

THE
MANUAL

A Philosopher's Guide to Life



EPICTETUS

THE MANUAL

*Rendered in contemporary language by Sam Torode,
based on a translation by Thomas Wentworth Higginson.*

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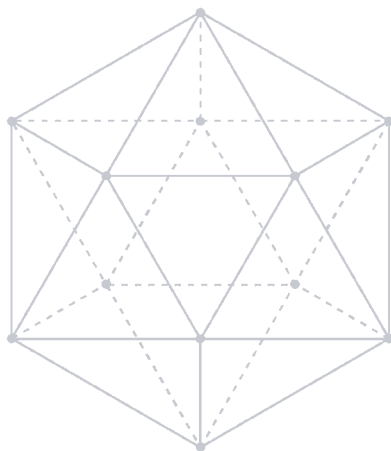
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FOREWORD

IN 2008, as the world plunged into the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, I experienced my own collapse—financial stress, loss of faith, and then divorce.

Enduring each day became a struggle. My inner landscape (my mind) was now a war zone. Daydreaming—previously my refuge—became dangerous. My imagination could only conjure despair.

I desperately needed peace of mind.

For the first time in my life, I ventured into the Self-Help section of the bookstore, and worked my way through every title. Things I'd always scoffed at—like positive thinking, affirmations, and visualization—were now of vital interest. Even the cheesiest volumes usually had something of value to take away. For instance, from Rhonda Byrne's *The Power* (a sequel to *The Secret*—a book I'd often mocked), I copied down this sentence: "Every challenge is presented to you so that you will choose love and turn away from negativity and blame."

I also combed the nearby Philosophy aisle, where I discovered two ancient books that proved to be the most helpful of all: the *Manual of Epictetus* and the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius.

Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius are pillars of the Stoic school of philosophy. Stoicism doesn't mean repressing emotion and shunning pleasure, I learned, but—in essence—focusing on what is in our power and letting go of everything we can't control.

Stoic philosophy, I found, is at the foundation of the best modern self-help approaches, such as rational emotive therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, and positive psychology. (Its influence is also reflected in Rhonda Byrne's quote above).

"When you are feeling upset, angry, or sad," Epictetus said,

don't blame another for your state of mind. Your condition is the result of your own opinions and interpretations. . . .

When anyone provokes you, remember that it is actually your own opinion provoking you. It is not the person who insults or attacks you who torments your mind, but the view you take of these things.

Do not be fooled by how things first appear. With time and greater perspective, you can regain inner peace.

Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius offered practical help, here and now. They showed that by changing my thoughts about a situation, I could immediately let go of pain.

The way to peace of mind, they taught, was in tending the garden of my own mind (by nurturing the positive and weeding out the negative) and disregarding other people's opinions of and actions towards me.

Other books that I found particularly soothing at this time were the *Tao Te Ching* and Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Nature*. As a writer and book designer by trade, I decided to create my own editions of these works. I saved the *Manual* and *Meditations* for last.

Nearly ten years after first discovering the wisdom of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, I made it part of my daily

morning routine to study a passage from an old translation of their words and re-write it in simple, contemporary language.

While I created these versions for my own use, I am also making them available publicly. If you are searching for peace of mind, I hope you benefit from the *Manual* and *Meditations* as much as I have.

—SAM TORODE

May, 2017

I

There are things that are within our power, and things that fall outside our power. Within our power are our own opinions, aims, desires, dislikes—in sum, our own thoughts and actions. Outside our power are our physical characteristics, the class into which we were born, our reputation in the eyes of others, and honors and offices that may be bestowed on us.

Working within our sphere of control, we are naturally free, independent, and strong. Beyond that sphere, we are weak, limited, and dependent. If you pin your hopes on things outside your control, taking upon yourself things which rightfully belong to others, you are liable to stumble, fall, suffer, and blame both gods and men. But if you focus your attention only on what is truly your own concern, and leave to others what concerns them, then you will be in charge of your interior life. No one will be able to harm or hinder you. You will blame no one, and have no enemies.

If you wish to have peace and contentment, release your attachment to all things outside your control. This is the path of freedom and happiness. If you want not just peace and contentment, but power and wealth too, you may forfeit the former in seeking the latter, and will lose your freedom and happiness along the way.

