

# Free essay on marcus aurelius: meditations

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## **Introduction**

Marcus Aurelius is one of the most influential philosophers. Ideally, he has substantial reasons why he came up with his philosophical works including the “Meditations”. Stoic Aristo’s readings and reports influenced Aurelius’ efforts to come up with his philosophical piece of work. These readings initiated a sense of self-acceptance and confidence in Aurelius’ philosophical works. The “Meditations” is a very different from the text from the other philosophical texts. Most of the elements that are significant in the book elevate towards Aurelius’ personal experiences. Some of these experiences such as death and livelihood irritations manifest in the entire text. For this reason, this paper centers on a number of things. For one, it aims at providing a list of some of the quotes that come from this book in their philosophical structure. Second, the paper discusses the ideas that emerge from Aurelius’ work and makes a precise comparison with the philosophies in the course and the film, “Crimes and Misdemeanor”. Finally, the paper presents my own assessment on this text by giving my thoughts on whether Aurelius has been successful in supporting his ideas.

## **Some of the philosophical quotes from Aurelius text include**

“Endeavour to persuade them, but act even if they themselves are unwilling, when the rule of justice so directs.” (Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, p42)

**“ One thing here is of great price, to live out life with truth and righteousness “(Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, P 42)**

“.. virtues which are wholly in [my] power - [are] integrity, dignity, hard work, self-denial, contentment, frugality, kindness, independence, simplicity, discretion, magnanimity.” (Aurelius, 83)

“.. and love these people among whom destiny has cast [us] - but [our] love must be genuine.” (Aurelius, 63)

“ Let one thing be your joy and comfort: to move on from social act to social act with your mind on God.” (Aurelius, 237)

“ If someone can prove me wrong and show me my mistake in any thought or action, I shall gladly change. I seek the truth, which never harmed anyone: the harm is to persist in one’s own self-deception and ignorance.” (Aurelius, 83)

**“ It is the gentle [leader] who [has] strength, sinew, and courage.” (Aurelius, 72)**

“ Reason and the method of reasoning are abilities, sufficient to themselves and their own operations. Thus they start from their appropriate principle and proceed to their proposed end; wherefore reasonable acts are called right acts, to indicate the rightness of their path.” (Marcus Aurelius, 31)

**“ The noblest kind of retribution is not to become like your enemy.” (Aurelius, 35)**

There are myriad themes and ideas, which come out from the ideologies that Marcus puts into understanding. He discusses these themes and ideas in details, in “ Meditations”. These ideas include piety, justice, change, leadership, and unity among the people existing within the universe. The

philosophical sayings that the philosopher have expressed in the book, “Meditation” are exceptional. A close examination of these sayings reveals that the rule of law interlocks as well as governs them. He writes that since there is a mono-universe, there is only one supreme God. The ideas of unity, justice, and leadership are dominant in this paper. Marcus failed to understand the need for unity. Ideally, the mystical realization that all the things that exist in the universe share community led to the bitterness of the logic behind his books. Unity as an idea can stand the harmony that is manifested in various quotes regarding the state of the universe. Ideally, Marcus elaborates the universe as one intelligent soul. It is one living being. In addition, the book expresses the perception of all things being one entity. One element ensures comprehension and practicability of the unity idea. This is the presence of governing law.

Definite attention towards the Mediations genre is elementary for avid readers of philosophical texts. Marcus wrote the text with the aim of personal satisfaction. He was interested in his improvement and the lessons that he developed from his tutors. He believed in the art of change in case of differentiation in one’s experience. In that line of thoughts, Marcus in his book, ‘Meditations’ elaborates the fact that he has experienced the need for people to exist together. According to him, human beings came into the world in order for them to act in the sake of each other (Rutherford, 73). His idea of unity dominates in this context. The book proves the difference between peaceful coexistence and individualistic category of life. This approach of life leads to Marcus discussing the themes of piety and justice. Most of the ideas that establish themselves within this book are elevated

towards the basic knowledge of what it means to have a stoic life. Detailed study of the book leads one to the understanding that anyone who tries to live a stoic life ends up being troubled. That is, one ends up being unhappy. According to this book, the life of living away from oneself is unpleasant. Within the text, he provides a solution that the only way to conform to peace and happiness within oneself is to respect the requirements of nature. Ideally, when one follows nature, then this is doing justice to one's conscience. This leaves the reader in a situation of mixed decisional dimensions where he or she needs to be rational for him or her to articulate the reality in the right way to live.

