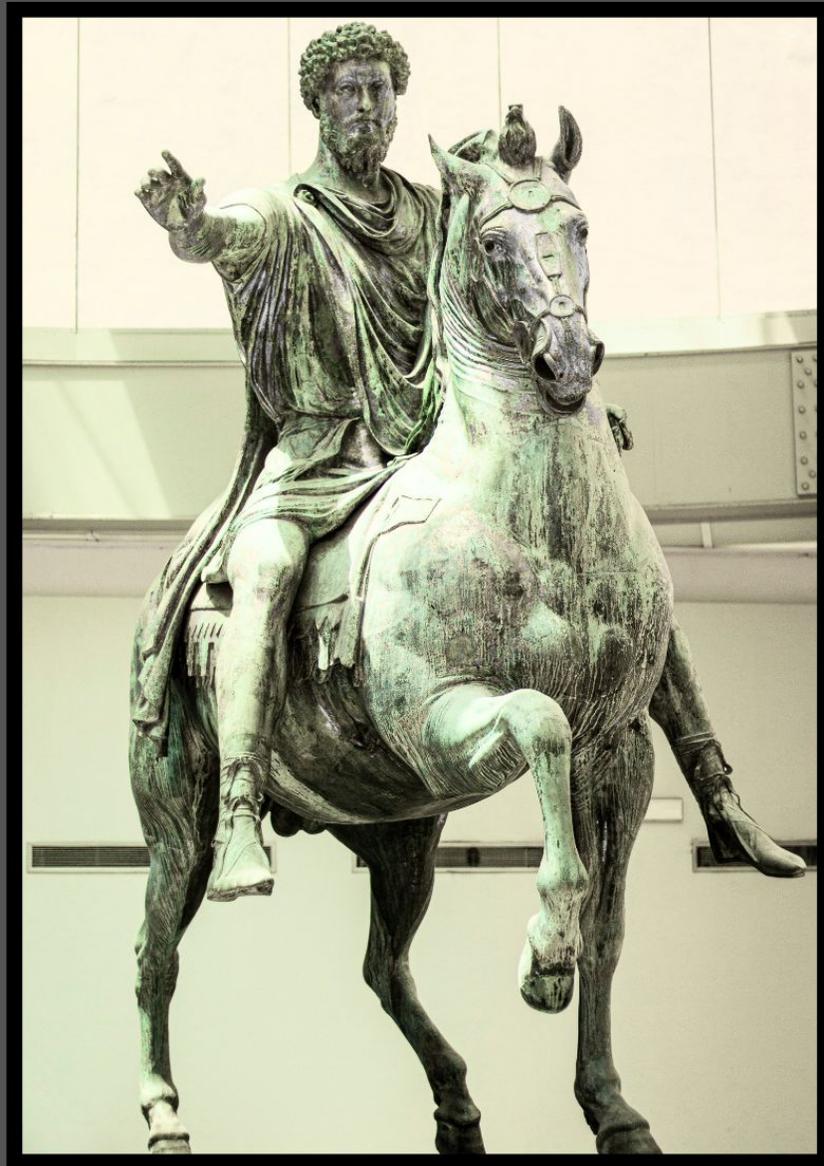


# Meditations

Marcus Aurelius



The Lateral Classics  
*Restoration Edition*

# MEDITATIONS

MARCUS AURELIUS

*The Lateral Classics Edition*

*Modernized and Adapted for the Contemporary Reader*

Lateral Classics Edition (v1.2.1)

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# INTRODUCTION

## The Emperor Speaks Clearly

Marcus Aurelius did not write *Meditations* for you.

He did not write it for publication, or for posterity, or to impress the literary critics of Rome. He wrote it for himself. It was a private journal—a collection of urgent spiritual exercises written by the most powerful man on earth to keep himself sane, just, and good while ruling an empire on the brink of chaos.

Because he wrote for himself, his original Greek was often curt, shorthand, and unpolished. He wasn't trying to be poetic; he was trying to be effective.

However, for the last few centuries, the English-speaking world has largely read Marcus through a filter of Victorian formalism. We have read him in the "thees" and "thous" of centuries past. We have accepted versions that prioritize academic precision over emotional resonance, turning the raw, private struggles of a man into the stiff lectures of a statue.

### The Lateral Approach

This edition exists to solve that problem.

At Lateral Classics, we believe that wisdom should not be hidden behind a language barrier of its own making. If Marcus Aurelius were alive today, he would not speak in archaic formality. He would speak directly, clearly, and with the urgency of a man who knows that life is short.

To create this "Living Edition"—so called because it returns Marcus's thoughts to their original vitality—we employed a method of comparative synthesis. We drew upon five of the most respected historical English versions: Meric Casaubon's emotive 17th-century rendering, Jeremy Collier's accessible 18th-century version, George Long's influential Victorian edition, C.R. Haines's scholarly early 20th-century work, and George Chrystal's precise academic text.

By comparing these distinct interpretations, we identified the core intent of each passage—the signal amidst the noise—and rendered that into clear, contemporary American English.

### Why Marcus Still Matters

Two thousand years separate us from Marcus Aurelius, yet his concerns remain ours: How do we remain just when treated unjustly? How do we find peace when the world is chaotic? How do we act well when no one is watching?

The particulars have changed. Marcus dealt with barbarian invasions and plagues; we deal with different crises. But human nature—in its weakness, its potential, and its need for guidance—remains constant.

The Stoic principles Marcus used to govern himself and an empire are as practically applicable now as they were then, perhaps more so in an age of constant distraction and manufactured outrage.

### **What You Will Find Here**

In this edition, you will not find "thees," "thous," or tangled syntax that obscures meaning. You will not find footnotes debating Greek verb tenses.

Instead, you will find the Emperor's thoughts as they were meant to be experienced: as direct commands to the self.

Where older versions might say: *"Thou must hasten to the goal and cast away empty hopes,"*

This edition says: *"Hasten to the goal. Discard your empty hopes, and if you care for yourself at all, come to your own rescue while you still can."*

### **How to Read This Book**

Do not read this like a novel. Do not try to finish it in a sitting.

*Meditations* was written as a practical tool. Read one entry in the morning. Let it sit with you. Test it against the annoyances of your commute, the frustrations of your work, and the fears of your own mind.

Marcus wrote these words to arm himself for the day; use them for the same purpose.

The wisdom here is two thousand years old, but the clarity is new.

*Lateral Classics*  
*January 2026*

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## **Book 1**

### **Book 1, Section 1**

From my grandfather Verus, I learned the essential lessons of a noble character and a gentle disposition. He taught me to cultivate a sweetness of temper and to keep my anger under strict command.

### **Book 1, Section 2**

From the reputation of my father and the memories I preserve of him, I learned the virtue of modesty. I learned to balance this humility with a manly character—resolute, strong, and self-possessed.

### **Book 1, Section 3**

From my mother, I learned to revere the divine and to be generous. She taught me to keep myself pure, abstaining not only from doing evil but even from the very thought of it.

She also taught me to live simply, far removed from the habits of the rich.

### **Book 1, Section 4**

From my great-grandfather, I learned not to attend public schools, but to secure good teachers at home.

He taught me that on these things, a man should spend liberally.

### **Book 1, Section 5**

From my tutor, I learned not to become a partisan in the arena. He taught me to support neither the Greens nor the Blues at the chariot races, and to favor neither the light nor the heavy shield in the lists.

He instilled in me the endurance of labor and the discipline of wanting little. I learned to work with my own hands, to mind my own business, and to turn a deaf ear to slander.

### **Book 1, Section 6**

From Diognetus, I learned not to waste my energy on empty enthusiasms. He taught me to look with skepticism on the tales of miracle-workers and charlatans—those who claim to banish spirits with incantations. I learned not to lose myself in hobbies like breeding fighting quails, nor to become obsessed with such distractions.

He taught me to tolerate plain speaking. Because of him, I became intimate with philosophy, attending the lectures of Bacchius, Tandasis, and Marcianus, and writing my own dialogues as a boy. I learned to prefer a simple plank bed and a rough pelt, embracing the rigors of the Greek discipline.

### **Book 1, Section 7**

To Rusticus, I owe the realization that my character required correction and constant discipline. He saved me from the vanity of the Sophists, teaching me not to waste time writing abstract theories or delivering sermons on virtue just to hear my own voice. I learned not to try to impress others by posing as a moral athlete or publicly displaying my asceticism.

I walked away from rhetoric, poetry, and the affectation of "fine style." He taught me to avoid pretension in my daily life—not to strut around the house in my ceremonial robes. I learned to write simply and directly, just as he did in his letter to my mother from Sinuessa.

He taught me how to handle conflict: to be easily appeased and ready for reconciliation the moment those who have offended me show a willingness to return. I learned to read with precision, never contenting myself with a superficial understanding or agreeing too quickly with those who talk smoothly around a subject. And above all, I thank him for introducing me to the discourses of Epictetus, borrowing the copy from his own private collection.

### **Book 1, Section 8**

From Apollonius, I learned true independence of mind and unwavering resolve—to look to nothing else, not even for a moment, except reason. He taught me to remain the same man in sharp pain, in the loss of a child, or in long illness. He was a living example that one person can be both resolute and yielding, both intense and gentle. He never lost patience when instructing others, and he clearly regarded his skill in teaching philosophy as the least of his gifts. From him I learned how to receive favors from friends—neither to be humbled by them nor to accept them coldly, as though they meant nothing.

### **Book 1, Section 9**

From Sextus, I learned the power of a benevolent temper. He showed me what a household looks like when it is governed by true paternal affection, and he embodied the resolve to live in harmony with nature.

He possessed a dignity that was entirely free of pretense. From him, I learned to care deeply for my friends and to tolerate, with infinite patience, the ignorant and those who form opinions without thinking. His company was effortless; speaking with him was more delightful than receiving the smoothest flattery, yet those present revered him all the more for it.

Most importantly, he taught me a vital balance: to be entirely free from the storms of passion—never showing a trace of anger—yet to remain full of warmth and natural affection. He showed me how to praise others without making a scene, and how to possess vast learning without ever putting it on display.

### **Book 1, Section 10**

From Alexander the Grammarian, I learned to refrain from fault-finding. I learned not to be the type of person who interrupts to criticize a grammatical slip, a clumsy phrase, or a mispronunciation.

Instead of shaming the speaker, I should simply use the correct expression myself in my reply. I can weave the right word into an answer, a confirmation, or a discussion of the topic itself. By

focusing on the substance of the conversation rather than the wording, I can offer a correction that is graceful and unnoticed, rather than pedantic.

### **Book 1, Section 11**

From Fronto, I learned to observe the envy, the duplicity, and the hypocrisy that are the hallmarks of a tyrant.

He also taught me to see that those among us who claim the rank of patrician are, generally speaking, the most deficient in natural human affection.

### **Book 1, Section 12**

From Alexander the Platonist, I learned to guard my tongue against the phrase, "I am too busy." I must not say this to others, nor write it in my letters, unless the necessity is absolute.

I must not make a habit of using "urgent business" as an excuse to evade the duties I owe to those around me. To live with others is to have obligations to them; I cannot let my work become a shield against my relationships.

### **Book 1, Section 13**

From Catulus, I learned not to be indifferent when a friend finds fault, even if his complaint is unreasonable. My duty is to try to restore him to his usual temper.

I learned to speak of my teachers with wholehearted goodwill—just as Domitius did of Athenodotus. And I learned to love my children with genuine affection.

### **Book 1, Section 14**

From my brother Severus, I learned to love my family, to love the truth, and to love justice. Through him, I came to understand the character of those great men of principle: Thrasea, Helvidius, Cato, Dion, and Brutus.

He gave me the vision of a state based on equality and free speech—a place where the same law applies to everyone. He taught me that a ruler must prize the liberty of the subject above all else.

From him, I also learned to be consistent in my devotion to philosophy, to be generous with an open hand, and to always cherish good hope. He taught me to trust that I am loved by my friends. I observed in him a complete lack of pretense; he never forced his friends to guess at his desires or his displeasures. His mind was always plain for all to see.

### **Book 1, Section 15**

From Claudius Maximus, I learned self-command—to hold a steady course and never be swayed by the currents of fortune. He taught me to remain cheerful in all circumstances, even in sickness. In him, I saw a rare blend of character: mildness mixed with gravity. He performed the task at hand thoroughly and without complaint.

Everyone believed that he spoke exactly what he thought, and that his actions were always driven by good intent. He was never shocked, never hurried, and never procrastinating. He was never perplexed or dejected. He had no need for a forced smile, nor did he ever give way to anger or suspicion.

He was generous, forgiving, and truthful. He appeared as a man who was naturally straight, not one who had been corrected. No one ever felt looked down upon by him, yet no one ever ventured to think themselves his superior. And he possessed a gracious humor.

### **Book 1, Section 16**

From my father, I learned the power of mildness combined with unshakeable resolve. Once he made a decision after full deliberation, he never wavered. He had no thirst for the empty honors that most men chase, but was driven instead by a love of labor and endurance.

He possessed an instinct for impartial justice, giving every man exactly what he deserved, and he knew precisely when to tighten the reins of authority and when to relax them. He freed his friends from the burden of protocol; they were not required to dine with him or accompany him on his travels. If urgent business kept them away, he welcomed them back as the same man they had left.

In the council chamber, he was thorough. He never settled for first impressions but investigated every matter to its core. He had the foresight to plan for distant events, managing even the smallest details without drama or fanfare. He suppressed the noise of organized applause and flattery. As a steward of the empire, he guarded the treasury carefully, patiently enduring the criticism of those who called him stingy. He was neither superstitious toward the gods nor a demagogue toward the people; he never courted the mob or pandered for popularity.

He handled the comforts of life—which fortune supplied in abundance—with a complete lack of arrogance or apology. If they were present, he enjoyed them simply; if they were absent, he did not miss them. No one could call him a sophist or a pedant. He was a ripe, mature man, impervious to flattery and fully capable of managing his own affairs. He honored true philosophers without disparaging the others. He took reasonable care of his health—not out of vanity or a fear of death, but simply to remain independent of doctors and medicine. He was entirely free of envy, happily promoting the talents of others and helping them gain the recognition they deserved.

There was nothing harsh or violent in him; he never broke into a sweat of panic. He did everything methodically, calmly, and with order. He fits the description of Socrates: a man strong enough to abstain from what others cannot resist, yet able to enjoy without excess what others abuse. To be strong enough to bear the one and sober enough to enjoy the other—this is the mark of a perfect and invincible soul.

### **Book 1, Section 17**

I am indebted to the powers that govern us for blessing me with good grandfathers, good parents, a good sister, and excellent teachers. Though I possess a temper that might have led me to violent outbursts, the gods ensured that no provocation ever pushed me to the brink of transgression against my family. I am grateful that I preserved my innocence in my youth, not rushing into manhood or sexual indulgence before the proper time.

I thank the divine for a father who stripped me of all vanity. He taught me that a ruler can live in a palace without guards, without embroidered robes, without torches and statues. He proved that a prince can live with the simplicity of a private citizen and yet remain fully effective in his public duties. I am grateful for a brother whose character challenged me to improve my own, and for children who are sound in both body and mind.

I am thankful that I did not make too much progress in rhetoric or poetry. Had I found success in those seductive arts, I might have been trapped by them. Instead, I was free to honor my teachers—Apollonius, Rusticus, and Maximus—and to grasp the true meaning of a life lived according to nature. If I have failed to live that life, the fault is entirely my own, for the gods have given me every reminder and instruction I needed.

They protected me from the snares of lust and the trap of financial ruin; I have always had the means to help the poor, and I have never been forced to beg for help myself. They gave me a wife who is obedient, affectionate, and simple. Even in my sickness—the spitting of blood and the dizziness—they sent me remedies in my dreams. And perhaps most importantly, when I first turned to philosophy, I did not fall into the hands of sophists or waste my life solving logic puzzles and speculating on the heavens. For all these things require the help of fortune and the gods.

*Written among the Quadi, near the river Granua.*

## Book 2

### Book 2, Section 1

At daybreak, say to yourself: Today I will meet with people who are meddling, ungrateful, arrogant, deceitful, envious, and unsociable. All these faults have come upon them because they do not know what is truly good and what is truly evil. But I have seen the nature of the good—that it is beautiful. I have seen the nature of the bad—that it is ugly. And I understand the nature of the wrongdoer himself: he is my kinsman, not by blood or seed, but because he shares in the same intelligence and the same portion of the divine.

Therefore, none of them can injure me, for no one can involve me in what is base. Nor can I be angry with my kinsman or hate him. We are made for cooperation, like the feet, like the hands, like the eyelids, like the rows of upper and lower teeth. To work against one another is contrary to nature—and what is resentment and aversion but a form of opposition?

### Book 2, Section 2

Whatever this is that I am, it consists of three parts: a little flesh, a little breath, and the ruling reason.

Put away your books. Stop being distracted; you have no time for that now.

Look at your flesh as if you were on the verge of death: it is nothing but stained blood and bones, a woven network of nerves, veins, and arteries. Look at your breath: it is mere air, and not even the same air, but a current expelled and inhaled every single moment.

Then there is the third part: the master within. You are an old man now. Do not let this sovereign part of you remain a slave. Do not let it be jerked around like a puppet by selfish impulses. Stop resenting your present lot, and stop cowering before the future.

### Book 2, Section 3

The works of the gods are full of providence. Even what we call chance is not separate from nature; it is woven into the intricate web of causes and governed by that same directing power.

Everything flows from this source. Alongside it is necessity, and the welfare of the whole universe, of which you are a part. Whatever the nature of the whole produces is good for every part that belongs to it. The universe is preserved by change—whether it is the shifting of simple elements or the unraveling of complex bodies.

Let these principles be enough for you. Hold to them. And cast away your thirst for books. You must not die muttering complaints, but peacefully and with true, heartfelt gratitude to the gods.

### Book 2, Section 4

Remember how long you have been putting this off. Recall how many times the gods have granted you a reprieve, and yet you have failed to use it.

You must now, at last, perceive the nature of the universe to which you belong, and the Ruling Power from which you flow. A limit has been set upon your days. If you do not use this time to clear the fog from your mind, the moment will vanish. You will vanish. And the chance will never return.

### **Book 2, Section 5**

Every hour, resolve firmly—like a Roman and a man—to do the work before you with precise and genuine dignity, with humanity, with independence, and with justice. Clear your mind of all other distractions.

You will find this mental quiet if you perform every act of your life as if it were your last. Strip away all aimlessness, all passionate resistance to reason, and all hypocrisy and self-love. Stop complaining about what fate has allotted to you.

Do you see how few things you need to master to live a smooth and godlike life? If you hold to these principles, the gods themselves will ask nothing more of you.

### **Book 2, Section 6**

Go on, degrade yourself, my soul. But soon you will have no time left to honor yourself.

Every man has but one life, and yours is nearly finished. Yet you still do not respect yourself. Instead, you place your happiness in the souls of others.

### **Book 2, Section 7**

Do external events distract you? Then make time to learn something good and stop wandering aimlessly.

But you must also guard against a different kind of drifting. There are people who wear themselves out with activity, yet they are merely triflers. They toil without a target—they have no fixed goal to guide their impulses and their thoughts.

### **Book 2, Section 8**

It is rare to find a man unhappy because he has not observed what is happening in another's soul. But those who fail to attend to the motions of their own minds are condemned to misery.

### **Book 2, Section 9**

Always keep this in mind: What is the nature of the universe, and what is my own nature? How are they connected?

Remember what kind of part you are, and what kind of whole you belong to. And know this: no one can stop you. Nothing can prevent you from speaking and acting in harmony with the nature of which you are a part.

### **Book 2, Section 10**

When comparing our faults, Theophrastus speaks with true philosophical insight. He concludes that offenses committed through desire are more blameworthy than those committed through anger.

Look at the difference. The man who flies into a rage turns away from reason with pain and inner cramping; he suffers as he sins. But the man who sins out of desire is defeated by pleasure. He reveals a lack of self-control that is softer, weaker, and more shameful.

Generally, the angry man is like one who has been wronged and is forced into passion by pain. But the man led by desire begins the trouble himself, rushing into vice merely to satisfy his own appetite.

## **Book 2, Section 11**

Think, speak, and act as if you might leave this life at any moment.

Do not fear death. If there are gods, they will do you no harm. If there are no gods—or if they do not care for human affairs—then what does it matter to live in a world empty of meaning and providence? But there are gods, and they do care. They have put it entirely within your power to avoid true evil. If anything else were truly bad, they would have given you the power to avoid that, too.

Consider this: how can something that does not make a man worse make his life worse? The nature of the universe would not have made such a mistake—either through ignorance or inability—as to let good and evil fall indiscriminately upon the just and the unjust alike.

Yet death and life, fame and obscurity, pain and pleasure, wealth and poverty—these things happen to good men and bad men equally. Why? Because they are not in themselves noble or shameful. Therefore, they are neither good nor evil.

## **Book 2, Section 12**

See how quickly all things vanish. The bodies themselves are swallowed by the universe, and their memory is swallowed by the endless tide of time.

Look closely at the objects of your senses—especially those that seduce you with pleasure, terrify you with pain, or are trumpeted by vanity. See how cheap they are, how corruptible, how dead. It is the task of the intellectual faculty to strip away their masks and see them for what they are.

Observe the people whose praise you crave. Who are they? What are these voices that grant reputation?

And look at death. If you analyze it with reason and strip away the phantom terrors we project onto it, you will see it for what it is: a simple function of nature. To be afraid of a natural process is childish. Furthermore, this process is not only natural; it is beneficial to the whole. Finally, consider how a man touches the divine—through which part of himself, and in what state that part must be to make the connection.

## **Book 2, Section 13**

Nothing is more wretched than the man who runs in circles, prying into the secrets of the earth and trying to guess what is in his neighbor's mind. He fails to realize that he only needs to attend to one thing: the divine spirit that lives within him.

To serve this inner guardian means to keep it pure—free from passion, free from aimless drifting, and free from resentment toward gods or men. We revere what comes from the gods because it is excellent. We accept what comes from men because they are our kin. Indeed, we should often pity them, for they suffer from a tragic ignorance of good and evil—a blindness far worse than the inability to distinguish white from black.

## **Book 2, Section 14**

Even if you were to live for three thousand years—or thirty thousand—remember this: you cannot lose any life other than the one you are living right now. Nor can you live any life other than the one you are losing.

Therefore, the longest lifespan and the shortest amount to exactly the same thing. The present moment is the same for everyone, and it is this fleeting instant alone that is lost in death. You cannot lose the past or the future, for how can you be robbed of what you do not own?

Keep two truths in mind. First, that all things from eternity spin in a circle, repeating the same forms again and again. It makes no difference whether you watch this spectacle for a hundred years or for forever; the sights are the same.

Second, that the man who lives longest and the man who dies soonest suffer an equal loss. They are both deprived only of the present. That is all they possess, and you cannot lose what you do not have.

