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January 18th

**SEE THE WORLD LIKE A POET AND AN ARTIST**

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“Pass through this brief patch of time in harmony with nature, and come to your final resting place gracefully, just as a ripened olive might drop, praising the earth that nourished it and grateful to the tree that gave it growth.”

—MARCUS AURELIUS, *MEDITATIONS*, 4.48.2

There are some stunningly beautiful turns of phrase in Marcus’s *Meditations*—a surprising treat considering the intended audience (just himself). In one passage, he praises the “charm and allure” of nature’s process, the “stalks of ripe grain bending low, the frowning brow of the lion, the foam dripping from the boar’s mouth.” We should thank private rhetoric teacher Marcus Cornelius Fronto for the imagery in these vivid passages. Fronto, widely considered to be Rome’s best orator besides Cicero, was chosen by Marcus’s adopted father to teach Marcus to think and write and speak.

More than just pretty phrases, they gave him—and now us—a powerful perspective on ordinary or seemingly *unbeautiful* events. It takes an artist’s eye to see that the end of life is not unlike a ripe fruit falling from its tree. It takes a poet to notice the way “baking bread splits in places and those cracks, while not intended in the baker’s art, catch our eye and serve to stir our appetite” and find a metaphor in them.

There is clarity (and joy) in seeing what others can’t see, in finding grace and harmony in places others overlook. Isn’t that far better than seeing the world as some dark place?