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My thoughts on the content will be reflected in footnotes at the bottom of each respective page. With the exceptions of annotations, page numbers, changes in font (for readability), name replacements or identifiers (protecting and indicating participants in discussion-based content), the original content is unedited.

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Date of commentary: 1/14/17

Date of original content (Approximate): January, 2015

Format: Self-reminder / Event preparation

Subject (Approximate): Acceptance, self-awareness, humility, patience, courage.

Participants: 1

Part (if Applicable): 1 of 1.

Synopsis: The content is written shortly after the beginning of my final undergraduate semester. During this period, I intended to conduct weekly meetings on my campus to teach interested persons in applying Stoic philosophy. At the time, it was the largest and most complex undertaking I attempted. To personally prepare myself, I wrote a self-reminder intended to motivate and reinforce a Stoic outlook, moderating expectations while reigning in fears.

~ Start of Original Content ~

Do not forget this moment, who you truly are, and who you are meant to become. The future is unknowable, and the past is unalterable. What is to come may be full of things that are preferable, or it may bring countless and severe hardships. In either case it matters only that you make certain that your every action is well-intended and unadulterated by what happens outside of you; for towards the end, and upon reaching the end, it will be the closest thing to you, and your greatest source of strength.¹

The typical semester is roughly four months long. You have considered theming each month according to a particular Stoic philosopher and their contributions. For example, the first month themed to Marcus Aurelius, the second to Seneca, the third to Musonius Rufus, and the fourth to Epictetus. Alternatively, each month could be themed to an emotion that is commonly struggled with. For example, the first month focuses on anger, the second to sadness, the third to jealousy (or envy), and the fourth to fear. Or you may attempt to adopt the traditional pattern (Epictetus, 3.2.1). You are inclined to choose the last.

¹ I am tempering my expectations for the semester at hand, the weekly project, and the future following graduation. I began my practice as a Stoic early in my experience as an undergraduate student; I had become accustomed to the current environments, methods, and means to practice Stoicism. I understood that the environment, means, and methods may change substantially following graduation, becoming more varied and complex as I took on greater responsibilities and more difficult pursuits. As I advise myself here, however, Stoic philosophy has repeatedly shown that such things only represent goods or evils if I judge them to be so, and are more appropriately thought of as material for practice. In short, I am reminding myself simultaneously that the project directly in front of me, and my post-graduation future, can only produce good if I approach them properly.

It is impossible to predict the number of people that will attend. Your method of advertisement, frequency of advertisement, scheduling, and incentives (such as coffee) may have an influence, but it is important to keep in mind two things:

1. that the number of attendees does not factor into whether or not they (or you) may be individually benefited, and
2. The personal dispositions of each potential attendee will determine whether or not they attend. Ultimately, it will be their decision, and this will have no bearing on you if your intentions are accurately placed and appropriate.

Fifty may attend, or ten, or five, or one, and possibly not even one; in every case no one can prevent you from improving through the work you've invested.²

Regarding scheduling, you must take common trends and mentalities into account. Accessibility is very likely to have an effect. Whether you prefer it or not, social media is becoming the preferred source of communication of many. It is simple to use, and easy to refer to. It additionally affords users the opportunity to ignore or defer conflicting views, while providing distance and time to plan thoroughly considered responses; in both cases, something that is not easily accomplished in person, which is why it is preferred.

The effort that you put into translating the workshop into social media may incentivize attendees to participate in person. In addition, it expands the reach of the workshop, potentially benefiting those that cannot feasibly attend for reasons that are independent of their disposition: time, distance, transportation, finances, responsibility, or otherwise. Time and location is important. The research that you've done suggests it is prudent to host the workshop late afternoon (after 6pm but before 9pm), later in the week (Thursday – Saturday).³

An example of a potential day and time would look like this: Every Thursday beginning at 7:30PM (lasting less than an hour) at 'x building/room' at 'x location' beginning January the 22nd, ending April 30th. Weekly advertisements will be posted, with each new advertisement placed following the end of the previous meeting. The advertisements will offer a concise but clear description of the focus of the upcoming meeting.

² A desire to see the weekly event do well sets up an expectation that will lead to distress if it isn't realized, and distracts from the core objective of conducting the meetings well, while assisting others in learning to apply Stoic philosophy. If any desires or fears are bound to the circumstantial results of the meetings, it will only serve to invite personal errors. I understood that conventional incentives (such as visually-attractive advertising and beverages) may encourage interested persons that may otherwise not go. There would be no opportunity to teach something to persons that may benefit from it, if they are not present. Keeping this in mind, I did the best that I could with the resources at hand to encourage interested parties to attend, while reigning in expectations of the end result.

³ I consider when I should hold the meetings – on what days, and time of day; weekly, or bi-weekly. I did not believe that physical advertising would reach all persons potentially interested in the project, and decided to do online advertising in addition. I take the opportunity to explore thought processes of persons in arguments I'd seen recently take place on social media. In the end, I aim to both conduct the instructional meetings in person, and post written versions online. While this doubled the effort required to properly manage the project, it also served as a test of my ability to properly apply Stoic philosophy under taxing circumstances at length.

Prospective short-hand schedule (as of 1/10/15)

Thursdays, 7:30PM, from January 22nd to April 30th

Month 1, discussion of the workshop.

Begins - 1/22 – A brief introduction about Stoicism – What it is, and what it isn't. Some basic history, and a little information about the most well-known Stoics and their difficulties and accomplishments. A synopsis of the system – Of Logic, Physics, and Ethics. Offer some examples of problems that Stoicism can be applied to address. Express that you are there to help at any time, but that applying Stoicism is by nature a very personal mission towards self-mastery, greatly dependent on one's own effort.

Attendees write their motivations to attend, to be left with you. The information is non-disclosed to others, and should be written in whatever style, clarity, or amount the attendee is comfortable with. Attendees may choose to write anonymously, although it may be for the best that they do not. The workshop concludes for the day. The information can be used to adapt future topics.

1/29– Describe and discuss the focus of the following months of the workshop. When the workshop ends, consider adapting the material according to the discussion that was had.⁴

~ End of Original Content ~

⁴ The purpose of asking attendees to write down their motivations, so that I might better understand their desires, fears, judgments, and means to guide them in self-improvement. In addition to helping others, I wished to develop more experience and skill in teaching Stoic philosophy, as I intended one day to teach it. Learning how best to do this was a goal underlying all that I aimed to do, and formed the groundwork for all considerations of future pursuits. To this day, this remains my foundational mission – central to my moment-to-moment thought process.