

YOUR USER'S MANUAL

*A Guide for Purpose and an Anxiety
Free Life in the 21st Century*

ANDERSON SILVER

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PREFACE

About the dogmas and rules of living a good life:

“It is about this that philosophers ought to meditate; this is what they should write down every day, and it should be the subject of their exercises.”

- Marcus Aurelius

The following pages are a collection of teachings that has helped me attain a level of tranquillity that I never thought previously possible. Although the main influences are, as the reader will notice, Stoicism and the Buddha Dharma (Buddha’s teachings, not to be confused with Buddhism), the ideas come from many branches of philosophy and science. A core practice of the Stoic way of life is repetition of the good dogmas, to replace the old ones that cause angst and anxiety.

“You must have these principles at hand both night and day; you must write them down; you must read them.”

- Marcus Aurelius

These collections of thoughts that follow were initially my meditations, a handy guide to refer to and periodically read regarding my established rules, or dogmas, for life. Their purpose was to remind myself all the creeds of leading a tranquil life, and through repetitive reading to keep the old bad perspectives at bay. The following book morphed from these meditations. I had shared my meditations with a troubled soul

and a listening ear. Following good feedback and positive results from this person close to my heart, I decided to turn the entirety of my meditations into a user friendly book, in the hopes that it may help a great many more people with *listening ears* find their inner peace and their way to a tranquil life in this modern, hectic world we live in.

As it was initially written for myself, I would like to present the reader with a few definitions for the purpose of clarity of the text. For example, when I refer to *meditation*, it is not necessarily the Buddhist mindful concentration meditation. Reading, reflecting and writing about a specific topic is typically what I consider my meditation. Although the mindful concentration meditation is also very useful, helpful and recommended, for the purposes of philosophy *meditation* refers to reflecting on ideas, not just oneself or peacefulness.

There are many references to *virtue* or lack thereof, as virtue is a core element of Stoicism. This virtue more specifically refers to honesty, honourability, and the rational mind. The rational ordinary mind is also an important distinction to make, as the ordinary mind refers to a mind devoid of and free from emotions.

Another important definition is that of happiness. In the daily colloquial language, we tend to use happiness in two ways:

1. To indicate elation and joy.
2. To describe a mental and emotional state of well-being.

The following thoughts will vehemently reject happiness. This rejection refers to the first definition (above) of the word, in the form of an emotional high of elation or joy. The following collection of thoughts' ultimate goal is to, in fact, help you get to and stay at, the second definition of the word.

I also encourage the reader to read the following thoughts with an open mind. Understand the concepts and the logic behind them that have withstood the test of time. But then question them. Question everything. However, remind yourself first, that one cannot question something they do not fully understand.

Finally, this book is meant to inspire a new outlook on life, not to offer a concrete or complete framework of actions and behaviors. And so, I encourage the reader to see beyond the words and embrace their message. Should you choose to begin a new approach to life, consider this as your very first step and know that there will be many more to come.

1 BECOMING A PHILOSOPHER KING

Congratulations, you are alive. This means you share the same unfortunate condition with 7.6 billion other people: The Human Condition. You did not ask to be here, yet you were given life and consciousness. You were also given a death sentence. What's more is you were not given a purpose or a reason. You just are with an unknown yet unavoidable expiration date. This is at best a confusing circumstance, and at worse a scary and depressing condition. Why am I here, you wonder? Why must I suffer and what is the purpose of life?

You work for the weekend. You look forward to vacations. You think about the events and gatherings you will attend with loved ones, friends and family for a happy and enjoyable time. You look forward to your alone time or relax time when you get home at night. You tolerate the drudgery of your day-to-day to enjoy those few moments in life when you can be free and happy (of which you never seem to get enough). You live with

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anxiety, fear everything, and find life to be difficult and unfair all too often. Why can't it be easy? Such is life, right?

Not really. Are you content with living a miserable or barely tolerable life most of the time so as to be able to enjoy few and far between happy moments? Sounds more like a prison sentence than an enjoyable life. You ask yourself, "Why can't I be in a good place all the time, instead of sacrificing most of my time to have some good moments in life?" Many have asked this question before you, including the ancient philosophers of Greece and Rome. And if they got it right, there is a way to be permanently in a good headspace: Become a philosopher king.

