

MEDITATIONS

Marcus Aurelius

The Private Thoughts of a Roman Emperor

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Meditations is one of the masterpieces of Stoic philosophy and perhaps the most personal document ever written by a Roman Emperor. Composed during military campaigns in the final years of Marcus Aurelius's life, these private reflections were never intended for publication.

This edition is based on the translation by George Long, first published in 1862 and now in the public domain via Project Gutenberg. The text has been faithfully preserved without alteration.

The illustrations in this volume were created especially for Onde Classics.

— Onde, Los Angeles, 2026



INTRODUCTION

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus was born on April 26, A.D. 121. His real name was M. Annius Verus, and he was sprung of a noble family which claimed descent from Numa, second King of Rome. Thus the most religious of emperors came of the blood of the most pious of early kings.

His father, Annius Verus, had held high office in Rome, and his grandfather, of the same name, had been thrice Consul. Both his parents died young, but Marcus held them in loving remembrance. On his father's death Marcus was adopted by his grandfather, the consular Annius Verus, and there was deep love between these two. On the very first page of his book Marcus gratefully declares how of his grandfather he had learned to be gentle and meek, and to refrain from all anger and passion.

The Emperor Hadrian divined the fine character of the lad, whom he used to call not Verus but Verissimus, more Truthful than his own name. He advanced Marcus to equestrian rank when six years of age, and at the age of eight made him a member of the ancient Salian priesthood.

His education was conducted with all care. The ablest teachers were engaged for him, and he was trained in the strict doctrine of the Stoic philosophy, which was his great delight. He was taught to dress plainly and to live simply, to avoid all softness and luxury. His body was trained to hardihood by wrestling, hunting, and outdoor games; and though his constitution was weak, he showed great personal courage to encounter the fiercest boars.

Antoninus Pius died in 161, and Marcus assumed the imperial state. No sooner was Marcus settled upon the throne than wars broke out on all sides. The good emperor was not spared domestic troubles. But although Marcus Aurelius may have held intellectually that his soul was destined to be absorbed, and to lose consciousness of itself, there were times when he felt, as all who hold it must sometimes feel, how unsatisfying is such a creed.

These Meditations record the innermost thoughts of his heart, set down to ease it, with such moral maxims and reflections as may help him to bear the burden of duty and the countless annoyances of a busy life. In their intimacy and frankness lies their great charm. These notes are not sermons; they are not even confessions. Marcus Aurelius is neither vulgar nor unctuous; he extenuates nothing, but nothing sets down in malice. He never poses before an audience; he may not be profound, but he is always sincere.

THE FIRST BOOK

I. Of my grandfather Verus I have learned to be gentle and meek, and to refrain from all anger and passion. From the fame and memory of him that begot me I have learned both shamefastness and manlike behaviour. Of my mother I have learned to be religious, and bountiful; and to forbear, not only to do, but to intend any evil; to content myself with a spare diet, and to fly all such excess as is incidental to great wealth. Of my great-grandfather, both to frequent public schools and auditories, and to get me good and able teachers at home; and that I ought not to think much, if upon such occasions, I were at excessive charges.

II. Of him that brought me up, not to be fondly addicted to either of the two great factions of the coursers in the circus, called Prasini, and Veneti: nor in the amphitheatre partially to favour any of the gladiators, or fencers. Moreover, to endure labour; nor to need many things; when I have anything to do, to do it myself rather than by others; not to meddle with many businesses; and not easily to admit of any slander.

III. Of Diognetus, not to busy myself about vain things, and not easily to believe those things, which are commonly spoken, by such as take upon them to work wonders, and by sorcerers, or prestidigitators, and impostors; concerning the power of charms, and their driving out of demons, or evil spirits; and the like. Not to keep quails for the game; nor to be mad after such things. Not to be offended with other men's liberty of speech, and to apply myself unto philosophy.

IV. To Rusticus I am beholding, that I first entered into the conceit that my life wanted some redress and cure. And then, that I did not fall into the ambition of ordinary sophists, either to write tracts concerning the common theorems, or to exhort men unto virtue and the study of philosophy by public orations. To read with diligence; not to rest satisfied with a light and superficial knowledge, nor quickly to assent to things commonly spoken of.

V. From Apollonius, true liberty, and unvariable steadfastness, and not to regard anything at all, though never so little, but right and reason: and always, whether in the sharpest pains, or after the loss of a child, or in long diseases, to be still the same man.