The analysis of the ideas in the book, "Meditations" brings about other elements of concern such as justice and piety. There is a level of commonness in the film, "Crimes and Misdemeanors," and the book, "Meditation". They both exclude the Godly being from active influence over one's life. For instance, the theme of personal conscience through obeying nature is evident in both cases. In the film, "Crimes and misdemeanors," an environment provides that there is no one to punish anyone for his misconduct. Instead, in both the film and the book, one's state of respect for morality is essential. In this case, the bid for justice is considered to be in the forefront. The rationalism of individuals is also very important.

Marcus believes that justice is a mutual contribution that promotes co-existence among members of society. He argues that everyone should act justly and practice to appreciate the benefits that come along. Co-existing as a family in the society brings harmony. Marcus believes that one party cannot perform justice. Rather it should be reciprocated by both parties to

achieve its intended fairness. Living communally is only attained if the trait is inculcated in every member of the society. One should deserve the society equally driven by the goal to sustain the cosmopolis. Treating others fairly is based on indifferent rather than nature oriented. Marcus highlights that an individual's action to another person is inseparable from the community's impact. This is because the person is part of the society. Therefore, as the society languishes due to an individual's negligence, he/she would also feel the impact at equal measures.

All human beings are rational and, therefore, prioritize their immediate interest in serving justice. Nevertheless, most people serve justice unilaterally and ignore the successive nature of its effect. A rational action of an individual is succeeded by the community who serve as the weighing scale of the impact of the action. Marcus argument that human beings are governed by a human constitution is valid. Human constitution is governed by the virtues inculcated into a person's life by the society. Thus, a person would act based on the experience obtained from the society.

The experience forms the current human constitution that a person uses to approach the indifferent situation. Justice is evident in that a person uses instinctive characteristic to justify his or her action and convince the society that justice cannot serve both parties fairly. One party would feel the impact stronger than the other would. For instance, in the administration of justice to a criminal, the judge uses both the contents of national and human constitution to decide the case. National constitution help in agitating the mind to weigh the case but its influence cannot hold if the human constitution is segregated. This forms the basis of acting justly.

In one of his philosophical quotes, “ Endeavour to persuade them but act even if they are unwilling, when the rule of justice so directs” (Aurelius, 42), Marcus indicates that it is difficult to administer justice fairly to all parties because each party tends to differ on the understanding of fairness in the justice. Serving justice to the society is delicate and, therefore, a person should be rational to expect a negative reaction from a party that is not satisfied. In simple terms, this is the cost of embracing the consequences of serving justice, which an individual should rationally embrace and move on. Doing so will have served him/her internal satisfaction and restored sanity in the society.

According to Richard Schickel, morality is a personal obligation and its only courage that can salvage it from devour by earthly influences. This is manifested in his film “ Crime and Misdemeanors”. The film portrays instances of instinctive dilemma where an individual is indifferent whether to sacrifice what is so valuable to his or her life. The film revolves around the deduction that there is no universal moral structure and it is a personal obligation to serve self-justice to one-self. In one of the plot narratives, the film narrates of an affair between a former steward and Judah; a married person. Justice is served when Judah kills the steward as a sacrifice to save his marriage. This act emphasizes the powerful forces of nature that rule the universe and excludes God’ s role.

This film is contrary to Marcus sentiment of acting justly because it excludes God from the scene. Marcus did not exclude the super powerful role of God. Instead, he emphasized on the moral structure of an individual that defines a society (Forstater, Mark, and Aurelius, 76). The film exalts the individual’s

power in serving justice at the expense of God's superpower. However, both the Marcus and Richard uphold that moral uprightness is the essence of serving equal justice.

In my opinion, I concur with Marcus that individuals form the society and the society involve the individuals. Moreover, Justice cannot be fair to all members. Pareto justice is the optimum level that can be attained. Acting rationally to an individual will be reciprocated to the whole society. I disagree with Richard's oblivious inconsideration of God's role in our action. As a Christian, I believe that God is the subject of our instinctive influence and our thinking is inseparable from him. Therefore, forces of nature cannot serve fair justice to all. In conclusion, Justice is a two-way traffic where its impact is reciprocated to all parties including the innocent.

