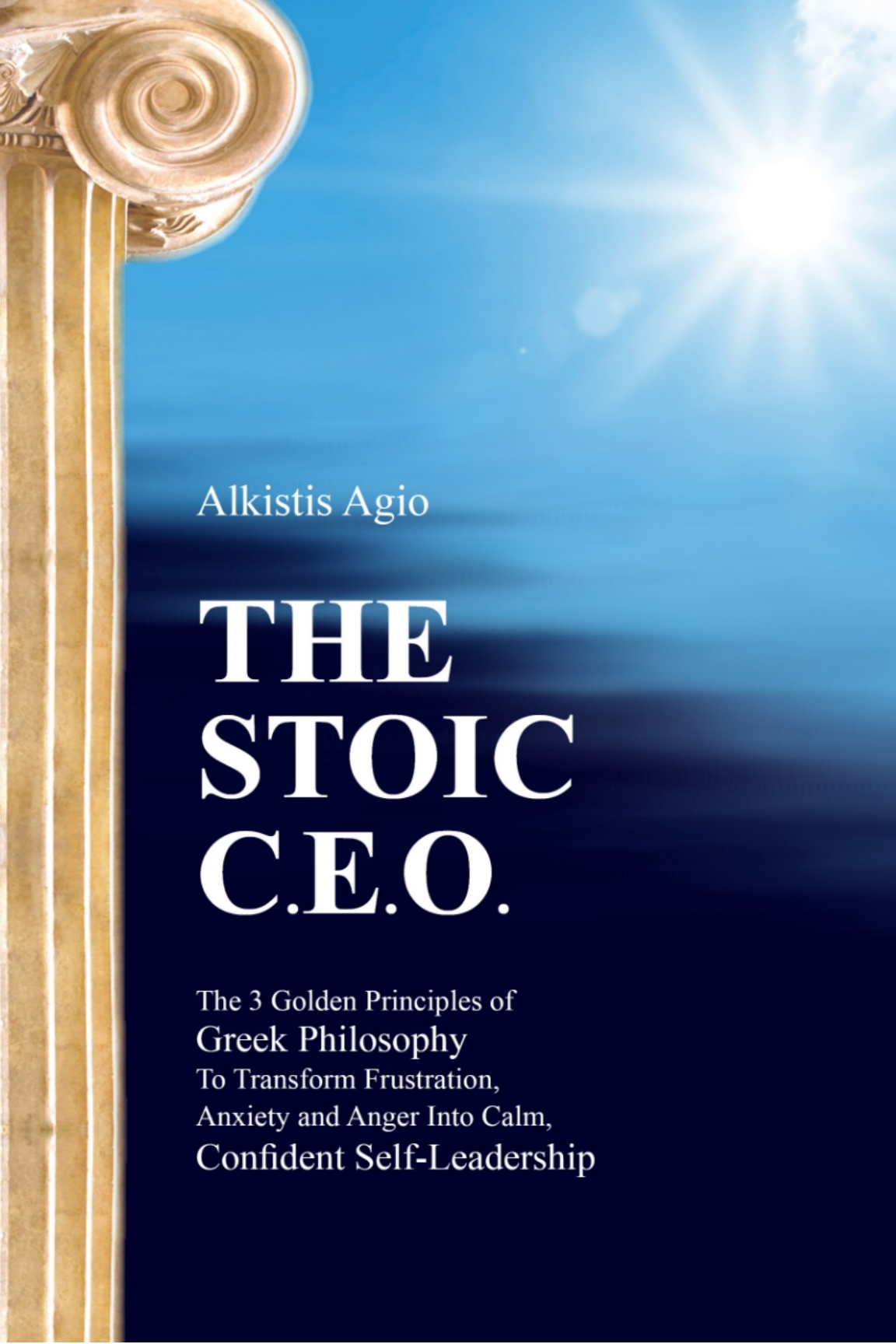
Alkistis Agio
THE STOIC C.E.O.
The 3 Golden Principles of
Greek Philosophy
To Transform Frustration,
Anxiety and Anger Into Calm,
Confident Self-Leadership

I would like to express my deepest

Gratitude

To Dimitris, my husband and my sister Matina,
for their practical assistance and inspiration
on every step of this exciting “Odyssey”.
To Stamos Triantafillou, my first mentor, and to my parents;
Nicholas Agiorgiti & Kalliroe Piperigou,
who gave me the gift of Life & Love.

1st Edition - March 2019

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"There is only one way to avoid criticism:
do nothing, say nothing, and be nothing."

- Aristotle

*Note: Some people may be confused or irritated by the title THE STOIC CEO, because this book is not exclusively about the teachings of the philosophical school of Stoicism. The word 'stoic', as used in this context, with a small 's', is meant as a characteristic describing a state of being ie mental and emotional strength, calm resilience and self-leadership.

Introduction

"No man can lead others, who cannot lead himself."
- Socrates

How can you lead others, if you can't lead yourself ?

On the outside, you may appear strong, successful and confident, but on the inside you often feel frustrated, angry and anxious, overwhelmed by life's relentless onslaught of details, problems, alternatives and considerations... You try to manage everything but the gnawing tightness in your stomach builds, you feel paralyzed by indecision and the feeling of being overwhelmed, a prisoner of your own life.

This feeling of 'being stuck' can cause havoc in our personal and professional life. The question is: Have you had enough yet? Are you ready to gain clarity, understand what's important to you and to make the right decisions-the ones that will lead you to real success and happiness, to unleash the best version of you?

If so, then you are at the right place, at the right time to TAKE CHARGE of your career, your life and most importantly, Yourself.

" Let he who would like to change the world,
first change himself ." - Socrates

So where do you begin?

The answer has always been one - Self-Leadership.
Self-Leadership means having:

- A developed sense of who you are, where you're going, and what you are willing to do to get there, as well as...
- The ability to influence yourself and others, in order to achieve your goals.

Self-Leadership is probably the most important skill you can ever develop as a person and as a professional and it mainly involves our emotional intelligence.

The importance of self-leadership, has been taught since the beginning of history, when the ancient Greek sages, recited The Odyssey, the story of a sailor setting out on a journey. The sailor yearns to arrive to his homeland, that is his aim, but he has no control over the elements. The winds and the sea are not in his power. He has only his attitude and his skills with the sails, adapting them to the changing conditions, keeping his course, remaining calm when a storm hits and leading his team with ethos. This story represents the inner battle that is to be won, since the external battle is not up to us.

"The first and greatest victory is to conquer yourself;
to be conquered by yourself is of all things most
shameful and vile." - Plato

In a moment, I will reveal to you the most powerful method in the world for self-leadership, based on ancient Greek philosophy. But first, I would like to share some of my journey with you. I promise, I will be mercifully brief.

How I Stumbled Upon Greek Philosophy

As I look back on my childhood, I can clearly see that I was introduced to Greek philosophy by my father. From a young age, instead of fairy tales like Cinderella, my father would read us bedtime stories from Aesop's Fables, the Iliad and the Odyssey.

In my teens, my father would sometimes invite me into his study, near the fireplace, where he would introduce to me to a book from his huge library on topics which ranged from Plato and Marx to Galbraith and Keynes. But mostly, my father taught me through his example; He was a Stoic by nature and conviction.

As you probably know, Stoicism was a school of philosophy originating in 3rd century BC Athens. It has come to be synonymous with mental resilience and endurance.

I believe that the harsh experiences in his early life, led my father to develop a stoic attitude to any obstacle or problem. Born in a poor, isolated mountain village near Sparta, Greece, he would wake up every morning at four to tend to the sheep, before walking for miles to the nearest school.

In WWII when he was only fifteen years old, the Germans began burning many of the villages in that area, so he joined the resistance fighters who lived in caves. Much later, after that, he endured torture camps for his resistance to military rule in Greece.

Finally, in 1967 he sought asylum from Canada, where he arrived without knowing anyone, and with almost no money. This land of opportunity was good to my father. After the initial difficult years, he could support my mother and their two infant daughters (my sister and me). Over the years, he rose to prominence as a successful loans manager for the Federal Bank of Canada, assisting thousands of new immigrants to thrive in Montreal.

His primary focus was to cultivate in us mental and emotional resilience, and tried to instill in us the **four 'Cardinal Virtues'**: **Phronêsis** (Practical Wisdom), **Dikaiosunê** (Justice), **Sôphrosunê** (Temperance), **Andreia** (Courage). All of these values and many more are found in the teachings of the Greek philosophers, as you will discover in this book.

The Decision That Changed My Life

I was 22, I was working at an international British bank in Athens. On the outside, I seemed to 'have it all'; an executive position with a good salary, luxury travels and friends in 'high places'. But on the inside I felt frustrated and anxious about my career path; I had chosen banking mainly to please my father, who was a bank CEO at the time, but my true interest was psychology and philosophy. He would often advise me "Alkistis it's fine to read psychology and philosophy books but life is very harsh and you should keep your safe, practical job no matter what…."

Ignoring my inner calling, I stayed on, feeling trapped like a hamster on a treadmill. My anxiety caused me a terrible skin condition called 'psoriasis', which left me with red scaly skin, spreading all over my body, and even on my face…Can you imagine how embarrassing that was, showing up to work everyday with a red face?

In my free time, I continued to read the Greek philosophers, and stumbled upon the Socratic Method; a technique for scrutinizing one's beliefs by asking questions... so, one day I decided to ask myself some important questions, as if I were in a dialogue with Socrates. It sounded something like this:

Socrates: "Alkistis, what is your greatest fear? What is keeping you up at night?...."

Alkistis: "My greatest fear is that if I leave my safe, comfortable job at the bank, I will lose everything: The admiration of my father, my status, a great salary and everything else…"

Socrates: "Is this thought really true? 100%...".

Alkistis: "No not really, my father will always love me, I may lose some social contacts who aren't really my friends...I could create income in many other ways, until I find what I really want to do professionally…"

Socrates: "Is it kind?...Towards yourself and to others?"

Alkistis: "No, it's not kind at all towards myself. It's quite mean actually, not believing in my abilities and innate talents. It's not kind towards others also, because if I really were to go back to university and study psychology, think of all those people I could help... Right now I'm not helping anyone...just sitting around feeling sorry for myself."