VI. Of Sextus, mildness and the pattern of a family governed with paternal affection; and a purpose to live according to nature: to be grave without affectation: to observe carefully the several dispositions of my friends, not to be offended with idiots.

VII. From Alexander the Grammarian, to be un-reprovable myself, and not reproachfully to reprehend any man for a barbarism, or a solecism, or any false pronounciation, but dextrously by way of answer, or testimony, or confirmation of the same matter to utter it as it should have been spoken.

VIII. Of Fronto, to how much envy and fraud and hypocrisy the state of a tyrannous king is subject unto, and how they who are commonly called nobly born, are in some sort incapable, or void of natural affection.

IX. Of Alexander the Platonic, not often nor without great necessity to say, or to write to any man in a letter, 'I am not at leisure'; nor in this manner still to put off those duties, which we owe to our friends and acquaintances under pretense of urgent affairs.

X. Of Catulus, not to condemn any friend's expostulation, though unjust, but to strive to reduce him to his former disposition: freely and heartily to speak well of all my masters upon any occasion; and to love my children with true affection.

XI. From my brother Severus, to be kind and loving to all them of my house and family; by whom also I came to the knowledge of Thrasea and Helvidius, and Cato, and Dio, and Brutus. He it was also that did put me in the first conceit and desire of an equal commonwealth, administered by justice and equality; and of a kingdom wherein should be regarded nothing more than the good and welfare of the subjects.

XII. From Claudius Maximus, in all things to endeavour to have power of myself, and in nothing to be carried about; to be cheerful and courageous in all sudden chances and accidents, as in sicknesses: to love mildness, and moderation, and gravity: and to do my business, whatsoever it be, thoroughly, and without querulousness.

XIII. In my father, I observed his meekness; his constancy without wavering in those things, which after a due examination and deliberation, he had determined. How free from all vanity he carried himself in matter of honour and dignity. His laboriousness and assiduity, his readiness to hear any man, that had aught to say tending to any common good.

XIV. From the gods I received that I had good grandfathers, and parents, a good sister, good masters, good domestics, loving kinsmen, almost all that I have. That I never through haste and rashness transgressed against any of them. That I preserved the flower of my youth. That I took not upon me to be a man before my time, but rather put it off longer than I needed.

XV. In the country of the Quadi at Granua, these. Betimes in the morning say to thyself, This day I shall have to do with an idle curious man, with an unthankful man, a railer, a crafty, false, or an envious man; an unsociable uncharitable man. All these ill qualities have happened unto them, through ignorance of that which is truly good and truly bad.

XVI. Whatsoever I am, is either flesh, or life, or that which we commonly call the mistress and overruling part of man; reason. Away with thy books, suffer not thy mind any more to be distracted, and carried to and fro; for it will not be.

XVII. Whatsoever proceeds from the gods immediately, that any man will grant totally depends from their divine providence. As for those things that are commonly said to happen by fortune, even those must be conceived to have dependence from nature, or from that first and general connection of all those things, which more apparently by the divine providence are administered and brought to pass.

THE SECOND BOOK

I. Remember how long thou hast already put off these things, and how often a certain day and hour as it were, having been set unto thee by the gods, thou hast neglected it. It is high time for thee to understand the true nature both of the world, whereof thou art a part; and of that Lord and Governor of the world, from whom, as a channel from the spring, thou thyself didst flow: and that there is but a certain limit of time appointed unto thee, which if thou shalt not make use of to calm and allay the many distempers of thy soul, it will pass away and thou with it, and never after return.

II. Let it be thy earnest and incessant care as a Roman and a man to perform whatsoever it is that thou art about, with true and unfeigned gravity, natural affection, freedom and justice: and as for all other cares, and imaginations, how thou mayest ease thy mind of them. Which thou shalt do; if thou shalt go about every action as thy last action.

III. Do, soul, do; abuse and contemn thyself; yet a while and the time for thee to respect thyself, will be at an end. Every man's happiness depends from himself, but behold thy life is almost at an end, whiles affording thyself no respect, thou dost make thy happiness to consist in the souls, and conceits of other men.

IV. Why should any of these things that happen externally, so much distract thee? Give thyself leisure to learn some good thing, and cease roving and wandering to and fro.

V. For not observing the state of another man's soul, scarce was ever any man known to be unhappy. Tell whosoever they be that intend not, and guide not by reason and discretion the motions of their own souls, they must of necessity be unhappy.

VI. These things thou must always have in mind: What is the nature of the universe, and what is mine--in particular: This unto that what relation it hath: what kind of part, of what kind of universe it is.