### **Book 2, Section 15**

Remember that everything is merely opinion. The saying of Monimus the Cynic is clear enough, and the objections to it are obvious. But the utility of his words is also clear—provided you accept the essential truth they contain, without embracing the exaggeration.

### **Book 2, Section 16**

The soul does violence to itself in five ways.

First and foremost, when it becomes an abscess on the universe—a separate, malignant growth. This happens whenever you resent what occurs, for to fight against reality is to separate yourself from Nature, which holds all things together.

Second, when it turns away from another human being or moves against them with the intent to harm, as is the way of angry men.

Third, when it is overpowered by pleasure or pain.

Fourth, when it plays a role, speaking or acting with hypocrisy and falsehood.

And fifth, when it acts without aim. To expend energy without a clear purpose is a failure of reason. Even the smallest action must be directed toward the end. And what is that end? To follow the reason and law of the most ancient of all cities: the Universe itself.

### **Book 2, Section 17**

Human life is but a point in time. Its substance is a flowing river, its perceptions are dim, and the body itself is destined for decay. The soul is a restless vortex, fortune is unpredictable, and fame is uncertain. To put it briefly: everything that belongs to the body is a stream; everything that belongs to the soul is a dream and vapor. Life is a warfare and a journey in a strange land, and the only lasting fame is oblivion.

What, then, can guide us? One thing, and one thing only: Philosophy.

And what is philosophy? It is to keep the divine spirit within you safe and uninjured. It is to remain superior to pleasure and pain, to do nothing aimlessly, and to never speak with falsehood or hypocrisy. It is to depend on no one else's action or inaction. It is to accept whatever happens—whatever is allotted to you—as coming from the same source from which you came.

And finally, it is to wait for death with a cheerful mind, seeing it for what it really is: nothing more than the dissolution of the elements that make up every living creature. If the elements

themselves suffer no harm in their ceaseless changing, why should you fear the dissolution of the whole? It is according to nature, and nothing that is according to nature can be evil.

*Written at Carnuntum.*

## Book 3

### Book 3, Section 1

We must account for more than just the fact that life is wasting away day by day, and that our remaining time is shrinking. We must also consider this alarming possibility: even if a man lives a long life, there is no guarantee his mind will keep pace with his years.

If he sinks into dotage, his physical life continues—breathing, nutrition, imagination, and appetite remain intact. But the higher faculties are extinguished long before the body dies. The ability to make use of oneself, to analyze duty with precision, to judge sense impressions clearly, and even to determine whether it is time to depart from this life—all these require a trained and vigorous intellect.

Therefore, we must hasten. We must press forward, not only because death is constantly drawing nearer, but because our understanding of the world often fades before we do.

### Book 3, Section 2

Notice this as well: even the accidental by-products of nature have a certain grace and charm.

When a loaf of bread is baked, the crust often cracks. Even though these cracks are contrary to the baker's art, they possess a unique appeal and stir our appetite. Figs are most beautiful when they split open at full ripeness. Olives, just as they approach rot, take on a special beauty.

The drooping ears of corn, the wrinkled brow of a lion, the foam dripping from a wild boar's mouth—considered alone, these things are far from lovely. Yet because they follow naturally from nature's processes, they contribute to the beauty of the whole.

If you look at the universe with understanding and insight, you will find pleasure in almost everything that happens. You will look at the gaping jaws of real wild beasts with as much appreciation as you do their painted imitations. You will see the maturity and bloom in an old man or woman with sober, appreciative eyes.

There is beauty everywhere, but only for the man who has become truly familiar with Nature and her works.

### Book 3, Section 3

Hippocrates cured many diseases, yet he eventually fell sick and died. The Chaldeans foretold the deaths of many others, but in time, fate caught up with them as well. Alexander, Pompey, and Caesar destroyed entire cities and slaughtered tens of thousands in battle, yet the day came when they too departed this life.

Heraclitus speculated endlessly about the universe ending in fire, yet he died filled with water, plastered in dung. Lice killed Democritus, and vermin of a different sort—human vermin—killed Socrates.

What is the lesson here? Simply this: You have boarded the ship, you have sailed the voyage, and you have reached the port. Now, step ashore.

If you are stepping into another life, you will find gods there, for the divine is everywhere. But if you are stepping into a state of non-existence, you will be free. You will cease to suffer pain and pleasure, and you will no longer be enslaved to this body—a vessel far inferior to the spirit that

serves it. For the servant is intelligence and divinity, but the container is only earth and corruption.

### **Book 3, Section 4**

Do not waste the remainder of your life in thoughts about others, unless you are referring them to some common good. You lose the opportunity to do your own work when you worry about what so-and-so is doing, and why, and what he is saying, and what he is plotting. All of this makes you wander away from the guardianship of your own mind.

You must purge your thoughts of everything aimless and useless, and especially everything officious and malicious. Accustom yourself to think only on those things about which, if someone were suddenly to ask, "What are you thinking now?", you could answer frankly and at once. Let your answer show immediately that all within is simple and benevolent, worthy of a social being who has no thought of pleasure or indulgence, nor any rivalry, envy, or suspicion—nothing you would blush to admit.

A man who is like this—who no longer delays taking his place among the best—is a priest and minister of the gods. He respects the divinity planted within him, which keeps him unstained by pleasure, unharmed by pain, and untouched by insult. He is a wrestler in the greatest of all contests: the struggle not to be overthrown by passion. He is dyed deep with justice, and he welcomes with his whole heart everything that happens to him.

He rarely concerns himself with what others say, do, or think, unless the public interest demands it. He focuses on his own action and accepts his own destiny—for the fate assigned to each man is carried along with him and carries him along with it. He remembers that all rational beings are his kin, but he values only the opinion of those who live in agreement with nature. As for the others, he knows how they live at home and abroad, by night and by day, and with whom they wallow. Therefore, he does not value the praise of men who cannot even please themselves.

### **Book 3, Section 5**

Do not labor unwillingly, nor without regard for the common good. Do not act without deep consideration, and do not let your motives pull you in opposite directions. Do not dress up your thoughts in fine language; avoid talking too much and meddling in too many things.

Let the god within you be the guardian of a real man—a man of ripe years, a statesman, a Roman, and a ruler. Stand at your post like a soldier waiting for the signal to retreat from life, ready to depart at a moment's notice, needing no oath and no witness to vouch for your integrity.

Be cheerful. Do not seek help from outside, and do not depend on the peace that others can give you. Your duty is to stand upright, not to be held upright by others.

### **Book 3, Section 6**

If you can find anything in human life better than justice, truth, temperance, and fortitude—in short, anything better than a mind satisfied with living according to reason and accepting its destiny—then turn to it with all your heart. If you find such a treasure, enjoy it to the fullest.

But if you find nothing superior to the divine spirit within you—the spirit that has mastered its impulses, examined its thoughts, and withdrawn itself from the senses to care for the gods and for men—then give no room to anything else. If you allow yourself to be distracted by lesser

things, even for a moment, you will lose the power to honor your own proper good without struggle.

It is not right to let anything foreign—like popularity, power, wealth, or pleasure—compete with the good of the rational and social soul. These things may seem compatible for a while, but they suddenly gain the upper hand and sweep you away.

Therefore, choose the better part simply and freely, and hold fast to it.

"But the better part is what is useful to me," you say.

If it is useful to you as a rational being, keep it. But if it is only useful to you as an animal, admit that, and hold to your decision without arrogance. Just make sure you have made the inquiry without error.

### **Book 3, Section 7**

Never value anything as an advantage if it forces you to break your word or lose your self-respect. Whatever compels you to hate, suspect, or curse another person—whatever makes you a hypocrite or drives you to desire things that must be hidden behind walls and curtains—is not a gain, but a loss.

The man who puts his mind and his inner divinity first, who worships the excellence of his own soul, makes no scenes and utters no groans. He needs neither the refuge of solitude nor the noise of the crowd to feel secure. Best of all, he lives without chasing life or fleeing death.

It matters nothing to him whether he uses this body for a long span of years or a short one. If he must depart this very moment, he leaves as easily as he would perform any other task that requires dignity and order. His only care, throughout his whole life, is to ensure his mind never strays into thoughts unworthy of a rational and social being.

### **Book 3, Section 8**

In the mind of a man who is truly disciplined and purified, you will find no corruption—no hidden sores or festering wounds skinned over.

When fate overtakes him, his life is never left incomplete. You could not say of him what is said of an actor who leaves the stage early: that he exited before the play was done.

In him, there is nothing servile and nothing fake. He is not overly dependent on others, nor is he alienated from them. He has nothing to answer for, and nothing that needs a hole to hide in.

### **Book 3, Section 9**

Revere your capacity for judgment. On this, everything depends. It is the only thing that keeps your ruling mind from accepting thoughts that are contrary to nature or the design of a rational being. This faculty secures three things: careful decision-making, fellowship with mankind, and alignment with the gods.

### **Book 3, Section 10**

Throw everything else away. Hold fast only to these few truths.

Remember that each of us lives only in the present, this fleeting instant. The rest of your life is either already gone or uncertain to ever happen.

The span of your life is short, and the nook of the earth you inhabit is tiny. Even the longest posthumous fame is brief—a mere echo passed along by a succession of poor mortals who will very soon be dead themselves. They do not even know themselves; how much less can they know a man who died long ago?

### **Book 3, Section 11**

Add this exercise to your spiritual arsenal:

Whenever an object presents itself to your mind, define it precisely. Strip it naked. Look at it in its essence, free from all labels and assumptions. See it as a whole, and see it in its parts. Say its name to yourself, and name the elements that compose it—and the elements into which it will eventually dissolve.

Nothing elevates the mind like the ability to examine every event in life methodically and truthfully. Look at everything that happens and ask:

- What is the nature of this universe?
- What function does this thing perform in it?
- What value does it have for the whole?
- What value does it have for man—a citizen of that highest city, of which all other cities are merely households?

Ask yourself: What is this thing that is making an impression on me right now? What is it made of? How long is it destined to last? And what virtue does it demand of me? Gentleness? Courage? Truth? Fidelity? Simplicity? Self-reliance?

Therefore, in every situation, be ready to say:

"This comes from God."

Or: "This comes from the weaving of fate, the complex web of coincidence and chance."

Or: "This comes from my fellow man, my kinsman, my partner. He acts out of ignorance, not knowing what is according to nature. But I do know. Therefore, I will treat him with kindness and justice, according to the natural law of fellowship. However, in matters that are indifferent—where neither virtue nor vice is at stake—I will still strive to give him exactly what he deserves."

### **Book 3, Section 12**

If you apply yourself to the task before you, following right reason with seriousness, vigor, and kindness; if you allow no distractions, but keep the divinity within you pure and upright, as if you were required to return it to its Giver this very moment; if you hold to this, expecting nothing and fearing nothing, satisfied with your present action and with heroic truth in every word you speak—then you will live a happy life.

And there is no one who can stop you.

### **Book 3, Section 13**

Just as a surgeon keeps his scalpels and instruments close at hand for sudden emergencies, so you must keep your principles ready to understand things divine and human.

Perform every action—even the smallest—mindful of the bond that unites them. You will never do right by man if you do not refer your actions to the divine; nor will you do right by the divine if you do not refer your actions to man.

### **Book 3, Section 14**

Stop wandering. You are not going to read your notebooks, or the histories of the ancient Greeks and Romans, or the anthologies you collected for your old age.

Hasten to the goal. Discard your empty hopes, and if you care for yourself at all, come to your own rescue while you still can.

### **Book 3, Section 15**

They do not understand the true meaning of these acts: to steal, to sow, to buy, to remain at peace, or to see what needs to be done.

None of these things can be judged by the physical eye. They are perceived only by a different kind of vision entirely.

### **Book 3, Section 16**

Body, soul, intelligence. To the body belong sensations. To the soul belong impulses. To the intelligence belong principles.

To be stamped by the impressions of the senses is something we share even with cattle. To be jerked around like a puppet by the strings of desire is something we share with wild beasts and with tyrants like Phalaris and Nero. Even possessing a mind that guides action toward a goal is common to those who deny the gods, betray their country, and commit their sins behind locked doors.

If all these things are shared by the lowest of creatures, what remains as the unique quality of the good man? It is this: to love and welcome what happens to him and what is spun for him by destiny. It is to keep the divinity within his breast unsoiled and undisturbed by a chaotic mob of imaginations.

He keeps this spirit tranquil, obeying it as a god, speaking nothing but the truth and doing nothing but justice. If the whole world refuses to believe he lives a simple, modest, and cheerful life, he holds no grudge. He does not stray from the path that leads to the end of his days, a goal he must reach pure, at peace, and ready to let go, in perfect harmony with his fate.

## Book 4

### Book 4, Section 1

The ruling power within, when it is in harmony with nature, takes a flexible attitude toward events. It adapts easily to whatever is possible and whatever is presented.

It does not require specific material to work with. It moves toward its purpose, but always with a reserve—ready to adjust if the path is blocked. In fact, it converts the obstacle itself into material for its own use.

It is like a fire mastering a heap of fuel. A small lamp would be extinguished by the load, but a strong fire instantly dominates what is thrown on top of it. It consumes the obstacle and uses it to rise even higher.

### Book 4, Section 2

Do nothing at random. Perform no action unless it follows the perfect principles of the art of living.

### Book 4, Section 3

Men seek retreats for themselves—houses in the country, by the sea, or in the mountains. You, too, often long for such escapes.

But this is a mark of the most common sort of man. For it is in your power, whenever you choose, to retire into yourself. There is no retreat quieter or more peaceful than the sanctuary of your own soul—especially if you have within you principles that, when you look at them, instantly restore your peace. And by peace, I mean nothing else than the good ordering of the mind.

Grant yourself this retreat constantly, and renew yourself. Let your principles be brief and fundamental, so that as soon as you turn to them, they wash away all sorrow and send you back to your duties without resentment.

For what disturbs you?

The wickedness of men? Remember that rational beings exist for one another, that patience is a part of justice, and that men do wrong involuntarily. Think of how many before you—who lived in enmity, suspicion, and hatred—are now dead and reduced to ashes. Remember this, and be quiet.

Or are you dissatisfied with your lot in the universe? Recall the alternative: either Providence or atoms. Remember the proofs that the world is a kind of political community, governed by law.

Or do physical pains trouble you? Reflect that the mind, once it withdraws and realizes its own power, does not mix with the breath or the body, whether the currents are smooth or rough. Remember what you have learned about pain and pleasure.

Or does the desire for fame torment you? Look at how quickly all things are forgotten. Look at the chaos of infinite time stretching behind you and before you. Consider the emptiness of applause, the fickleness of those who praise you, and the narrowness of the space in which this fame exists. The whole earth is but a point in the universe; how small a corner of it is your dwelling place, and how few are the men who will praise you there?

Therefore, remember to retreat into this little territory of your own. Do not distract yourself or strain yourself. Be free. Look at things as a man, as a human being, as a citizen, and as a mortal.

And keep these two principles ready at hand:

First, that external things do not touch the soul; they stand quietly outside, while your disturbances come only from the opinion within.

Second, that everything you see changes in a moment and will soon be no more. Constantly bear in mind how many changes you have already witnessed. The universe is transformation; life is opinion.

#### **Book 4, Section 4**

If the power of thought is common to us all, then reason—which makes us rational—is also common.

If this is so, then the reason which commands us what to do and what not to do is also common.

If this is so, there is a common law.

If this is so, we are fellow citizens.

If this is so, we are members of a single political community.

And if this is so, the universe is, in effect, a state. For of what other political community is the whole human race a member?

From this common city comes our mind, our reason, and our law. For where else could they come from? Just as the earthy part of me is a portion derived from the earth, and the watery part from another element, and the fiery part from its own source—for nothing comes from nothing, just as nothing returns to nothing—so too must the intellectual part proceed from a source.

#### **Book 4, Section 5**

Death is like birth: a mystery of nature. One is a combination of elements, the other a dissolution into the same.

There is nothing in this to be ashamed of. It is not contrary to the nature of a rational being, nor does it violate the logic of his constitution.

#### **Book 4, Section 6**

It is natural that such people should act in such a way; it is a matter of necessity. To wish it were otherwise is like wishing the fig tree had no juice.

But keep this thought constantly in mind: in a very short time, both you and he will be dead. And soon after that, not even your names will remain.

#### **Book 4, Section 7**

Remove the judgment, and you remove the complaint: "I have been hurt."

Remove the complaint, and the hurt itself disappears.

**Book 4, Section 8**

If a thing does not make a man worse in himself, it cannot make his life worse. It causes him no harm, neither from the outside nor from the inside.

**Book 4, Section 9**

The nature of the universal good required this to happen.

**Book 4, Section 10**

Understand this: everything that happens, happens justly. You will find it to be so if you observe carefully.

I mean not merely as a consequence of inevitable sequence, but as an act of justice—as if done by one who assigns everything its true value.

Continue to take notice of this, as you have begun. And whatever you do, ensure it is the kind of act a good man, in the proper sense of the word, may perform. Safeguard this quality in every action.

**Book 4, Section 11**

Do not adopt the opinion of the man who wrongs you. Do not see the world as he wishes you to see it.

Instead, look at the matter itself. See things simply, as they are in truth.

**Book 4, Section 12**

You must always keep these two rules in readiness.

First, act only as your ruling reason—the inner lawgiver—suggests for the good and benefit of mankind.

Second, be prepared to change your mind if anyone is present to correct you or move you from a false opinion. But let this conversion spring only from a persuasion that the new path is just or for the common advantage. Never change your mind because it looks pleasant or earns popularity.

**Book 4, Section 13**

"Do you possess reason?" "I do." "Then why do you not use it?" For if this faculty performs its proper work, what more could you possibly require?

**Book 4, Section 14**

You have existed as a part. Soon, you will vanish into the whole that produced you.

Or rather, through the process of change, you will be reabsorbed into the generative reason of the universe.

**Book 4, Section 15**

Many grains of frankincense are set upon the same altar. One falls into the fire first, another falls after.

It makes no difference.

#### **Book 4, Section 16**

Within ten days, you will appear like a god to those who now regard you as a wild beast or an ape.

This transformation requires only one thing: that you return to your moral principles and the reverence of reason.

#### **Book 4, Section 17**

Do not live as though you had ten thousand years ahead of you. Death hangs over your head. While you are still living, while it is in your power, become good.

#### **Book 4, Section 18**

What richness of leisure you gain when you cease to look at what your neighbor says, does, or thinks! Your only concern should be your own actions, to ensure they are just and holy.

Do not waste time peering into the darkness of another man's character. Instead, heed the sage Agathon: run straight for the goal, never glancing aside.

#### **Book 4, Section 19**

He whose heart flutters with desire for posthumous fame fails to reflect that every person who remembers him will very soon be dead. Their successors will also die, until the whole recollection of him is extinguished. Memory is handed on by links that flare up and are quenched.

But suppose that those who remember you were immortal, and the remembrance itself were everlasting. What then is that to you?

To the dead, I need scarcely say, the praise is nothing. But what is it even to the living? What is praise, except perhaps for some small strategic utility? By clinging to this future hope, you reject the present bounty of nature and neglect the improvement of your own soul.

#### **Book 4, Section 20**

Anything that possesses its own beauty is beautiful in itself, and its worth terminates there, without including praise as a component. A thing is therefore made neither better nor worse by being praised. This is true even for material objects and works of art, which are judged by the masses.

What need has the truly beautiful of anything external? It requires nothing more than justice, truth, kindness, or self-respect.

Which of these owes its beauty to being praised, or is ruined by being blamed? Does an emerald forfeit its excellence if it is not praised? Does gold, ivory, purple, a simple knife, a flower, or a tree?

#### **Book 4, Section 21**

You ask: "If souls continue to exist, how has the air contained them all since the beginning of time?" I answer with another question: How does the earth contain all the bodies buried in it for so many ages?

The answer is the same. Just as bodies on earth change and dissolve, making room for others, so it is with souls. They are transferred to the air, persist for a time, and then are changed, diffused, and absorbed into the universal creative intelligence. This process allows room for the souls that follow.

We must also consider not just the number of buried bodies, but the multitude of animals devoured daily by us and by other creatures. A vast number are consumed and, in a way, buried in the bodies of those who feed on them! Yet there is always space, because they are transformed into blood, air, and fire.

How do we find the truth in all this? By separating the material (the passive stuff) from the form (the active force).

#### **Book 4, Section 22**

Do not be whirled about. Stop wandering from your path.

In every impulse you feel, ensure you fulfil the claims of justice. And on the occasion of every impression, maintain the faculty of clear understanding.

#### **Book 4, Section 23**

Everything that harmonizes with you, O Universe, harmonizes with me. Nothing that is in due time for you is too early or too late for me.

Everything your seasons bring, O Nature, is fruit for me. From you are all things. In you are all things. To you all things return.

The poet says, "Dear city of Cecrops!" Should I not say, "Dear city of God!"?

#### **Book 4, Section 24**

"Do few things," says the philosopher, "if you want to be tranquil."

But consider if it would not be better to say: Do only what is necessary, and whatever the reason of a social being requires, and as it requires. This brings not only the calm that comes from doing things well, but also the ease that comes from doing few things.

Most of what we say and do is unnecessary. If you eliminate these unnecessary actions, you will gain more leisure and less disturbance. Therefore, on every occasion, you must ask yourself: "Is this one of the unnecessary things?"

You must cut away not only unnecessary actions, but unnecessary thoughts as well, for unnecessary actions will not follow if the thoughts are removed.

#### **Book 4, Section 25**

Try living the life of the good man and see how it suits you.

I speak of the man who is content with the portion allotted to him out of the universe. He is satisfied with the justice of his own actions and the benevolence of his own heart.

You have had experience of that other kind of life. Make trial of this one also.

### **Book 4, Section 26**

You have seen that way of life; now look at this one. Stop disturbing yourself. Make yourself simple.

Does someone do wrong? The injury is to himself. Why should that trouble you?

Has something happened to you? It is well. Whatever it is, it was destined and spun out for you as your share from the whole since the beginning of all things.

To sum it up: life is short. You must turn the present moment to profit with reason and justice. Be sober even in your relaxation.

### **Book 4, Section 27**

Either the world is an ordered whole, or it is a chaotic jumble. But even if it appears to be a jumble, it still forms a coherent world.

Ask yourself: can order exist within you—in your own body and mind—while the vast universe remains nothing but disorder?

Impossible. Especially when you consider that all things, though distinct and separate, are woven together and united.

### **Book 4, Section 28**

Consider the sheer ugliness of these characters: the malicious, the unmanly, the stubbornly obstinate, the inhuman, the bestial, and the childish. The stupid, the false, the ribald, the fraudulent, and the tyrannical.

Look at them.

### **Book 4, Section 29**

The man who does not know the things in the universe is an alien to it. But he who is shocked by what is happening in the universe is no less a stranger.