Alkistis : "Is it useful? Absolutely not; my constant whining, and self-pity self-talk is just making me miserable and my skin condition is getting worse every time I repeat those self-sabotaging thoughts…"

On that day, I faced my deepest fears and made the decision to take charge of my life. I handed in my resignation at the bank.

Did things get better after that? Of course not, things got much worse before they eventually got better. I had a dramatic argument with my father, who expressed his disappointment and his conviction that I was making a great mistake in letting go of a promising career. He ousted me from his house, saying, "Tan I Epi Tas" quoting the ancient Spartan motto, "Return as a victor or upon your shield'.

Looking back at that moment, it was the best thing that my father could have ever done. He cut me loose. I had to stand on my own. Not having any other plan, I left Greece with my meager savings and backpacked through Turkey all the way to Mount Nemrut, near

the Iranian border. Due to the onset of the first Gulf War though, I decided it was time to head back towards Europe.

(Image: Alkistis Walking through Cappadocia, Turkey)

Starting in Rome, and later in Paris and Berlin, I found work in low-income jobs like waitressing, temping teaching yoga. I even tried creating my own businesses, but these ventures left me in debt. During that difficult and challenging period, I was often filled with frustration, fear, anger, doubt and anxiety, but I ploughed on regardless, since there was no turning back.

Then one day, I finally got a break when I had the good fortune of being hired by a global leadership training company, to teach communication skills to managers. I gratefully accepted the job and found it very fulfilling. I was well-paid and appreciated for doing something that I seemed to have a natural talent for. For the first time in a long while, I felt ‘comfortable in my skin’.

In his world-wide bestseller, “How To Win Friends & Influence People”, Dale Carnegie devotes a whole chapter to Socrates, openly admitting that he borrowed his ideas from the Master of Greek philosophy:

"The ideas I stand for are not mine.
I borrowed them from Socrates…." - Dale Carnegie

It was through leadership training, that I was introduced to "The Rhetoric" by Aristotle. In it, he reveals an effective system, based on three simple principles (actually five, as we'll see later, but they're usually reduced to three). They are the three "traits" that a leader must have, in order to create and sustain impact and influence.

1. **Ethos,** which addresses the truth, credibility and integrity of the speaker.
2. **Pathos,** which addresses their emotional intelligence and use of imagination.
3. **Logos,** which addresses the logic, reason and common sense of their arguments.

Over two millennia later, Aristotle's system is still the cornerstone of modern leadership skills training; His system on influence, is taught in MBA programs at top universities like Harvard, Stanford, Columbia, Yale and INSEAD. It is through Aristotle that the world's top CEOs are initiated into the **priceless 'Art of Influence and Persuasion'.**

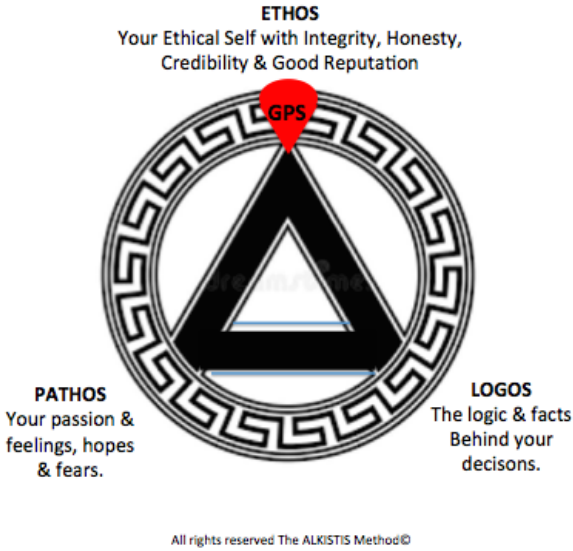
As I taught these principles of Aristotle to managers, in the Emirates, I would often video-record their presentations, to show them their progress. Their improvement in most cases was astounding! Many managers went from being fumbling, ineffective and insecure speakers to confident, impactful influencers. It began to

dawn on me that these three great principles of Aristotle, go far beyond "How to Make Friends and Influence People", as Dale Carnegie would put it…

I realized that there was a deeper - more essential level to be discovered; Aristotle's concepts of Ethos, Pathos and Logos could serve for leading ourselves and TAKING CHARGE of our life; These three golden principles could serve as a 'G.P.S.', a 'compass' for confidently navigating through life's decisions, dilemmas and challenges, unscathed.

It was the type of method that I wished I had when I started out my journey... I thought back to all the times that I had been confused, frustrated, insecure and angry… If only I had had such a powerful tool of self-reflection in my hands then, I could have spared myself a lot of frustration, anxiety, time, energy, and money.

This realization got me excited because I had finally found a solid foundation, on which to build my life and profession; This was the 'Shield' that I could return home with, to my father, who I missed so much after my ten year 'odyssey'.



For over twenty years now, I have had the honor and pleasure of training C-Suite managers at some of the world's leading corporations like Sony, Mercedez, Barclays Bank, Novartis, Bayer, Bosch, CCC, TUI, BMW and other organizations. In these seminars I was able to test and improve my method for core **Self-leadership development.**

One of the main things that I discovered in my experience is that it does not need to take a long time to make change happen, or to have a breakthrough. Breakthroughs can happen in an instant, as long as we have the right 'tools' for taking charge of our thought.

"Man is affected not by events,
but by the view he takes of them." - Epictetus

Today, The ALKISTIS Method® seminars, trainings and e-course are offered to both companies and the public at large all over the world.

I sincerely hope that you too will be inspired to become the outstanding person you are, on your journey to your homeland, Ithaca*. (*Island-Kingdom in Homer's, The Odyssey)

Alkistis on a popular Greek TV show, as a motivational coach

“The ALKISTIS Method' resonates deeply with me… The Virtues and character traits such as Honesty, Truthfulness, Integrity, Courage and Industriousness that are enshrined in 'The ALKISTIS Method’, are all familiar values which the United Nations proudly represents on a global level.”

Maria - Threase Keathing, UK Country Director,
United Nations Development Programme

OVERVIEW

This book is divided into 4 sections

- **The first section** of this book is an explanation of the **Core Concepts** of The ALKISTIS Method®.
- **The second section** contains the **six basic exercises** (also referred to in Greek as "Askesis") of The ALKISTIS Method®, which can empower you to gain clarity, make decisions, plot your path and program your subconscious to get the results you want.
- **The third section** contains the **Philosophical Foundations**, a brief discussion of the philosophers and ideas that formed the backbone of the insights presented in The ALKISTIS Method®.
- **The fourth section** ties everything you have learned in The ALKISTIS Method® with the **Scientific** discoveries and approaches of the twenty-first century, which characterize this method.

At the end you will find useful links to life-long learning through The ALKISTIS Method® and how you can apply the method in your organization or how you can get qualified as a practitioner and trainer, so that this knowledge is spread and replicated, throughout the world and benefits as many people as possible.

If you would like to find out your present competency level in Self-Leadership, take 'The Self-Leadership Quiz' at the end of this book before you proceed. This way, you can gauge your progress as you move forward.

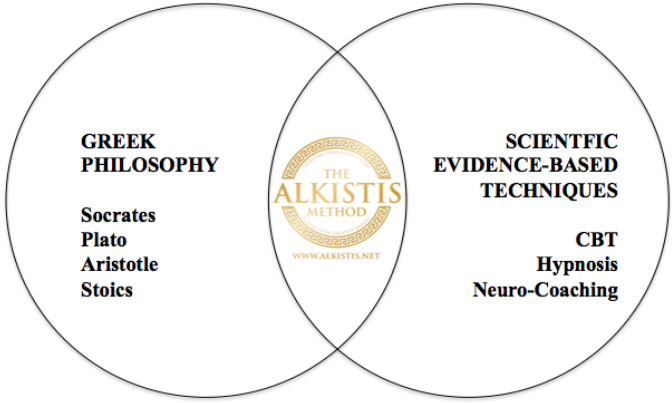
SECTION 1
The ALKISTIS Method

Core Concepts

"No man can lead others, who cannot lead himself"
-Socrates

The ALKISTIS Method® is the first-ever method of self-leadership development that effectively integrates the modern scientific, evidence-based techniques of neuro-coaching with the ageless wisdom of ancient Greek philosophy. (Especially Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and the Stoic school.)

Applied in practice, The ALKISTIS Method® leads to calm, confident, self-leadership, for both personal happiness and professional excellence, which the ancient Greeks called "Aristeia".



Results You Can Expect with The ALKISTIS Method®:

- Harness your greatest fears and weaknesses.
- Become an influential and effective leader.
- Embody and articulate your values, purpose and vision.

- Make positive, balanced decisions that lead to optimal results for you and your team.
- Become your most powerful self, based on your authenticity.
- Achieve authentic happiness & success.
- Manage conflict and your emotional states

Following is an overview of the core concepts which encompass the basic teachings of The ALKISTIS Method®. The historical and scientific foundations of this method, are presented in finer detail in the third section of this book.

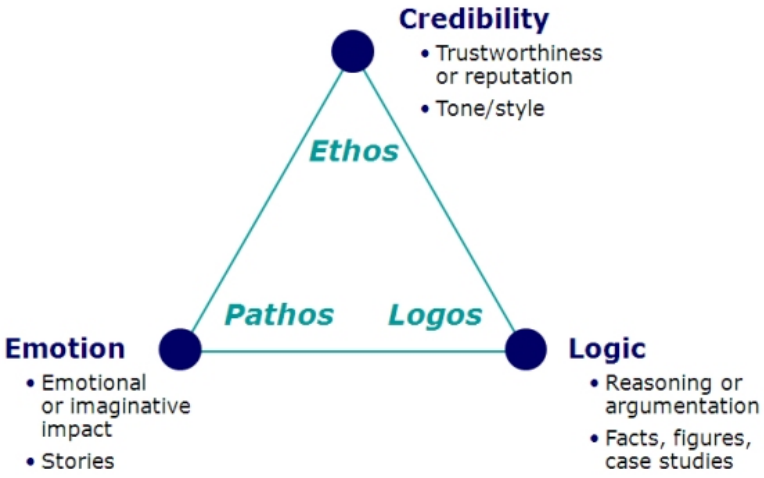
We Begin Where Aristotle Left Off...

