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Date of commentary: 2/5/17

Date of original content (Approximate): Fall, 2014

Format: Self-reminder

Subject (Approximate): Money, acceptance, courage, poverty, resilience

Participants: 1

Part (if Applicable): 1 of 1

Synopsis: A personal reminder written in response to my heightened concern over being unable to meet my financial needs during my junior year of college. I designed the language of the reminder to refocus my view of my encroaching financial issues in light of my priorities as a practicing Stoic.

### ~ Start of Original Content ~

I believe that each situation contains an example of the most severe incarnation of itself, and may be used for training. One of my fears, which has been a presence for two years, has crept closer month by month. It incrementally increases the difficulty of meeting present needs: school books, health care, car repairs, replacement clothes, food, insurance, and various bills.<sup>1</sup>

I do not believe the gain of possessions contributes whatever to the virtues (which alone accounts honestly for my happiness or unhappiness). Likewise, I do not believe their loss contributes to my vices. The fear I experience is drawn from conceptions of the variety of events I will encounter if I enter poverty. I have prepared my mind to account for poverty as far as I can, but as with all severe incarnations of events I've encountered, only when I experience it in full will I know what my true strength is in regards to it.<sup>2</sup>

I am confident, and know better than my baser impulses, and I have the benefit of experience of the strength of Stoic principles. If I embody the fibers the Stoics speak of, I will hold that poverty is not an evil. The Stoics state that there is no shame in accepting help from others in such a situation, so long as

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<sup>1</sup> I understood that there had not been a better opportunity for me to practice resilience under unfamiliar conditions. The circumstances were my first exposure to financial uncertainty and instability – where an unexpected expense would require a sacrifice of a budgeted need. At this time I was a Resident Assistant participating heavily in student leadership roles, and a position in a special needs non-profit. As it happened my Resident Assistant role and special needs non-profit position helped alleviate some risk, but the risk remained ever-present. Yet I was aware that the situation was a valuable test of my principles – I hadn't faced an enduring challenge of this kind before.

<sup>2</sup> This paragraph was framed to redraw my attention to the Stoic premises that Virtue alone is good, and Vice alone is evil. I sought to remind myself continually that all that I had conventionally accomplished up to this point was the result of a firm and pervasive mindset that externals had no bearing on me unless I invited them to. The final sentence refers to a self-imposed check on my behavior as a practicing Stoic – I am in a state of continual learning, and should be very careful to suggest that I am prepared to face severe conditions.

your intent remains to overcome its harsher aspects through force of character – whether help is received or not.<sup>3</sup>

~ End of Original Content ~

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<sup>3</sup> I am referring to various circumstances in which I had experienced something sudden, unexpected, and unfortunate. Of them, examples are: (1) A lengthy multi-faceted illness including laryngitis, bronchitis, vomiting, fatigue, and restlessness. (2) The theft of a recently purchased laptop, and the unsuccessful attempts by campus police to locate and retrieve it despite my best efforts, information, and timeliness. (3) Being forced off the road while on a pedestrian path by a turning truck while walking home. The reference to the appropriateness of accepting help is drawn from two passages then-recently read from Epictetus, and from Marcus Aurelius. In Epictetus's passage, he suggests (paraphrasing) that fearing poverty is an error (due to not being an evil), but is also baseless due to the likelihood that a good person will draw support (Epictetus, Book III, 26). Marcus Aurelius likened receiving help to working together towards an objective that can be considered mutual (Marcus Aurelius, Book VII, 7.)