That man is a fugitive who runs away from the obligations of social reason.

That man is blind who refuses to see with the eyes of his understanding.

That man is a beggar who is dependent on others, lacking the resources within himself to live.

He is an abscess on the universe—a malignant growth—who separates himself from the reason of our common nature by complaining about his lot. He forgets that the very same Nature that brought him into the world brought this event to him as well.

He is a fragment torn from the state—a limb cut off from the community—who tears his own soul away from the one common soul of all rational beings.

### **Book 4, Section 30**

One man practices philosophy without a tunic. Another without a book. Here is a third, half-naked.

"I have no bread," he says, "yet I stand firm by Reason."

And I? Though I may derive no livelihood from my learning, I too must stand firm by Reason.

#### **Book 4, Section 31**

Love the art which you have learned, humble though it may be, and find your rest in it.

Spend the remainder of your life as one who with his whole soul commits his concerns and everything he possesses to the gods. And as for men, make yourself neither a tyrant over them nor a slave to them.

#### **Book 4, Section 32**

Consider the times of Vespasian. You will see everything exactly as it is now: people marrying, raising children, getting sick, dying, warring, feasting, trading, and farming. You will see them flattering, boasting, suspecting, plotting, wishing for the death of others, hoarding wealth, and scrambling for consulships and kingdoms.

Yet all that life is spent and gone. Not a trace of that existence remains anywhere. Now turn to the times of Trajan. The spectacle is the same. That life, too, is dead.

Recall those you have known who distracted themselves with idle things, neglecting what their own nature required—failing to hold fast to it and find contentment there.

And here you must remember that the attention given to any enterprise has its proper worth and proportion. You will not be disheartened or troubled if you apply yourself to small matters no further than is fitting.

#### **Book 4, Section 33**

Words once familiar are now archaic. The names of men who were once celebrated sound just as strange and old-fashioned. Think of Camillus, Caeso, Volesus, and Leonnatus. Then Scipio and Cato. Then Augustus. Then even Hadrian and Antoninus. All these things quickly fade away. They turn into mere legend, and soon, oblivion buries them completely. I speak of those who shone with great brightness; as for the rest, the moment they breathe their last, they are gone and forgotten.

What is eternal remembrance? It is completely empty. It is mere vanity.

What, then, is worth your serious effort? Only this one thing: a mind that thinks justly, actions that serve the common good, speech that never lies, and a disposition that welcomes whatever happens. Welcome it as necessary, familiar, and flowing from the same source from which you yourself came.

#### **Book 4, Section 34**

Give yourself up, wholly and willingly, to Clotho, the Fate who spins your thread of life. Let her weave your destiny into whatever design she chooses.

#### **Book 4, Section 35**

Everything is ephemeral—both the one who remembers and the one who is remembered.

**Book 4, Section 36**

Constantly observe how all things come to pass through change. Accustom yourself to the thought that the Nature of the universe loves nothing so much as to transform the things that are and to create new things in their likeness.

For everything that exists is, in a manner, the seed of what will follow. You must not think of "seeds" only as those cast into the earth or the womb—that is a profoundly simple error.

**Book 4, Section 37**

A moment more, and you will be dead. And yet, you are not simple. You are not undisturbed. You still harbor the suspicion that things outside you can cause harm.

You have not yet learned to be kindly toward all men. And you do not yet realize that true wisdom consists entirely in acting justly.

**Book 4, Section 38**

Look closely at the governing principles of men—even those the world calls wise. Observe clearly what things they run away from, and what things they hunt after.

**Book 4, Section 39**

Your harm does not reside in the mind of another, nor does it reside in the shifting condition of the body or the environment that surrounds you. Where is it, then? It lies in that part of you which forms judgments about what is evil.

Refuse to form the judgment, and all is well. Even if your poor body—the garment so closely bound to you—is cut, burned, or festering with decay, let the mind that observes these things remain at peace.

Let your mind judge this: whatever can happen equally to a wicked man and to a good man is neither good nor evil. For if an event befalls the man who defies nature, just as it befalls the man who lives in harmony with it, that event is morally indifferent.

**Book 4, Section 40**

Think constantly of the universe as a single living being, possessed of one substance and one soul.

See how all things are absorbed into the single consciousness of this living creature. Observe how it accomplishes all things with a single, deliberate impulse.

See how all things cooperate to cause everything that comes to pass. Look at the intricate contexture of the web and the continuous spinning of the thread.

**Book 4, Section 41**

What are you, apart from the better and divine part within you? As Epictetus well said: "You are a little soul carrying a corpse."

**Book 4, Section 42**

It is no evil for things to undergo change, just as it is no good for things to come into existence because of change.

**Book 4, Section 43**

Time is a river—a violent torrent of things coming into being.

No sooner is a thing seen than it is swept away, and another comes to take its place, only to be swept away in its turn.

**Book 4, Section 44**

Everything that happens is as familiar and predictable as the rose in spring or the fruit in summer.

The same is true of sickness, death, slander, and treachery. These are all natural events—even if they are the very things that delight or torment the foolish.

**Book 4, Section 45**

Whatever follows is always aptly fitted to what went before.

You must realize that the events of the world are not merely a list of disjointed items following a necessary sequence. Instead, there is a rational connection. Just as existing things are harmoniously arranged, so those that come into being display a wonderful, interconnected affinity.

**Book 4, Section 46**

Always remember the words of Heraclitus: "The death of earth is to become water, and the death of water is to become air, and the death of air is to become fire." And the cycle reverses.

Remember the man who forgets where the road leads. Remember that men are constantly at odds with the very thing they are closest to—the Reason that governs the universe. The things they encounter every day seem strange and alien to them.

We must not act or speak as if we were asleep, for even in sleep we think we are acting and speaking. Nor should we be like children who simply follow their parents, accepting things merely because "that is what we have been taught."

**Book 4, Section 47**

If a god were to inform you that you must die tomorrow, or certainly the day after, you would not care much whether it was the first day or the second. You would only struggle if you were the most miserable of cowards. For how small is the difference?

Therefore, for the same reason, think it no great matter whether you die after many years or tomorrow. The span of time between the two is trifling in the face of eternity.

**Book 4, Section 48**

Think continually of how many physicians are dead—the same ones who used to furrow their brows so seriously over their patients.

How many astrologers are gone, after predicting the deaths of others with such great display? How many philosophers, after endless arguments on death or immortality? How many warriors, after slaughtering thousands? How many tyrants, after wielding their power over men's lives with terrible arrogance, as if they themselves were immortal? Think even of whole cities that have died: Helice, Pompeii, Herculaneum.

Recall the people you have known yourself. One man buried another, then was laid out dead himself; another buried him, and soon followed. And all this happens in such a short time.

See clearly how worthless and ephemeral human things are. What was yesterday a little mucus will tomorrow be a mummy or a pile of ashes. Pass through this tiny span of time in accordance with nature, and end your journey contentedly. Fall away like an olive when it is ripe: blessing the earth that bore it, and grateful to the tree that gave it life.

#### **Book 4, Section 49**

Be like the rocky headland against which the waves constantly break. It stands firm, and the boiling water around it eventually settles to rest.

Never say to yourself, "I am unlucky because this has happened to me." Say instead, "I am lucky because, though this has happened, I remain free from sorrow, neither crushed by the present nor afraid of the future." This could have happened to anyone, but not everyone could have endured it without pain. Why then should you call the accident a misfortune, rather than calling your endurance a piece of good fortune?

Can you really call something a misfortune for a man if it does not violate his nature? Does this accident prevent you from being just? Does it stop you from being generous, self-controlled, wise, prudent, honest, humble, or free?

If it does not prevent you from possessing the qualities that make a man complete, then it is no disaster. Remember this principle when anything threatens to cause you pain: the thing itself is no misfortune; but to bear it nobly is good fortune.

#### **Book 4, Section 50**

Here is a simple, unrefined thought, yet it is a powerful remedy against the fear of death. Review in your mind those who clung tenaciously to life. What more did they gain than those who died early?

They all lie in the grave at last. Think of men like Cadicianus, Fabius, Julianus, and Lepidus. They buried many others, and then they were carried out themselves. The time gained was small. And consider what you must endure to cross it—the anxiety, the tiresome company, the frailty of your own body.

Do not consider life a thing of great value. Look at the immense ocean of time behind you and the infinite abyss ahead. In that vastness, what is the difference between a baby who lives three days and a man who lives three generations?

#### **Book 4, Section 51**

Always run the short road. And the short road is the way of nature.

Therefore, speak and act in conformity with the soundest reason. For such a purpose frees a man from trouble, from inner warfare, and from all calculation and empty display.

## Book 5

### Book 5, Section 1

In the morning, when you find yourself unwilling to rise, have this thought ready: I am arising now to do the proper work of a man. Why, then, am I displeased if I am going to do the very thing for which I was born and brought into the world? Was I made for this—to lie in the bedclothes and keep myself warm?

"But this is more pleasant." Were you born only for pleasure, and not at all for action or exertion? Do you not see the small plants, the little birds, the ants, the spiders, and the bees? They are all working together to bring order to their part of the universe. And you—will you refuse the work of a man? Will you not hasten to do what your own nature bids you?

"But rest is necessary." Yes, it is necessary. But nature has set limits for rest, just as she has for eating and drinking. Yet in rest, you exceed these limits, going beyond what is sufficient. But in action, you stop short of what you are capable of doing.

You do not love yourself; if you did, you would love your nature and her purpose. Others who love their various arts exhaust themselves with labor, neglecting to wash or eat. But you honor your own nature less than the miser honors his gold, or the vain person his applause. When desire takes hold of them, they willingly forgo food and sleep to perfect the thing they care for. And yet, are the acts which concern the common good of humanity less worthy of your labor and attention?

### Book 5, Section 2

How easy it is to repel and wipe away every impression that is troublesome or unsuitable. And immediately to enter into perfect peace.

### Book 5, Section 3

Judge every word and deed that is in accord with nature to be fit for you. Do not let the censure or criticism of others divert you; if a thing is right to say or do, judge yourself worthy of it.

Those who criticize you follow their own peculiar and often flawed principles. Do not pay attention to them, but keep to the straight path, following your own nature and the universal nature. Understand that the way of these two is one.

### Book 5, Section 4

I will continue my course of action, following Nature's path until the day I sink down and rest from my labors. I will breathe out my last breath into the air from which I daily drew it.

I will fall upon that Earth, the very ground whence my father gathered the seed, my mother the blood, and my nurse the milk that nourished me. It is the Earth that has provided my food and drink through all these years, that sustains my footsteps, and that bears with me—her manifold abuser.

### Book 5, Section 5

Men may not praise you for the sharpness of your mind. Be it so. But there are many other good qualities for which you cannot claim natural inability. Display those virtues that are wholly in your power: sincerity, dignity, endurance of hardship, aversion to pleasure, contentment with your portion, kindness, frankness, freedom from excess, seriousness, and magnanimity.

Do you not see how many qualities you are immediately able to exhibit, and yet you voluntarily remain below the mark? Are you compelled by any natural defect to be complaining, grasping, or flattering? To find fault with your body, or seek popularity, or be so restless in your mind? No, by the gods! You might have delivered yourself from these failings long ago.

Only if in truth you can only be charged with being somewhat slow and dull of comprehension, must you exert yourself about this also. Do not neglect your dullness, nor yet take pleasure in it.

### **Book 5, Section 6**

When men do a kindness, there are three types. Some are quick to remind you of the debt they are owed. Others, though they make no claim, remember the favor and hold the recipient as their debtor. But a third sort is hardly even conscious of the act.

These are like the vine that produces its clusters and seeks nothing more after yielding its proper fruit. The horse after running, the dog after tracking the game, the bee after making honey—they do not call out for applause, but immediately set out to do the same once more.

You might object that a rational man should perceive he is acting unselfishly, and wish his fellow to perceive it too. That is true, but you misunderstand the meaning of this reflection. If you truly grasp the principle, you will not omit any social act; you will only avoid the subtle pride of the first two types.

### **Book 5, Section 7**

This was a prayer used by the Athenians: "Rain, rain, O dear Zeus, down on the ploughed fields of the Athenians and on the plains."

In truth, we ought not to pray at all, or we ought to pray in this simple and noble fashion—for the common good, and not merely for ourselves.

### **Book 5, Section 8**

Just as we say the physician has prescribed a course of exercise, a cold bath, or walking barefoot, so too must we understand when it is said that the Universal Nature has prescribed for a man disease, injury, loss, or any other harsh circumstance.

In the first case, the treatment is appointed as conducive to the patient's health. In the second case, that which happens to every man is fixed for him suitably to his destiny. This is what the word "suitable" means: like the squared stones in a wall or pyramid that fit together harmoniously, all things in the universe are united in one bond of harmony. And just as the body is formed of all its parts, so Destiny is formed out of all existing causes.

Even the most unphilosophical grasp this, for they say, "Fate brought this upon him."

Let us, then, receive these decrees of Fate just as we receive the prescriptions of a physician. Many of his prescriptions are disagreeable, but we accept them in the hope of health. Let the fulfilling of the purposes of Nature be judged by you to be as essential as your own health. Accept everything that happens, even if it seems harsh, because it leads to the health of the Universe, and to the well-being of the Universal Mind.

For two reasons, then, you must be content with what befalls you. First, because it was created and prescribed for you specifically, and was woven into your destiny from the first causes.

Second, because even that which comes to the individual contributes to the felicity, perfection, and very continuance of the Power that governs the Universe.

The integrity of the whole is mutilated if you cut off anything from the continuity of the causes and parts. And you do cut off and violently take away a part whenever you are dissatisfied and try to put anything out of the way.

### **Book 5, Section 9**

Do not feel disgusted, discouraged, or dissatisfied if you do not always succeed in acting according to right principles. If you are beaten off course, return to the effort again. Be content if the greater part of your conduct is consistent with the nature of man, and love the philosophical path to which you return.

Do not come back to philosophy as if she were a master or schoolteacher, but as one with sore eyes turns to a sponge and egg, or as another turns to a plaster or fomentation. In this way, you will find rest in reason, yet make no empty show of obeying her.

Remember that philosophy requires only the things which your nature requires. Yet you would have something else which is not according to nature. You might object, "What is more agreeable than my old habits?" But is not this the very reason why pleasure deceives us?

Consider if high-mindedness, freedom, simplicity, equanimity, and piety are not far more agreeable. For what is more delightful than wisdom itself, when you think of the security and the happy course of all things that depend on the faculty of understanding and knowledge?

### **Book 5, Section 10**

The natures of things are so veiled that to many philosophers, and those no ordinary ones, all things have seemed altogether unintelligible. Even the Stoics themselves admit that certainty is hard to grasp. All our judgments are subject to error, for where is the man who never changes his mind?

Carry your thoughts then to the objects themselves. Consider how short-lived and worthless they are—things that may be in the possession of a filthy wretch, a harlot, or a robber. Then review the morals of those who live with you. It is hardly possible to endure even the most agreeable of them, to say nothing of the difficulty of enduring oneself.

Amid such darkness and moral filth, and in this constant flux of substance and of time, of motion and of things moved, I cannot imagine what there is here worthy of serious pursuit.

On the contrary, it is a man's duty to comfort himself and await his natural dissolution without chafing at the delay. Find rest in these two principles alone: first, that nothing will happen to you which is not in accord with the nature of the universe; and second, that it is always in your power never to act contrary to your inner god, the divine spirit within you. For no one can compel you to this.

### **Book 5, Section 11**

"About what am I now employing my own soul?" You must ask yourself this question on every occasion.

Inquire: What is occupying the part of me that they call the ruling principle? And whose soul do I possess right now? Is it the soul of a child, or of a youth? Is it the soul of a weak woman, or of a tyrant? Is it the soul of a domestic animal, or of a wild beast?

### **Book 5, Section 12**

You can learn what the multitude considers good even from this observation. If a man genuinely conceives things like wisdom, self-control, justice, and fortitude as truly good, he would not endure a jest directed at the idea of "a superabundance of good things."

But if a man first values those things that appear good to the crowd—wealth, luxury, and fame—he will listen and readily accept the comic poet's raillery as fitting. Thus, even the common mind perceives the difference. We reject the jest when applied to virtue, yet accept it as witty when applied to opulence.

Go on, then, and ask if we should truly prize and value those things that allow for the apt application of the comic writer's words: that he who has them, through pure abundance, has no place to relieve himself.

### **Book 5, Section 13**

I am composed of the formal and the material. Neither of these two elements will perish into non-existence, just as neither came into existence out of non-existence.

Every part of me, then, will be reduced by change into some new part of the universal substance. That part will change into yet another part of the universe, and so on forever.

It was by consequence of such a change that I too exist, and those who begot me, and so backward into infinite time. We may speak this way, even if the universe is administered according to definite periods of revolution.

### **Book 5, Section 14**

Reason and the art of thinking are faculties that are self-sufficient in themselves and in their proper acts. They start from a principle unique to them and proceed directly toward the end they propose.

This straight movement is why such actions are named *Katóρθōseis*—a word that signifies they proceed by the right road.

### **Book 5, Section 15**

Call none of those things a man's if they do not belong to him merely by virtue of being human. They are not required by our nature, nor does our nature promise them. They are not the means by which man attains his ultimate purpose.

If any of these external things were truly good, it would be wrong for a man to despise them. Furthermore, we would not praise the man who willingly deprives himself of them or patiently endures their loss.

But we see the opposite is true: the more a man deprives himself of such things, or the more patiently he endures their loss, the better man he becomes.

### **Book 5, Section 16**

Your mind's character will be determined by your habitual thoughts, for the soul takes its dye from the imagination. Therefore, you must thoroughly steep it in a continuous succession of thoughts like this: "Where a man can live, there he can also live well." Then, if you say, "I must live in a palace"—well, then, you can also live well in a palace.

Consider also: everything is carried toward the purpose for which it was created. That purpose is its end, and where the end is, there also is its advantage and good. Now, the good for the rational creature is society, for it has long been proven that we were made for fellowship.

It is manifest that the inferior exist for the sake of the superior. Things that possess life are superior to things without life, and of those that have life, the superior are those which have reason.

### **Book 5, Section 17**

To crave impossibilities is lunacy. And it is impossible for the wicked not to act badly in some instance or another.

### **Book 5, Section 18**

Nothing happens to any man that he is not fitted by nature to bear. Others experience the very same things as you, and yet they stand firm and remain unharmed.

They achieve this either because they are ignorant that anything has happened to them, or because they endure solely to display their courage. It is a shame, then, that mere ignorance and vanity should prove stronger than wisdom and principle.

The things themselves do not touch the soul or have any access to it. The soul alone moves and affects itself. The things that co-exist with it are only those accessory beliefs and judgments that the soul grants itself.

### **Book 5, Section 19**

External things cannot touch the soul, not in the least degree. They have no admission to it, nor can they deflect or move it.

The soul turns and moves itself alone. Whatever judgment it chooses to adopt, such it fashions for itself the things that present themselves from without.

### **Book 5, Section 20**

In one respect, man is the nearest thing to me: I am bound to do him good and to bear with his faults. But when he makes himself an obstacle to my proper action, he becomes one of the indifferent things—no less significant to my purpose than the sun, the wind, or a wild beast.

It is true that he may hinder some specific external action. Yet he cannot impede my inner disposition or my purpose. This is because the mind possesses the power of conditional action and adaptation to circumstances.

The mind converts every hindrance to its activity into an aid. That which stands in the way of an action is adapted and transmuted into a furtherance of it. The obstacle on the road helps us run the road.

**Book 5, Section 21**

Revere the most excellent power in the universe. This is the power that utilizes all things and governs all things.

In the same manner, revere the most excellent power within yourself. It is akin to the universal power, for it is this internal force that utilizes everything else within you, and by this your whole life is governed.

**Book 5, Section 22**

That which does not harm the community cannot harm the citizen. You must remember to apply this rule to every perception of wrong.

If the whole community is not harmed by this, then neither am I harmed. And if the whole is not harmed, why should I make it my private grievance?

But if the community is harmed, there is no need to be angry with the one who caused the harm. Rather, you must inquire into where his mistake lies and gently show him his error.

**Book 5, Section 23**

Often think of the speed with which things are swept past and disappear. All substance is like a river in ceaseless flow, its activities are in constant change, and its causes are subject to countless variations. Scarcely anything stands still.

Consider this boundless abyss that surrounds you: the infinity of time already past, and the immense void of the future, wherein all things are disappearing.

Is he not senseless who, in such an environment, allows himself to be puffed up with pride or plagued by worries, making himself miserable over troubles that will vex him only for a short time?

**Book 5, Section 24**

You must often consider the universe of being, of which you are but a very small portion. Think of universal time, of which only a brief and fleeting moment has been assigned to you. And consider destiny, in which your share is infinitesimally fractional.

Understand this: if another trespasses against me, let him look to that. He is master of his own disposition and action. I, for my part, possess as much as universal Nature wills me to possess, and I do that which my own nature requires.

**Book 5, Section 25**

Does another do me wrong? Let him look to that. His disposition is his own, and his action is his own.

I, for my part, now possess what the universal Nature wills me to have, and I do what my own nature now wills me to do.

**Book 5, Section 26**

Let the ruling part of your soul remain undisturbed by the movements of the flesh, whether they are pleasurable or painful. Do not let the mind mingle with them; confine these feelings to their own proper limbs.

However, because the mind and body form a single, unified organism, these sensations will inevitably rise up to the understanding. When this happens, do not attempt to resist the sensation itself, for it is natural.

But you must ensure that the ruling faculty does not add its own opinion to the sensation. Do not let it judge that what you feel is either "good" or "bad." Let the sensation exist, but strip away the judgment.

### **Book 5, Section 27**

Live with the gods. And he lives with the gods who constantly shows them a soul content with what is assigned to it.

He does the will of that inner spirit—that fragment of the divine—which Zeus has given to every man as a guardian and a guide. And this spirit is nothing other than your own mind and reason.

### **Book 5, Section 28**

Are you angry with the man whose armpits smell? Are you angry with the one whose breath is foul?

What good will this anger do? He has such a mouth, and he has such armpits; it is necessary that such an emanation must come from such a source.

"But the man has reason," you say. "He could understand his offense if he took the trouble."

Well then, you have reason too. Use your rational faculty to awaken his. Show him his error. Admonish him. If he listens, you will cure him, and there will be no need for anger.

There is no need for a tragic scene or for false compliance.

### **Book 5, Section 29**

You can live here on earth exactly as you intend to live when you have departed.

But if men do not permit this, then leave this life—but do so as one who suffers no harm.

"The house is smoky, and I quit it." Why make a great matter of this?

But as long as nothing of this kind drives me out, I remain free. No one will stop me from doing what I choose, and I choose to act according to the nature of a rational and social being.

### **Book 5, Section 30**

The intelligence of the universe is social.