The first book in history on the art of persuasion, The Rhetoric, was written by the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle. In his book, he presents the concepts of Ethos (credibility), Pathos (emotion, imagination) and Logos (logic, reason), as the three traits an orator must have in order to influence and persuade his audience.

These three concepts are still the cornerstones of modern leadership today. Let us look at them in more detail:

- **Ethos** refers to the authority or credibility of the presenter; the moral values he embodies and shares with his audience. For example, being a notable figure in the field in question, or being introduced by one.
- **Pathos** refers to the audience's emotions and imagination; their hopes and fears. It can be particularly powerful if it agrees with the underlying values of the audience. Pathos also reflects the emotion or passion expressed by the speaker.
- **Logos** refers to the facts, data and evidence presented to support the claims, thesis or position a speaker is presenting. The term logic is derived from the Greek word, Logos.

This is the basic diagram showing Aristotle's system "The Rhetorical Triangle", as it is known:



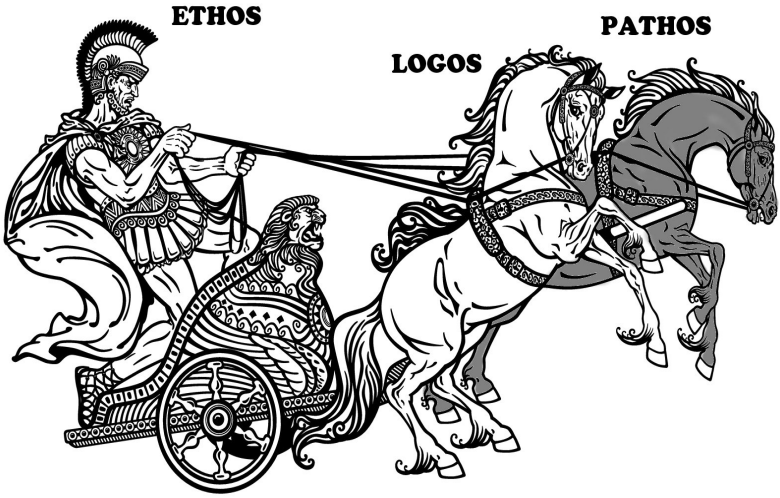
Additionally, there are also two more, lesser known traits, addressed by Aristotle.- namely Telos and Kairos. **Telos** (end / destination / outcome), meaning the purpose or attitude of a speech, and **Kairos** (timing), meaning the particular setting, context, atmosphere, time, and place that a speech occurs. We place these together with **Logos**, as they address the real, logical considerations we must examine, to make our campaign a success.

For Aristotle, Ethos, Pathos and Logos, address the qualities that transform an ordinary person into a great influencer, someone who can inspire and influence others.

The unique approach of The ALKISTIS Method® is that these same traits are applied to oneself.

You will become an outstanding leader and influencer and you will apply these insights to lead yourself**, to take charge of your life and guide yourself to fulfillment.**

The ALKISTIS Method® refocuses Aristotle's insights and broadens their scope. It includes such things as making well thought-out, balanced decisions and mastering your thoughts and emotions to command your psycho - physiological 'state'.



The Charioteer of The ALKISTIS Method®

One of the core concepts of Self Leadership, which is borrowed and developed in The ALKISTIS Method®, is the concept of the Charioteer, from Plato's famous book Phaedrus. Hereunder is the The ALKISTIS Method® adaptation of this concept. The original version is described in Section 3 of this book, under "Plato".

The Essence of Self-Leadership is to harness the power of your mind (and body), like a charioteer harnesses horses.

Imagine then a charioteer (Ethos), in charge of navigating to a specific compelling end, outcome or destination (referred to by Aristotle as the Telos). He is harnessing two majestic stallions, one black, the other, white.

The horses represent the 'battle in the human brain'; a battle that revolves around impulse control. A tug-of-war between your emotions, hopes and fears (Pathos), and a logical, strategic, moderating counterforce (Logos). Logos and Pathos, need to stay balanced and 'in sync', throughout the journey. They must work together and gallop in stride, led by your firm, confident hand. Harnessing these opposing forces, and driving them in alignment with your Ethos, is significant for anyone trying to take charge of

their lives, whether it's a leader, a CEO or anyone else. Being too uninformed, too impulsive, too hesitant, or not true to yourself, can spell trouble at work and in our private life.

The 3 Principles as embodied in the Charioteer Allegory

- The **Charioteer**, represents '**Ethos**'; our true, authentic self, or as Plato has it, our "Soul". Ideally, this 'True Self" has integrity, honesty and ethos, but most of all, wants what's best for us, to enable us to reach the state of Eudaimonia.
- **The Black Horse,** is about addressing our **'Pathos'**; our emotions, our motivation, our hopes and dreams. Also our deepest fears and weaknesses.
- The **White Horse**, is about addressing '**Logos**', or logic; the part that examines and calculates. The 'reality-check' part, that makes sure our hopes and fears are based on practical thinking, strategy, numbers and reason.

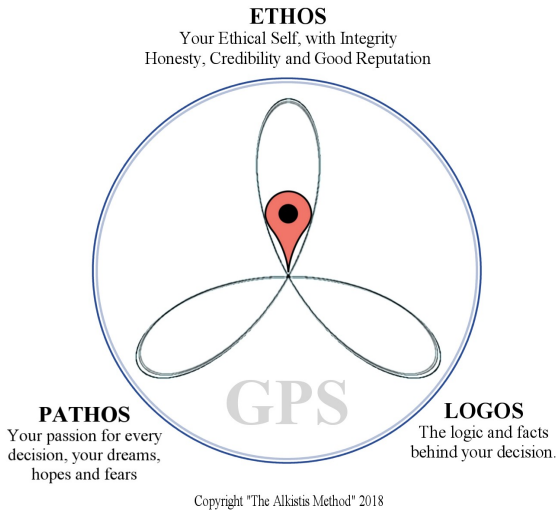
The above principles, or traits, presented through The ALKISTIS Method®, provide a way of organizing your internal world so that you have more control over what your brain does. It aims to reprogram your neuropsychology, for success on all levels- beyond just positive thinking or affirmations.

"We cannot choose our external circumstances, but we can always choose how we will respond to them."
- Epictetus

It's essential that you have more control over how you feel, and what you do, because if you change the way you think, it changes the way you feel, which changes the way you act, giving you better, longer lasting results.

All our efforts are directed towards reaching the state of Eudaimonia, - the Greek word encapsulating the notions of success, happiness and prosperity, (ie "human flourishing") which is our real

ultimate goal. Eudaimonia In this, Ethos, Pathos and Logos function together like a GPS, an inner compass, to help get us there, as ‘smoothly as possible’.



The ALKISTIS Method®, instructs that the path to Eudaimonia (happiness-fulfillment) is in accepting the present moment as it presents itself, and not allowing ourselves to be controlled by our desire for pleasure or our fear of pain.

The 3 Golden Principles in More Detail

Ethos- The Leader's Edge

Let's face it, leaders are not always virtuous; Hitler and Stalin, as extreme examples, were very powerful leaders, but they were not good leaders. They ultimately led their followers to death and destruction because their vision was flawed and their tactics lacked virtue or integrity. This fact becomes very important when it comes to leading yourself. You can't hide from the truth then and in the long term, 'the ends never justify the means'. Deep happiness and fulfillment (Eudaimonia), according to the Greek philosophers, can never be attained by a malicious character.

In order to become a good and effective leader of yourself, self - inquiry and self - regulation are paramount. They are essential skills. As Shakespeare wrote in **Hamlet**: To thy own self be true. What are your motives? Do your thoughts and actions reflect your motives, and your core-values?

"He who cannot lead himself, cannot lead others."

- Socrates

Self-alignment is what Ethos is all about. Being true to yourself, understanding who you are at your core and figuring out what is best for your wellbeing and the inner "tribe" you are leading. You are challenged to set compelling goals, and create the vision that will inspire the whole of you. According to the Greeks, this is the way that will 'attract' your state of Eudaimonia. Your promised land. Your 'Ithaca'. *Ithaca (Island-Kingdom in the Odyssey)

There are many ego-traps you can fall into when considering this. You may think, for example, that the goal of your life is to earn as much money as possible, and that virtue and all those other lofty ideals should be followed by others, and not by you - as long as you can get away with it.

Ancient Greek philosophers like Socrates and the Stoics thought otherwise; they saw humanity as a single community, in which all humans were relatives, and citizens of the cosmos (Cosmopolis).

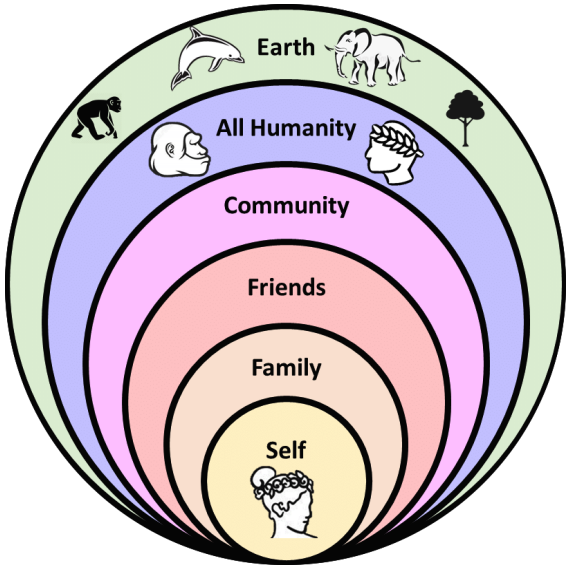


Diagram based on The Circles of Concern from Hierocles

This concept was based on the idea of oikeiôsis (Greek: οἰκείωσις) which was based on the view that all animals behave in a

self-preserving way and are not only aware of themselves, but are aware of themselves in relation to other animals.