VII. Theophrastus, where he compares sin with sin says well and like a philosopher, that those sins are greater which are committed through lust, than those which are committed through anger.

VIII. Whatsoever thou dost affect, whatsoever thou dost project, so do, and so project all, as one who, for aught thou knowest, may at this very present depart out of this life. And as for death, if there be any gods, it is no grievous thing to leave the society of men.

IX. Consider how quickly all things are dissolved and resolved: the bodies and substances themselves, into the matter and substance of the world: and their memories into the general age and time of the world.

X. It is the part of a man endowed with a good understanding faculty, to consider what they themselves are in very deed, from whose bare conceits and voices, honour and credit do proceed.

XI. Consider with thyself how man, and by what part of his, is joined unto God, and how that part of man is affected, when it is said to be diffused.

XII. If thou shouldst live three thousand, or as many as ten thousands of years, yet remember this, that man can part with no life properly, save with that little part of life, which he now lives.

XIII. Remember that all is but opinion and conceit.

XIV. A man's soul doth wrong and disrespect itself first and especially, when as much as in itself lies it becomes an aposteme, and as it were an excrescency of the world.

XV. The time of a man's life is as a point; the substance of it ever flowing, the sense obscure; and the whole composition of the body tending to corruption. His soul is restless, fortune uncertain, and fame doubtful; to be brief, as a stream so are all things belonging to the body; as a dream, or as a smoke, so are all that belong unto the soul. Our life is a warfare, and a mere pilgrimage. Fame after life is no better than oblivion. What is it then that will adhere and follow? Only one thing, philosophy.

Whilst I was at Carnuntum.

THE THIRD BOOK

I. A man must not only consider how daily his life wasteth and decreaseth, but this also, that if he live long, he cannot be certain, whether his understanding shall continue so able and sufficient, for either discreet consideration, in matter of businesses; or for contemplation. Thou must hasten therefore; not only because thou art every day nearer unto death than other, but also because that intellective faculty in thee, whereby thou art enabled to know the true nature of things, and to order all thy actions by that knowledge, doth daily waste and decay.

II. This also thou must observe, that whatsoever it is that naturally doth happen to things natural, hath somewhat in itself that is pleasing and delightful.

III. Hippocrates having cured many sicknesses, fell sick himself and died. How then stands the case? Thou hast taken ship, thou hast sailed, thou art come to land, go out, if to another life, there also shalt thou find gods, who are everywhere.

IV. Spend not the remnant of thy days in thoughts and fancies concerning other men, when it is not in relation to some common good.

V. Do nothing against thy will, nor contrary to the community, nor without due examination, nor with reluctance.

VI. To be cheerful, and to stand in no need, either of other men's help or attendance, or of that rest and tranquillity, which thou must be beholding to others for.

VII. If thou shalt find anything in this mortal life better than righteousness, than truth, temperance, fortitude, and in general better than a mind contented both with those things which according to right and reason she doth, and in those, which without her will and knowledge happen unto thee by the providence; if I say, thou canst find out anything better than this, apply thyself unto it with thy whole heart, and that which is best wheresoever thou dost find it, enjoy freely.

VIII. Never esteem of anything as profitable, which shall ever constrain thee either to break thy faith, or to lose thy modesty.

IX. In the mind that is once truly disciplined and purged, thou canst not find anything, either foul or impure.

X. Use thine opinative faculty with all honour and respect.

XI. To these ever-present helps and mementoes, let one more be added, ever to make a particular description and delineation as it were of every object that presents itself to thy mind, that thou mayest wholly and thoroughly contemplate it, in its own proper nature, bare and naked.

XII. What is this, that now my fancy is set upon? of what things doth it consist? how long can it last?

XIII. If thou shalt intend that which is present, following the rule of right and reason carefully, solidly, meekly, and shalt not intermix any other businesses, but shall study this only to preserve thy spirit unpolluted, and pure, and shall cleave unto him without either hope or fear of anything, contenting thyself with heroical truth, thou shalt live happily.

XIV. As physicians and chirurgeons have always their instruments ready at hand for all sudden cures; so have thou always thy dogmata in a readiness for the knowledge of things, both divine and human.

XV. Be not deceived; for thou shalt never live to read thy moral commentaries, nor the acts of the famous Romans and Grecians. Hasten therefore to an end, and giving over all vain hopes, help thyself in time if thou carest for thyself, as thou oughtest to do.