Whenever distress or displeasure arises in your mind, remind yourself, “This is only my interpretation, not reality itself.” Then ask whether it falls within or outside your sphere of power. And, if it is beyond your power to control, let it go.

Desire demands the attainment of that which you desire, and aversion demands the avoidance of that which you dislike. Those who fail to attain their desires are disappointed. Those who attain what they dislike are distressed.

If you avoid only those undesirable things which are within your control, you will never suffer by attaining something you detest. But if you try to avoid what you cannot control—sickness, poverty, death—you will inflict useless mental suffering upon yourself.

End the habit of despising things that are not within your power, and apply your aversion to things that are within your power. As for desire, for now it is best to avoid it altogether. Those new to this philosophy must first secure their sphere of power, before they can discern what is worthy of desire. For if you desire things not within your power, you will suffer disappointment.

When practical necessity demands that you desire or avoid something external—at work, for instance—act with steady deliberation, not hasty strain.

What of things, objects, and beings that delight your mind, are of good practical use, or which you dearly love? Remind yourself of their true nature, beginning with the smallest trifle and working upward.

If you have a favorite cup, remember that it is only a cup that you prefer—if it is broken, you can bear it.

When you embrace your wife or child, remember that they are mortal beings. By accepting their nature rather than denying it, if either should die you will find the strength to bear it.

4

In preparing for any action, remind yourself of the nature of the action.

For instance, if you are going to a public pool, remind yourself of the usual incidents: people splashing, some pushing, some scolding, thieves stealing unguarded personal belongings. You will not be disturbed if you go into the experience prepared for such things and determined to retain inner harmony.

If something undesirable happens, you will be able to say, "My desire is not only to swim, but to remain in harmony with the nature of things. I cannot stay in harmony if I let myself become upset by things beyond my control."

And so it is with every act or experience.

5

People are not disturbed by things themselves, but by the views they take of those things. Even death is nothing to fear in itself, or Socrates would have run from it. The fear of death stems from the view that it is fearful.

When you are feeling upset, angry, or sad, don't blame another for your state of mind. Your condition is the result of your own opinions and interpretations.

People who are ignorant of philosophy blame others for their own misfortunes. Those who are beginning to learn philosophy blame themselves. Those who have mastered philosophy blame no one.

6

Do not take satisfaction in possessions and achievements that are not your own. If a horse were to say, "I am handsome," his pride may be excusable. But if you boast, "I have a handsome horse," you are claiming merit that is not yours.

What, then, is your own? The way you live your life.

When you are living in harmony with nature, you can take just satisfaction.

7

During a voyage, when the ship is anchored and you go ashore for supplies, you may amuse yourself with picking up some seashells and pretty stones along your way. But keep your thoughts tuned on the ship, remaining alert for the captain's call. You may need to drop your "treasures" and run back to the boat at any time.

Likewise in life, remain steadfast in pursuing your mission, always willing to shed distractions.

8

Do not wish that all things will go well with you, but that you will go well with all things.

9

Lameness may strike your leg, but not your resolve. Sickness may weaken your body, but not your determination—unless you let it. The only thing that can impede your will is your will itself.

Each time an obstacle arises, remind yourself of this truth. While it may hinder some part of you, it cannot constrain your true self.

IO

Whenever a challenge arises, turn inward and ask what power you can exercise in the situation.

If you meet temptation, use self-control; if you meet pain, use fortitude; if you meet revulsion, use patience.

In this way, you will overcome life's challenges, rather than be overcome by them.

II

Do not say of anything “I have lost it,” but rather, “I have given it back.”

Has your wife died? You have given her back.

Has your child died? You have given him back.

Have you lost your home? You have given it back.

“But,” you may retort, “a bad person took it.” It is not your concern by what means something returns to the Source from which it came.

For as long as the Source entrusts something to your hands, treat it as something borrowed, like a traveller at an inn.

If you wish to make progress, lay aside your alibis. Stop making excuses like “If I don’t cling tightly to my money and possessions, I’ll end up on the street”; and “If I don’t get angry and punish an employee who steals from me, she’ll become a brazen criminal.”

It is better to die poor, while free from fear and grief, than to live surrounded by riches and filled with anxiety. And it is better that your employee be guilty than you be angry.

Begin with little things. Is some oil spilled or wine stolen? Say to yourself, “Accepting these annoyances is the price of my peace and tranquility. All good things come at a cost.”