Accordingly, it has made the inferior things for the sake of the superior, and it has fitted the superior things to one another.

You see how it has subordinated, co-ordinated, and assigned to everything its proper portion, and how it has brought the very best things into concord with one another.

### **Book 5, Section 31**

How have you behaved until now? Towards the gods, your parents, your brother, your wife, your children, your teachers, your friends, and your servants? Can it be truly said of you that you have "wronged no man in deed or word"?

Recall all that you have passed through and all that you have found the strength to endure. The history of your life is now complete; your service is ending.

Think of how many beautiful things you have seen. Think of how many pleasures and pains you have despised, how many things called "honors" you have spurned, and to how many difficult people you have shown kindness.

### **Book 5, Section 32**

Why do unskilled and ignorant souls disturb the soul that possesses skill and knowledge?

And what soul is that?

It is the one that knows the beginning and the end. It knows the Reason that pervades all substance, and it understands how the universe is administered through all eternity in fixed cycles.

### **Book 5, Section 33**

In a very little while, you will be nothing but ashes or a skeleton. A name, perhaps; and perhaps not even a name. And what is a name? Nothing but sound and a hollow echo.

The things we prize most in this life are empty, rotten, and trivial. We are like puppies biting one another, or quarrelsome children who laugh one moment and weep the next. Faith, modesty, justice, and truth have fled the earth and risen to Olympus.

What, then, keeps you here? The things of sense are unstable and constantly changing. The senses themselves are dull and easily deceived. The poor soul is nothing but an exhalation of blood. And fame in such a world is mere vanity.

What are you waiting for? You wait for the end—whether it be extinction or a change to another state—with a calm and contented mind.

And until that time comes, what is enough for you? What else but to revere and praise the gods, to do good to men, to bear with them and forbear? And as for everything that lies outside the limits of this poor flesh and breath, remember: it is neither yours nor in your power.

### **Book 5, Section 34**

You can pass your life in a steady flow of happiness if you take the right path—if you follow the right method in your thoughts and actions.

Two things are common to the soul of God, the soul of man, and every rational being.

First, that nothing outside yourself can hinder you.

Second, that you locate your good solely in the disposition to justice and the practice of it, and that you let your desire end there.

**Book 5, Section 35**

If this is neither my own badness nor the result of my own badness, and if the common good is not injured, why am I troubled by it?

And where is the harm to the common good?

**Book 5, Section 36**

Do not be swept away by appearances. Give help to others according to your ability. But if they suffer a loss in indifferent things—like wealth or status—do not imagine they have been truly harmed. It is a bad habit to think so.

Be like the old man in the play who asks for the child's spinning top. He treats the moment seriously for the child's sake, but he never forgets that it is just a toy.

When you are shouting from the public platform, have you forgotten the true value of what you seek? "But the people take these things seriously," you say. Must you then become a fool just because they are?

True good fortune is what a man assigns to himself. And good fortune is simply this: a good disposition, good impulses, and good actions.

## Book 6

### Book 6, Section 1

The substance of the universe is docile and pliable. The Reason that governs it has no motive to do wrong, for it contains no malice. It does no harm to anything, and nothing is hurt by it.

All things come into being and fulfill their purpose according to its direction.

### Book 6, Section 2

Let it make no difference to you whether you are shivering with cold or comfortably warm, so long as you are doing your duty.

Do not worry whether you are drowsy or well-rested, whether you are being criticized or praised, or whether you are dying or doing something else.

For dying, too, is one of the acts of life. Even in this last act, it is sufficient to simply do the work at hand well.

### Book 6, Section 3

Look within. Let neither the unique quality nor the true value of anything escape you.

### Book 6, Section 4

All existing things will soon change.

They will either be reduced to vapor—if indeed all substance is one—or they will be scattered and dispersed.

### Book 6, Section 5

The governing Reason knows its own disposition. It understands exactly what it is doing, and it knows the material it is working upon.

### Book 6, Section 6

The best revenge is not to become like the one who wronged you.

### Book 6, Section 7

Find your delight and your rest in one thing only: to pass from one act of service to another, keeping God always in your mind.

### Book 6, Section 8

The ruling power within is the force that rouses and steers itself. It makes itself whatever it wishes to be.

And it makes everything that happens appear to it exactly as it wills.

### Book 6, Section 9

Every single thing is accomplished in conformity with the nature of the universe.

It is certainly not governed by any other nature—neither one that surrounds it from the outside, nor one enclosed within it, nor one that stands apart from it.

### **Book 6, Section 10**

The universe is either a chaotic confusion—a tangled web that eventually scatters apart—or it is a unity, held together by order and providence.

If it is the former, why should I wish to linger in such a random, aimless mess? Why should I care about anything other than how I will eventually turn back to dust? And why should I be disturbed? No matter what I do, the scattering is inevitable.

But if the latter is true, then I bow in reverence. I stand firm, and I put my trust in the Power that governs all.

### **Book 6, Section 11**

When circumstances force you to be disturbed, return to yourself as quickly as possible. Do not remain out of tune longer than you must.

You will gain greater mastery over the harmony by constantly returning to it.

### **Book 6, Section 12**

If you had both a stepmother and a mother at the same time, you would be dutiful to your stepmother, but your constant return would be to your mother.

Let the Court be your stepmother and Philosophy your mother. Return to Philosophy often and find your rest in her. For it is only through her that life at Court becomes tolerable to you, and you become tolerable to those around you.

### **Book 6, Section 13**

When you have meat and other delicacies before you, train your imagination to see them for what they are: this is the dead body of a fish, this the dead body of a bird, and this the carcass of a pig.

And again: this fine Falernian wine is only a little grape juice; this purple robe is but sheep's wool dyed with the blood of a shellfish. And as for sexual union, it is merely the friction of an internal organ and the spasmodic excretion of mucus.

How useful it is to strike at the heart of things with these realistic impressions! They penetrate the object and expose its true nature.

You should use this method throughout your life. Whenever things appear most worthy of your approval, strip them naked. Behold their cheapness and strip away the fine words that dress them up. For outward show is a great perverter of reason. It cheats you most when you are most sure that you are engaged in something noble.

Remember what Crates said about Xenocrates himself.

### **Book 6, Section 14**

Most of the things the multitude admires belong to the most general categories. They value things held together merely by cohesion or natural organization—stones, wood, fig trees, vines, and olives.

Those who are a little more reasonable admire things held together by a living soul—flocks and herds. Those who are considered more cultivated admire things guided by a rational mind, yet not the universal reason. They admire only technical skill, artistic ability, or the possession of many skilled slaves.

But the man who reveres the rational soul—the universal and social soul—cares for none of these things. Above all else, he strives to keep his own mind in a state of reason and social harmony, and to cooperate with all his kin to this end.

### **Book 6, Section 15**

Some things are hurrying into existence, and others are hurrying out of it. Even as a thing is born, part of it is already dead. The constant flow of change renews the world, just as the unbroken passage of time keeps the infinite age of the universe always fresh.

In this river, where nothing stands still, what is there to prize? To set your heart on any of these passing things is like falling in love with a sparrow as it flies past—one moment it is before your eyes, and the next it is gone.

Life itself is nothing more than the exhalation of blood and the breathing of air. There is no difference between the breath you draw and release at this very moment, and the act of giving back your whole power of breathing to the element from which you first drew it at your birth.

### **Book 6, Section 16**

What is truly worth valuing? Not respiration, for we share that with beasts. Not the reception of sense impressions, nor being pulled by the strings of impulse, nor even eating—which is no better than voiding the waste. What, then, remains? Applause? No. Public praise is nothing but the idle clatter of tongues. Cast away the vanity called fame. Only this remains to be prized: to govern your own movement and restraint in conformity with your rational nature. This is the goal of every art and craft. The vine-dresser, the horse-trainer, the dog-keeper all work toward this: making what they tend fit for its purpose. What else is the aim of all education?

Here, then, is what you should truly value. If this goes well with you, you will seek nothing more. But if you keep valuing these other things, you will never be free. You will be full of envy, suspicion, and scheming against those who possess what you desire. The man who needs external goods is necessarily in a state of turmoil, often blaming the gods.

But if you revere and honor your own mind, you will be content with yourself, in harmony with society, and at peace with the gods—grateful for all they give and have ordained.

### **Book 6, Section 17**

Above, below, all around—these are the motions of the elements.

But the motion of virtue is none of these. It is something more divine. Advancing by a path that is hard to understand, it goes happily along its road.

### **Book 6, Section 18**

How strangely men act! They are unwilling to praise the people who are living right now and whom they see every day. Yet they set the highest value on being praised by posterity—by people they have never seen and never will see.

This is as foolish as being grieved because those who lived before you did not praise you.

**Book 6, Section 19**

If you find something difficult to accomplish, do not assume it is impossible for a human being.

But if a thing is possible for a man and consistent with his nature, recognize that it is attainable by you as well.

**Book 6, Section 20**

In the gymnasium someone scratches you with his nails or strikes your head—you show no resentment, take no offense, suspect no malice later. You guard against him, not as an enemy but with friendly avoidance. Act the same way in all of life: overlook much from those who oppose you, and avoid them without suspicion or hatred.

**Book 6, Section 21**

If anyone can refute me—if anyone can show me that I am thinking or acting incorrectly—I will gladly change.

I seek the truth, and the truth has never harmed anyone. The only person who is harmed is the one who persists in his deceit and ignorance.

**Book 6, Section 22**

I do my duty. That is enough.

Other things do not trouble me. For they are either things without life, things without reason, or people who have wandered astray and do not know the road.

**Book 6, Section 23**

As for animals and things without reason, use them generously and freely; for you possess reason, and they do not.

But towards human beings, since they share in reason, act in a social spirit.

In all things, call upon the gods. And do not trouble yourself about how long you will continue to do this. Even three hours spent in this frame of mind is sufficient.

**Book 6, Section 24**

Alexander the Macedonian and his mule driver were reduced to the same state by death.

They were either received back into the same generative principle of the universe, or they were scattered alike among the atoms.

**Book 6, Section 25**

Consider how many distinct things are happening within you at this very instant—both in your body and in your soul.

If you grasp this, you will not be surprised that many more things—indeed, all things that come to pass—can exist simultaneously in that One and Whole which we call the Universe.

**Book 6, Section 26**

If someone asks you how to spell the name "Antoninus," do you shout the letters? If they become angry, do you become angry in return? Or do you simply continue to list the letters, one by one, with composure?

Remember this in your daily life: every duty is made up of a sum of separate acts. You must observe these parts and go straight through to the end. Finish what is set before you methodically, without becoming angry at those who are angry with you.

**Book 6, Section 27**

It is a cruel thing to forbid men from striving after what they believe is suitable and beneficial to them. Yet, in a way, you deny them this liberty whenever you grow angry at their bad behavior.

For they are drawn to these actions because they truly believe them to be useful and good.

"But they are mistaken," you say.

Then teach them and show them their error. Do not be angry.

**Book 6, Section 28**

Death is a release from the impressions of the senses, and from the impulses that jerk us around like puppets.

It is a cessation of the restless wandering of the mind, and a discharge from our hard service to the flesh.

**Book 6, Section 29**

It is a disgrace for the soul to be the first to give up in this life, while the body still holds out.

**Book 6, Section 30**

Take care not to be Caesarized—do not be dyed with that imperial stain. For such corruptions happen. Keep yourself simple, good, pure, dignified, unaffected, a friend of justice, and vigorous in proper work. Strive to remain the man that philosophy wished to make you. Revere the gods and help mankind.

Life is short—its only harvest is a righteous disposition and social acts.

Do everything as a disciple of Antoninus Pius. Remember his constancy in every reasonable act; his piety, his serenity, and his contempt for empty fame. He made the meticulous effort to understand affairs thoroughly, never dismissing a matter until he had examined and grasped it completely.

Recall how he bore unjust criticism without retaliating; how he was never hasty, nor listened to slander; and how little sufficed him—lodging, bed, clothing, and food. He was constant in friendship, tolerated frank opposition, and always took pleasure when anyone showed him a better way.

Imitate all this, so that your last hour may find you with as clear a conscience as his.

**Book 6, Section 31**

Return to your sober senses and call yourself back. Shake off your sleep and realize that what troubled you were merely dreams.

Now that you are awake again, look at these things before you exactly as you looked at those dreams.

**Book 6, Section 32**

I consist of a little body and a soul. To the body, all things are indifferent, for it possesses no power to distinguish them.

To the mind, everything is indifferent except its own activities. Whatever belongs to its own activity is within its power. Yet even here, only the present activity matters. For the actions of the past and the actions of the future are, at this moment, indifferent to it.

**Book 6, Section 33**

So long as the foot does the work of the foot, and the hand the work of the hand, their labor is not contrary to nature.

So it is with a man. As long as he does the work of a man, his labor is not contrary to nature.

And if it is not contrary to nature, it is no evil to him.

**Book 6, Section 34**

Think of the pleasures enjoyed by robbers, parricides, and tyrants.

**Book 6, Section 35**

Do you not see how craftsmen behave? They may accommodate the unskilled to a certain point, but they cling tenaciously to the principles of their art and refuse to depart from them.

Is it not strange, then, that the architect and the physician respect the logic of their trades more than man respects his own reason? Especially when this reason is a possession he shares with the gods?

**Book 6, Section 36**

Asia and Europe are mere corners of the universe. The whole ocean is but a drop. Mount Athos is a clod of earth. The entire present moment is a single point in eternity. All things are small, changeable, and perishable.

Everything proceeds from that one source—the universal ruling power—either directly or by way of necessary consequence.

Therefore, the gaping jaws of the lion, poison, and every harmful thing—like thorns or mud—are merely after-products of what is grand and beautiful. Do not imagine that they are alien to the power you revere; rather, reflect on the single fountain from which all things flow.

**Book 6, Section 37**

He who sees the present has seen everything. He has seen all that has occurred from all eternity, and all that will occur for time without end.

For all things are of one nature and one form.

### **Book 6, Section 38**

Meditate often on the bond that unites all things in the universe, and on their relationship to one another.

For all things are woven together, and because of this, they feel a kind of friendship for one another. One thing follows another in due order—driven by the movement of the whole, the shared spirit of the parts, and the unity of all substance.

### **Book 6, Section 39**

Adapt yourself to the things with which your lot has been cast.

And as for the people you are destined to live with—love them, but love them truly.

### **Book 6, Section 40**

Every instrument, tool, or vessel is in good condition if it does the work it was designed to do—even though the maker is not present.

But for things held together by nature, the case is different. The power that created them resides within them and abides there.

Therefore, you must revere this power all the more. Believe that if you live and act according to its will, everything in you will be in harmony with intelligence. Just as in the universe, all things are in harmony with the universal mind.

### **Book 6, Section 41**

If you regard anything not in your own power as good or evil for yourself, it is inevitable that when such a thing befalls you, you will blame the gods and hate men—those who are the actual or supposed cause of the misfortune.

In fact, many injustices we commit stem from setting value on such things. But if we judge as good and evil only those things in our power, there is no occasion left for accusing the gods or standing in enmity toward men.

### **Book 6, Section 42**

We are all working together toward a single end. Some of us work with knowledge and intent; others do not know what they are doing. As Heraclitus said, even sleepers are laborers and fellow-workers in the great operations of the world.

Men cooperate in different ways. Surprisingly, even the man who complains—the one who tries to resist and hinder the course of nature—cooperates abundantly. For the universe had need even of such men as these.

It remains, then, for you to decide which group you will join. The Power that rules all things will certainly make use of you regardless; it will assign you a place among its fellow-workers. But see to it that you do not become what Chrysippus called the cheap and ridiculous line in the play.

### **Book 6, Section 43**

Does the sun try to do the work of the rain? Does Asclepius try to do the work of the Fruit-Bearer?

And what of the individual stars? Are they not all different, yet all working together toward the same end?

### **Book 6, Section 44**

If the gods have taken counsel about me and my fate, they have doubtless taken good counsel. It is hard to imagine a god without wisdom. And what motive could they have to harm me? What profit would that bring to them or to the universe, which is their special care?

But if they have not taken counsel about me in particular, they have certainly done so for the whole. And I am bound to welcome and accept those things that happen to me as a consequence of that general ordinance.

But suppose they take no counsel at all—an impious belief, for if it were true, we should stop our sacrifices, prayers, and oaths. But if they do not care about individual concerns, it is still lawful for me to deliberate about myself. And my deliberation is about my own interest.

Now, what is to every man's interest is that which agrees with his own constitution and nature. My nature is rational and social. As Antoninus, my city and country is Rome. As a man, it is the world. Whatever is useful to these communities is the only thing useful to me.

### **Book 6, Section 45**

Whatever happens to the individual is for the benefit of the Whole. This thought alone should be enough to satisfy you.

But if you observe closely, you will see another general truth: what brings advantage to one man usually brings advantage to others.

However, you must take the word "advantage" here in its common sense—referring to those intermediate things, like health or wealth, which are neither virtues nor vices.

### **Book 6, Section 46**

Think of the entertainment in the amphitheatre. The constant repetition of the same sights makes the spectacle tedious.

It is exactly the same in the whole of life. Up and down, everything is the same, springing from the same causes.

How long, then?

### **Book 6, Section 47**

Think continually of all the men who are dead and gone—men of every profession, every nation, and every rank. Follow the thought down to Philistion, Phoebus, and Origanion. Now pass on to the other generations.

We must all move to that place where so many great orators and noble philosophers have gone—Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Socrates. Think of the heroes of old, the generals who followed

them, and the tyrants. Think of Eudoxus, Hipparchus, Archimedes, and other men of sharp intellect, great minds, and hard labor. Think even of those like Menippus, who mocked this perishable and ephemeral life.

Consider that all of them have long since been laid in the ground. What harm is this to them? And what harm is it to those whose names are altogether unknown?

One thing here is worth a great deal: to pass your life in truth and justice, maintaining a kind heart even toward liars and unjust men.

### **Book 6, Section 48**

When you wish to delight yourself, think of the virtues of those who live with you. Consider the energy of one, the modesty of another, the generosity of a third, and some other good quality of a fourth.

For nothing delights the mind so much as seeing examples of virtue exhibited in the characters of those around us—especially when they present themselves in abundance. Therefore, keep them always before your eyes.

### **Book 6, Section 49**

You are not dissatisfied that you weigh only a certain amount and not three hundred pounds.

Why, then, are you dissatisfied that you must live only so many years and no more?

Just as you are content with the amount of substance assigned to you, be content with the time.

### **Book 6, Section 50**

Try to persuade them. But if the principles of justice demand it, act—even against their will.

If, however, someone stands in your way with force, shift to contentment and tranquility. Use this very obstacle as an opportunity to exercise a different virtue.

Remember that your attempt was always conditional. You did not aim at the impossible. What, then, was your aim? Simply to make the effort. In this, you have succeeded. The intent is fulfilled, even if the action is blocked.

### **Book 6, Section 51**

The ambitious man places his good in the action of another.

The pleasure-seeker places it in his own sensations.

But the man of understanding places his good in his own action.

### **Book 6, Section 52**

It is in your power to have no opinion about a thing and not to be disturbed in your soul.

For things themselves have no natural power to form our judgments.

**Book 6, Section 53**

Accustom yourself to attend carefully to what is said by another. As far as possible, enter into the speaker's mind.

**Book 6, Section 54**

That which is not good for the swarm is not good for the bee.

**Book 6, Section 55**

If the sailors abuse the helmsman, or the sick abuse the doctor, will they listen to anyone else?

And if they do not listen, how can the helmsman secure the safety of the ship, or the doctor the health of the patient?

**Book 6, Section 56**

How many of those who came into the world with me have already left it!

**Book 6, Section 57**

To the jaundiced, honey tastes bitter. To the victim of a mad dog, water is terrifying. To a child, a ball is a treasure.

Why, then, are you angry?

Do you believe that false opinion has less power over the mind than bile has over the body, or poison over the veins?

**Book 6, Section 58**

No one can prevent you from living according to the reason of your own nature.

Nothing will happen to you that is contrary to the reason of the universal nature.

**Book 6, Section 59**

Consider the people whom men strive to please. Consider the objects they wish to gain, and the methods they employ to gain them.

Think how soon time will cover all things, and how many things it has covered already.

## **Book 7**

### **Book 7, Section 1**

What is vice? It is something you have seen often.

On every occasion that something happens to trouble you, keep this thought ready: "I have seen this before."

Look up, look down. Everywhere you will find the same things. The histories of ancient times, the middle ages, and our own day are filled with them. Cities and households are filled with them right now.

There is nothing new. All things are familiar, and all things are fleeting.

### **Book 7, Section 2**

How can your principles die? Only if the thoughts that correspond to them are extinguished. And it is always in your power to fan those embers back into a flame.

I am able to form the right opinion about this event. If I can do that, why am I disturbed? What is outside my mind has absolutely no relation to my mind. Realize this, and you stand upright.

You have the power to live your life over again. Simply look at things now as you used to look at them. In this lies the renewal of your life.

### **Book 7, Section 3**

Think about the pageantry of public life, the drama of the stage, the amassing of flocks and herds, and the posturing of sham battles.

What are they really?

They are a bone thrown to puppies. A crumb tossed into a fishpond. The heavy labor of ants dragging their burdens. The scurrying of terrified mice. The movements of puppets jerked by strings.

You must take your place amidst all this with good humor and without arrogance. But keep this truth constantly in mind: a man is worth exactly as much as the things he takes seriously.

### **Book 7, Section 4**

In conversation, attend strictly to what is said. In every movement, observe closely what is being done.

With actions, look immediately to the end they serve. With words, make sure you grasp the true meaning.

### **Book 7, Section 5**

Is my understanding sufficient for this task or not?

If it is sufficient, I use it as an instrument given to me by nature.

If it is not, I step aside for someone who can do the work better—unless duty forbids me to withdraw. In that case, I do the best I can, calling on another to help me do what is now reasonable and useful for the common good.

For whatever I do, whether alone or with another, must be directed to this single end: that it is useful and suitable for society.

**Book 7, Section 6**

How many who were once celebrated by fame have now been surrendered to oblivion?

And how many who sang their praises are long since dead?

**Book 7, Section 7**

Do not be ashamed to be helped. It is your duty to achieve the task at hand, like a soldier storming a wall.

What if you are lame and cannot climb the ramparts alone, yet can accomplish it with the aid of another?

**Book 7, Section 8**

Do not let the future disturb you. You will come to it, if you must, armed with the same reason that you now employ against the present.

**Book 7, Section 9**

All things are woven together, and the bond is sacred. There is hardly anything unconnected to another thing.

All things are coordinated and combine to form the same ordered universe. For there is one universe made up of all things, and one God who pervades all things. There is one substance, one law, and one reason common to all intelligent beings.

And there is one truth—if indeed there is one perfection for all beings who share the same origin and the same reason.