THE FOURTH BOOK

I. That inward mistress part of man if it be in its own true natural temper, is towards all worldly chances and events ever so disposed and affected, that it will easily turn and apply itself to that which may be, and is within its own power to compass.

II. Let nothing be done rashly, and at random, but all things according to the most exact and perfect rules of art.

III. They seek for themselves private retiring places, as country villages, the sea-shore, mountains. But all this thou must know proceeds from simplicity in the highest degree. At what time soever thou wilt, it is in thy power to retire into thyself, and to be at rest, and free from all businesses. A man cannot any whither retire better than to his own soul.

IV. If to understand and to be reasonable be common unto all men, then is that reason, for which we are termed reasonable, common unto all.

V. As generation is, so also death, a secret of nature's wisdom.

VI. Such and such things, from such and such causes, must of necessity proceed.

VII. Let opinion be taken away, and no man will think himself wronged.

VIII. Whatsoever doth happen in the world, doth happen justly.

IX. Conceit no such things, as he that wrongeth thee conceiveth, or would have thee to conceive, but look into the matter itself, and see what it is in very truth.

X. These two rules, thou must have always in a readiness. First, do nothing at all, but what reason proceeding from that regal and supreme part, shall for the good and benefit of men, suggest unto thee. And secondly, if any man that is present shall be able to rectify thee or to turn thee from some erroneous persuasion, that thou be always ready to change thy mind.

XIV. Not as though thou hadst thousands of years to live. Death hangs over thee: whilst yet thou livest, whilst thou mayest, be good.

XXIX. Whatsoever is now present, and from day to day hath its existence; all objects of memories, and the minds and memories themselves, incessantly consider, all things that are, have their being by change and alteration.

XLIII. Let thy course ever be the most compendious way. The most compendious, is that which is according to nature: that is, in all both words and deeds, ever to follow that which is most sound and perfect.

THE FIFTH BOOK

I. In the morning when thou findest thyself unwilling to rise, consider with thyself presently, it is to go about a man's work that I am stirred up. Am I then yet unwilling to go about that, for which I myself was born and brought forth into this world? Or was I made for this, to lay me down, and make much of myself in a warm bed?

II. How easy a thing is it for a man to put off from him all turbulent adventitious imaginations, and presently to be in perfect rest and tranquillity!

III. Think thyself fit and worthy to speak, or to do anything that is according to nature, and let not the reproach, or report of some that may ensue upon it, ever deter thee.

VI. Such there be, who when they have done a good turn to any, are ready to set them on the score for it, and to require retaliation. Others there be, who though they stand not upon retaliation, yet they think with themselves nevertheless, that such a one is their debtor. Others again there be, who when they have done any such thing, do not so much as know what they have done; but are like unto the vine, which beareth her grapes, and when once she hath borne her own proper fruit, is contented and seeks for no further recompense.

XV. Such as thy thoughts and ordinary cogitations are, such will thy mind be in time. For the soul doth as it were receive its tincture from the fancies, and imaginations.

XXI. To live with the Gods. He liveth with the Gods, who at all times affords unto them the spectacle of a soul, both contented and well pleased with whatsoever is afforded, or allotted unto her.

XXVII. Within a very little while, thou wilt be either ashes, or a sceletum; and a name perchance; and perchance, not so much as a name.

XXX. Let death surprise me when it will, and where it will, I may be a happy man, nevertheless. For he is a happy man, who in his lifetime dealeth unto himself a happy lot and portion. A happy lot and portion is, good inclinations of the soul, good desires, good actions.

THE SIXTH BOOK

I. The matter itself, of which the universe doth consist, is of itself very tractable and pliable. That rational essence that doth govern it, hath in itself no cause to do evil.

V. The best kind of revenge is, not to become like unto them.

VI. Let this be thy only joy, and thy only comfort, from one sociable kind action without intermission to pass unto another, God being ever in thy mind.

XV. Not vegetative spiration, it is not surely that in this life should be so dear unto us; nor sensitive respiration. What is it then that should be dear unto thee? This I think: that in all thy motions and actions thou be moved, and restrained according to thine own true natural constitution and construction only.

XVIII. Do not ever conceive anything impossible to man, which by thee cannot, or not without much difficulty be effected; but whatsoever in general thou canst conceive possible and proper unto any man, think that very possible unto thee also.

XX. If anybody shall reprove me, and shall make it apparent unto me, that in any either opinion or action of mine I do err, I will most gladly retract. For it is the truth that I seek after, by which I am sure that never any man was hurt.