To understand this concept, we have to picture a series of concentric circles, beginning with our Self, then our family, friends, community, country and eventually the entire human race. Then we should contract the circles, to reduce the distance between them as much as possible, so **caring for our relatives as for ourselves, our friends as our relatives, our community as our friends, and so on, till we see all mankind as our countrymen.** Greek philosophers saw the world as a single community, in which all humans are relatives, and are here to work together (synergia).

We find more meaning in our lives when we overcome our small self, and let our actions be guided towards something higher, like the common good. This lays the groundwork for a civil society, where real justice is served.

The journey of human existence should be like that of an initiation. From the ignorance and alienation of infancy and adolescence, to the ethical self-transformation, wisdom and human flourishing of maturity.

Ethos, taught Socrates, is not just something you wear for the outside world. It is something you practice and embody everyday in your life, even if no one is watching.

If we want to be happy, **we** must **behave with Ethos, because if we don't, we become the very thing we despise in others**. Also, we become inwardly un-aligned and frustrated. It's a conflict that results in anxiety and a hidden 'dis-ease' inside of us. It's not the path to Excellence or Eudaimonia.

This means that having Ethos is in fact the most selfish thing we can do, because we are catering to our own happiness without taking anyone or anything else into account. Ethos is its own reward.

Ethos is something we all want because it's beneficial to everyone. Its effect spreads like a 'healing wave' of strength, justice and

prosperity throughout our world, from our families and children to our colleagues, communities, businesses and institutions.

A leader with Ethos will attract the best people into his/her business, the business will gain a better reputation, better partners and, everything else being equal, more clients. This will improve the economy on the whole. An ethical government or institution will be trusted by the people and will be strongly supported, lending justice and prosperity to everyone. It's what has always distinguished successful countries from failed ones. Ethos will create a healthier overall environment wherever it's applied; a beneficial "butterfly effect" that sweeps through our society, enabling everyone to win.

Virtue (Greek: Areté), the cornerstone of Ethos, is not therefore an abstract term for philosophy, but a very concrete aspect of our personal happiness, freedom and fulfillment. We should be ethical, not because it's the 'right thing' to do, but for purely selfish reasons. It benefits us and our well being to behave nobly.

Ethos is the backbone of our character, an experience of our Self in our most empowered state. It provides one with an armor to fight off fear and doubt. It provides strength, purpose and direction, which are the most empowering traits one can have. Without it, we are a ship without a compass.

There are no excuses: Duty is duty. Good is good.
We must do it every day, everywhere.

Marcus Aurelius, Roman Emperor, and a devout student of Greek philosophy, wrote 2,000 years ago:
"No matter what anyone says or does, my task is to be good. Like gold or emerald or purple repeating to itself, 'No matter what anyone says or does, my task is to be emerald, my color undiminished.'"
Ethos is your duty.

Ethos, therefore, should be the first filter any decision. we make needs to pass through.

It guides our decisions every moment of our life, even if our life is at stake. The story of Agrippinus, who espoused the Greek philosophy of Stoicism, exemplifies this clarity:

The tyrannical Roman Emperor Nero had asked Agrippinus and Florus to humiliate themselves by acting like clowns – or face execution. Florus didn't know what to do, but Agrippinus predicted that Florus would act like a clown while he, himself would not.

Why? Because Florus had already considered the possibility of acting like a clown. Agrippinus, instead, is recorded to have told Nero, "It's up to you to do your part, and it's up to me to do mine."

Point being, your only true possession is your character, ie Ethos, which is like saying, your Honor.

Let us start by asking ourselves the fundamental questions that will help us clarify the values that we choose to live by. Questions that any self-respecting person and professional needs to ask himself / herself to command respect and influence others:

- What are the core values/virtues I wish to live by?
- What matters the most to me?
- What is my Life Purpose ?
- What legacy do I want to leave behind?

The ALKISTIS Method® recommends adopting the four cardinal virtues in defining your Ethos because practicing these will inevitably lead to your fulfillment and 'flourishing' ie Eudaimonia

The Four Cardinal Values

- **phronêsis** (Practical Wisdom)
- **dikaiosunê** (Justice)

- **sôphrosunê** (Temperance)
- **andreia** (Courage)

Historians can't agree on where this classification originated. It appears to go back as far as Plato or Socrates, although some argue that they can be traced back to about the 12th-8th centuries B.C., to Homer's epic poems, The Iliad and The Odyssey.

phronêsis (prudence/practical wisdom)

> This is the ability to know what is good and bad/common sense; we apply wisdom to judge what is to be done and what is not to be done ie to know what is under our control and what is not. Includes good calculation, quick-wittedness, cunning, discretion, and resourcefulness.

dikaiosunê (justice/morality)

> The peace of the soul with itself, with respect to how we treat others. ie to be just. The state underlying a law-abiding way of life; social equality; the state of obedience to the laws. Includes piety, honesty, equity, and fair dealing.

sôphrosunê (temperance/moderation)

> Moderation of the soul concerning the desires and pleasures; harmony and good discipline. It has to do with personal independence, and self -discipline; rational agreement within the soul about what is admirable and contemptible. Includes endurance, confidence, high-mindedness, cheerfulness, and industriousness.

andreia (fortitude/courage)

> The state of the soul which is unmoved by fear; deep confidence. Self-restraint about what is truly fearful and terrible; boldness in obedience to wisdom; being intrepid in the face of death. Includes discipline, modesty, and self-control.

These virtues derive initially from Plato's Republic Book IV, 426–435. The Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius discusses these in Book V:12 of Meditations and views them as the "goods" that a person should identify in one's own mind, as opposed to "wealth or things which conduce to luxury or prestige." These cardinal virtues are listed in the Bible, as they were adopted by early Christians, who added on the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity.

The cardinal virtues are considered the 'antidote' to the capital vices of pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath and sloth. If you build your life and ambitions around these vices, you will probably be disappointed, because the pleasure they offer is ephemeral. It doesn't mean that we don't enjoy pleasurable things like acclaim, sex and monetary success. It means that we "prefer" them, but we don't "require" them to be deeply fulfilled, to "flourish" ie to live in a state of Eudaimonia.

To clarify your personal Ethos, Stephen Covey, who wrote The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People, recommends writing a 'Personal Mission Statement':

> "Writing or reviewing a mission statement changes you because it forces you to think through your priorities deeply, carefully, and to align your behaviour with your beliefs".

We apply this all in Section 2, The Askesis (exercises). Most professionals are very familiar with their company's mission statement, but few have clearly formulated one for themselves.

Words to live by

Some other words that embody ideas which have endured in philosophy because great minds have found them to be valid and wise, are:

Prosoche - (Gr. προσοχή, attention, focus) - Your brain runs all the time, and it's either going to run in the direction you want it to go, or it's going to run all over the place. If you don't take charge of your

thoughts and manage what images you are forming, then you won't be performing at your peak, or getting the results that you really want. That is why it's important to observe, organize and manage your thoughts and energy, a process the ancient Greeks called 'Prosoche'. (Discussed in more detail later on).

Ataraxia - (Gr. ἀταραξία,, generally translated as "equanimity", or "tranquillity") - is a Greek philosophical term for a lucid state of robust equanimity that is characterized by ongoing freedom from distress and worry on a deep level. Not to be confused with indifference or carelessness, it means fully taking charge of oneself and the situation at hand by being calm and collected.

Pathos & Logos - Your Two Powerful Stallions

Pathos and Logos should be considered together. Ultimately, they serve the same purpose. They pull the chariot that the Charioteer (Ethos) commands, towards Eudaimonia (Happiness and Success). They can be described in the following way:

Pathos- Your Black Stallion

Pathos is your passion; your ability to harness your emotional states to influence and appeal to the emotions of your team or 'audience'. Aristotle addressed Pathos as a vital part of the art of persuasion ie

awakening emotion in the audience so as to influence them to reach the desired conclusions and actions.

In The ALKISTIS Method®, the 'audience' is first and foremost yourself, then others. Your Pathos is directed towards motivating you. It's how you convince yourself to act one way or the other. It is how you fan your ambition, become inspired, activate your courage, and resilience to carry you forward, and overcome your fears, anxieties and doubts.

Pathos is also about understanding, harmonizing and harnessing the powers of other people's hopes and emotions. This is a very powerful ability that will greatly increase your chances of achieving your goals, persuading others to see your point of view and join your vision. To do this properly however, you must first feel the passion inside yourself; you must believe and be aligned with the things you want the others to believe in. Integrity is the direct path to reaching people's hearts.

Logos- Your White Stallion

Logos is your ability to apply logical, objective, realistic and strategic thinking for influencing yourself and others. It's the proof behind your theories; the evidence that you need to supply your audience with, to convince them that you're not just a daydreamer or a wishful thinker and that your proposals are rational and feasible. Do not take for granted that everyone understands what it is you envision. You need to understand through your Logos and communicate this to others. If you don't, your position is weak; Who can take a nebulous leader seriously?

This is even more important when you are leading yourself. Become vigilant. Don't allow your first impressions make you jump to conclusions. How true are the 'facts' behind your judgments?

Applying Logos and Pathos, in alignment with our Ethos, is what The Alkistis Method® is about. For a more detailed look at how this can be achieved, refer to Section 2, The Askesis (exercises)

Interestingly, neuroscience has found that there is a division of some of our brain's functionality, between our right and left hemispheres, reminiscent to the ideas of Logos and Pathos. Even modern psychologists, speak of "IQ" (Intelligence quotient) and "E.Q." (Emotional Quotient), which, again, coincide quite well with the distinction between Logos and Pathos as deduced by Aristotle over two millennia ago.

Using Ethos, Pathos, Logos to understand others

Lastly, these three traits that Aristotle analyzes, can also help you better understand other people. It is difficult sometimes to gauge the intentions and substance of someone you just met, and examining each of these traits separately can give you better insight. Ask yourself: What is their Ethos? Their history, their reputation? Do they have integrity? What is their Pathos? Their motivation, their hopes and fears. What is their Logos? Are their facts correct? Are they reasonable? It is certainly not a full proof method, but it will at least offer your a well-founded first impression.