**Book 7, Section 10**

Everything material soon vanishes into the universal substance. Every cause is swiftly taken back into the universal reason. And the memory of everything is quickly overwhelmed by eternity.

**Book 7, Section 11**

For a rational being, the same act is according to nature and according to reason.

**Book 7, Section 12**

Be upright, or be made upright.

**Book 7, Section 13**

Just as the physical limbs are united in a single body, so are rational beings. Though we are separated by individual existence, we are constituted for a single cooperation.

This truth will strike you more forcibly if you say to yourself: "I am a limb of the rational system."

If you merely say, "I am a part," you do not yet love mankind from the heart. Doing good does not yet delight you for its own sake. You do it merely as a propriety—as a bare duty—rather than as a direct kindness to yourself.

#### **Book 7, Section 14**

Let external events fall upon whatever part of me can feel them. Let those parts complain if they choose.

But as for me, unless I judge this occurrence to be an evil, I am not injured. And it is in my power to refuse that judgment.

#### **Book 7, Section 15**

Whatever anyone does or says, I must be good.

It is just as if the gold, or the emerald, or the purple were constantly repeating to itself: "Whatever anyone does or says, I must be an emerald and keep my color."

#### **Book 7, Section 16**

The ruling faculty does not disturb itself. It does not frighten itself or drive itself into craving.

If anyone else can frighten or pain it, let them try. But the mind itself will not, by its own opinion, turn itself toward such things.

Let the body take care, if it can, that it suffers nothing; and if it does suffer, let it speak. But the soul itself—the very thing that is subject to fear and pain, the thing that forms opinions about them—will suffer nothing, for it will never deviate into such a judgment.

The ruling principle is self-sufficient. It wants nothing unless it creates a want for itself. Therefore, it is free from all disturbance and obstruction—unless it disturbs and obstructs itself.

#### **Book 7, Section 17**

Happiness is a good spirit—a good mind.

What, then, are you doing here, Imagination? Go away! I swear by the gods, go back the way you came, for I have no need of you.

You have come only because it is your old habit. I am not angry with you; just go.

#### **Book 7, Section 18**

Is anyone afraid of change? Why? What can take place without it? What is more pleasing or more suitable to the nature of the universe?

Can you take a hot bath unless the wood undergoes a change? Can you be nourished unless your food undergoes a change? Can anything useful be accomplished without change?

Do you not see, then, that for you to undergo change is just the same—and equally necessary for the nature of the universe?

**Book 7, Section 19**

Through the substance of the universe, all particular bodies are swept along as if in a rushing torrent. They are united with the whole and work together with it, just as the limbs of our body work with one another.

How many men like Chrysippus, Socrates, and Epictetus has time already swallowed up?

Let this thought strike you regarding every man and every thing you have to deal with.

**Book 7, Section 20**

One thing only troubles me: that I might do something which the constitution of man does not allow.

Or that I might do it in a way it does not allow, or at a time it does not allow.

**Book 7, Section 21**

The time is near when you will forget everything.

And the time is near when everything will forget you.

**Book 7, Section 22**

It is a uniquely human quality to love even those who wrong you.

You will feel this love if you realize that they are your kin, and that they act out of ignorance and against their own will.

Reflect also that in a very short time, both you and he will be dead.

But above all, remember that he has done you no harm. For he has not made your governing mind any worse than it was before.

**Book 7, Section 23**

The Universal Nature works with the substance of all things as if it were wax.

Now it molds a horse; then it melts that down and uses the material for a tree; then for a man; then for something else. Each of these things exists for only a brief moment.

But it is no hardship for the vessel to be taken apart—just as it was no hardship for it to be put together.

**Book 7, Section 24**

An angry scowl is completely unnatural. When you assume it often, all beauty begins to die. Eventually, it is extinguished so completely that it can never be rekindled.

Let this physical fact be a proof to you that anger is contrary to reason. For if the sense of moral shame is lost, what reason is left for living?

**Book 7, Section 25**

Nature, which governs the whole, will soon change everything you see.

It will take their substance and use it to make other things. And then, from their substance, it will make others again.

It does this so that the world may be ever new.

### **Book 7, Section 26**

When a man wrongs you, consider immediately: what was his judgment of good and evil when he did it?

Once you understand this, you will pity him. You will no longer wonder at him, and you will no longer be angry.

For perhaps you yourself still hold the same view of "the good" as he does—or one very like it. In that case, you must excuse him. But if you no longer judge such things to be good or evil, you will be all the more ready to show kindness to one who is still lost in error.

### **Book 7, Section 27**

Do not let your mind dwell on what you lack. Instead, look at the things you possess, and select the best among them.

Reflect on how eagerly you would chase them if they were not already yours.

But at the same time, stay vigilant. Do not let your delight in them turn into a habit of dependence. Do not value them so highly that you would be crushed if they were ever taken away.

### **Book 7, Section 28**

Retire into yourself.

The rational ruling power has this nature: it is content with itself when it does what is just, and in doing so, it secures its own tranquility.

### **Book 7, Section 29**

Wipe out the imagination. Stop the pulling of the strings. Confine yourself to the present.

Understand clearly what is happening, whether to you or to another. Divide and analyze every object into the material and the cause.

Think of your last hour.

Let the wrong done by another stay exactly where the wrong was done.

### **Book 7, Section 30**

Direct your attention to what is said.

Let your mind penetrate into the things that are happening and the causes that produce them.

### **Book 7, Section 31**

Adorn yourself with simplicity and modesty, and with indifference toward the things that lie between virtue and vice.

Love mankind. Follow God.

The poet says that Law rules all. And it is enough to remember that: Law rules all.

### **Book 7, Section 32**

Concerning death:

If the universe is merely a concourse of atoms, death is a scattering.

If it is a unity, death is either extinction or a change of state.

### **Book 7, Section 33**

Concerning pain:

If it is intolerable, it destroys us. If it lasts, it is bearable.

The mind maintains its own tranquility by retiring into itself, and the ruling faculty is not made worse. As for the parts of the body that are harmed by the pain—let them complain, if they can.

### **Book 7, Section 34**

Concerning fame: look at the minds of those who seek it. Observe what they are, what they avoid, and what they pursue.

And reflect on this: just as heaps of sand drift one upon another, hiding the layers beneath, so in life, the events of the past are quickly covered by the events that follow.

### **Book 7, Section 35**

This is a saying from Plato:

The man who has true grandeur of soul, and who contemplates all time and all substance—do you suppose he considers human life to be a great matter?

"It is not possible," the dialogue answers.

"Such a man, then, will deem death to be no evil?"

"Certainly not."

### **Book 7, Section 36**

It is a saying of Antisthenes: It is royal to do good and receive abuse for it.

### **Book 7, Section 37**

It is a shameful thing that the countenance is so perfectly obedient to the mind, regulating and composing itself as the mind commands, and yet for the mind not to be able to regulate and compose itself by its own command.

**Book 7, Section 38**

It is useless to vex ourselves at things, for they care nothing about our anger.

**Book 7, Section 39**

To the immortal gods and to us, your fellow mortals, give cause for rejoicing.

**Book 7, Section 40**

Life must be reaped like the ripe ears of corn: one man is born, and another dies.

**Book 7, Section 41**

If the gods care not for me and for my children, there is a reason for it.

**Book 7, Section 42**

The good is with me, and the just.

**Book 7, Section 43**

Do not join others in their weeping, and avoid all violent emotion.

**Book 7, Section 44**

This is a saying from Plato:

"I would give this man a simple and just answer: You are mistaken if you think a man of any worth should calculate the risks of living and dying."

"He should look to this one thing in all that he does: Is he acting justly or unjustly? Is he performing the works of a good man or a wicked man?"

**Book 7, Section 45**

"Men of Athens, the truth is this: Wherever a man has taken his post, believing it to be best, or wherever he has been stationed by his commander, there he must stay and face the danger.

He must weigh neither death nor anything else against the disgrace of desertion."

**Book 7, Section 46**

But consider this, my friend: perhaps true nobility and goodness are not about saving your life or being saved.

A man who is truly a man does not calculate the span of his days. He does not cling desperately to life. He entrusts these matters to the gods and accepts the old saying that "no man can escape his destiny."

His only concern is this: how to live the time he has left in the best way possible.

**Book 7, Section 47**

Watch the courses of the stars as if you were running along with them.

Constantly consider how the elements shift and change into one another. For thoughts like these wash away the filth of our life on earth.

**Book 7, Section 48**

This is a fine thought from Plato: He who discourses on men should look at earthly things as if viewing them from some high place.

Look down on them: the assemblies, the armies, the farms. Look at the marriages and the divorces, the births and the deaths. Look at the noise of the law courts and the silence of the deserts. Look at the foreign nations, the festivals, the funerals, and the markets.

It is a medley of all things—a mixture of opposites that somehow creates a perfect order.

**Book 7, Section 49**

Consider the past, and the rise and fall of so many empires. From this, you can foresee the future.

For it will certainly be of the same nature; it cannot break the rhythm of the events occurring now.

Therefore, to have witnessed human life for forty years is the same as witnessing it for ten thousand. For what more will you see?

**Book 7, Section 50**

That which springs from earth returns to earth. But that which springs from heavenly seed returns to the heavenly realms.

This means one of two things: either the disentangling of the intricate knot of atoms, or the simple scattering of the unfeeling elements.

**Book 7, Section 51**

With foods and drinks and cunning magic arts, men attempt to divert the channel and escape from death.

But the gale which heaven has sent upon us—we must endure it, and toil without complaint.

**Book 7, Section 52**

Another may be more skilled than you at wrestling.

But he is not more generous in spirit, more modest, better prepared for life's accidents, or more gentle toward the faults of his neighbors.

**Book 7, Section 53**

Wherever a work can be done in agreement with the Reason that is common to both gods and men, there we have nothing to fear.

For if we are able to find success in an activity that aligns with our own nature, we need suspect no harm.

**Book 7, Section 54**

Everywhere and at all times, it is in your power to accept your present lot with reverence.

It is in your power to deal justly with the people around you.

And it is in your power to scrutinize your current thoughts, ensuring that no false impression steals into your mind without being fully understood.

### **Book 7, Section 55**

Do not look around at the ruling principles of others. Look straight ahead to where nature is leading you—both the universal nature through what happens to you, and your own nature through what must be done by you.

Every being must act according to its constitution. And the first principle of man's constitution is the social.

The second is to resist the persuasions of the body. It is the peculiar office of the rational mind to isolate itself and never be overpowered by the movements of the senses or the appetites, for both are animalistic. The intelligent mind claims superiority and does not permit itself to be mastered by them. And rightly so, for it is formed by nature to use all of them.

The third element in the rational constitution is freedom from rashness and error. Let the ruling principle hold fast to these things and go straight on, and it will possess what is its own.

### **Book 7, Section 56**

Consider yourself dead. You have completed your life up to this moment.

Now, take what is left—this surplus time—and live it according to nature.

### **Book 7, Section 57**

Love only that which happens to you, and is spun for you by fate. For what could be more suitable to you than that?

### **Book 7, Section 58**

In every event, keep before your eyes those to whom the same thing happened long ago. They were vexed, they were shocked, they railed against it.

And where are they now? Nowhere.

Why then do you choose to follow their example? Leave these agitations to those who cause them and those who are moved by them. Focus entirely on how to make proper use of the event.

For it will be raw material for you. You will use it well. Only attend to yourself, and resolve to be a good man in every action. And remember: the external event is indifferent; your conduct is what matters.

### **Book 7, Section 59**

Look within. Within is the fountain of good, and it will ever bubble up, if only you will ever dig.

### **Book 7, Section 60**

The body should be held firm, showing no irregularity in its movement or its posture.

Just as the mind brings an expression of intelligence and composure to the face, it should demand the same discipline from the whole body.

But ensure that all of this is done without affectation.

### **Book 7, Section 61**

The art of life is more like the wrestler's art than the dancer's.

It requires of us to stand ready and firm to meet assaults which are sudden and unexpected.

### **Book 7, Section 62**

Constantly observe the kind of people whose approval you wish to have, and what ruling principles guide their souls.

If you do this, you will neither blame those who offend you by mistake, nor will you require their commendation when you see the shallow source of their opinions and desires.

### **Book 7, Section 63**

No soul loses truth willingly. The same holds for justice, temperance, kindness, and all virtues of this kind. Keep this always in mind, and you will be gentler with everyone.

### **Book 7, Section 64**

In every pain, let this thought be present: there is no dishonor in it. It does not make the governing intelligence worse, for it destroys neither its rational nor its social nature.

In most cases, the saying of Epicurus should aid you: "Pain is neither unbearable nor eternal." This holds true, provided you remember its limits and do not add to it with your imagination.

Remember, too, that many things we find disagreeable are actually pain in disguise—such as drowsiness, scorching heat, or the loss of appetite. When you are discontented with any of these, say to yourself: "I am surrendering to pain."

### **Book 7, Section 65**

Take care that you never feel toward the inhuman what the inhuman feel toward mankind.

### **Book 7, Section 66**

How do we know that Telauges was not superior in character to Socrates? It is not enough that Socrates died a more glorious death, or argued more skillfully with the sophists, or endured the freezing nights with greater resilience. It is not enough that he bravely refused to arrest Leon of Salamis, or that he walked the streets with a proud swagger—if indeed that report is true.

The only thing that matters is what sort of soul he had. Was he satisfied to be just toward men and pious toward the gods? Did he refrain from being vexed by the wickedness of others or enslaving himself to their ignorance? Did he accept whatever fell to his lot from the whole without regarding it as strange or intolerable? And finally, did he keep his mind distinct, refusing to let it be swayed by the sensations of the miserable flesh?

### **Book 7, Section 67**

Nature has not blended the mind with the body so intimately that you cannot draw a line between them and keep what is yours under your own control.

Remember this always: it is very possible to be a godlike man and yet go unrecognized by anyone.

Remember also that a happy life depends on very few things. And just because you have given up hope of becoming a great logician or a scientist, do not despair of being free, modest, social, and obedient to God.

### **Book 7, Section 68**

It is in your power to live free and at peace, even if the whole world shouts against you, and even if wild beasts tear apart the limbs of this clay body that surrounds you.

For what stops the mind from keeping its calm? It can still judge what is happening correctly and make use of what is thrown its way.

Let your judgment say to the event: "This is what you are in reality, no matter how you appear to others."

Let your practice say to the opportunity: "You are exactly what I was looking for."

For whatever happens is always raw material for virtue. It is fuel for the work of a man or a god. Nothing is new or hard to handle; it is familiar and ready for use.

### **Book 7, Section 69**

The perfection of moral character consists in this: in passing every day as if it were the last.

Do this without being violently excited, without being sluggish, and without playing the hypocrite.

### **Book 7, Section 70**

The gods are immortal. Yet they do not lose patience, even though they must endure so many worthless men for such a vast span of time. More than that—they even care for them and help them in all ways.

But you—who are destined to cease at any moment—are you already weary of enduring the bad?

And this, when you are one of them yourself?

### **Book 7, Section 71**

It is a ridiculous thing not to flee from your own vice, which is possible, but to try to flee from the vice of others, which is impossible.

### **Book 7, Section 72**

Whatever the rational and social faculty encounters that contributes neither to intelligence nor to the common good, it justly judges to be inferior to its own standard.

### **Book 7, Section 73**

When you have done a good act and another has received the benefit, why do you still look for a third thing besides these, as fools do?

Do you seek the reputation of having done a kindness? Or do you expect a return?

### **Book 7, Section 74**

No one tires of receiving a benefit.

But to act according to nature is a benefit.

Therefore, do not tire of receiving a benefit yourself by the very act of bestowing it upon others.

**Book 7, Section 75**

The Nature of the Whole moved to create the universe.

Since then, either everything that happens follows as a necessary consequence, or else the most important things—those toward which the ruling power directs its own movement—are devoid of reason.

Remember this, and you will face many difficulties with greater tranquility.

## Book 8

### Book 8, Section 1

To crush the desire for empty fame, reflect on this: it is no longer in your power to have lived your whole life as a philosopher—or even your youth. You know, and many others know, that you have fallen far short of wisdom. You are confused and disordered. It is now difficult for you even to gain the reputation of a philosopher; the very conditions of your life fight against it.

If you have truly seen where the matter lies, throw away the question of how you seem to others. Be content if you can live the rest of your life—however long or short—as your nature wills.

Focus only on what your nature requires, and let nothing else distract you. You have wandered far and wide, yet you have found happiness nowhere. Not in logic, not in wealth, not in fame, not in pleasure. Nowhere.

Where is it, then? In doing what human nature requires.

And how will you do this? By holding principles from which your impulses and actions flow. What principles? Those concerning good and evil: that nothing is good for a man unless it makes him just, temperate, courageous, and free; and nothing is bad unless it makes him the opposite.

### Book 8, Section 2

On the occasion of every act, ask yourself: How is this with respect to me? Shall I regret it?

A little time, and I am dead, and all is gone. What more should I seek, if what I am now doing is the work of an intelligent, social being—one who lives under the same law as God?

### Book 8, Section 3

Alexander, Gaius, and Pompeius—what are they in comparison with Diogenes, Heraclitus, and Socrates?

The philosophers saw into the nature of things, understanding their causes and their matter; their ruling principles were their own. But as for those others, consider how many cares they had to manage, and to how many things they were slaves.

### Book 8, Section 4

You can burst with indignation, but they will go on doing the same things nonetheless.

### Book 8, Section 5

The main thing is this: do not be perturbed. For all things happen according to the nature of the universe, and in a little while you will be nobody and nowhere, just like Hadrian and Augustus.

Next, look steadily at the business before you and see it for what it is. Remember that it is your duty to be a good man. Do what human nature demands, and do it without swerving.

Speak what seems just to you—but let it be done with kindness, modesty, and sincerity.

### Book 8, Section 6

The nature of the universe has this constant task: to take the things which are here and move them there; to change them, take them away, and carry them elsewhere.

All things are merely change, yet we need not fear anything new. All things are familiar to us; their distribution remains the same.

### **Book 8, Section 7**

Every nature is content when it proceeds along its proper path.

A rational nature moves well when it gives assent to nothing false or uncertain; when it directs its impulses only toward the common good; when it limits its desires and aversions to things within its own power; and when it welcomes everything assigned to it by the Universal Nature.

For we are part of the Whole, just as a leaf is part of the plant. But the leaf is part of a nature that is without sense or reason and can be hindered. Human nature is part of a nature that is unhindered, intelligent, and just. This nature assigns to each—according to worth—its proper portion of time, substance, energy, activity, and circumstance.

But do not look for this equality by comparing one specific thing in one person to one specific thing in another. You must compare the whole of one with the whole of the other.

### **Book 8, Section 8**

You have no leisure to read.

But you have leisure to check your arrogance. You have leisure to rise superior to pleasure and pain. You have leisure to despise the love of fame.

And you have leisure not only to bear with the ungrateful and the stupid, but to care for them.

### **Book 8, Section 9**

Let no one ever hear you complain about life at court again.

Not even your own ears.

### **Book 8, Section 10**

Regret is a form of self-reproach for having neglected something useful. Whatever is good must be useful, and the man of virtue makes it his concern.

But no man of virtue would ever feel regret for having passed up a sensual pleasure.

Therefore, pleasure is neither good nor useful.

### **Book 8, Section 11**

When you look at a thing, ask yourself: What is it in itself, by its own proper constitution? What is its substance and material? What is its causal nature?

What work is it doing in the world? And how long is it destined to last?

### **Book 8, Section 12**

When you rise from sleep with reluctance, remind yourself: performing acts for the common good is consistent with my constitution and with human nature.

Sleep is something we share with the irrational animals. But the work that aligns with your specific nature is more truly your own. It is more suitable to you, and indeed, more pleasant.

### **Book 8, Section 13**

Constantly—and if possible, on the occasion of every impression upon your soul—apply to it the principles of Physics, Ethics, and Logic.

### **Book 8, Section 14**

When you meet anyone, immediately ask yourself: "What are this man's convictions regarding good and bad?"

For if he holds certain views about pleasure and pain, or about fame and disgrace, or life and death, it will not seem strange to me that he acts as he does. I will bear in mind that he is compelled to act this way.

### **Book 8, Section 15**

Remember that it is a shame to be surprised if a fig tree produces figs. It is just as shameful to be surprised if the world produces the events it was designed to bear.

For a physician, it is a disgrace to be shocked if a patient has a fever. For a captain, it is a disgrace to be shocked if the wind blows against him.

### **Book 8, Section 16**

Remember that changing your mind and following someone who corrects you is as free an act as discovering the truth on your own. The decision is yours, made by your own judgment and understanding.

### **Book 8, Section 17**

If the faulty action is entirely within your power to stop, why do you continue to do it? But if the action lies in the power of another, whom exactly are you blaming? Are you blaming the random flux of matter, or are you blaming the guiding intelligence of the universe? To blame either is pure madness. Therefore, the simple path is to blame no one. If you can, correct the cause of the error. If you cannot do that, at least correct the thing itself. But if you cannot even correct the thing itself, then why find fault? What is the purpose? No action should ever be undertaken without a clear, useful purpose.

### **Book 8, Section 18**

That which dies does not fall out of the universe.

If it stays here, it also changes here, and is dissolved into its proper parts—which are the elements of the universe and of yourself.

These elements change, and they do not complain.

### **Book 8, Section 19**

Everything exists for a purpose—a horse, a vine. Why are you surprised?

Even the sun will say, "I have my work to do," and so will the rest of the gods.

For what purpose, then, do you exist? To enjoy pleasure?

See if common sense can tolerate that idea.

### **Book 8, Section 20**

Nature aims at the end of a thing just as much as at its beginning and its duration.

Consider a man tossing a ball. What good does the ball gain by rising? What harm does it suffer by falling? What evil has happened when it finally hits the ground?

What good is it to the bubble while it holds together, or what harm when it bursts?

The same is true of a candle flame.

### **Book 8, Section 21**

Turn the body inside out and look at it. See what kind of thing it is. See what it becomes when it grows old, when it is sick, and when it is dead.

Short-lived are both the praiser and the praised, the one who remembers and the one who is remembered.

All of this happens in a tiny corner of this region of the world. Yet even here, people do not agree with one another—indeed, a man cannot even agree with himself.

And the whole earth is nothing but a point.

### **Book 8, Section 22**

Attend to the matter before you—whether it is an opinion, an act, or a word.

You suffer this justly. For you would rather become a good man tomorrow than be one today.

### **Book 8, Section 23**

Am I about to act? I will do it with reference to the good of mankind.

Does anything happen to me? I receive it and refer it to the gods—the universal source from which all that occurs is derived.

### **Book 8, Section 24**

Think about what bathing truly is: oil, sweat, filth, foul water—all disgusting things.

Every part of life, and everything you encounter, is much the same.

### **Book 8, Section 25**

Lucilla buried Verus, then Lucilla died. Secunda buried Maximus, then Secunda died. Epitynchanus buried Diotimus, then Epitynchanus died. Antoninus buried Faustina, then Antoninus died.