XXVI. Death is a cessation from the impression of the senses, the tyranny of the passions, the errors of the mind, and the servitude of the body.

XXVII. In this kind of life thy body be able to hold out, it is a shame that thy soul should faint first, and give over. Keep thyself therefore, truly simple, good, sincere, grave, free from all ostentation, a lover of that which is just, religious, kind, tender-hearted, strong and vigorous to undergo anything that becomes thee. Worship the Gods, procure the welfare of men, this life is short.

XXXIV. He that seeth the things that are now, hath seen all that either was ever, or ever shall be, for all things are of one kind; and all like one unto another.

THE SEVENTH BOOK

I. What is wickedness? It is that which many time and often thou hast already seen and known in the world. Generally, above and below, thou shalt find but the same things. There is nothing that is new. All things that are, are both usual and of little continuance.

VI. Let not things future trouble thee. For if necessity so require that they come to pass, thou shalt be provided for them with the same reason, by which whatsoever is now present, is made both tolerable and acceptable unto thee.

XII. Whatsoever any man either doth or saith, thou must be good; not for any man's sake, but for thine own nature's sake; as if either gold, or the emerald, or purple, should ever be saying to themselves, Whatsoever any man either doth or saith, I must still be an emerald, and I must keep my colour.

XV. Is any man so foolish as to fear change, to which all things that once were not owe their being?

XXXI. As one who had lived, and were now to die by right, whatsoever is yet remaining, bestow that wholly as a gracious overplus upon a virtuous life. Look within; within is the fountain of all good. Such a fountain, where springing waters can never fail, so thou dig still deeper and deeper.

XXXIII. The art of true living in this world is more like a wrestler's, than a dancer's practice. For in this they both agree, to teach a man whatsoever falls upon him, that he may be ready for it, and that nothing may cast him down.

THE EIGHTH BOOK

I. This also, among other things, may serve to keep thee from vainglory; if thou shalt consider, that thou art now altogether incapable of the commendation of one, who all his life long, or from his youth at least, hath lived a philosopher's life.

V. That which the nature of the universe doth busy herself about, is; that which is here, to transfer it thither, to change it, and thence again to take it away, and to carry it to another place.

XXV. The true joy of a man, is to do that which properly belongs unto a man. That which is most proper unto a man, is, first, to be kindly affected towards them that are of the same kind and nature as he is himself.

L. 'They kill me, they cut my flesh; they persecute my person with curses.' What then? May not thy mind for all this continue pure, prudent, temperate, just? As a fountain of sweet and clear water, though she be cursed by some stander by, yet do her springs nevertheless still run as sweet and clear as before.

LI. He that knoweth not what the world is, knoweth not where he himself is.

LVI. All men are made one for another: either then teach them better, or bear with them.

THE NINTH BOOK

I. He that is unjust, is also impious. For the nature of the universe, having made all reasonable creatures one for another, to the end that they should do one another good; more or less according to the several persons and occasions but in nowise hurt one another: it is manifest that he that doth transgress against this her will, is guilty of impiety towards the most ancient and venerable of all the deities.

III. Thou must not in matter of death carry thyself scornfully, but as one that is well pleased with it, as being one of those things that nature hath appointed.

IV. He that sinneth, sinneth unto himself. He that is unjust, hurts himself, in that he makes himself worse than he was before.

VI. To wipe away fancy, to use deliberation, to quench concupiscence, to keep the mind free to herself.

XI. This day I did come out of all my trouble. Nay I have cast out all my trouble; it should rather be for that which troubled thee, whatsoever it was, was not without anywhere that thou shouldest come out of it, but within in thine own opinions, from whence it must be cast out, before thou canst truly and constantly be at ease.

XXVI. Up and down, from one age to another, go the ordinary things of the world; being still the same. And either of everything in particular before it come to pass, the mind of the universe doth consider with itself and deliberate. In sum,

either there is a God, and then all is well; or if all things go by chance and fortune, yet mayest thou use thine own providence in those things that concern thee properly; and then art thou well.

XXXIII. Loss and corruption, is in very deed nothing else but change and alteration; and that is it, which the nature of the universe doth most delight in.

THE TENTH BOOK

I. O my soul, the time I trust will be, when thou shalt be good, simple, single, more open and visible, than that body by which it is enclosed. Thou wilt one day be sensible of their happiness, whose end is love, and their affections dead to all worldly things.

III. Whatsoever doth happen unto thee, thou art naturally by thy natural constitution either able, or not able to bear. If thou beest able, be not offended, but bear it according to thy natural constitution.