And when you ask your employee to do something, remember that she may not do as you wish. But giving her the power to upset you does no good for either of you.

As you travel the path of philosophy, be content to be considered plain or even foolish. Do not strive to be celebrated for anything.

If you are praised by others, be skeptical of yourself. For it is no easy feat to hold onto your inner harmony while collecting accolades. When grasping for one, you are likely to drop the other.

If you want your wife, children, and friends to live forever, you are foolish, for that is not in your power. Likewise, if you want an employee to be faultless, you are foolish, for you wish her to be something she is not.

When you desire something outside your sphere of power, you set yourself up for disappointment. But it is within your power to avoid disappointment, by directing your desires to things that are rightfully yours to obtain and control.

If you wish to be free, do not desire anything that depends on another, lest you make them your master.

Think of life as a banquet. If a dish is handed to you, sample it with gratitude. If you're waiting for a particular platter to come around, do not lunge for it—be patient. If it passes you by, don't complain.

Act in this way regarding spouses, children, honors, offices, and wealth, and you will become worthy to feast with the gods. More than this—if you abstain from the rich desserts that come your way, passing them on to others, you will become worthy to rule with the gods. This was the way of Diogenes and Heraclitus, and they are now venerated as divine.

When you see a person weeping with grief—for instance, a woman lamenting that her daughter has moved away, or a man crying over a business loss—take care to distinguish between events themselves, and our interpretations.

Remind yourself, “What upsets this person is their opinion of what has happened. Another in the same circumstance, taking a different perspective, would react quite differently.”

Do not share these thoughts with the grieving person. Sympathize with them—even cry with them. Your tears will be outward, not inward.

Think of life as a play, and yourself as an actor. Your role and time on stage is up to the Author's choosing. Whether you are cast as a pauper, a cripple, a congressman, or a king, play your part to the best of your ability.

You cannot choose the era, nationality, family, and body into which you are born. But to act well in your given role—this is your sphere of power.

When you come across a “bad omen,” like a black cat or a squawking raven, distinguish between reality and interpretation.

Remind yourself, “Nothing is foreboding to me. All signs point to good luck, if I interpret them that way. Whatever life brings, I can use it to my advantage.”

If you make peace with all things that are beyond your power, refusing to fight them, you will be invincible.

When you see a person who is respected, powerful, or celebrated on some account, do not be taken in by appearances and assume that they are happy.

If you desire the virtues which are within your power, there is no room for envy or aping others. Instead of wishing to be a general, a congressman, or a celebrity, desire to be free. And the way to be free is to let go of anything that is not within your control.

When anyone provokes you, remember that it is actually your own opinion provoking you. It is not the person who insults or attacks you who torments your mind, but the view you take of these things.

Do not be fooled by how things first appear. With time and greater perspective, you can regain inner peace.

Continually remind yourself that you are a mortal being, and someday will die. This will inspire you not to waste precious time in fruitless activities, like stewing over grievances and striving after possessions.

If you intend to follow this path, prepare for your family and friends to sneer, “Look who’s become a philosopher now,” and, “So you think you’re better than us?”

For your part, do not adopt any air of superiority. Mind your own business, keep busy with the work you are best suited for, and play well the part the Author has given you.

If you are diligent and consistent, those who ridiculed you will come to admire you. But if you abandon the path near the start because of their laughter, you are truly worthy of scorn.

If you find yourself acting to impress others, or avoiding action out of fear of what they might think, you have left the path.

Find satisfaction in following your philosophy. If you want to be respected, start by respecting yourself.

Do not fret about your own significance, worrying, "I'll never become admired or renowned—I'm just a nobody."

Is it your business to chase after political power or fame?
No.

Find your significance within yourself. Within your own sphere of power—that is where you have the greatest consequence.

"But I want power and renown so that I may help other people," you say. What do you mean by "help"? Can you really give them happiness and satisfaction—things that are in their own spheres of power, not yours? And can you give someone something that you, yourself, don't even have?

"But I'll get money, and then share it." If you can acquire riches without losing your honor and self-respect, then do it. But if you lose what is dearest to you, no amount of money can make up for it.

Besides, which would you rather have—money to share with others, or loyal and honest friends? Work to acquire the character of a person who attracts good friends, rather than losing your character to gain riches.