It is always the same story. Celer buried Hadrian, then Celer died.

And where are those sharp-witted men now? The seers who predicted the fates of others, or the men inflated with pride? Men like Charax, Demetrius the Platonist, and Eudaemon.

They were all creatures of a day, dead long ago. Some were forgotten the moment they breathed their last. Others became characters in a legend. Others have faded even from legend into oblivion.

Remember this: the compound that is "you" must inevitably be dissolved. Your breath will either be extinguished, or it will be removed and placed elsewhere.

### **Book 8, Section 26**

A man's joy comes from doing the work proper to a man.

And what is that work? To show goodwill to his own kind. To rise above the movements of the senses. To distinguish true impressions from plausible appearances. And to contemplate the nature of the universe and the events it brings to pass.

### **Book 8, Section 27**

You have three primary relationships. The first is to the body that surrounds you. The second is to the divine Source from which all things come. The third is to those who live with you.

### **Book 8, Section 28**

Pain is either an evil to the body—then let the body declare it—or it is an evil to the soul.

But it is in the power of the soul to maintain its own serenity and tranquility. It simply has to refuse to judge that pain is an evil.

For every judgment, impulse, desire, and aversion is located within, and no evil can climb that high.

### **Book 8, Section 29**

Wipe out your impressions. Say to yourself constantly: "It is now in my power to ensure that this soul harbors no wickedness, no desire, and no confusion at all."

"Instead, I can look at all things as they truly are, and use each one according to its value."

Remember this power that nature has given you.

### **Book 8, Section 30**

Speak both in the Senate and to every person, whoever they may be, appropriately and without any affectation.

Use sound, plain discourse.

### **Book 8, Section 31**

Think of the court of Augustus: his wife, his daughter, his descendants, his ancestors, his sister, Agrippa, his kinsmen, his intimates, his friends, Areius, Maecenas, his physicians, and his priests.

The entire court is dead.

Then turn your thoughts to others—not just to the death of individuals, but to the extinction of whole families, like the Pompeys. Consider the inscription often found on tombs: "The last of his line."

Think of the anxiety his ancestors felt to ensure they left a successor. Yet, by necessity, someone had to be the last. Here again, contemplate the death of a whole race.

### **Book 8, Section 32**

You must build your life action by action. If each step achieves its purpose as far as it is able, be content. No one can keep you from doing this.

"But something external will stand in my way."

Nothing can stand in the way of your acting with justice, self-control, and good judgment.

"But perhaps some specific practical result will be blocked."

Well, by accepting the obstacle gladly and shifting your aim to what is currently possible, a new action immediately arises to take the place of the old one. And this new action fits perfectly into the life you are building.

### **Book 8, Section 33**

Accept good fortune without arrogance, and let it go without reluctance.

### **Book 8, Section 34**

Have you ever seen a severed hand, or a foot, or a head, lying apart from the rest of the body? That is what a man makes of himself when he refuses to accept what happens, or when he separates himself from others through unsocial actions. You have deliberately cast yourself out of the natural unity. You were born a part of it, but now you have chosen to cut yourself off.

Yet here lies a beautiful, singular provision. It is entirely within your power to unite yourself again. Nature has granted this privilege to no other part of creation; once a physical limb is separated, it can never rejoin the body.

Consider the kindness with which the divine Source has honored mankind. It gave us the power never to be separated from the universal whole in the first place. And even when we have been separated, it has allowed us to return—to be grafted back in and resume our place as a vital part of the whole.

### **Book 8, Section 35**

Just as the Universal Nature has granted every rational being all its other powers, so too have we received this one.

Observe how Nature works: it takes everything that stands in its way or opposes it, adapts it, places it in the destined order, and makes it a part of itself.

In exactly the same way, the rational being can convert every hindrance into raw material for its own action, and use it to further its original design.

### **Book 8, Section 36**

Do not disturb yourself by imagining your whole life at once. Do not let your thoughts gather up all the various troubles that have happened in the past or may happen in the future.

Instead, in every present circumstance, ask yourself: "What is there in this specific matter that is unbearable and beyond endurance?"

You will be ashamed to confess it.

Remind yourself that neither the future nor the past weighs upon you, but only the present. And the burden of the present is reduced to insignificance if you isolate it. Isolate it, and then challenge your mind: are you really unable to hold out against this mere trifle?

### **Book 8, Section 37**

Do Panthea or Pergamus still sit by the tomb of Verus? Does Chabrias or Diotimus still keep watch by the tomb of Hadrian?

The idea is ridiculous.

But suppose they did sit there—would the dead be conscious of it? And if the dead were conscious, would they be pleased? And even if they were pleased, would that make the mourners immortal?

Was it not their destiny to become old women and old men, and then to die? And once they were dead, what would be left for those they mourned to do?

The whole thing is nothing but a foul smell and blood in a sack.

### **Book 8, Section 38**

If you possess sharp perception, use that skill for the purpose of sound judgment and wisdom, as the philosopher advises.

### **Book 8, Section 39**

In the nature of a rational being, I see no virtue that opposes justice. But I do see a virtue that opposes pleasure—and that is temperance.

### **Book 8, Section 40**

If you remove your opinion about what appears to cause you pain, you yourself stand in perfect safety.

"Who is this 'self'?"

It is Reason.

"But I am not Reason."

So be it. Then let Reason not trouble itself. But if some other part of you suffers, let it form its own opinion about the matter.

### **Book 8, Section 41**

A hindrance to the senses is an evil for the animal nature. A hindrance to growth is an evil for the plant. In the same way, a hindrance to the understanding is the unique evil of the intelligent nature.

Apply this to yourself. Does pain or pleasure touch you? Let the senses deal with that.

Has an obstacle blocked your path? If you aimed for your goal unconditionally, then yes, this obstacle is an injury to your rational nature. But if you accepted the possibility of hindrance from the start, you have not been harmed or stopped.

For the things that properly belong to the mind cannot be impeded by any man. Fire cannot touch the mind, nor steel, nor tyrants, nor slander. Once it has become a sphere, it remains a sphere.

#### **Book 8, Section 42**

Why should I pain myself when I have never willingly pained another?

#### **Book 8, Section 43**

Different things delight different people.

My delight is this: to keep my ruling reason sound. To turn away from no man, and from no event that befalls mankind. To look at all things with welcoming eyes, accepting each one and using it according to its true value.

#### **Book 8, Section 44**

Secure this present time for yourself.

Those who pursue fame after death do not realize that the men of tomorrow will be exactly like the men of today—the very ones you cannot bear to be around right now. And they, too, will be mortal.

What is it to you if they make a certain noise with their voices, or hold a certain opinion about you?

#### **Book 8, Section 45**

Take me and cast me wherever you wish. For even there, I shall keep my own inner divinity tranquil—that is to say, satisfied—as long as it can act according to its proper constitution.

Is this event, whatever it is, sufficient reason for my soul to suffer and become worse than it was? Should it become depressed, expansive with desire, shrinking in fear, or terrified?

What could you possibly find that is worth such degradation?

#### **Book 8, Section 46**

Nothing can happen to a man that is not natural to man. Nothing happens to an ox that is not natural to an ox, nor to a vine that is not natural to a vine, nor to a stone that is not proper to a stone.

If, then, what befalls you is both usual and natural, why are you displeased?

Universal Nature brings you nothing that you cannot bear.

#### **Book 8, Section 47**

If you are distressed by any external thing, the pain is not due to the thing itself, but to your estimate of it. And this you have the power to revoke at any moment.

But if the cause of your distress lies in your own character, who is preventing you from correcting the principles that guide you?

And if you are distressed because you are failing to perform some action that seems sound to you, why not simply do it rather than complain?

"But some insuperable obstacle stands in the way."

Then do not be distressed, for the cause of your inaction does not lie with you.

"But life is not worth living if this act is left undone."

Then depart from life contentedly, just as a man who has achieved his purpose dies—at peace with yourself, and feeling no ill will toward the obstacle that stopped you.

### **Book 8, Section 48**

Remember that the governing mind becomes invincible when it withdraws into itself and is content simply not to be forced to do what it does not wish—even if its resistance is based on nothing but stubbornness.

Consider, then, how much stronger it is when it forms its judgments with reason and careful deliberation.

Therefore, a mind free from passion is a citadel. A man has no stronger fortress in which to seek refuge and remain forever impregnable. He who has not seen this is ignorant; he who has seen it and does not fly to it is wretched.

### **Book 8, Section 49**

Say nothing more to yourself than what the first impressions report.

You have been told that someone speaks ill of you. That is the report. But that you have been injured? That is not in the report.

I see that my child is sick. I see the fact. But that he is in danger? I do not see that.

Stick to the first appearance. Add no internal commentary, and nothing can affect you. Or rather, add only this: the understanding of a man who knows the ways of the world.

### **Book 8, Section 50**

Is the cucumber bitter? Throw it away. Are there brambles in the path? Turn aside. That is all you need to know. Do not go on to demand, "Why were such things made in the world?"

Anyone who understands nature would laugh at you, just as a carpenter or a shoemaker would laugh if you complained about the shavings and scraps on their workshop floor. The difference is that the craftsman has a place outside to throw his waste. Universal Nature has no space outside herself.

The wonder of her art is that she works strictly within her own limits. Everything that seems to rot, grow old, or become useless, she transforms into herself, creating new forms from the old material. She needs no substance from the outside, and she needs no place to discard her refuse. Her own space, her own material, and her own art are enough.

**Book 8, Section 51**

Do not be sluggish in your actions, nor confused in your conversation, nor wandering in your thoughts. Let there be no inward conflict in your soul, nor any violent outpouring of emotion. Do not fill your life with so much business that you have no leisure.

Suppose they kill you, cut you to pieces, curse you. What power does any of that have to prevent your mind from remaining pure, wise, sober, and just?

If a man stands by a clear, limpid spring and curses it, the spring does not stop sending up fresh water. Even if he throws clay or filth into it, the water quickly washes it away and clears itself; it is never polluted.

How, then, do you secure such a perpetual fountain within yourself, rather than a stagnant cistern? By shaping your character every hour toward freedom, combined with kindness, simplicity, and modesty.

**Book 8, Section 52**

He who does not know what the world is does not know where he is.

He who does not know for what purpose the world exists does not know who he is, nor what the world is. And he who fails to know these things cannot even say for what purpose he himself exists.

What, then, do you think of a man who seeks the praise—or avoids the blame—of those who applaud, when those very people know neither where they are nor who they are?

**Book 8, Section 53**

Do you wish to be praised by a man who curses himself three times an hour?

Do you wish to please a man who cannot even please himself?

And does a man please himself when he regrets almost everything he does?

**Book 8, Section 54**

Do not be content merely to breathe in the air that surrounds you. From this moment on, think in harmony with the intelligence that embraces all things.

For this intelligent power is diffused everywhere. It is just as available to the man who is willing to draw it in as the air is to the man who is able to breathe.

**Book 8, Section 55**

In general, wickedness does no harm to the universe. And in particular, the wickedness of one person does no harm to another.

It harms only the one who possesses it—and he has been granted this unique privilege: he can be free of it the moment he chooses.

**Book 8, Section 56**

To my own power of choice, the free will of my neighbor is just as indifferent as his breath and his flesh.

For although we are made for the sake of one another, the ruling mind of each of us has its own independent jurisdiction. Otherwise, my neighbor's wickedness would be my own harm.

And God did not will this, to ensure that my unhappiness would never depend on another.

### **Book 8, Section 57**

The sun appears to pour itself down, and indeed, it is diffused in all directions, yet it is not exhausted. For this diffusion is actually an extension.

You can see the nature of a ray if you observe sunlight entering a darkened room through a narrow opening. It extends in a straight line until it strikes a solid body that blocks the air beyond. There the light stops; it does not slide off or fall down, but remains fixed.

Such should be the flow and diffusion of your understanding. It should not pour out and vanish, but extend. It should not crash violently against obstacles, nor should it collapse in despair. Instead, it should stand firm and illuminate whatever receives it.

As for that which refuses to transmit the light, it merely deprives itself of the radiance.

### **Book 8, Section 58**

He who fears death fears either the loss of sensation or a different kind of sensation.

But if you have no sensation, you will feel no harm. And if you acquire a different kind of sensation, you will be a different kind of living being, and you will not cease to live.

### **Book 8, Section 59**

People exist for one another. Either teach them, or bear with them.

### **Book 8, Section 60**

An arrow moves in one way, the mind in another.

The mind, even when it exercises caution, pauses to deliberate, or is occupied with deep inquiry, is nonetheless moving straight onward toward its proper object. Its goal is reached not by speed, but by intention.

### **Book 8, Section 61**

Enter into the ruling mind of every person you meet; and likewise, allow every other person to enter into your own.

## Book 9

### Book 9, Section 1

To act unjustly is to act against the divine. Universal nature made rational beings for one another—to help each other according to merit, never to harm. Whoever violates this will commit impiety against the most ancient of powers.

The liar is equally impious. Universal nature is the nature of all things that exist, and this nature is called truth—the first cause of all that is true. He who lies willingly does wrong through deception. He who lies unwittingly is still at odds with universal nature, bringing disorder to the world by fighting against its design. Such a person wars against nature itself. He has neglected the means nature gave him to distinguish false from true, and now he has lost that power.

He who pursues pleasure as good and flees pain as evil is also impious. Such a person will inevitably blame universal nature for unfair distribution—claiming it gives pleasures to the wicked and pains to the good. Moreover, whoever fears pain will fear something that must exist in the world, and this is impious. And whoever chases pleasure will not hold back from injustice, which is plainly impious.

Toward those things to which universal nature is indifferent—for she would not have made both if she were not indifferent to both—those who would follow nature must likewise be indifferent. Whoever is not neutral toward pain and pleasure, death and life, honor and dishonor, which universal nature uses with complete neutrality, clearly acts against the divine. When I say nature uses them with neutrality, I mean they happen indifferently to all beings in the chain of events that flows from the original impulse of Providence—when she conceived the principles of all that would be and set the powers of creation in motion.

### Book 9, Section 2

It would be the happiest lot to depart from mankind without having tasted lying, hypocrisy, luxury, or pride. But failing that, the next best course is to die having felt a deep revulsion for these things, rather than remaining content with them.

Or have you decided to stay and live with vice? Has experience not yet taught you to flee this pestilence?

For the corruption of the mind is a plague far worse than any infection of the air we breathe. The latter destroys you only as an animal; the former destroys you as a human being.

### Book 9, Section 3

Do not despise death, but accept it well-content, for it is one of the things that Nature wills.

Just as it is natural to be young, to grow old, to mature, to grow teeth and beard and gray hairs, to beget, to carry a child, and to give birth—just as these are all natural operations of the seasons of your life, so also is your dissolution.

Therefore, a thoughtful man will not be careless, impatient, or scornful toward death, but will wait for it as one of the operations of Nature. Just as you wait for the child to emerge from your wife's womb, so wait for the hour when your soul shall slip out of this envelope.

But if you need a simpler comfort to reach your heart, consider this: nothing will make you more willing to part with life than observing the things you will leave behind, and the characters with whom your soul will no longer have to mingle.

It is wrong to be offended by them; indeed, it is your duty to care for them and bear with them gently. Yet you must remember that your departure is not from men who share your principles. That alone—living with kindred spirits—might have been the one thing to hold you back and bind you to life. But now, seeing the weariness that comes from the discord of living with those who do not understand, you may say:

"Come quickly, Death, lest I too forget myself."

#### **Book 9, Section 4**

He who does wrong, wrongs himself. He who acts unjustly acts against himself, for he makes himself bad.

#### **Book 9, Section 5**

He often acts unjustly who leaves a thing undone, not only he who does it.

#### **Book 9, Section 6**

Your present judgment grounded in understanding, your present action directed toward the common good, your present acceptance of everything that happens—this is enough.

#### **Book 9, Section 7**

Wipe out imagination. Check impulse. Quench desire. Keep the ruling faculty in its own power.

#### **Book 9, Section 8**

One life is distributed among the irrational animals; one intelligent soul is divided among the rational. Just as there is one earth for all things of the earth, and one light by which we see, and one air that we breathe—for all of us who have sight and life.

#### **Book 9, Section 9**

Things that share a common element naturally tend toward their own kind. The earthy gravitates toward the earth. Fluids flow together. Aerial bodies merge. It takes force to keep them apart. Fire rises to join the elemental fire above, but it is so ready to join with any fire here below that dry material is easily kindled, simply because there is less moisture to hinder the union.

In the same way, everything that shares the common rational nature moves toward its own kind—and acts even more strongly. For the superior the nature, the stronger the readiness to mingle and fuse with what is akin to it.

Accordingly, among irrational animals we find swarms, herds, the nurturing of young, and something resembling love. For there is a soul in them, and the instinct to unite is far more intense here than in plants, stones, or trees. Among rational beings, we see political communities, friendships, families, assemblies, and even during war, treaties and truces. Among beings still higher, like the stars, a kind of unity exists even across great distances. Thus, ascent in the scale of being produces sympathy even in separation.

But look at what is happening now. Only among intelligent beings has this mutual affection and inclination been forgotten. Only here do we fail to see the streams flowing together. Yet, try as

they might to escape, they are still caught and held. Nature prevails. Observe closely and you will see: you will sooner find a piece of earth touching nothing earthy than find a man completely separated from other men.

### **Book 9, Section 10**

Man, God, and the Universe all bear fruit; each produces it in its own proper season.

Although custom has restricted this term to the vine and similar plants, that matters nothing. Reason produces fruit both for the common good and for itself, and from it other things grow that are of the same nature as Reason itself.

### **Book 9, Section 11**

If you are able, correct them with teaching. If not, remember that kindness was given to you for this very purpose.

Even the gods are indulgent to such people; indeed, they sometimes help them secure health, wealth, and reputation—so gracious are they.

You can be so too. Tell me, who hinders you?

### **Book 9, Section 12**

Do not labor as one who is wretched, nor as one seeking pity or admiration.

Direct your will to one thing only: to act or to refrain from action as social reason requires.

### **Book 9, Section 13**

Today I escaped all trouble. Or rather, I cast out all trouble—for it was not outside me but within, in my own opinions.

### **Book 9, Section 14**

All things are familiar in experience, fleeting in time, and base in their substance. Everything now is just as it was in the days of those we have buried.

### **Book 9, Section 15**

Things stand outside the door, themselves by themselves, neither knowing nor declaring anything about themselves.

What is it, then, that judges them? The ruling faculty.

### **Book 9, Section 16**

For the rational social creature, good and evil lie not in what is felt, but in what is done. Virtue and vice are the same—they exist in action, not in passivity.

### **Book 9, Section 17**

For the stone thrown upward, falling is no evil. Rising is no good.

### **Book 9, Section 18**

Penetrate into their guiding principles, and you will see what sort of judges you fear—and how they judge themselves.

**Book 9, Section 19**

All things are changing. You yourself are in continuous mutation and, in a sense, decay. And so is the whole universe.

**Book 9, Section 20**

Another man's wrong-doing should be left where it lies—with him.

**Book 9, Section 21**

The termination of an activity, the cessation of an impulse or an opinion—their death, so to speak—is no evil.

Look back at the stages of your own life: childhood, youth, manhood, old age. Every change was a kind of death. Was there anything to fear in them? Now consider your life under your grandfather, then under your mother, then under your father. As you find many other transitions, changes, and endings there, ask yourself: Was any of this terrible?

If not, then neither is the termination, the cessation, and the final change of your whole life a thing to be feared.

**Book 9, Section 22**

Hasten to examine your own ruling reason, that of the Universe, and that of your neighbor.

Your own, that you may make it just.

That of the Universe, that you may remember of what you are a part.

That of your neighbor, that you may understand whether he acted out of ignorance or with knowledge—and to remember that he is your kinsman.

**Book 9, Section 23**

As you yourself are a component part of a social system, so let every act of yours be a component part of social life.

Any action of yours that does not refer, directly or indirectly, to the social end, tears your life asunder and destroys its unity. It is an act of sedition—like a man in a popular assembly who separates himself from the general concord.

**Book 9, Section 24**

Children's quarrels and games. Poor souls carrying corpses around. Such is everything—and the ceremonial processions of the dead make this plain.

**Book 9, Section 25**

Go straight to the quality of the cause; isolate the formal principle from the material and contemplate it by itself. Then, determine the longest possible time that a thing of this specific quality is naturally able to subsist.

**Book 9, Section 26**

You have endured unnumbered troubles because you were not content to let your ruling reason do the work it was formed by nature to do.

But enough of that.

### **Book 9, Section 27**

When people blame you, or hate you, or voice similar criticisms, go to their souls, penetrate within, and see what sort of people they are.

You will realize that there is no need to be anxious about what they think of you.

However, you must still be kind to them, for by nature they are your friends. Even the gods assist them in various ways—through dreams and prophecy—to help them get the things they value.

### **Book 9, Section 28**

The cycles of the universe are the same, up and down, from age to age.

Either the Universal Mind exerts itself in every particular event—in which case, accept what comes from it. Or it exerted itself once, and the rest follows by a chain of consequence. Or else, there are only atoms and indivisible elements.

In short: If there is a God, all is well. If it is only chance, do not let yourself be ruled by chance.

Soon the earth will cover us all. Then the earth itself will change, and that which succeeds it will change again, and so on forever. When one considers these successive waves of change and transformation, and the speed of their flow, one will despise everything mortal.

### **Book 9, Section 29**

The Universal Cause is like a winter torrent; it carries all things along with it.

How worthless are these little men who engage in politics and imagine they are playing the philosopher! Drivellers, all of them.

What then, O man? Do what nature requires of you now. Set yourself in motion, if you have the power, and do not look around to see if anyone is watching. Do not hope for Plato's Republic; be content if there is the slightest progress, and regard that outcome as no small matter.

For who can change the convictions of men? And without a change of conviction, what is there but the slavery of men who groan while pretending to obey?

Go on, tell me of Alexander, Philip, and Demetrius of Phalerum. It is for them to judge if they truly understood what common Nature required and trained themselves accordingly. But if they were merely playing the tragic hero, no one has condemned me to imitate them.

The work of philosophy is simple and modest. Do not seduce me into insolence and pride.

### **Book 9, Section 30**

Look down from above on the countless herds of people and their thousand ceremonies, their voyaging in storm and in calm, and the changing states of those coming into the world, those living together, and those leaving it.

Consider the life lived by others long ago, the life that will be lived after you, and the life being lived right now among foreign peoples. Think of how many do not even know your name, and

how many who do will soon forget it. Think of those who praise you today but will blame you tomorrow.

To be remembered after death is worth nothing. Reputation is nothing. In the end, it is all nothing.

### **Book 9, Section 31**

Maintain a steady calm regarding everything that happens to you from outside causes. In everything you do yourself, let justice be your guide. This means every impulse and every action must find its purpose in the common good, for this is the very essence of your nature.