The other idea that Marcus Aurelius brings out in his book, "Meditations," is the idea of leadership. In simple terms, leadership is essentially the art of persuading a group of individuals to attain a common goal. There are several groups, which teach the skill and art of becoming a leader, but skill and art are essentially not the only things that we should study to lead. In fact, we should strengthen our characters as well as gain moral bravery to bring virtue into the society. In the Mediations, Marcus reminds us of the virtuous moral values that we must seek to attain if we are to lead the others. Three values are evident in Aurelius' leadership idea. They include love, self-mastery, and truth. These ideas are similar to the philosophies we are studying in the course.

I have understood that the value of self-mastery might be the difficult of all the virtues since it needs us to know that we should change. In the real



sense, this is a chastening position, which calls for remembrance of our weaknesses, imperfections, and defects. Our human nature demonstrates that we blame our faults on our neighbors. My understanding of self-mystery virtue is further contributed by the "Meditations," where the author teaches us that when we eliminate our judgment positioned on the other, we stop feeling the hurt that we once did. Marcus means that it should not matter to us when others wrong us.

As a virtual, self-mastery encompasses improving our own moral character. As human beings, we think that criticizing the others will in one way or another result in a change, but in reality, this change is for the worse. With self-mastery value, we focus on the things over which we have the power. Marcus Aurelius states that, "virtues which are wholly in [my] power - [are] integrity, dignity, hard work, self-denial, contentment, frugality, kindness, independence, simplicity, discretion, magnanimity." In concentrating on some of the mentioned-virtues of which one has the power, one might then be and feel admirable of being valuable in the world.

The moment we are on the route to mastering ourselves, we will desire to develop a profound, as well as influential love for the humankind. In the Meditations, the author convinces us to accept "and love these people among whom destiny has cast [us] - but [our] love must be genuine."

Individuals will often be part of our lives. It is worth to mention that most of our greatest trials and joys arise because of our involvement with the other persons. It is common for us to ignore or revenge when we are dealing with hard situations. However, ignorance and revenge only makes the matters worse. Aurelius has put it clearly that the finest revenge is not to be like our

enemies but that we should honestly love them even at the moment when it is hard.

The third value in Aurelius' leadership idea is truth. He insists in us life motive: " Let one thing be your joy and comfort: to move on from social act to social act with your mind on God." In fact, with our minds on God, we will definitely find the truth, which will set us free. Many great woman and men shared this value. They all loved truth and they sought it in all the things. In seeking the truth, we might find ourselves back in our pursuit to self-mastery. It is worth to mention that much of our truth pursuing can bring us down literary to the humanity depths as we change to the actual truth. Conversely, if we decide to master ourselves and improve continually, it will be certain that we will discover the truth. In his book, " Meditations," Marcus Aurelius provides a good example of the type of attitude that we should use in seeking the truth. He argues, " If someone can prove me wrong and show me my mistake in any thought or action, I shall gladly change. I seek the truth, which never harmed anyone: the harm is to persist in one's own self-deception and ignorance."

Through seeking as well as developing these principles; love, truth, and self-mastery we possess the tools that helps us in governing our actions and impulses. Governing our behaviors will without doubt strengthen our character besides bestowing the moral courage that is necessary to lead the others. Aurelius says, " It is the gentle [leader] who [has] strength, sinew, and courage." Additionally, he insists that when we take care of our emotions we come closer to the power. For this reason, leadership is about becoming great and then governing by showing the way.

I totally agree with the ideas brought out by Marcus Aurelius in his book, "Meditations." I think the author has succeeded in supporting the ideas he is trying to get across. He skillfully urges purposefulness, resolve, and reason saying that we should not waste our energy on the unnecessary tasks. He urges us to concentrate on all the works if there are rational. According to him, we must possess solid principles, but we should be prepared to change the principles any moment if persuaded to do so by the reason. Marcus work is inspiring and unendingly moving because he supports his ideas with philosophical ideas that any reader understands.

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