The Desire of Knowledge

In an anecdotal story from ancient Greece, Socrates, widely accepted as the wisest person of his time, was walking down a sandy shore with Plato, his pupil, a young man from a prominent family who passionately desired to learn from the master.

At one point, Socrates said to Plato, "Walk with me into the sea."

As they ventured in and the water started to slowly rise above their ankles, then their knees, Plato wondered, "What is the lesson my master is trying to teach me?" When the water reached to shoulder height, Socrates abruptly grabbed Plato's head and pushed him down under the water. Plato didn't react in the beginning, thinking it was an exercise of some sort, but soon, as he started running out of oxygen, he began to struggle and fight back. Socrates however, a builder by trade and quite strong despite his age, held him down,

until Plato could take no more and had to seriously fight for his life to free himself from his mentor's relentless grasp.

When he regained his breath, he angrily accused Socrates of trying to drown him. Socrates matter-of factly replied, "That was not my intention of course. "

"Then why did you do it?" Plato demanded.

Socrates calmly replied, "When you desire my knowledge like you desired that breath of air, then you shall have it."

Similarly, you must ask yourself, how badly do you want the inner freedom and other benefits of Self Leadership? Are you willing to follow through with the rigorous training- the Askesis? Are you ready to leave your comfort zone?

You must want the inner freedom and other benefits of Self Leadership, as much as 'a drowning person wants oxygen', in order to reap the full benefits of The ALKISTIS Method®.

As an inspiration, it may help you to gaze into the eyes of one of the most beautiful and famous statues of the ancient world, The Charioteer of Delphi.

Image: Photo taken at National Archeological Museum of Delphi

You may notice, The Charioteer is not portraying the struggle, during the race, but expressing an enchanted state, right after he has won the race, as he takes the victory-lap around the stadium to the sound of a cheering crowd. His mesmerizing gemstone eyes evoke what the Greeks of the Classical period referred to as Areté (moral excellence, true nobility.

Despite his great victory, there are no shouts or wild celebration, only contentment and calm inner strength. The face and body do not convey arrogance, only the sense of deep, serene self confidence and satisfaction. He did not succeed through luck or divine providence. He succeeded through clarity of purpose, hard work, and virtue. He deserves his place at the podium.

Suggested: Before going on to the next section, ponder on the above, while listening to the inspirational, epic musical piece Chariots of

Fire. (Composed by contemporary Greek composer Vangelis.) Then, write down your thoughts in a journal.

SECTION 2
The Askesis

Exercises for Self-leadership

Exercises for Self-leadership

Over the past twenty years, as an executive consultant and coach for dozens of the world's largest and most progressive companies, I've noticed that my clients spend millions with top consulting firms to implement change management or leadership development initiatives. Many months later, these consulting firms invariably delivered comprehensive and detailed 'Lean and Six Sigma' roadmaps to a future that looked great in their reports. That was the easy part. But what was not always successful, was the hardest part- namely inspiring individuals, on each functional team to willingly take action.

That's where **The ALKISTIS Method®** offers a solution, to make change happen in practice. Its success lays in its application- not its reports.

Applying The ALKISTIS Method®

As you have already realized by now, the concepts of The ALKISTIS Method® can only be assimilated and understood through experience and practice, which is not the same thing as knowing them intellectually. (Imagine the difference between swimming in the sea, and thinking about swimming in the sea.)

Daily practice requires personal 'Work' on observing the flow of your thoughts, honest self-reflection, and a flexible mindset capable of making leaps, but also exercising temperance.

"Don't explain your philosophy. Embody it." **-Epictetus**

American philosopher Henry David Thoreau conveyed the problem of modern western philosophy in his book Walden, Life in the Woods.

> "There are nowadays professors of philosophy, but not philosophers. To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, [. . .] but to so love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence,

magnanimity, and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically.

In other words, modern philosophy has become a discourse about philosophy.

Philosophy is a practice not a theory. Unlike modern academia, philosophy was, first and foremost, about learning **how to live well** - not only thinking about it.

A philosophy school in Golden Age of Greece was meant to transform the lives of its students; To break their chains and realize their potential. (See Plato's Allegory of The Cave later on.) The same applies to Self Leadership. It's all about applying oneself on all levels. The insights philosophy gives are viewed as a way of life and become our daily practice towards personal awakening and excellence.

In the Greek language, the practice and application of what one 'knows' is called 'Askesis', and it is the key to personal awakening. Askesis (pronounced ask-ee-sis) means: rigorous 'training', 'practicing' and 'self-discipline' from Greek askein 'to exercise'. Hence an 'ascetic' is someone who 'practices', a practitioner towards improving and mastering one's physical, emotional and mental abilities.

The Askesis here, are based on a neuro-coaching approach which is scientifically tested and therefore highly effective. In combination with concepts from Greek philosophy, they represent an integration of applied neuroscience, performance psychology and neurolinguistics.

In these Askesis, the emphasis is on neurology and engaging the whole nervous system, all three of our 'brains', the spinal cord and peripheral nerves for high performance and wellbeing. This differs from other forms of coaching and training methods because we are retaining the central importance of using neurological or 'embodied thinking' processes, rather than relying on advice-style models of

coaching. The benefits and potential of neurocoaching cannot be overstated.

It has been scientifically proven that when we read something or hear it, we retain only a 10-20% of the knowledge, whereas, when we participate with our whole nervous system in various exercises, we retain up to 100 %, even after several years have passed.

The idea that the way we think can physically alter our brain at the neural-level and reverse previous learning, impairment or damage, is central to neuro-coaching.

Scientific studies in psycho-cybernetics have shown that it takes as little as sixty-six days to take on a new habit.

Many Askesis are based on the most recent research we have on the human brain and how it affects our physical, emotional and mental states. That's why they are often accompanied by music, visual-arts and specific physical movements in the seminars and workshops.

The Askesis cultivate Prosochē (προσοχή), which was discussed above, at the end of the section on Ethos (Words to live by).

> When you relax your attention for a while, do not fancy you will recover it whenever you please, but remember this, that because of your fault of today your affairs must necessarily be in a worse condition in future occasions.
> -Epictetus (Discourses 4.12.1)

In time, you will become a prokoptōn (one who is making progress) as you develop and deepen the attitude and practice of prosochē. The practice of self-observation however, does not demand perfection. It does demand that one does it. Prosoche requires attention, not perfection. The goal of the prokoptōn is continual progress. "Ever to excel".

The upcoming seven Askesis of The ALKISTIS Method® no only develop your prosoche but also give you a very good basis, from which to filter your experience and observations. On the path to

'Take Charge', you need to know who you are, what you want and where you want to go.

The 7 major Askesis of The ALKISTIS Method®

We now come to the main Askesis, where you can explore each exercise and apply it to your life.

I. THE CHARIOTEER'S CHOICE®
Make Well, Thought-Out , Balanced Decisions

II. THE SOCRATIC TEST®
Master Your Thoughts & Emotions

III. DEFINE YOUR ITHACA®
Formulate Your Personal Mission Statement

IV. MORPHEAS MIND MECHANICS®
Program Your Subconscious For Success (mp3)

V. THE MAP OF ULYSSES®
Create a Future Vision of your Life

VI. MASTER OF RHETORIC®
Influence Others With Ease

VII. ACHILLES' HEEL REVISITED®
Find Your "Blind-Spots" of Self-Sabotage

A full explanation of these Askesis with video-tutorials is available through The ALKISTIS Method® E-Learning Program:
www.alkistis.net/e_learning.html

ASKESIS I.
THE CHARIOTEER'S CHOICE®

Make Well, Thought-Out, Balanced Decisions

Background:

Making decisions, in most cases can be hard, because there are many factors and risks involved. The most important thing though, is that you make them. Neuroscience tells us that reaching decisions reduces your worry and anxiety and helps you solve problems, even if the decision you reach is only "good enough".

You can never have all the information, so you can never reach the perfect decision. It will always have a degree of uncertainty in it. The point is that, the more you exercise your Ethos, Pathos and your Logos 'muscles', the better your decision-making capacity will be, the less the uncertainty you will face and the happier you will feel about it. So much time and energy is lost, when we are unclear, undecided or we procrastinate.

"While we wait for life, life passes" -**Seneca**

In his presentation of the concepts of Ethos, Pathos and Logos, Aristotle was referring to the traits an orator must have in order to influence and persuade his audience. (As mentioned earlier on in this book, there are also two other, lesser known principles, **Telos** (end, goal, completion) and **Kairos** (timing, context), which can be considered as included under the **Logos** trait, since they address logical, reality based matters.)

Together, Ethos-Pathos-Logos, represent the most basic questions we can ask regarding any situation or problem we are faced with i.e.

Who, Why, What, Where and When, which correspond to the Ethos-Pathos-Logos scheme.

- **Ethos** addresses **Who** you are.
- **Pathos** addresses **Why** you want what you want.
- **Logos** addresses **What** and **How**; the actual realities you are facing.
- **Telos** addresses **Where**; the actual outcome you seek to achieve.
- **Kairos** addresses **When**; the best time to act/ your timing.

Together, these force you to examine the full spectrum of considerations which you must address in order to reach a balanced decision for yourself (or to persuade others that your decision is valid.)

It's like calibrating the G.P.S. of your mind, with a clear address, allowing you to achieve your goals in the most ideal-way.

It's a process of checks and balances. and working to gain the knowledge, courage and confidence needed to set the correct goals and take the most beneficial, balanced and informed decisions possible.

NOTE: This Askesis is best done, after you have done the Askesis DEFINE YOUR ITHACA® and THE MAP OF ULYSSES®.

Name: THE CHARIOTEER'S CHOICE®

Purpose: To help you to think more clearly and to come to the best decision possible, through processing your thoughts and feelings.

Instructions: Briefly describe your dilemma or issue, that you are faced with and that needs to be decided upon .

Formulate the dilemma here.

What are the 2-3 possible solutions/options/paths according to your understanding of the situation?

You will then proceed to pass through the first filters of Ethos, Pathos, Logos.