"But if I become rich, I could help the entire country." Again, is this really true? Will people not have food and shelter without your providing them? Are there not metal smiths, brick makers, home builders, farmers, grocers, and so on? It is enough for each person to tend to his or her own proper work.

“What is my position in society?” The one best suited to your talents, which you can hold with honor. Each person has a vital role in society; you are important right where you are.

But if you lose your honor in striving for greater (perceived) significance, you become useless.

Do you envy someone who is popular at work, invited to parties, and spoken of in social circles? If they attract love because of positive character qualities, be glad for them. If they attract attention because of negative character qualities, be glad you don't share them.

Do not expect to equal anyone in effect without putting forth a similar effort. A person who rarely leaves home, who doesn't converse with, praise, and encourage others, will not attract friends.

Everything has its price. How much does lettuce cost? If you are unwilling to pay a dollar for lettuce, yet you envy the man who has a bagful of lettuce because he paid five dollars, you are a fool. Do not imagine he has gained an advantage over you—he has his lettuce, you have your coins.

So, if you have not been invited to a party, it is because you haven't paid the price of the invitation. It costs social engagement, conversation, encouragement, and praise. If you are not willing to pay this price, do not be upset when you don't receive an invitation.

Do you have anything good in place of the invitation? Yes—you have the pleasure of not making small talk with people you don't really like, not praising someone you don't admire, and not mingling with lackeys.

When our neighbor's boy breaks their vase, we are likely to say, "Oh well, accidents happen."

But how would you react if your own vase was broken?

You ought to react in the same way you did when it was your neighbor's property that was damaged.

Now apply this to greater things. If your neighbor's child or wife dies, you naturally think, "These things happen. We're all mortal."

But if your own child or wife dies, you cry out in despair—"I wish I'd never been born!"

Whenever misfortune befalls you, ask yourself how you would react if it were someone else in the same situation.

The Good stands before us like an archer's target.

Evil is not a thing in itself but a missing of the mark, an arrow gone astray.

If someone tried to take control of your body and make you a slave, you would fight for freedom.

Yet how easily you hand over your mind to anyone who insults you. When you dwell on their words and let them dominate your thoughts, you make them your master.

In every situation, consider what precedes it and what may follow—then act. If you act rashly, without regard to consequences, you may defeat your purposes.

Say your goal is to win a wrestling match at the Olympic Games. Consider what comes before, during, and after the event. Before, you must train rigorously, eat a strict diet, abstain from alcohol, obey your coach, and follow the rules of the competition. During the match, you may be thrown down, dislocate your arm, sprain your ankle, eat dust, and be beaten.

If you have considered all this, and you still want to wrestle—by all means, begin training. Otherwise, you are like a child who daydreams about being a great wrestler and acts out shows with his friends.

Some hear a lecture from a wise philosopher, and are inspired to become philosophers. Lacking study and practice, they are mere imitators.

You may fancy yourself a wrestler, then a gladiator, then an orator, then a philosopher—but never begin training in earnest. If so, you are a dabbler who samples many fields, but when the time comes to commit to one, you move on to the next.

To find your vocation, first consider your talents and inclinations. Do you have the back, shoulders, and thighs of a wrestler? Or the potential and determination to gain them through exercise?

Do you live in a way befitting a philosopher? Or are you restless, quick to anger, and a glutton for food and drink? If you truly wish to become a philosopher, you must gain self-control, give up friends who are bad influences, be prepared to face ridicule and scorn, and be willing to give up honors, offices, riches, and fame.

If you have fully considered the consequences, and you still wish to make these sacrifices for peace, freedom, and inner harmony—by all means, begin your philosophical training.

Whatever your vocation, pursue it wholeheartedly. Consider, choose, and commit.

Duties are determined by relations. If a man is your father, the relationship implies the duties of listening to his counsel, following his instructions, patiently receiving his correction, and helping to take care of him in his old age.

Now suppose he is a bad father. Are your duties voided? Or is there still a natural bond?

Before judging his behavior, look to your own. Fulfill your duties to the best of your ability. If he insults or rejects you, do not stoop to his level and retaliate in anger. Hold securely to your clear conscience and inner harmony.

From the example of the father, you can deduce how to fulfill your duties in relation to neighbors, employers, and so on.

No one can steal your peace of mind unless you let them.