### **Book 9, Section 32**

You can sweep away many of the useless things that disturb you, for they exist entirely within your own opinion. By doing this, you will immediately create vast room for your mind to expand.

Fill this space by embracing the whole Universe in your thought and contemplating the eternity of time. Observe the rapid change in every specific thing—how short the span is from birth to dissolution, and how the yawning infinity before birth is matched only by the infinite ages that follow death.

### **Book 9, Section 33**

All that you see will quickly vanish. Even those who watch these things pass away will soon perish themselves. In the end, the person who dies in extreme old age will be left in the exact same condition as the one who died in their youth.

### **Book 9, Section 34**

What are the ruling principles of these men? What are they busy with? What reasons drive their love and their respect?

Imagine their souls stripped naked before you. Look at their arrogance—how they believe that their criticism actually harms you, or that their praise actually does you good.

### **Book 9, Section 35**

What we call loss is nothing but change. Universal Nature delights in change; it is the method by which she orders all things well. Everything happening now has happened the same way from eternity, and will continue to happen the same way forever.

How then can you say that the world is mismanaged? Do you really believe that, despite the existence of so many divine powers, no way has ever been found to set things right? Is it reasonable to think that the Universe is condemned to labor under a never-ending curse of evil?

### **Book 9, Section 36**

See the corruption inherent in the material substance of everything: water, dust, bones, and filth.

What is marble? It is merely a callous of the earth.

What are gold and silver? Only common sediment and dregs.

Your fine robes are nothing but twisted animal hair, and the royal purple dye is merely the blood of a shellfish.

Everything else is of the same nature. Even the breath of life is no different—it is merely a wind, shifting constantly from one state to another.

### **Book 9, Section 37**

Enough of this miserable life, this grumbling, and these apish antics. Why are you disturbed? Is anything new happening? What astonishes you?

Is it the Cause? Look at it closely. Is it the Matter? Look at it closely. Aside from these, there is nothing. It is high time you became simpler and better in your relation to the gods.

It is all the same whether you watch this spectacle for a hundred years or for three.

### **Book 9, Section 38**

If he has done wrong, the harm is his own. But perhaps he has not done wrong.

### **Book 9, Section 39**

Either all things proceed from a single intelligent source and share a common life like a single body—in which case the part must not find fault with what is done for the benefit of the whole. Or else there are only atoms, a meaningless mixture and a final dispersion.

Why then are you disturbed? Ask your ruling reason: "Are you dead? Are you corrupt? Are you a fraud? Have you become a beast, grazing and herding with the rest?"

### **Book 9, Section 40**

Either the gods have power or they do not. If they have no power, why pray to them? But if they do have power, why not pray for this: that they free you from fearing anything, from desiring anything, from grieving over anything? Why not pray for that, rather than praying that something happen or not happen? Surely if the gods can help us at all, they can help us in this.

But you may say, "The gods have placed these things in my own power." Then is it not better to use what is in your power like a free person, rather than grasping slavishly for what is not in your power? And who told you the gods do not help us even in the things that are in our power? Begin to pray for such things and see what happens.

One man prays: "How can I sleep with that woman?" You pray: "How can I stop wanting to sleep with her?" Another prays: "How can I be rid of this person?" You pray: "How can I stop needing to be rid of him?" Another prays: "How can I not lose my child?" You pray: "How can I not fear losing him?"

Turn your prayers this way, and see what comes of it.

### **Book 9, Section 41**

Epicurus says: "In my sickness, I did not speak about my body's suffering, nor did I discuss such things with those who came to visit me. I continued my work in natural philosophy as before, focusing especially on this: how the mind, though it shares in the body's violent movements, can remain undisturbed and preserve its own good. I did not give the physicians an opportunity to act as if they were doing something grand. My life went on well and happily."

Do the same when you fall sick or face any other hardship. Never abandon philosophy, whatever happens to you. Do not engage in empty talk with the ignorant or those who know nothing of nature. Give your attention only to the work before you and to the means by which you accomplish it.

### **Book 9, Section 42**

When you are offended by someone's shamelessness, ask yourself immediately: Is it possible for shameless people not to exist in the world? It is not. Then do not demand the impossible. This person is one of those shameless ones who must exist. Apply the same thought to the knave, the deceiver, and every other wrongdoer. When you remember that such people must exist, you will be kinder toward each individual.

It is also useful to recall what virtue nature has given us to counter every wrong. Against the foolish, she has given gentleness. Against other wrongs, other resources. Besides, you can teach the one who has gone astray, for every person who errs misses their mark and has wandered from the path.

And what harm have they truly done you? You will find that none of those who anger you has done anything to make your mind worse. The only real evil and harm exist in your mind alone. Where is the strangeness in the ignorant person acting like an ignorant person? Perhaps you should blame yourself instead—for not expecting this. Your reason could have told you this would likely happen, yet you forgot, and now you are surprised.

Above all, when you blame someone for faithlessness or ingratitude, turn to yourself. The fault is plainly your own. Either you trusted someone of that character to keep faith, or when you did them a kindness, you did not do it absolutely—treating the act itself as the complete reward.

What more do you want when you have done someone a kindness? Is it not enough that you have acted according to your nature? Do you seek payment for it? This would be like the eye demanding a reward for seeing, or the feet for walking. These organs were made for their particular work. By performing it according to their nature, they fulfill their purpose. So too, man is made for kindness. When he acts kindly or works for the common good, he does what he was made for and has what is his own.

## Book 10

### Book 10, Section 1

Will you ever, my soul, be good and simple and unified—more visible than the body that surrounds you? Will you ever know the contentment of a loving heart? Will you ever be fulfilled and free from want, longing for nothing—neither living nor lifeless things for pleasure? Not craving more time to enjoy them, nor better places, nor finer climates, nor more agreeable company? Will you be satisfied with your present state and pleased with all that is around you? Will you convince yourself that you have everything, that all things come to you from the gods, and that all is well for you—and that whatever pleases them hereafter will be well, too, for the preservation of that perfect being who is good, just, and beautiful, who begets all things and holds them together, who gathers what dissolves to create others like them? Will you ever live as a fellow citizen with gods and men, finding no fault with them and earning no condemnation from them?

### Book 10, Section 2

Observe what your nature requires—simply as nature governs you. Do this freely, provided it does not harm your nature as a living being. Next, observe what your nature as a living being requires. Accept all of this, provided it does not harm your rational nature. Now remember: the rational is also social. Follow these rules and trouble yourself with nothing else.

### Book 10, Section 3

Whatever happens, you are either naturally able to bear it or you are not. If you are able, bear it without complaint as your nature allows. If you are not able, do not complain either—for it will soon consume you and then perish itself.

Remember this: you can bear anything that you convince yourself is in your interest or your duty to bear. Your opinion makes things endurable.

### Book 10, Section 4

If someone errs, teach them kindly and show them their mistake. If you cannot, blame yourself. Or do not even blame yourself.

### Book 10, Section 5

Whatever happens to you was appointed from eternity. The same web of causes that brought you into being also wove in everything that would happen to you.

### Book 10, Section 6

Whether the universe is atoms or nature, let this be established: first, that I am part of a whole governed by nature; second, that I am closely related to other parts like myself.

Remembering that I am a part, I shall not be displeased with anything assigned to me from the whole. For nothing that benefits the whole can injure the part. The whole contains nothing harmful to itself. And universal nature has this further quality: no external cause can compel it to generate anything harmful.

As long as I remember I am part of such a whole, I shall be content with everything that happens. And because I am related to parts like myself, I shall do nothing that harms the

community. Instead, I shall direct my efforts toward others like me, turn every impulse toward the common good, and avoid the opposite.

When this is done, life flows smoothly—as you may observe the life of a citizen flows smoothly when he pursues actions that benefit his fellow citizens and accepts cheerfully whatever the state assigns him.

### **Book 10, Section 7**

All parts contained in the universe must change. Call it "perish" if you like, though "change" is the truer word. Now if this were both harmful to the parts and unavoidable, the whole itself would be in poor condition—its parts forever prone to decay and constructed to fall apart. Did nature then set out to harm her own parts, making them liable to evil and bound to fall into it? Or did she not know what she was doing? Both suppositions are absurd.

But even if we drop the word "nature" and simply say things are constituted this way, it remains ridiculous to claim that parts are naturally subject to change and then be shocked or grieved when change happens—as if it were contrary to nature. Especially when things dissolve back into the very elements from which they came. Either the elements scatter, or the solid returns to earth and the spiritual to air. These elements are taken back into the universal order, which either burns and renews in cycles or endures through eternal transformations.

And do not imagine that the solid and spiritual parts of you have been yours since birth. All of this was added only yesterday or the day before—from the food you ate and the air you breathed. What changes is this recent addition, not what your mother brought forth. But even if what she bore binds you closely to your individual nature, this changes nothing of what has been said.

### **Book 10, Section 8**

You have taken these names for yourself: good, modest, truthful, thoughtful, even-tempered, magnanimous. See that you do not lose them. And if you do, return to them at once.

Remember what these words mean. Thoughtful means careful attention to each thing that appears before you, discriminating observation without distraction. Even-tempered means willing acceptance of whatever the common nature assigns you. Magnanimous means lifting your mind above the pleasurable or painful movements of the flesh, above empty fame, above death and all such things.

If you maintain these qualities—not seeking the titles from others, but truly possessing them—you will be a new person and enter a new life. To remain as you have been, torn and defiled by the same distractions, is the choice of a fool clinging to life. You would be like those half-devoured fighters in the arena who, covered in wounds and gore, beg to be kept until tomorrow—only to be thrown again to the same claws and teeth.

Anchor yourself in these few qualities. If you can hold them, remain there as one who has migrated to the Islands of the Blessed. But if you feel yourself slipping and cannot maintain them where you are, retreat to some corner where you can prevail. Or if even that fails, leave life altogether—not in anger, but simply, freely, and with dignity. At least you will have done this one thing well: departed in the right way.

To keep these qualities in mind, remember that the gods do not want flattery. They want rational beings to become like them. Remember that the fig tree does a fig tree's work, the dog does a dog's work, the bee does a bee's work—and a human being must do a human being's work.

### **Book 10, Section 9**

Foolishness, war, fear, lethargy, servility—these will daily erase those sacred principles you have gathered from observing nature. You must look and act in every case so that the task at hand is accomplished and your contemplative faculty exercised at the same time—maintaining the quiet confidence that comes from understanding each thing, neither parading it nor hiding it.

When will you find joy in simplicity? When in dignity? When in knowledge of each particular thing—what it is in its essence, what place it holds in the universe, how long it is formed to last, what it is composed of, to whom it can belong, and who has power to give it or take it away?

### **Book 10, Section 10**

A spider is proud when it catches a fly. One man when he catches a hare, another when he nets a fish. Another when he takes a boar, another a bear, another when he conquers the Sarmatians. Are they not all robbers, if you examine their principles?

### **Book 10, Section 11**

Develop a method for contemplating how all things change into one another. Practice this constantly, for nothing cultivates greatness of mind like this.

The person who does this has already put off the body. Realizing they must soon leave everything behind and depart from among the living, they give themselves wholly to justice in all their actions and to acceptance of whatever happens. What others say or think or do against them does not even enter their mind. They are content with two things: acting justly in the present moment and loving whatever lot is assigned to them.

They cast aside all distractions and have no other aim than to follow the straight path laid down by law—and by following it, to follow God.

### **Book 10, Section 12**

Why give in to suspicion when you can examine what ought to be done? If you see your path clearly, take it without turning back. If you do not see it, pause and consult the best advisors. If other obstacles arise, proceed carefully with the means you have, holding to what appears just.

This is the best you can achieve. To fail in this would be the only true failure.

The person who follows reason in everything is both calm and ready, both cheerful and composed.

### **Book 10, Section 13**

As soon as you wake, ask yourself: 'Will it make any difference to me if someone else censures me for doing what is just and right?'

No, it will not.

Have you forgotten what sort of people these are—the ones who are so arrogant in their praise and blame of others? Have you forgotten what they are like in bed and at the table? Have you forgotten what they do, what they avoid, and what they pursue?

Have you forgotten how they steal and plunder? They do not rob with hands and feet, but with their most precious part—the very part which, when a man chooses, can produce fidelity, modesty, truth, law, and a good spirit.

#### **Book 10, Section 14**

To nature, who gives and takes back all, the well-instructed and modest person says: "Give what you will, take back what you will." And he says this not proudly, but in obedience and goodwill toward her.

#### **Book 10, Section 15**

The time you have left is short. Live as if you were on a mountain. It makes no difference whether you are here or there, provided that, wherever you are, you live as a citizen of the World.

Let men see, let them know, a real man who lives in accordance with Nature. If they cannot endure him, let them kill him. For it is better to die than to live as they do.

#### **Book 10, Section 16**

Stop talking about what a good person should be. Be one.

#### **Book 10, Section 17**

Constantly picture the whole of time and the whole of substance. Then consider that every individual thing is, in substance, no more than a fig seed—and in time, no more than a single turn of the drill.

#### **Book 10, Section 18**

Look at every existing thing and observe that it is already dissolving and changing—in a state of decay and dispersion—or that everything is made by nature to die.

#### **Book 10, Section 19**

Consider what people are like when eating, sleeping, coupling, relieving themselves, and so on. Then consider them when they lord it over others—puffed up with pride, filled with anger, rebuking from some lofty position. Yet just a short time ago, to how many were they servants, and for what purposes? And in a little while, what state will they be in?

#### **Book 10, Section 20**

What universal nature brings to each thing is for its good—and it is for its good at the time when nature brings it.

#### **Book 10, Section 21**

"The earth loves the rain," and "the majestic sky loves to fall." The Universe itself loves to create whatever is destined to be.

I say then to the Universe: "I love what you love."

Is it not a common saying that these things "love to happen"?

### **Book 10, Section 22**

Either you continue living here and have grown accustomed to it, or you depart by your own will, or you die and have fulfilled your service. There is no other possibility. Take heart, then.

### **Book 10, Section 23**

Keep this clear before you: this place is like any other. All things here are the same as on a mountaintop, or by the sea, or wherever you choose to be. You will find what Plato says to be true: that one can dwell within city walls as in a shepherd's fold on the mountain.

### **Book 10, Section 24**

What is my ruling faculty now? What am I making of it? For what purpose am I using it? Is it empty of understanding? Has it broken away from social life? Has it melted into the flesh and become swayed by it?

### **Book 10, Section 25**

The person who flees from their master is a runaway. But the law is every person's master. Therefore, whoever breaks the law is a runaway.

And whoever is grieved or angry or afraid about what has happened, is happening, or will happen—things ordained by the power that rules all things, which is the Law that assigns to each what is fitting—that person too is a runaway.

### **Book 10, Section 26**

A man deposits seed in the womb and departs. Another cause takes over, labors on it, and completes a child. What a marvel from such a beginning. Again, food passes down the throat. Another cause takes it and transforms it into sensation, motion, life, strength—how many things, and how mysterious. Contemplate these things that happen in such hidden ways. Observe the power that produces them, just as you perceive the force that draws things downward or lifts them upward—not with your eyes, but no less clearly.

### **Book 10, Section 27**

Constantly reflect that all things now are as they were before—and will be again. Set before your eyes whole dramas from history: the whole court of Hadrian, the whole court of Antoninus, the courts of Philip, Alexander, Croesus. All the same scenes, only different actors.

### **Book 10, Section 28**

Picture anyone who grieves over something or is discontented as like a pig that kicks and screams when sacrificed. Like this too is the person who lies alone in bed, silently lamenting the bonds of fate.

Remember: only to the rational being is it given to accept willingly what happens. Simple submission is required of all.

### **Book 10, Section 29**

With each thing you do, pause and ask yourself: is death dreadful because it will take this from me?

### **Book 10, Section 30**

When someone's wrongdoing offends you, turn immediately to yourself. Consider what similar fault you are guilty of—such as thinking money is good, or pleasure, or a bit of fame, and so on. By attending to this, you will quickly forget your anger. This thought will help too: the person was under compulsion. What else could they do? Or if you are able, remove the constraint from them.

### **Book 10, Section 31**

When you see Satyron the Socratic, think of Eutyches or Hymen. When you see Euphrates, think of Eutycheon or Silvanus. When you see Alciphron, think of Tropaeophorus; and when you see Xenophon, think of Crito or Severus.

And when you look upon yourself, think of any of the Caesars who came before you. Do this in every case.

Then let this thought strike you: Where are they now?

Nowhere, or nobody knows where.

By doing this, you will constantly view human things as mere smoke and nothingness—especially if you reflect that whatever has once changed will never exist again throughout the infinity of time.

Why then this concern? Why does it not suffice you to pass through this brief span of time in an orderly way? What material, what an opportunity for improvement you are avoiding!

For what are all these things but exercises for the reason, once it has viewed life's events accurately and according to their nature?

Persevere, then, until you have made these things your own—just as a strong stomach assimilates all food, or as a blazing fire turns everything thrown into it into flame and brightness.

### **Book 10, Section 32**

Let no one have the power to say truthfully that you are not sincere or good. Let whoever thinks this of you be mistaken. This is entirely in your power. Who can prevent you from being good and sincere? Resolve, then, to live no longer unless you are such a person. Reason itself does not require you to live if you are not.

### **Book 10, Section 33**

What can be said or done in accordance with reason in this present moment? Whatever it is, it is in your power. Make no excuses that you are hindered.

You will never stop complaining until doing what is proper to your nature becomes as enjoyable to you as luxury is to those who pursue pleasure. You should count as pleasure whatever you can do according to your own nature—and you have the power to do this everywhere.

A cylinder cannot roll everywhere by its own motion, nor can water or fire or anything governed merely by nature or irrational soul—many obstacles can block them. But intelligence and reason can pass through every impediment, moving as their nature directs them. Picture this ease with which reason moves through all things—like fire rising upward, like a stone falling downward, like a cylinder rolling down a slope. Seek nothing more.

All other hindrances either affect the body alone, which is lifeless, or—apart from opinion and reason's own surrender—cannot crush you or harm you at all. For with all other things, when harm befalls them, they become worse. But a person becomes better and more worthy of praise by rightly using such circumstances.

Remember: nothing harms the true citizen that does not harm the city. Nothing harms the city that does not harm the law. None of these so-called misfortunes harm the law. What does not harm the law, then, harms neither city nor citizen.

### **Book 10, Section 34**

To the person grounded in true principles, even the briefest saying is enough to remind them to be free from grief and fear. Like this:

"Leaves—some the wind scatters on the ground. So is the race of men."

Your children are leaves. So too are those who applaud you or curse you, who praise you openly or mock you in secret. So too are those who will preserve your name after death. All these things come forth in spring. Then the wind casts them down, and the forest brings forth others in their place.

Brief existence is common to all. Yet you pursue and flee from these things as if they were eternal. A little while and you will close your eyes. And soon another will mourn for the one who carried you to your grave.

### **Book 10, Section 35**

A healthy eye sees all visible things. It does not say, "I want only green things"—for that is the mark of a diseased eye. Healthy hearing and smell are ready for all sounds and scents. A healthy stomach accepts all food, just as a mill grinds whatever grain it was made to grind.

So too a healthy mind should be prepared for whatever happens. But the mind that says, "Let my children be spared" or "Let everyone praise me" is like an eye that craves only green things, or teeth that want only soft food.

### **Book 10, Section 36**

No one is so fortunate that when they die, someone standing nearby will not welcome what is happening. Even if the person was good and wise, will there not be someone who says inwardly, "At last I can breathe freely, freed from this schoolmaster. He was not harsh with any of us, but I always felt he silently condemned us"? This is what is said of a good person. But in your own case, how many more reasons are there for which many would be glad to be rid of you?

Think of this when you are dying, and you will depart more easily when you reflect: "I am leaving a life in which even those for whom I have toiled, prayed, and cared—even they wish me gone, hoping perhaps to gain some advantage by my death." Why, then, should anyone cling to a longer stay here?

Nevertheless, do not leave them with any less kindness on this account. Keep your character, remain friendly, goodnatured, and gracious toward them. But on the other hand, do not depart as if torn away. Rather, let your separation from them be like the gentle death in which the soul slips easily from the body. Nature joined you to them, and now she parts you. I am separated as from kinsmen—not dragged away resisting, but without compulsion. For this too is according to nature.

**Book 10, Section 37**

Make it a habit: whenever anyone does something, ask yourself what end they have in view. But begin with yourself. Examine yourself first.

**Book 10, Section 38**

Remember: what moves you is the hidden principle within. This is what persuades you. This is life. This, if we speak truly, is the person.

When you think of yourself, do not include the vessel that surrounds you or the organs attached to it. They are like a carpenter's axe—tools that happen to grow with the body. Without the inner cause that moves and restrains them, these parts are no more useful than the shuttle without the weaver, the pen without the writer, or the whip without the driver.

## Book 11

### Book 11, Section 1

The rational soul has these qualities: it sees itself, examines itself, and shapes itself as it wills. It reaps its own fruit—unlike plants and animals, whose fruits are enjoyed by others. It reaches its proper end wherever life may stop. For it is not like a dance or a play, where any interruption leaves the whole action incomplete. The rational soul, at whatever point it is overtaken, makes what it has complete and whole. So it can say: I have what is my own.

It ranges through the whole universe and the void surrounding it, traces its design, and stretches into the infinity of time. It grasps the cyclical renewal of all things and comprehends this: those who come after us will see nothing new, nor did those before us see anything more than we have seen. A person of forty, if they have any understanding at all, has seen—through the uniformity of things—all that has been and all that will be.

The rational soul also loves its neighbor. It loves truth and modesty. It values nothing above itself—which is also the property of law. Thus right reason and justice are one and the same.

### Book 11, Section 2

You will think little of a beautiful song, a dance, or athletic contests if you break them into parts. For the song, divide the melody into separate notes. Ask yourself of each: does this single sound master me? You will be ashamed to admit it. For the dance, consider each movement and posture by itself. Do the same for the athletic display.

In all things—except virtue and the acts of virtue—remember to turn to the parts. By this division, come to value the whole less. Apply this rule also to your entire life.

### Book 11, Section 3

How blessed is the soul that stands ready at any moment to be released from the body—whether to be extinguished, dispersed, or to continue. But this readiness must come from your own judgment, not from mere obstinacy as with the Christians, but from deliberation and dignity, so that others too may be persuaded—without theatrical display.

### Book 11, Section 4

Have I done something for the common good? Then I have my reward. Keep this thought always present, and never stop.

### Book 11, Section 5

What is your calling? To be good. And how is this achieved except by principles—some concerning the nature of the universe, and some concerning the proper constitution of man?

### Book 11, Section 6

Tragedies were first introduced to remind us of real events, and that such things happen according to the ordinary course of nature. They teach us that what delights us on the stage should not grieve us on the greater stage of life.