"The Three Filters"

1. **Ethos Filter -** Be honest and truthful with yourself. Is the path or solution that you are thinking about, aligned with who you are? Is it aligned with your integrity, your character, your core values and your best interests? Does it reflect who you aspire to be; your authentic, Best Self? Is it aligned with your purpose in life, and the future vision you have for yourself? (See later on the askesis on creating your Personal Mission Statement)

   Write down your thoughts...

2. **Pathos Filter -** Consider Pathos: Your emotions (hopes and dreams as well as fears) How do you feel about it? What does your gut feeling say? What emotions does it evoke in you? Emotions express your subconscious thinking and will usually reveal actual problems or opportunities. Pathos will compel you on the one hand, raising your hopes that your dreams can be achieved, but on the other hand, it may paralyze you with fear and self-doubt, making you waver with indecision. Answer these questions:

   What is your BIG WHY?
   What is holding you back?
   Write about your 3 Fears/Main Concerns.

3. **Logos Filter - What** and **How**. Logos is your reality-check. Consider the hopes and fears you listed above in view of the actual realities you are facing. looking at the facts, are your fears overblown or are your hopes too naive and optimistic?

The only way to know is to work the numbers and list the facts. What do they say? What does 'common sense' say? What are the logical, rational steps and strategies that must be followed? What proofs, evidence, examples or case-studies do you have? What is the 'usefulness' of this path you are choosing? Does it serve the general plan of your life?

Telos: What is your exact goal and is it beneficial to you in the short term as well as in the long term?

Kairos: Is this the right time?

Note: It is always a good idea to discuss your thoughts with a mentor, coach or consultant, to get someone else's opinion.

Finally, take a decision and write it down.

ASKESIS II
THE SOCRATIC TEST®

Master Your Thoughts & Emotions

Background: Managing your psycho-physiological state, is no easy task, especially when there are deep seated fears and insecurities. The application of a 'filtering system', representative of Ethos, Pathos and Logos, for dealing with unwanted, disturbing thoughts**,** is very useful, as this anecdotal story with Socrates demonstrates.

A long time ago in ancient Athens, the great philosopher is said to have come upon an acquaintance, who ran up to him excitedly and said, "Socrates, do you know what I just heard about one of your students?"

"Wait a moment," Socrates replied. "Before you tell me, I'd like you to pass a little test. It's called the Test of Three."

"Test of Three?"

"That's correct," Socrates continued. "Before you talk to me about my student let's take a moment to test what you're going to say. The first test is Truth. Have you made absolutely sure that what you are about to tell me is true?"

"No." the man replied, "Actually I just heard about it."

"All right," said Socrates. "So you don't really know if it's true or not. Now let's try the second test, the test of Kindness. Is what you are about to tell me about my student something good?"

"No, on the contrary…"

"So," Socrates continued, "you want to tell me something bad about him, even though you're not certain it's true?"

The man shrugged, a little embarrassed.

Socrates continued, "You may still pass though because there is a third test – the test of Usefulness. Is what you want to tell me about my student going to be useful to me?"

"No, not really…"

"Well." concluded Socrates, "If what you want to tell me, is neither true nor good nor even useful, then why tell it to me at all?"

As this story reveals, there are three useful filters we must pass our thoughts and beliefs through, before allowing them to dwell in our minds:

1. **Is it True?**
   Represents **Ethos** (Consider: Integrity, Credibility, Accuracy)

2. **Is it Kind?**
   Represents **Pathos** (Consider: Feelings, Emotions, Compassion, Kindness, Empathy)

3. **Is it Useful?**
   Represents **Logos** (Consider: Reason, Practicality, Applicability, Utility, Facts, Strategies)

Now try it for yourself:

Name: "THE SOCRATIC TEST"®

Purpose: Using three 'filters' to overcome distressing, frustrating, angering, fear-filled, alarming thoughts and beliefs you may presently hold.

Instructions: Bring to mind, a particular thought or belief that worries, distresses or angers you, regarding your personal or professional life. It can be a large or small thing.

Write down this exact thought or belief in one or two sentences, exactly as it is formulated when you think it. It is a belief that you presently hold about yourself, another person or a situation. Try not to analyse it. State it simply. It could be something like this:

- "I am worried that I will fail at my job and be fired."
- "I am angry at David because he shamed in front of colleagues."
- "I am afraid that my business will fail and my life-standard will drop."

Write down the thought or belief that worries, stresses, frustrates or angers you. (It should be 1-3 sentences long, not more.)

Now ask yourself:

1. **Is it 100% true**, Or am I distorting the facts through distortion:

   - Dramatizing the situation and overblowing it's importance
   - Generalizing and assuming things that are not 100% true
   - Over-Personalizing and taking offence at things that are not really related to me.

Now ask yourself again, is my thought or belief 100% true?

⇗ YES or ⇖ NO

If you consider it true, to what degree is it true? 100%, 75%, 50%, 25%. Giving a general statement that something is true, may be misleading, if it is only 50% true or occasionally true, but not always true.

We often give 'truths' a larger power (%) than they are due. If we can demystify it-even for a moment, we loosen the ground upon which it stands. Sometimes, it take one small doubt, to make the wall start tumbling down.

If your answer is 'No', try to 'process' it, to gauge it's actual truthfulness and its importance relative to your overall goals.

2. Is my thought or belief kind?

Is it kind towards you? Are you putting yourself down, being too critical? Self reflection is good, but many times we judge ourselves too harshly. We're all human and we make mistakes; the point is to learn from them, not to let them drain our energy and confidence. (You may find that you can trace back this harsh criticism to your mother or your father's way of disciplining you when you were a child).

Also, is it kind towards the **other**(s)? Look at it from the perspective of the others who are involved. How does the situation look from their perspective?

Write your thoughts down..

This diagram may assist you in this process on showing how perspective affects our view of truth: What do you see here, an old lady (facing forward), or a young lady (facing to the back). (Image W.E.Hill 1915)

3. Is my thought or belief useful?

Although fear can sometimes be beneficial, alerting you to real dangers, too much fear and pessimism can poison your mind with self-defeating doubt and paralyze you with indecision. You have to therefore "police" your brain, and only allow it to think thoughts which are useful, in order to keep it healthy and productive.

Consider your thought or belief. What is the benefit of allowing it to run around in your mind? Does it help you in any way? Who would you be if you didn't have it? What would your life look like, if it did

not exist? Can you imagine your life, if this thought just was erased from your mind. Who would you be?

Lets even take it to other extreme and assume that it were true for a moment. What is the result? Would you be more productive, more courageous, more effective or more calm?

How would you **rephrase, change or modify** it so that it is more Truthful, Kind and Useful, so that it becomes a more empowering statement?

Write down this new, re-phrased statement in positive terms and read it out loud.

In psychoanalysis, the Greek myth of the Medusa represents our fears and how we can overcome them through using a "mirror" of self-reflection, in order to get the prizes of freedom and power.

ASKESIS III
DEFINE YOUR ITHACA®
Formulate Your Personal Mission Statement

Background: We face tough decisions everyday. As a parent, spouse and business professional you encounter several circumstances each day which test your patience, your character and your peace of mind.

A Personal Mission Statement is a tool that can guide you and help shape your decisions, priorities and reactions, based on your values and the vision you have for your life. It is a condensed, focused representation of your **Ethos.** A helpful reminder from the person you want to be.

" Give me a place to stand, and I shall move the world"
- Archimedes

Clarifying your life purpose makes it easier to navigate through life, when you have a sense of where you want to go. Your psychological well being is empowered, when your actions and words are aligned with your core values. Life is generally good and you feel more content, confident and satisfied. When your behavior doesn't match your values, you develop to sense an uneasiness that swells inside of you, preventing you from reaching your state of eudaimonia.

Externally, leaders are aligned and connected to the mission values and goals of their organization. But internally, leaders must be aligned with a set of personal values and character traits that drive their ultimate success..

In this Askesis you can formulate your Personal Mission Statement, based on your values.

Name: DEFINE YOUR ITHACA®

Purpose: To get clear what are our core values and what this translates into as a personal mission statement, which can guide us through difficulties as an inner compass or GPS.

Instructions: Stage 1. Clarify your Ethos

Answer these 10 questions below to determine your Ethos:

1. Look around your personal and professional spaces. Make a list of 3-5 things that are dear and important to you. Next to each item, write which of the values (from the list below, these things represent. For example: Your University Degree & Certificates of Attendance to Seminars represents 'life-long learning' or 'achievement'. Your Montblanc pen represents 'effectiveness' at getting big contracts or 'elegance'.
2. How do you spend most of your time? Make a list of 3-5 things and next to each item, write which value (from the list below) each thing represents. For example: Working long hours on your computer may represent 'wealth creation'. Going to gym represents health, wellness. Travel may mean adventure for you.
3. What activities energize you? You do these 3-5 activities and you feel great afterwards? For example: Jumping on trampoline represents joy, euphoria. Speaking in front of an audience may represent success or strength. Spending regular time with friends could mean loyalty.
4. Where are you spending or investing most of your money?
5. In which area of your life are you most organized, professional, competent, focused and reliable?
6. What are you most obsessed about?

7. What sorts of goals do you set and then able to realize (or notice significant progress over time)?
8. What topics of conversation do you bring up often, or have you taught on. What kind of topics 'energize' you?
9. Who are the celebrities, politicians or people in your life who inspire you?
10. What do you like to learn, listen, study or read about?

Next to each of the 10 above questions, take note of the **10-15 Values** that you see keep repeating as a 'pattern' . Use the list below for reference.

