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## [The greco-roman world - suite]

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also gives direct expression from time to time to the feelings aroused in him by his situation among men, to the pleasure he takes in the thought of the fine qualities of others, or to the way he must restrain his desire for friendship in view of the way men behave around him. In these cases the form of maxim or exhortation, in which he sets down the moral of his inner experience to all appearance as something coolly observed from without, is but a traditional element of style which he imposes upon himself. "This alone could attach one to life, if it were granted to live with men of like mind. Now, however, you have to see what melancholy lies in the discord of life together, and can say: 'Come more quickly, Death, lest I, too, forget myself.'" <sup>87</sup> He pictures himself, as Seneca had done, at the point of death, but with what different feelings! The people for whom he has cared and laboured will in most cases be glad to be freed from him as from a pedagogue. "Why, then, should we desire a longer stay here? But do not part from them with less goodwill on that account, but be true to your own character, kindly, good-natured, conciliatory." <sup>87</sup> "Ripeness is all"—ripeness for death "not out of sheer opposition like the Christians, but after reflection and with dignity, and so as to convince others, without histrionic display" (XI, 3).

He does not seek to give artistic expression to his feelings, and his ideas do not sparkle. But he has not forgotten the art of writing epigrammatical sentences, so highly valued by his teacher of rhetoric: while his aphorisms are free from rhetoric, he uses a very cultivated diction everywhere. "What does not benefit the hive is of no benefit to the bee." . . . "All is ephemeral, both what remembers and what is remembered." . . . "Whoever does wrong, wrongs himself; whoever does injustice, does it to himself, making himself evil." \* As a rule he keeps to simple topical phrases and pictures; to him they are not the expression merely of thoughts but of the actual reality of things; the concrete provides the basis for generalization, and haziness vanishes as his mind is clarified by the influence of the intellectual world established by the Stoic philosophy. "Only a madman expects a fig in winter; such is he who expects a child when it is no longer permitted." † At one place he quotes half a verse

\* VI, 54; IV, 35; IX, 4; etc.

† Marcus Aurelius, XI, 33: *Σύκον χειμῶνος ζῆται, μαιωμένου τοιοῦτος ὁ παιδίον ζῆται, ὅτι οὐδέτι δίδεται.* Here the allusion to Epictetus, and at the same time the difference in tone, is particularly plain. Epictetus, *Disc.*, III, 24, 86: "In such fashion remind yourself that the object of your love is mortal; it is not one

of Homer: "And my dear heart laughed within." Here and there he strikes this note more distinctly: "Happiness is a good genius or a good familiar spirit. 'What, then, are you doing here, phantom of imagination? Depart, in God's name, the way you came; I have no need of you. But you have come according to your ancient habit. I am not angry with you, only depart'" (VII, 17).

Here more is going on than listening to reason and the procuring of comfort and strength from the principles of philosophy. The form of quasi-diary entries expresses something different from the daily exercises in moralizing underlying the epistles of Seneca or the addresses of Epictetus, which were similarly composed to the emperor's Meditations. It comes here to express the man's awareness of the unity of his personality, on which he relies at all times: the Socratic conception of personality is still dominant throughout, but at the same time the changed method of experience breaks through in its entirety, facilitated by the method of noting down. This inner unity of the person he finds in the uniform activity of the reasoning will, which does "everything, even the very smallest, as mindful of the bond which unites the divine and the human"; in every moral act thus performed the whole life is summed up, so that life, fulfilled according to its ordering, "is never uncompleted, as one might say that the actor is leaving the stage before he has finished his part, before the play is over".\*

In the Stoic outlook on the world Marcus Aurelius found the doctrine of personality together with pantheism; it was a double aspect full of inconsistency for the thought, but corresponding to what is true to life, that our confidence in the freedom of our will should be bound up with our feeling of dependence. As he confronted the Stoic principles again and again with his experiences and feelings, thereby ascertaining their truth, this personal sort of philosophizing resulted with him in an emotional attitude to the spiritual world, in which we can see reflected the general tendency developing in those days toward Neoplatonic religion.

\* III, 13, 6; cf. II, 14; III, 10; XII, 26, etc. Cf. Seneca, *Ep. Mor.* 77, 20: *Nihil ad rem pertinet quo loco (i.e. seu tabula seu vitæ) desinas.*

of your own possessions; it has been given you for the present, not inseparably nor for ever, but like a fig, or a cluster of grapes, at a fixed season of the year, and if you hanker for that in the winter you are a fool. If in this way you long for your son, or your friend, at a time when he is not given to you, rest assured that you are hankering for a fig in winter-time. For as winter-time is for a fig, so is every state of affairs that arises out of the universe in relation to the things which are destroyed in accordance with that same state of affairs."