Worship the gods by acknowledging that they govern the universe justly and well. Resolve to know the laws of nature, follow them in all circumstances, let them shape you, be guided by their perfect wisdom. Then you will never feel cheated or ignored by the gods.

This is only possible if you let go of all things beyond your control. Stop judging the things that fate brings you as “good” or “evil”; only judge your own thoughts, desires, and actions as good or evil. If you suppose events to be good or evil in themselves, when life doesn’t go as you wish you will inevitably blame the Author.

Everyone naturally avoids and curses things that seem harmful, and pursues and praises things that seem helpful. If you believe that someone has deliberately hurt you, it is impossible to praise them. Or if a son feels his father has withheld good things and given him evil, he cannot honor his father. For the same reason, those who curse things outside their power revile the gods.

Where our attention and affection lie, there too is our worship. Take care, then, where you direct your focus, desires, and dislikes.

Be mindful of this when you participate in religious services and prayers. In devotion, be neither careless nor extravagant.

When you hear predictions of the future, do not become fearful or excited—remember that future events are beyond your control. Keep the same serene mindset you had before hearing the prediction.

When you understand that outside events do not touch your deepest self—what matters is your interpretation and reaction—you can use any circumstance to your benefit.

Trust fate, and trust yourself. Seek advice from the laws of nature, not prognosticators.

Suppose you visit an oracle, and she predicts that one of your friends will be arrested and exiled. Will you let this prophecy change your behavior? Will you abandon your friend in anticipation of trouble?

If your friend is unjustly arrested, reason demands that you stand by him. Agreeing with this law of nature, the greatest of oracles—the Oracle at Delphi—once threw a man out of the temple for abandoning his friend.

Be the same person in public as in private.

Speak only what is useful and beneficial. In conversation, avoid idle chatter about horse races, athletes, celebrities, food, and drink. Refuse to participate in gossip—tearing down, inflating, and judging other people. Among friends, shift the conversation to worthy topics; among strangers, stay silent.

Do not laugh loudly and obnoxiously.

Avoid taking oaths (binding your will to another person or group of people) as much as possible.

Avoid vulgar entertainments. Sometimes you may accept an invitation out of politeness—in that case, go but keep your mental distance. But if your friends keep inviting you out to degrading shows, find new friends—or you will soon find yourself off the path and in a mud pit.

Take care of your bodily needs—food, drink, clothes, shelter—but avoid luxury and indulgence.

Enjoy sex only within the bounds of your marriage; but do not assume a posture of moral superiority and look down upon those who behave otherwise.

If a friend tells you that someone has criticized or insulted you, say, “They must not know about my other faults, or they would have pointed out those, too.”

When you attend the games, do not get emotionally invested in the rivalry. Wish only that the best team or athlete wins. Avoid the extremes of elation at a win and devastation at a loss.

When you attend parties, be a polite guest. Do not revel to the point of losing your dignity.

In company, do not prattle on about your own adventures and misadventures. However exciting your exploits are to you, others may not be so interested. Also, keep your language free of obscenities. Do not dip into the gutter in search of cheap laughs.

If you are unsure how to act in a given social situation, ask yourself how Socrates or Zeno would behave. Model yourself after the wisest.

When you feel burning desire for something that appears pleasurable, you are like a person under a spell. Instead of acting on impulse, take a step back—wait till the enchantment fades and you can see things as they are.

Consider the cost of pursuing this potential pleasure, every consequence that may follow from acquiring or experiencing it, and how you will feel about it the next day.

Then consider how you will feel about yourself tomorrow if you resist the temptation today.

If reason tells you a pleasure is wholesome and harmless, you may enjoy it in moderation. But take care not to let your happiness gradually become dependent on it.

Gaining in self-possession is more satisfying than any bodily pleasure.

Whenever you act from clear judgment, doing what needs to be done, do not worry about what others will think—even if the whole world might misunderstand you.

If you are off course, correct yourself. But if you know you are in the right, why fear those who misjudge you?

Black and white thinking may seem powerful in speeches and debates, but real life is mostly gray areas. It is rarely a question of good versus bad, but of weighing greater and lesser goods on a scale of values.

At a feast, taking the largest helping may be good for your appetite, but sharing generously is good for the spirit of the celebration. In this case, honoring your hosts and fellow guests should be valued above satiating your hunger.

