

SELECTIONS FROM THE MEDITATIONS OF MARCUS AURELIUS

In view of the preceding paper by Sahakian (3) about the application of Stoic philosophy in psychotherapy, we thought publication of the present selections from the Stoic philosopher and Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius would be appropriate. They show that Stoic philosophy, in addition to pointing out the importance of attitude and the possibility and often advisability of attitude change, also placed great stress on what Adler meant by social interest.

These selections were made by C. F. Ernst, Vienna, and were originally published in German (2). Our English version is from the German source (1) since we found its language closer to our present-day psychological understanding than various existing English translations which we consulted.

Don't do anything you do not want to do; nor anything without regard to the common weal (III. 5).

Avoid not only useless actions but also useless thoughts, for the latter are the causes of superfluous actions (IV. 24).

Accustom yourself to pay attention to what others say, and put yourself as much as possible into the speaker's psyche (VI. 53).

Individual beings gifted with reason are related to one another, in spite of their separateness, like the individual members of an organism. They, too, are made for cooperation. Tell yourself often: I am a member of the totality of reasonable beings (VII. 13).

In the nature of man, the drive to sociability comes first; second comes his control over sensory stimulations (VII. 55).

Do not tire of seeking your benefit by granting benefit to others (VII. 74).

Nature has made its beings for each other, to be useful but in no way to harm each other (IX. 1).

Don't work as one who is unhappy at it, or to be admired or pitied; rather want only the one thing: to apply your energy—or to withhold it—as the community requires (IX. 12).

To the extent that I am in close contact with the parts that are akin to me, I shall do nothing which is against the common weal.

Rather I shall, with constant regard to my fellowmen, direct my striving entirely toward what is generally best (X. 6).

Altogether, one must first be acquainted with many conditions, to be able to pass a well-founded judgment on the actions of another (XI. 18. 5).

Just as all men do not have the same opinion about the values which are generally accepted, but only about some values, i.e., those which have general validity, so one must posit for oneself only such a goal as is considered good by all and corresponds to the common weal (XI. 21).

Accustom yourself also to matters which at first you despaired of carrying out. After all, although the left hand from lack of exercise is usually weaker, it nevertheless takes hold of the reins with more strength than the right hand, because that is how it is constantly used (XII. 6).

Firstly, do not act at random, nor without a purpose; secondly, do not direct your ultimate intention toward anything but the common weal (XII. 20).

REFERENCES

1. AURELIUS ANTONINUS, M. *Des Kaisers Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Selbstbetrachtungen*. Transl. by A. Wittstock. Leipzig: P. Reclam Jr., no date.
2. ERNST, C. J. Individualpsychologische Gedankengänge in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart. *Int. Z. Indiv. Psychol.*, 1947, 16, 189-190.
3. SAHAKIAN, W. S. Stoic philosophical psychotherapy. *J. Indiv. Psychol.*, 1969, 25, 32-35.