Accountability
Accuracy
Achievement
Adventure
Altruism
Ambition
Assertiveness
Balance
Being the best
Belonging
Boldness
Calmness
Carefreeness
Carefulness
Challenge
Change-flow
Cheerfulness
Clear-mindedness
Commitment
Community
Compassion
Competitiveness
Consistency
Contentment
Continuous Improvement
Contribution
Control
Cooperation
Correctness
Courtesy
Creativity
Curiosity
Decisiveness
Democracy
Dependability
Determination
Devoutness
Diligence
Discipline
Discretion
Diversity
Dynamism
Economy
Education
Effectiveness
Efficiency
Elegance
Empathy
Enjoyment
Enthusiasm
Equality
Excellence
Excitement
Expertise
Exploration
Expressiveness
Fairness
Faith
Family
Fidelity
Fitness
Flexibility
Fluency
Focus
Freedom
Freedom-of-choice
Fun
Generosity
Goodness
Grace
Growth
Happiness
Hard Work
Health & Wellbeing
Helping Society
Holiness
Honesty
Honor
Humility
Independence
Ingenuity
Inner Harmony
Inquisitiveness
Insightfulness
Intelligence
Intellectual Status
Intuition
Joy
Justice
Leadership
Legacy
Lightness-of-being
Love
Loyalty
Making a difference
Mastery
Meaningful relationships
Merit
Money
Obedience
Openness
Order
Originality
Patriotism
Peace
Perfection
Piety
Positivity
Practicality
Preparedness
Professionalism
Prudence
Quality-orientation
Reliability
Resourcefulness
Restraint
Results-oriented
Rigor
Security
Self-actualization
Self-control
Self-development
Selflessness
Self-reliance
Sensitivity
Serenity
Service
Shrewdness
Simplicity
Soundness
Speed
Spontaneity
Stability
Strategic
Strength
Structure
Success
Support
Teamwork
Temperance
Thankfulness
Thoroughness
Thoughtfulness
Timeliness
Tolerance
Traditionalism
Trustworthiness
Truth-seeking
Understanding
Uniqueness
Unity
Usefulness
Vision
Vitality
Well-being

Then, select and circle from these recurring values, the 6 Core Values that are most important to you.

List them, in order of priority

The ALKISTIS Method® recommends adopting the four cardinal virtues designated by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle and later the Stoics, which lead to a genuinely happy life (Eudaimonia). (Values are the goal, virtues are the character traits to get you there.)

The Cardinal Virtues

- phronêsis (**prudence**/practical **wisdom**)
- dikaiosunê (**justice**/**morality**)
- sôphrosunê (**temperance**/**moderation**)
- andreia (**fortitude**/**courage**)

Next, go down to the chart below, where there is a list of **6 Human Needs (HN)** and determine which from the list of 6 Human Needs, are most important to you and correspond with your Core Values.

List the 6 Human Needs next to their respective Core Values

1. **Certainty**: Assurance you can avoid pain and gain pleasure, safety, security.
2. **Uncertainty/Variety**: The need for unknown, change, new stimuli, adventure
3. **Significance**: Feeling unique, of value, important, special or needed, independence.
4. **Connection/Love**: A strong feeling of closeness or union with someone or something.
5. **Growth**: An expansion of capacity, capability or understanding.
6. **Contribution**: A sense of service and focus on helping, giving and supporting others.

Your final list should look something like this:

1. Volunteering	>>	HN: Contribution
2. Travelling with kids	>>	HN: Variety/Uncertainty
3. Family Traditions	>>	HN: Connection/Love
4. Achieving (ex. CEO status)	>>	HN: Significance
5. Money, Wealth	>>	HN: Certainty
6. Lifelong learning	>>	HN: Growth

The above are a 'distillation' of **your most important needs and values**, in order to be fulfilled. It reveals to you what experiences really drive and inspire you, 'underneath it all'.

Now, with the above set of your deepest needs and values, you have a clearer picture of "Who you are…." (Ethos). But in order to really have Self-Leadership, you also need to be clear on your personal mission, ie what you are here to do, what has meaning and for whom. Contributing and serving society, your family, your team, your clients, your company, is something that will provide you with a sense of purpose, self respect and self worth. The stuff of which self-leadership will be the natural result, not something you have to strive for.

In his book "The Leader Who Had No Title" top management guru, Robin Sharma demonstrates how we can all work with and influence people like a superstar, regardless of our position. You don't need to be a CEO or a world leader to be a leader from within; You just need to figure out what it is you are skilled at and love to do, and where you can make a difference!

Instructions: Stage 2 Finding your Mission Statement

Before we proceed to writing your personal Mission Statement, it's useful to gain some clarity on your life's professional mission and purpose by answering these questions:

1. What do I (love to) do? What are my skills and talents? If you could teach someone something, what would that be?

2. Who do I do it for?
3. What do those people or causes actually want and need that I can provide? What is the deficiency or lack that you are trying to fulfill? How will it change or transform as a result?

Some guidelines for the formulation of your statement:

- It should be short, preferably contained in one sentence, so that it can be focused, concise and easy to follow.
- It should not be a general, vague or predictable statement. Try to be as specific as possible.
- It should be in the present or present-continuous tense. (As if it has already happened.)
- If you are a religious person, you may include your faith within it, if that's what expresses you best.

Here are some examples of mission statements adopted by very successful CEOs.

> "To serve as a leader, live a balanced life, and apply ethical principles to make a significant difference." - Denise Morrison, CEO, Campbell Soup Co.
>
> "To have fun in my journey through life and learn from my mistakes." - Sir Richard Branson, Founder, Virgin Group
>
> "To be a teacher. And to be known for inspiring my students to be more than they thought they could be." - Oprah Winfrey, OWN

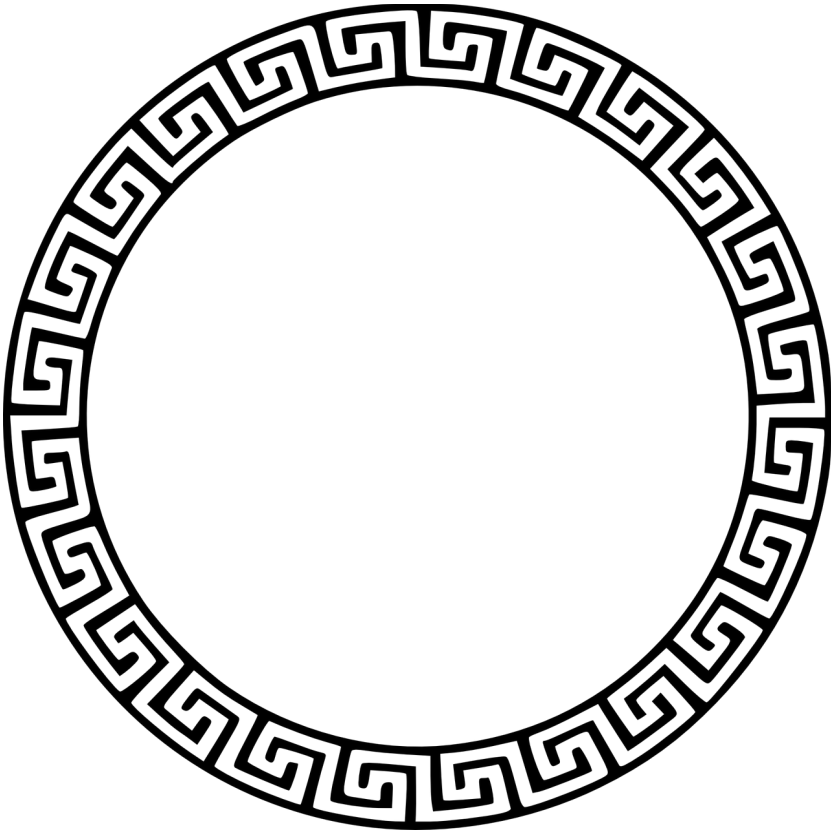
Write your own Personal Mission Statement..

When you repeat your Personal Mission Statement, you should, ideally, feel confident about it; It's your personal 'credo', 'motto' or 'maxim'.

Take time and thought to formulate it and revise it throughout your life, as circumstances, realities and priorities change. Remember that

this is a concise distillation of what it takes to make you happy, to allow you to reach your state of Eudaimonia.

Once you are done, write it on your 'Shield' (below), which you can also 'decorate' with other symbols such as a lion, a sun, a laurel, a crown, anything that will inspire you.



Suggested to also think about:
What will your obituary in the newspaper look like?

Take a moment to wrrite your obituary or epitaph; what you would want written about you when you have passed away many, many years from now. Use words, phrases, sentences. Don't over-think this exercise. Do not edit, censor, analyze or critique your thoughts.

Take 10-15 minutes to complete it. You can revisit it again in the future, so do not try to perfect your answer now. Questions you should ask yourself as you do this exercise are:

- What and/or who did you impact or change? Why?
- What character traits and values did you consistently demonstrate over your life? At your core, who were you?
- Who did you care for? How did you impact or change this person/these people?
- What were major accomplishments in your life? At the ages of 40, 50, 60, 70?
- What did you show interest in? What were you passionate or enthusiastic about?
- What was your legacy?

Think BIG. Imagine possibilities. Ask yourself often: Why not?

ASKESIS IV.
MORPHEAS MIND MECHANICS®
Program Your Subconscious For Success (audio-mp3)

This basic Askesis, taught within The ALKISTIS Method® is for inducing a calm, relaxed and harmonious state of body, mind and spirit. it is also conducive to 'programming' the subconscious in realizing a specific "instruction-mission" for example a Personal Mission Statement.

Background: The practice of consciously recognizing and controlling our imagination or dreams, has been around for centuries, since ancient Greek times, when "Morpheus" the ancient Greek God of Dreams (popularized in the movie "Matrix") was venerated.

Many temples (Epidaurus, Delphi, Ephesus, and others) contained a special area for 'dream incubation' where pilgrims were induced into a sort of sleep-trance for dreaming with the intention of meeting a particular divinity for the purpose of healing or receiving a message/ insight. (Hypno-agogia: Greek for 'Sleep - Channelling')

Image (CC) 2.0: Ancient bronze sculpture of 'Morpheus', **Greek God of Dreams**. the one with the amazing ability of appearing in dreams of mortals in any form. As his name implies, the Greek word "morphe" means "form" (meta-morphosis ie

to trans-form). He was the one who shaped and formed dreams. The name of the opiate drug morphine is from the name of Morpheus.

Today, modern doctors recommend daily practice of a deeply relaxing inner state of body and mind, of at least twenty minutes, to help us manage stress and anxiety in a natural, non-chemical way.