If you win the adoration of others by pretending to be someone you're not, you may gain celebrity or high office—but you will lose out on the fulfillment of a life best-suited to your attributes and abilities.

As when walking, you keep an eye out for sharp stones and fallen branches in your path; so when thinking, watch for obstacles and errors in your line of thought. Tread carefully, taking care not to stumble into illogic and unreason.

Our possessions should be suited to our bodies and lives, just as our shoes are suited to our feet.

Could you run better if your shoes were larger than your feet, or gold-plated and diamond studded? Of course not.

Once you let your appetite exceed what is necessary and useful, desire knows no bounds.

Some young women confuse their self-worth with their ability to attract the attention of men, and so pour all their energies into makeup, clothing, and jewelry. If only they realized that virtue, honor, and self-respect are the marks of a true beauty.

It betrays a lack of an interior life when a person is overly focused on bodily things—whether indulging in food and drink, exercising to exhaustion, or spending excessive time on grooming.

Care for your body as needed, but put your main energies and efforts into cultivating your mind.

Whenever someone helps or hinders you, or praises or criticizes you, remember that they see you only through the lens of their own impressions. If they act or speak from a warped perspective, they hurt themselves—not you.

For if someone mistakes truth for falsehood, the truth is not harmed, but only the person deceived. Keeping this in mind, gently turn away any insult or injury. “It seems right to them, though they are mistaken.”

Everything has two handles: one by which it can be carried, and one by which it cannot. If a friend treats you unfairly, do not try to grasp the situation by the handle of retribution—it will burn your hand.

Instead, reach for the opposite handle of reconciliation. Remember that you are friends, you've known each for other a long time, and the relationship is worth keeping. By this handle, it can be carried.

Here are some examples of illogical conclusions: “I am richer than you, therefore I am more valuable than you.” “I am more eloquent than you, therefore I am superior to you.”

The logical conclusions would be: “I am richer than you, therefore I can buy more things than you.” “I am more eloquent than you, therefore my speech is more polished than yours.”

A person’s worth, after all, is not found in possessions or style.

Does a person bathe quickly? Do not say that they bathe poorly, but only quickly.

Does a person drink a lot of wine? Do not say they drink badly, but only in abundance.

Unless you perfectly understand another's motives, how can you judge them? Do not mistake your impressions for the whole truth.

Do not proclaim yourself a philosopher, or go around preaching your principles. Show them by example.

At a feast, do not give a speech about how everyone should eat. Only eat as you should.

Socrates never made a spectacle of himself or put on an air of authority. In philosophical conversations, follow his example—stay mostly silent; ask questions and listen intently. If anyone calls you ignorant and says you know nothing, be sure that you are now a true student of philosophy.

Sheep do not spit out grass to show the farmer how much they've eaten—they ruminate on it, digest it, then display the results in wool and milk. In the same way, do not spew your undigested thoughts; show their results in action.

Once you have reigned in your bodily appetites, do not brag about it. Ask for water, but do not announce at the table, “I only drink water.”

Consider how much more austere are the poor than you, and how much greater the hardships they endure.

Do not make a spectacle of self-deprivation. When you fast, tell no one.

An ignorant person is one who is tossed about between elation and despair by external forces and events.

A philosopher is one whose thoughts and emotions are internally anchored. She criticizes no one, praises no one, blames no one. She considers herself a student, not an expert.

When she fails, she takes responsibility. When she succeeds, she smiles to herself.

She controls her desires. She hates only those things which hinder the free use of her will. She acts with calm deliberation.

If she comes across as knowing nothing in eyes of others, she does not care.

If you hear a teacher boast of being able to understand and interpret the writings of Chrysippus, remember—if Chrysippus had written clearly and simply, there would be nothing to brag about.

What do I desire? To know the laws of nature and follow them. Who knows the laws of nature? I hear that Chrysippus does, so I will read his works. But I cannot understand them, so I need someone to interpret them. When an interpreter reveals the meaning, my response should be to follow Chrysippus' teachings—not admire the interpretation. The whole point of learning is to live out the teachings.

Those who focus on interpretations are grammarians, not philosophers.

Whenever a student asks me to interpret Chrysippus, I blush at the parts where my life doesn't live up to his teachings.

Follow your principles as though they were laws. Do not worry if others criticize or laugh at you, for their opinions are not your concern.