As a philosopher king, you can be in a good place all the time, whether you are working, playing, eating, meditating, walking, are sick, healthy, on vacation, in jail or even while being tortured physically or mentally. A philosopher king is always in a good place regardless of where he is, what he is doing, or what is happening around him. This sounds like a good deal – after all, you do not want pain or suffering, so why not follow the guidelines of the ancient philosophers to become a philosopher king? If there is a condition whereby you can live your life the way you truly want to, free of suffering, would you not pursue said condition with the utmost urgency? Living a tranquil life, where you remain in a good place regardless of the world that seems to want to punish you at every pass, is something to be desired.

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In 2010, the San José mine in Chile collapsed trapping 33 men 2300 feet underground. As they laid there hungry and thirsty in the hot damp darkness for 16 days without any contact from the surface above, they prepared for death. A few of the miners began talking about how they would change their lives and live it the way they want to, should they miraculously get a second lease on life. After 69 days of being trapped they were rescued, and they did change the way they lived their lives. But why did they need a brush with death to begin living their lives in harmony instead of going about it confused and unhappy? If they had it in them the whole time, why did they not already live their lives in an anxiety free manner? Why were they waiting? The more pressing question is, why are you waiting?

2 THE JOURNEY

The truth is that you cannot become a philosopher king any more than you can levitate through meditation. The freedom and tranquillity you will obtain come from not the destination, but the journey. Live every day by a set of rules, mantras, and dogma and work your way toward becoming a philosopher king. This is your salvation.

There is no condition in which one can be happy all the time. In the same way, there is no condition where one can be sad all the time. One cannot always be in happy moments. The repetitive happy moment would then become a normal state. Then you need to up the ante and do something more to be happier. Then more, and more, until there is nothing better and so you end up in depression. With ups, inevitably there are downs and vice versa. Without the sad times, one cannot have happy times as one would not even know what they are. This cycle of the Yin and Yang is unavoidable, so how can we

possibly pursue a happy life, if sadness is inevitable? The simple answer is that we cannot.

Emotions, by their nature, come and go. They are fleeting. Therefore, pursuing a life based on chasing an emotion, such as happiness, necessarily obliges that at certain times you simply cannot attain your pursued emotion. In other words, by setting an emotion as your objective, you immediately must accept that you will fail your objective some or most of the time. To pursue something that you can only get some of the time, and to base your life on it, is a fool's errand. Therefore, the pursuit must necessarily be about something else, something more.

Along with emotions, you also have a state of mind. You feel anxieties. To worry about the unknown, for example, when and how you will die, can cause anxiety. It can also be consistent and last a lifetime, as there are many unknowns and there always will be. Unlike emotions that have no state where they can exist consistently and forever, anxiety as a state of mind does have conditions where it can exist permanently. Therefore, there is also a way of living where you can have a state of mind whereby you are free of anxiety: Tranquillity.

Accordingly, the lifelong journey to become a philosopher king is not for the purpose of pursuing happiness, but it is the pursuit of Tranquillity. The pursuit of a Tranquil life will liberate you from fear and anxiety, regardless of how "good" or "bad" life and the world around you appears to be.

3 YOU ARE NOT SPECIAL

In quantum physics, quarks¹ go in and out of existence (or rather from our dimension). When matter and antimatter appear at the same time and pair up, they cancel each other out and disappear. Right before the Big Bang, in the grand scale, there would have been about equal amounts of matter and antimatter. However, at any given time, there may be some small amount of quarks in existence (in our dimension) waiting for antiquarks to appear so that they may pair up and annihilate each other. This also happens vice-versa in that there may be pockets of antiquarks that lay around waiting to be paired up. 13.8 billion years ago, as matter and antimatter were popping in and out of existence, the Big Bang, fueled by the minor amounts of quarks floating around began the expansion of our

¹ *Quarks are the smallest particles of matter that we have discovered to date.*

universe. From this minuscule amount of leftover quarks, our entire visible universe was created. This visible universe stretches 93 billion light-years across and was made up of a minor amount of quarks that were waiting around for their anti-quarks. These are truly cosmic and humbling scales. A beam of light, the fastest thing known to us, would take 93 billion years to traverse the visible universe. Compared to little ol' you, the universe is colossal.

Now consider yourself and your significance within the universe. To say you are small in the cosmic scale of things is a gross overstatement. Think about the sheer quantity of events that must have occurred in the history of this giant, vast 13.8 billion-year-old universe. You have been around for a handful of years, and at maturity might make it past a century. That means you are a participant in $7.25 \times 10^{-9}\%$ or 0.00000000725% of the known life of the visible part of the universe. In other words, a totally and utterly insignificant part of the universe in the cosmic scale of things.