For you see that these things must be accomplished, and that even those who cry out "O Cithaeron!" must endure them.

And indeed, some excellent things are said by the dramatic writers, especially this passage:

"If the gods have neglected me and my children,

There is a reason for it."

And again:

"It is vain to be angry at things."

And this:

"To reap life like a ripe ear of corn."

And many others of the same kind.

After tragedy, the Old Comedy was introduced. It had a magisterial freedom of speech, and by its very directness was useful in warning men against arrogance. Diogenes used this method for the same purpose.

Next, consider the Middle Comedy, and what it was admitted for; and finally the New Comedy, which gradually degenerated into mere artistic mimicry. Everyone knows that these writers said some useful things; but what was the ultimate aim and purpose of this whole enterprise of poetry and playmaking?

#### **Book 11, Section 7**

How clear it is: no way of life is better suited for practicing philosophy than the one you are in now.

#### **Book 11, Section 8**

A branch cut off from its neighboring branch must be cut off from the whole tree. So too, a person separated from another person has fallen away from the whole community.

But a branch is cut off by another. A person, however, separates himself by his own action—through hatred and aversion—and does not know that he has thereby severed himself from the whole social body.

Yet here is the gift of Zeus, who established this community: it is in our power to grow back together and become part of the whole again. But if this separation happens often, it becomes harder for the severed part to reunite and restore itself. And in truth, the branch that has grown from the first with the tree and shared its life is not like one that was cut off and later grafted back. As the gardeners say: they may grow on the same bush, but they are not of the same mind.

#### **Book 11, Section 9**

Those who oppose you in following right reason cannot turn you from proper action. Do not let them turn you from kindly feeling toward them either. Guard yourself in both: remain steady in judgment and action, but also gentle toward those who try to hinder you or trouble you.

To be angry with them is as much a weakness as to abandon your course through fear. Both are deserters—the one who flees, and the one who turns against someone who is by nature a kinsman and friend.

**Book 11, Section 10**

Nature cannot be inferior to art, since the arts imitate nature. If this is so, then universal nature—the most perfect and comprehensive of all—cannot fall short of any artistic skill.

All arts use inferior materials for higher purposes. So too does universal nature. Here is the origin of justice. And from justice, all the other virtues have their foundation.

Justice cannot be preserved if we care about indifferent things, or if we are easily deceived, rash, and changeable.

**Book 11, Section 11**

The things you pursue or flee do not come to you. In truth, you go to them. Let your judgment about them be at rest. They will remain still, and you will no longer be seen pursuing or avoiding them.

**Book 11, Section 12**

The soul is a sphere truly shaped when it neither reaches outward toward anything nor shrinks inward, neither expands nor contracts—but shines with light, by which it sees the reality of all things and the reality within itself.

**Book 11, Section 13**

Will someone despise me? Let that be their concern. Mine is to ensure I am never found doing or saying anything worthy of contempt.

Will someone hate me? Let that be their concern. I will be kind and goodnatured to everyone—and even to those who hate me, I will be ready to show them their error. Not by reproach, not by making a display of my patience, but genuinely and nobly, as Phocion did—if indeed he was sincere.

For your inner disposition should be such that the gods, seeing into you, find you neither angry nor complaining. What harm can come to you if you do what is proper to your nature and accept what is now fitting to the nature of the universe—you, who are stationed here to serve the common good?

**Book 11, Section 14**

People despise one another, yet flatter one another. They wish to rise above one another, yet grovel before one another.

**Book 11, Section 15**

How rotten and insincere is the person who says, "I intend to deal straightforwardly with you." What are you doing? There is no need for such a proclamation. The fact will show itself immediately. It should be written on your forehead. Your voice betrays it at once. It flashes from your eyes—just as a lover reads everything in the beloved's glance.

The truly good person should be like someone with a strong odor: as soon as they come near, you know it whether you want to or not. But affected simplicity is a knife hidden beneath the cloak. Nothing is more shameful than false friendship. Avoid this above all.

The good, straightforward, kind person shows these qualities in their eyes. There is no mistaking it.

### **Book 11, Section 16**

The power to live the best life lies in the soul—when it is indifferent to things that are indifferent by nature. It becomes indifferent by examining each thing, both in parts and as a whole, and remembering this: no object forces an opinion on us or comes to us of its own accord. Things remain still. We ourselves create judgments about them and inscribe them on our minds.

But it is in our power not to inscribe them. And if a judgment sneaks in unnoticed, it is in our power to erase it. Remember too that you need this vigilance only for a little while—then life will end.

What is the difficulty? If things accord with nature, rejoice in them and they will be easy for you. If they are contrary to nature, seek what accords with your own nature and pursue it swiftly, even if it brings no reputation. For every person is permitted to seek their own good.

### **Book 11, Section 17**

Consider where each thing comes from, what it is made of, what it changes into, what it will be when changed—and that it suffers no harm from this change.

### **Book 11, Section 18**

When someone offends you, consider these things:

First: What is your relation to them? We were made for one another. And from another view, I was set over them—as a ram over the flock, as a bull over the herd. But begin from first principles: if all is not atoms, then nature governs the universe. If so, the lower things exist for the higher, and the higher for one another.

Second: Consider what they are like at table, in bed, and elsewhere. Consider especially how they are enslaved by their own opinions, and with what pride they do what they do.

Third: If they act rightly, you have no cause for anger. If wrongly, they do so involuntarily and through ignorance. No soul is willingly deprived of truth, nor of the power to treat each person as they deserve. Therefore people are pained when called unjust, ungrateful, greedy, or wrongdoers to their neighbors.

Fourth: You yourself do many wrong things and are much like others. Even if you refrain from certain wrongs, you still have the disposition toward them—though cowardice, concern for reputation, or some other base motive restrains you.

Fifth: You cannot even be certain whether they have done wrong. Many things are done for good reasons. In short, you must know many things before you can judge another's acts properly.

Sixth: When you are vexed or grieved, remember that human life is but a moment, and soon we shall all be laid in our graves.

Seventh: It is not their acts that disturb us—for those belong to their own minds—but our opinions about those acts. Remove these opinions. Be willing to dismiss your judgment that the act is a calamity, and your anger ends. How remove them? By understanding that another's wrongful act does not degrade you. For unless only what is shameful is evil, you too must do many wrongs and become a thief and everything else.

Eighth: Consider how much more pain our anger and vexation cause us than the acts themselves that provoke them.

Ninth: Kindness is invincible—if it is genuine and not affected. For what can even the most vicious person do to you if you remain kind toward them, and when opportunity comes, gently admonish them and calmly teach them better at the very moment they try to harm you? Say: "No, my child, we were made for other things. I shall not be harmed, but you are harming yourself, my child." Show them gently and by general principles that this is so—that even bees do not act this way, nor any creatures formed by nature to live together. Do this without irony or reproach, but affectionately and without bitterness. Not as if lecturing, not to impress bystanders, but for them alone, even if others are present.

Remember these nine rules as gifts from the Muses, and begin at last to be truly human while you live. But guard equally against flattering people and being angry with them—both are unsocial and harmful. In the heat of anger, remember: to yield to passion is not manly. Mildness and gentleness are more human and more manly. The person who possesses these has strength, courage, and fortitude—not the one subject to fits of passion. For the nearer the mind is to freedom from passion, the nearer it is to strength. As pain is a mark of weakness, so is anger. Both are wounds. Both are surrenders.

Tenth: If you wish, take this tenth gift from Apollo, leader of the Muses: to expect bad people not to do wrong is madness—for that is to wish the impossible. But to allow them to wrong others while expecting them not to wrong you is irrational and tyrannical.

### **Book 11, Section 19**

There are four corruptions of the ruling faculty you must constantly guard against. When you detect them, erase them and say of each:

This thought is not necessary.

This destroys fellowship.

This is not from my true thoughts—and to speak what is not from the heart is among the most absurd things.

The fourth: when you reproach yourself for anything, this is evidence that the divine part within you has been overpowered and yields to the less honorable and mortal part—the body and its gross pleasures.

### **Book 11, Section 20**

The fire and air in you naturally tend upward, yet they obey the order of the universe and remain here in your body. The earth and water in you naturally tend downward, yet they are raised up and held in a place not their own. So even the elements obey the whole—remaining where they are placed, though against their nature, until the signal sounds for their release.

Is it not strange, then, that your rational part alone should be disobedient and discontent with its station? No violence is done to it. Nothing contrary to its nature is imposed. Yet it refuses to submit and moves in the opposite direction.

Every movement toward injustice, excess, anger, grief, or fear is nothing but a deviation from nature. And when the ruling faculty is vexed at anything that happens, it too deserts its station.

For it was made for reverence toward the gods no less than for justice. Indeed, these qualities come before justice itself and are part of the same fellowship with all things.

### **Book 11, Section 21**

The person who does not always aim at one and the same goal cannot be one and the same throughout life. But this is not enough unless you add what that goal should be.

For just as people do not agree about all things commonly held to be good, but only about certain things—those that serve the common interest—so too must your goal be common and social. The person who directs all their efforts toward this end will make their actions consistent, and thus remain always the same.

### **Book 11, Section 22**

Remember the story of the country mouse and the city mouse, and the alarm and terror of the city mouse.

### **Book 11, Section 23**

Socrates used to call the opinions of the multitude "Lamiae"—bugbears used to frighten children.

### **Book 11, Section 24**

The Spartans at their public spectacles gave strangers seats in the shade, but took their own seats wherever they could.

### **Book 11, Section 25**

Socrates refused Perdiccas's invitation to his court, saying: "I will not come, lest I die the worst of deaths—receiving favors I cannot repay."

### **Book 11, Section 26**

In the writings of the Ephesians there was this precept: constantly keep in mind some one of the ancients who practiced virtue.

### **Book 11, Section 27**

The Pythagoreans advised looking at the sky each morning—to remember the heavenly bodies that constantly perform their work in the same way, and to remember their order, their purity, their nakedness. For no star has a veil before it.

### **Book 11, Section 28**

Consider Socrates when he wrapped himself in a sheepskin after Xanthippe took his cloak and went out—and what he said to his friends who were ashamed and drew back when they saw him dressed this way.

### **Book 11, Section 29**

In writing and reading, you must first learn to follow before you can teach. This is even more true in life.

### **Book 11, Section 30**

"You are a slave: free speech is not for you."

**Book 11, Section 31**

"And my heart laughed within me."

**Book 11, Section 32**

And they will curse Virtue herself, speaking harsh words.

**Book 11, Section 33**

To look for figs in winter is madness. No better is the person who longs for their child when they can no longer have them.

**Book 11, Section 34**

Epictetus said: When you kiss your child, whisper to yourself, "Tomorrow perhaps you will die."

"Those are ill-omened words," you say.

"Not at all," he replied. "No word is ill-omened that signifies a natural process. Is it ill-omened to say the corn is reaped?"

**Book 11, Section 35**

The unripe grape, the ripe grape, the dried grape—all are changes, not into nothing, but into what does not yet exist.

**Book 11, Section 36**

No one can rob us of our free will.

—Epictetus

**Book 11, Section 37**

Epictetus also said: We must discover the art of assent. In our impulses, we must take care that they are restrained, that they serve the common good, that they are proportionate to worth. We should abstain entirely from inordinate desire. And we should show aversion to none of the things not in our control.

**Book 11, Section 38**

The contest, he said, is not about some trivial matter, but about whether we are sane or mad.

**Book 11, Section 39**

Socrates used to say: What do you want? Souls of rational beings or irrational? Rational. What kind of rational beings? Sound or unsound? Sound. Why then do you not seek them? Because we have them already. Why then do you fight and quarrel?

## Book 12

### Book 12, Section 1

All those things you seek through roundabout ways, you can have now—if you do not refuse them to yourself. This means: leave all the past behind, entrust the future to providence, and direct the present toward piety and justice alone.

Piety means accepting the lot assigned to you, for nature made it for you and you for it. Justice means speaking the truth freely and without deceit, and doing what accords with law and the worth of things. Let nothing hinder you—not the wickedness of others, not their opinions or words, not even the sensations of this flesh that surrounds you. Let the body see to itself.

When the time of your departure comes, if you set aside all else and prize only your ruling reason and the divine within you—if your fear is not that you will cease to live, but that you have never yet begun to live according to nature—then you will be worthy of the universe that made you. You will no longer be a stranger in your own land. You will no longer wonder at daily events as if they were unexpected. You will no longer depend anxiously on this or that.

### Book 12, Section 2

God sees all minds stripped bare of material vessels, husks, and flesh. With His intellect alone, He touches only that which has flowed from Himself into these bodies.

If you too accustom yourself to see this way, you will free yourself from much distraction. For the person who looks past the flesh that surrounds them will not waste time thinking about clothing, housing, fame, and such externals.

### Book 12, Section 3

You are made of three things: body, breath, and mind. The first two are yours to care for. The third alone is truly yours.

If you separate from your mind—that is, cut away from it—all that others do or say, all that you yourself have done or said, all anxieties about the future, all that belongs to the body or breath independent of your will, and all that the external whirl of events sweeps along; if you strip away what clings to it from the past and future, and make yourself like Empedocles's sphere, "all round and rejoicing in its perfect rest"; if you train yourself to live only the life that is yours—the present moment—then you will be able to pass the remainder of your days calmly, nobly, and at peace with the spirit within you.

### Book 12, Section 4

I have often wondered at this: every person loves themselves best, yet values the opinion of others about themselves more than their own opinion.

If a god or wise teacher stood beside you and commanded you to speak aloud every thought the moment it arose, you could not endure it for a single day. So we care more about what our neighbors think of us than what we think of ourselves.

### Book 12, Section 5

How is it that the Gods, who have arranged all things well and benevolently for mankind, have overlooked this one thing: that some men—especially good men who have had the closest

communion with the Divine through pious acts and holy service—should never exist again once they die, but be completely extinguished?

But if this is indeed the case, be assured: if it ought to have been otherwise, they would have done it.

For if it were just, it would also be possible; and if it were according to Nature, Nature would have brought it about. Therefore, from the fact that it is not so (if indeed it is not so), be convinced that it ought not to be so.

You can see that in asking this question, you are debating with God. But we would not thus dispute with the Gods unless they were most excellent and most just. And if they are so, they would not have allowed anything in the ordering of the Universe to be neglected unjustly or irrationally.

### **Book 12, Section 6**

Practice even those things you despair of accomplishing. For the left hand, which is ineffective for most tasks through lack of practice, yet holds the bridle more firmly than the right—because it has been practiced in this.

### **Book 12, Section 7**

Consider what condition you should be in—both in body and soul—when death overtakes you. Consider the shortness of life, the boundless abyss of time past and future, the frailty of all matter.

### **Book 12, Section 8**

Look at the causes of things stripped bare of their coverings. Consider the purpose of actions. Understand what pain is, what pleasure is, what death, what fame.

See who is responsible for your inner unrest. Understand that no one can be hindered by another. Remember: everything is opinion.

### **Book 12, Section 9**

In applying your principles, be like the wrestler, not the gladiator. The gladiator who drops his sword is finished. But the wrestler always has his hand and needs only to use it.

### **Book 12, Section 10**

See things as they are, dividing them into matter, form, and purpose.

### **Book 12, Section 11**

What power you have: to do only what God approves, and to welcome whatever God assigns you.

### **Book 12, Section 12**

For what happens according to nature, blame neither the gods nor men. The gods do no wrong, either willingly or unwillingly. Men do wrong only unwillingly, through ignorance.

Blame no one.

**Book 12, Section 13**

How ridiculous—and like a stranger—is the person who is surprised at anything that happens in life.

**Book 12, Section 14**

Either there is an inviolable necessity and unchangeable order, or a gracious Providence, or chaos without purpose or direction.

If there is an invincible necessity, why resist it? If there is a Providence that can be moved, make yourself worthy of divine help. If there is chaos without a guide, be content that amid such turmoil you have within yourself a governing reason.

And if the storm sweeps you away, let it sweep away the flesh, the breath, and all else. The intelligence it cannot sweep away.

**Book 12, Section 15**

The light of a lamp shines without dimming until it is extinguished. Shall truth, justice, and temperance be extinguished in you before you are?

**Book 12, Section 16**

When you think someone has done wrong, ask yourself: How do I know this is truly a wrong? And even if it is, perhaps they have already condemned themselves—and that is like tearing their own face.

To wish that a bad person not do wrong is like wishing the fig tree not to have juice in its figs, infants not to cry, horses not to neigh, and all other things not to be as they must be by nature. What else can someone with that disposition do?

If it troubles you, cure the disposition.

**Book 12, Section 17**

If it is not right, do not do it; if it is not true, do not say it.

For let your impulse be in your own power.

**Book 12, Section 18**

In everything that presents itself to you, observe what it is that makes the impression. Analyze it by dividing it into its cause, its matter, its purpose, and the time within which it must end.

**Book 12, Section 19**

Perceive at last that you have within you something better and more divine than the drives that cause your passions and pull you like a puppet on strings.

What is my mind occupied with now? Is it fear? Suspicion? Desire? Or any such thing?

**Book 12, Section 20**

First: Do nothing inconsiderately or without a purpose.

Second: Let your actions refer to nothing else than the common good.

### **Book 12, Section 21**

Consider that before long you will be nobody and nowhere, nor will any of the things exist which you now see, nor any of those who are now living.

For all things are formed by nature to change, to be transformed, and to perish, so that other things may come into existence in their place.

### **Book 12, Section 22**

Remember: everything is opinion, and opinion is in your power. Remove your opinion when you choose, and like a sailor who has rounded the headland, you will find calm—everything steady, a harbor without waves.

### **Book 12, Section 23**

Any activity that ceases at its proper time suffers no evil from ceasing. Nor does the one who performed it suffer evil because it has ended.

So too with life, which is the whole of all our actions. If it ceases at its proper time, it suffers no evil from ending. Nor has the one who brought this chain of actions to its close in due time been ill-treated.

The proper time and limit are set by nature—sometimes by our particular nature, as in old age, but always by universal nature. Through the changing of its parts, the whole universe remains ever young and fresh. Whatever serves the whole is always good and timely.

Therefore the ending of life is no evil. It brings no shame, for it is not in our power and does not harm the common good. Rather, it is good—for it is timely, beneficial to the whole, and moves with it.

The person who moves in the same direction as God, who is carried toward the same things in their mind, is truly led by God.

### **Book 12, Section 24**

Keep these three principles ready:

First: In your actions, do nothing rashly or contrary to justice. As for external events, they happen either by chance or by providence. Do not blame chance or accuse providence.

Second: Consider what each being is from conception to the receiving of a soul, and from soul to death—what it is composed of and what it dissolves into.

Third: If you could suddenly rise high above the earth and look down on human affairs, you would see their infinite variety. You would see at the same time the great multitude dwelling in the air and aether around you. And however often you rose up, you would see the same things—sameness of form, brevity of duration.

Are these the things to be proud of?

### **Book 12, Section 25**

Cast away opinion, and you are safe. Who, then, prevents you from casting it away?

### **Book 12, Section 26**

When you are troubled, you have forgotten this: that all things happen according to universal nature. You have forgotten that another's wrongdoing is not your concern. You have forgotten that what happens now has always happened and will always happen, everywhere.

You have forgotten how close the kinship is between you and all humanity—a bond not of blood or seed, but of intelligence. You have forgotten that every person's mind is divine and flows from God. You have forgotten that nothing is truly your own—not your child, not your body, not even your life. All came from God.

You have forgotten that everything is opinion. And you have forgotten that you live only the present moment, and lose only this.

### **Book 12, Section 27**

Constantly recall those who have been consumed by resentment, who have been conspicuous for honors or disasters or enmities or any other fortune. Then ask: where are they now? Smoke and ash and legend—or not even legend.

Think of Fabius Catullinus in the country, Lucius Lupus in his gardens, Stertinius at Baiae, Tiberius at Capreae, Velius Rufus—all their eager pursuit of things, all their pride. How worthless is everything so violently desired.

How much more fitting for a philosopher to show himself, in whatever sphere is given him, just, temperate, obedient to the gods—and to do this with simplicity. For the pride that is proud of its lack of pride is the most intolerable of all.

### **Book 12, Section 28**

To those who ask, "Where have you seen the gods, or how do you know they exist, that you worship them so devoutly?" I answer:

First, they are visible even to the eyes. Second, I have never seen my own soul either, yet I honor it. So with the gods: from the constant experience of their power, I know they exist, and I revere them.

### **Book 12, Section 29**

The safety of life lies in this: to examine everything thoroughly—what it is in itself, what its matter, what its form. To do justice with all your soul and speak the truth.

What remains but to enjoy life by linking one good action to another, leaving not even the smallest gap between?

### **Book 12, Section 30**

There is one light of the sun, though it is interrupted by walls, mountains, and countless other things. There is one common substance, though it is distributed among innumerable bodies with different qualities. There is one soul, though it is divided among infinite natures and forms. There is one intelligent soul, though it seems to be divided.

Of all these things, the other parts—such as breath and matter—are without sensation and have no bond of fellowship. Yet even these are held together by the intelligent principle and drawn

toward the same. But the mind in particular is drawn to what is akin to it, and joins with it. The feeling of communion is not broken.

### **Book 12, Section 31**

What do you desire? To continue existing? To have sensation? Movement? Growth, and then decay? The use of speech? The power of thought?

Which of these seems worth desiring? If each is of little account, turn to what remains: to follow reason and to follow God.

But it contradicts the honoring of reason and God to grieve because death will deprive you of these things.

### **Book 12, Section 32**

How small a part of boundless time is allotted to each of us—and how soon it vanishes into eternity. How small a part of the universal substance. How small a part of the universal soul. And on what a tiny clod of the whole earth you crawl.

Reflecting on all this, consider nothing great except to act as your nature leads you, and to endure what the common nature brings.

### **Book 12, Section 33**

How does the ruling reason use itself? This is the whole matter. All else, whether in your power or not, is but lifeless ashes and smoke.

### **Book 12, Section 34**

This is powerful for overcoming the fear of death: even those who counted pleasure as good and pain as evil still despised death.

### **Book 12, Section 35**

Death holds no terror for the person who counts as good only what comes in due season, who is indifferent whether their acts of right reason are many or few, and who cares not whether they behold the world for a longer or shorter time.

### **Book 12, Section 36**

"O Man, you have been a citizen of this great City. What difference does it make to you whether for five years or a hundred? For under its laws, equal treatment is meted out to all.

Where is the hardship, then, if you are sent away from the city not by a tyrant or an unjust judge, but by Nature who brought you in? It is like the magistrate who employs an actor dismissing him from the stage.

'But,' you say, 'I have not finished the five acts, but only three.'"

"True, but in life, three acts make a whole play. For the limit is determined by Him who was once the cause of your creation, and is now the cause of your dissolution. You are responsible for neither."

"Depart then with a good grace, for He who dismisses you is gracious."

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