IV. Him that offends, to teach with love and meekness, and to show him his error.

XII. He hath got loose from the bonds of his body, and perceiving that within a very little while he must of necessity bid the world farewell, and leave all these things behind him, he wholly applied himself, as to righteousness in all his actions, so to the common nature in all things that should happen unto him.

XVI. Give what thou wilt, and take away what thou wilt, saith he that is well taught and truly modest, to Him that gives, and takes away.

XVIII. Make it not any longer a matter of dispute or discourse, what are the signs and proprieties of a good man, but really and actually to be such.

XXXIII. Let it not be in any man's power, to say truly of thee, that thou art not truly simple, or sincere and open, or not good.

XXXIV. As he that is bitten by a mad dog, is afraid of everything almost that he seeth: so unto him, whom the dogmata have once bitten, or in whom true knowledge hath made an impression, everything almost that he sees or reads be it never so short or ordinary, doth afford a good memento.

THE ELEVENTH BOOK

I. The natural properties, and privileges of a reasonable soul are: That she seeth herself; that she can order, and compose herself: that she makes herself as she will herself: that she reaps her own fruits whatsoever.

III. That soul which is ever ready, even now presently from the body, whether by way of extinction, or dispersion, or continuation in another place and estate to be separated, how blessed and happy is it!

VII. A branch cut off from the continuity of that which was next unto it, must needs be cut off from the whole tree: so a man that is divided from another man, is divided from the whole society.

XI. Then is the soul as Empedocles doth liken it, like unto a sphere or globe, when she is all of one form and figure: when she neither greedily stretcheth out herself unto anything, nor basely contracts herself, or lies flat and dejected; but shineth all with light.

XII. Will any condemn me? let him look to that, upon what grounds he does it: my care shall be that I may never be found either doing or speaking anything that doth truly deserve contempt.

XV. To live happily is an inward power of the soul, when she is affected with indifferency, towards those things that are by their nature indifferent.

XVIII. What portion soever, either of air or fire there be in thee, although by nature it tend upwards, submitting nevertheless to the ordinance of the universe, it abides here below in this mixed body.

THE TWELFTH BOOK

I. Whatsoever thou doest hereafter aspire unto, thou mayest even now enjoy and possess, if thou doest not envy thyself thine own happiness. And that will be, if thou shalt forget all that is past, and for the future, refer thyself wholly to the Divine Providence, and shalt bend and apply all thy present thoughts and intentions to holiness and righteousness.

II. God beholds our minds and understandings, bare and naked from these material vessels, and outsides, and all earthly dross. For with His simple and pure understanding, He pierceth into our inmost and purest parts.

VIII. How happy is man in this his power that hath been granted unto him: that he needs not do anything but what God shall approve, and that he may embrace contentedly, whatsoever God doth send unto him?

XIII. If it be not fitting, do it not. If it be not true, speak it not. Ever maintain thine own purpose and resolution free from all compulsion and necessity.

XV. It is high time for thee, to understand that there is somewhat in thee, better and more divine than either thy passions, or thy sensual appetites and affections.

XVI. Remember that all is but opinion, and all opinion depends of the mind. Take thine opinion away, and then as a ship that hath stricken in within the arms and mouth of the harbour, a present calm; all things safe and steady.

XXI. To them that ask thee, Where hast thou seen the Gods, or how knowest thou certainly that there be Gods, that thou art so devout in their worship? I answer first of all, that even to the very eye, they are in some manner visible and apparent. Secondly, neither have I ever seen mine own soul, and yet I respect and honour it.

XXII. Herein doth consist happiness of life, for a man to know thoroughly the true nature of everything; what is the matter, and what is the form of it: with all his heart and soul, ever to do that which is just, and to speak the truth.

XXVII. O man! as a citizen thou hast lived, and conversed in this great city the world. Whether just for so many years, or no, what is it unto thee? Thou hast lived as long as the laws and orders of the city required. Why then should it be grievous unto thee, if the same nature that brought thee in, doth now send thee out of the world? As if the praetor should fairly dismiss him from the stage, whom he had taken in to act a while. Oh, but the play is not yet at an end, there are but three acts yet acted of it? Thou hast well said: for in matter of life, three acts is the whole play. Now to set a certain time to every man's acting, belongs unto him only, who as first he was of thy composition, so is now the cause of thy dissolution. As for thyself; thou hast to do with neither. Go thy ways then well pleased and contented: for so is He that dismisseth thee.

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