How long will you make excuses for your lapses? How long will you wait before following your reason without exception? You know all the necessary principles of philosophy. Are you waiting for some guru to order you around? You are no longer a child, but a mature adult—it's time to act like one.

If you are lazy and careless, piling procrastination on top of procrastination, you will continue to be tossed and tormented by external forces until your death.

From this instant, then, choose to act like the worthy and capable person you are. Follow unwaveringly what reason tells you is the best course. Face every situation—promising pain or pleasure, glory or disgrace—with the courage of a soldier in battle. Approach life as your own Olympic Games—each action is important, one movement can determine victory or defeat.

Look to Socrates—he continually improved himself in every way, with reason as his guide.

Of course, you and I are not Socrates. But we can live as individuals striving to become like Socrates.

The first topic of philosophy is the practical application of principles. For instance, learning and living the principle, “Do not lie.”

The second topic is understanding the reasons behind the principles. For instance, “Reasons why we should not lie.”

The third topic is verifying the principles through logic. “What are the consequences of lying? Do these consequences confirm our reasons for not lying? Or are our reasons contradictory?”

Each topic follows from the one before it, with the first—practical application of principles—being the essential foundation.

In most schools of philosophy, however, they spend all their time on the second and third subjects—arguments and proofs—and neglect entirely the first. They can explain in academic and scholarly terms exactly why lying is wrong—yet they routinely lie.

Philosophy is for living, not just learning.

Keep these maxims close at hand:

Lead me, Fate, wherever you will,
and I will cheerfully follow.
For, even if I kick and wail,
all the same I must follow.

—CLEANTHES

Whoever yields to fate becomes wise,
by learning the laws of heaven.

—EURIPIDES

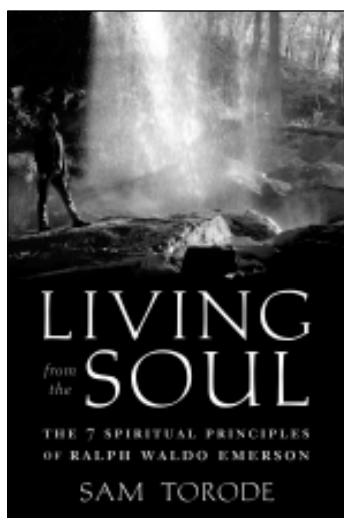
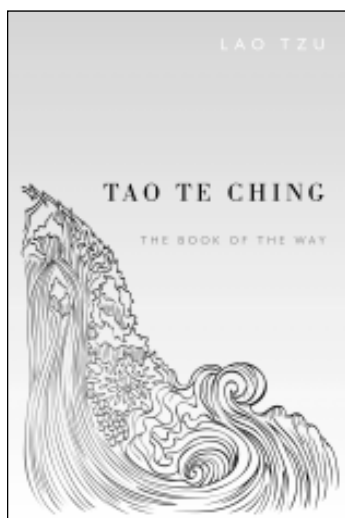
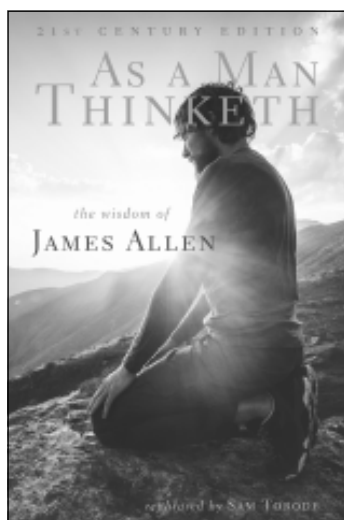
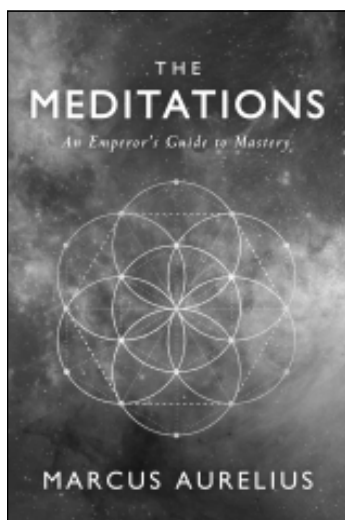
If it pleases the gods, let it be.

—SOCRATES

They may kill me, but they cannot hurt me.

—SOCRATES

FURTHER READING



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