But you are a Homo Sapiens, the crown jewel of the universe, no? Not quite so. For starters, if we have life on this planet, that means the universe contains the building block for life. With the universe's scale, size and longevity, it is a statistical certainty that life exists elsewhere, always has existed, and always will as long as the universe is around and doing its thing. The fact that we have not yet detected life elsewhere has more to do with our lack of technological capabilities, then it has to do with the question of life existing elsewhere in the universe.

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From a philosophical perspective, to think life is unique to our small and unassuming planet, circling a relatively common star, would be to ignore the simple fact that we come from stardust, and that stardust is abundant everywhere in the universe. It would also ignore the fact that the rules of the universe are consistent and the same everywhere. And so with stardust everywhere and the laws of the universe being the same everywhere, life must also be everywhere, must have been around for a long time, and will still be for a long time to come.

Even if we were to have the delusion that life is unique to our planet, as a species we are one of the most unsuccessful animals to ever roam it. Every other animal has learned to live with its environment and survived for long periods of time. The dinosaurs existed for 165 million years. The shark has been around for 425 million years. The collective human species (genus homo²) has been around for a mere 2 million years and we have been nothing but destructive, causing more deaths and extinctions than any other predator.

But we're Homo Sapiens (the word *Sapiens* coming from the Latin word for *Wise*). We built cities, we developed advanced technologies, we built rockets and explored space. We have

² *Some more commonly known human species are Homo Neanderthalensis (commonly referred to as Neanderthals) and Homo Erectus (the most successful of any human species in terms of longevity). However, in recent years many more discoveries have been made of other different extinct human species, including Homo Floresiensis, who lived on an island in Indonesia and adults grew to a height of only 3 feet.*

modern medicine and cars and flying machines and the Internet. We have achieved so much; we must be important or special in some way? Do not deceive yourself. Even among all the different human species, we, Homo Sapiens, are the most destructive and short-sighted. Homo Erectus, for example, lived for almost 2 million years and thrived in East-Asia. Homo Sapiens conversely, evolved in East-Africa 150,000 years ago, and willingly or unwillingly killed off all the remaining human species. And with our self-destructive tendencies, given the current state of affairs today, we do not even have a good shot at making it to 200,000 years of existence by the look of things.

Beyond that, even amongst our species, there are 7.6 billion humans on the planet today. Ask yourself very honestly, “What makes me more special than any other human being?” Are the rich more special and therefore more deserving of the universe, than the poor because they have accumulated material goods? Does the honest worker deserve more from the universe than the criminal? You may have your opinions, but the simple and unavoidable truth is that the universe does not care, and nature does not play favourites. We all live by the same unbreakable rules of the universe. We all need food, we all need water, we all have a circadian rhythm³, and we all suffer from the human condition.

³ *Circadian Rhythm is a biological process that displays a repetitive pattern of sleep, digestion, energy levels, etc. over a 24-hour period.*

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Any “needs” beyond the universe’s imposed rules are superfluous constructs that we, the only remaining human species, have created and we chose to live by them. But this does not change the fact that anything over and above what nature and the universe demands is extra “pretend stuff” that we do not actually need.

Many ancient philosophers manifested this in the way they lived. For example, Diogenes of Sinope who was an eminent philosopher from the school of Cynics had no possessions except for his cloak and staff, and he slept and ate wherever he wanted. In other words, he was homeless by choice. The iconic and famous philosopher was once visited by Alexander the Great, who was an admirer of his teachings. The magnanimous Emperor once visited Diogenes and said that he would grant the philosopher anything he wished for from his vast empire. When Alexander asked Diogenes what he wanted, he replied this: That the Emperor move slightly to his right, as he was blocking the sun.

other noises in the background even in a very noisy environment. This is efficient; however, efficiency comes with a compromise in quality. If the brain is only registering what it thinks is important, it means you are missing out on a world of information that is right in front of our eyes, literally. At this moment, you are focusing on this sentence and this sentence alone, and therefore are unaware of a whole world around you. Take a moment to look up and view, listen, absorb. The sheer volume of information that is available to you at this moment is immense, yet for a moment there, your brain was solely focused on this text.

“Nothing has such power to broaden the mind as the ability to investigate systematically and truly all that comes under thy observation in life.”

- Marcus Aurelius

To make good, rational decisions, take a step back and make sure you have all the information, not just the information you see. Fight the Autonomous Loop whenever you can, and train your mind to view the world the way it is, and not the world your brain's autonomous loop thinks is important (the brain is selfish and riddled with bad coding like this...more on this later).

The second rule is to see things through many pairs of eyes. Your mind is subjective to your reality. And so every other person who has their own reality will see things from a whole other subjective perspective. This is a simple, yet significant point.