Furthermore, scientific studies have proven that in relaxed state, the mind is more than two hundred (200x!) times more receptive to suggestions, than in its ordinary, conscious state, allowing new thoughts to slip through the defenses of the ‘older guard’ of thoughts and habits. In addition, when we introduce a 'Personal Mission Statement' (or positive affirmations) during this practice, it can bring on positive, powerful changes in our life. If you are a practicing Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Jew or any other religion, the Deep Relaxation can also enhance your spiritual experience and euphoria.

Here are the **benefits** of this Deep Relaxation through Guided Visualization on mp3:

- Calms your nerves. Helps you handle stress better in general.
- Cultivates the process of self-induced deep relaxation, so that you can 'relax yourself' at will.
- Increases your mindfulness, allowing you to become more intuitive.
- Offers space to insert a deeply empowering **mission statement** for personal transformation, during the practice..
- Relieves migraines and other psychosomatic stress related symptoms.

It’s no wonder many professional athletes, top entrepreneurs use these techniques to get outstanding results. (See more in Section 3, Scientific Foundations, Hypno-learning).

When asked about hypnotherapy in an article of the Harvard Medical School Journal (Sept. 2015) Dr. Max Shapiro, psychologist, answered that:

> "It is now known that the brain has greater ability to influence the body than previously acknowledged… A hypnotic trance empowers people to activate neural circuits that are otherwise hidden… This circuitry can activate greater comfort for pain relief, greater mental focus for certain activities, and greater self-esteem."

Name: MORPHEAS MIND MECHANICS®

Purpose: To get you into a relaxed state, open to suggestion and reprogramming of your subconscious to more positive beliefs and habits.

Instructions: This Askesis, can be done on a daily or weekly basis. You will need to find a place where you will not be disturbed for 20 minutes. Switch off your mobile devices and close the door, making it clear that you should not be disturbed during the practice.

Lay on a bed, a yoga mat, a carpet or a reclining chair. Cover yourself with a light blanket or throw a jacket over the top part of your body if you are at the office. (This is because it will make you feel more protected, as your temperature drops slightly, during relaxation.)

Lay back, with your legs slightly apart and your arms rested at the sides, preferably with the palms facing upwards.

Press PLAY on your mp3 player and simply listen to the soothing voice that will guide you along a beautiful and relaxing inner 'landscape' (for example, a walk along the beach.)

Note: Somewhere around the middle of the mp3, there is a special section where you will be invited-prompted, to repeat (mentally) a suggestive statement**.** This is any kind of pre-chosen positive affirmation or mission statement of a result, that is compelling for

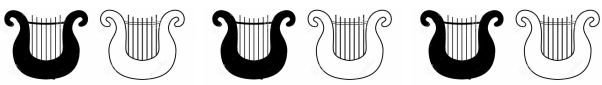
you- for example, your **Personal Mission Statement or ideal state of being**.

Doing the Deep Relaxation every day, it is like watering a 'seed' which will grow and flourish. It will begin to transform your life in a positive way and rewired your brain for success.

Download your FREE Deep Relaxation MP3 here below and begin.

http://www.alkistis.net/free_mp3.html

The music on the mp3 has been inspired by original Ancient Greek music. by composer B. Blazoudakis, of The Megaron National Athens Concert Hall, exclusively for The ALKISTIS Method®.



ASKESIS V.
THE MAP OF ULYSSES®
Create Your Future Vision

Background: The future vision is about getting clear about the ideal version of your future. It defines your "Ithaca", the end experience that you want to achieve. This exercise will help you in three ways. First, to define this future vision with more precision, so as to help you take a decision. Decision means precision. Precision focuses our energy. Second, to choose the best path which suits your life's reality. Third, the clearer you are, the easier it will be to recognise the Telos- your desired result,when you see it.

This Askesis is not meant to bind you to a certain result, but to help you become more specific. No one can know what the future holds, and of course you can alter or tweak your vision along the way. So go ahead and don't be afraid to declare what you want- your Ithaca.

The process to create a clear future vision requires three activities:

1. Brainstorming to come up with 2- 3 possible **scenarios, related to the vision that you want.** For each version of these possible scenarios, explore their possible outcomes. For example, you may wish to achieve health, happiness and increased income doing the thing you love most, professionally. But not all scenarios would suit your reality. You will need to find the best fit. In naming the various versions of your mission, you create a map, which will help you find the most ideal route.

2. Deciding which of the 2-3 scenarios is most ideal, by using the decision-making filters of Ethos, Pathos, Logos. View these scenarios as 'suitors' which may all look good but only one is really the best match for you.Creating a visual representation of it (Vision Board, Slide-show or a Motivational Mind-Movie

video) which we will view regularly to connect us with this vision on a profound level.

3. Charting achievable goals within a flow-chart, and working from the end goal, the Telos, backwards to make it happen.

This way, we allow the Telos- our vision, to guide us.

Name: **THE MAP OF ULYSSES®**

Purpose: Setting a clear destination (Telos**).**

Instructions: First, explore 2-3 possible scenarios that will enable you to achieve your vision for your future. Be as specific as possible. Describe everything in vivid detail:

Where do you want to be living? What will your occupation be? What are your family requirements? What will you see, taste, smell, feel once you have arrived? By when can it realistically be fulfilled? 1 year, 2 years, 3 years, 5 years ahead?

Give each scenario a **title**, so they become more distinguishable in your mind.

You don't have to write full sentences, just **jot down the main points** of your 2-3 scenarios on a separate sheet of paper or computer screen.

Example: It is the January 2025, and I am living and working in Paris, France. The kids are going to the International School. Me and (spouse or partner's name) are really well and in harmony together. My company is making X turnover and it has been awarded X prize…. My health is great, as I go jogging every day and play volleyball once a week with the team. etc… We also go skiing in the alps once a year. My actions are really making a positive difference to ….etc…

Using The Alkistis Method® to filter the most ideal scenario of all:

ETHOS

1. Does it reflect my character, my core values and the Personal Mission Statement I created and am committed to?
2. If not, where exactly does it deviate, and what effect will that deviation have on my integrity, prospects, and overall life experience?
3. Do I really have integrity in this choice? Be positive here, but also realistic. Remember, "To thine own self be true."
4. Am I ready to change my life, if that's what it takes to achieve this scenario, and will I be happy if I do?

Now the last question - Who will your vision make you become? What does the vision of Ithaca do to you, the Hero?

Carl Jung said that "The goal is important only as an idea; the essential thing is the opus which leads to the goal: that is the goal of a lifetime."

PATHOS

1. What undesired changes are necessary for me to make which go against my grain, desired lifestyle or way of doing things? Does it take me out of my comfort zone?
2. What is my greatest fear, concern, discomfort or uneasiness about this scenario?
3. What other emotions does it inspire in me?
4. What do I really love about this particular scenario?
5. Will this scenario really bring more meaning to my life?
6. On a scale of 1-10, how excited or moved am I about this scenario? It should ideally be something like "HELL YES!!!"

LOGOS

1. Does this scenario actually raise my quality of life? And if so, how?

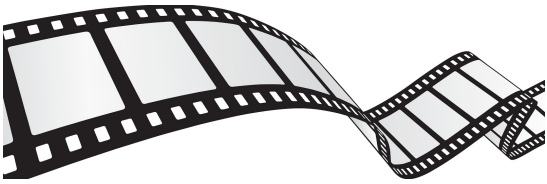
2. What does this scenario mean for me financially? Do I have a clear understanding of the consequences or do I need more research?
3. What things, situations, lifestyle habits will I need to change? (Make a list)
4. Who will these changes affect except me? (i.e. family members, friends, main stakeholders)
5. Whose approval or consent do I need to proceed and will this be easy to get?
6. How large of a disruption will this scenario cause in my present life?
7. Do I have a clear plan or strategy? What are my milestones? (Make a general 'flow-chart' showing major milestones.)
8. Does it depend on external circumstances or do I have a reasonable 'control' over the process? How do I minimize risk?
9. What are the greatest obstacles for manifesting this scenario?

Also address the other two traits of method, namely Kairos (timeliness)

After this filtering process is complete, it will be easier to **select ONE** of these scenarios, as being the most ideal and compelling one.

Write down the title of your scenario as if it was a movie.

In order to also engage **the right side of your brain in manifesting this scenario** it's recommended to make a visual representation called a "Vision Board". You can do this by using photographs and sticking them onto a collage, or making a 'slideshow' on your computer. Even better is to use audio-visual software to create a 'Motivational Mind-Movie' video, complete with inspiring, upbeat, empowering music and titles.

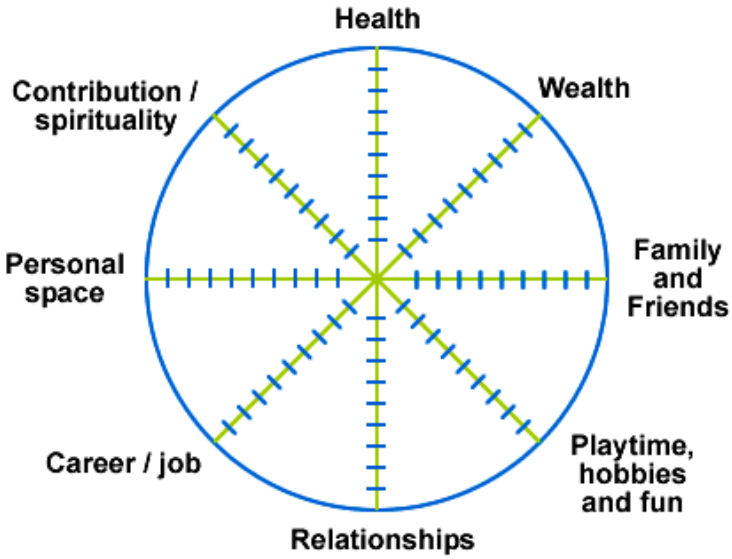


Apply your imagination with ‘role-play’. For example: Some of my clients have even created a ‘mock’ interview of their future-self by a “reporter from CNN” who asks them about their life and accomplishments, as if it has already occured (in the future year 20XX).

There is no perfect way to do this. have fun with it. The point is that, this process will empower you, as well as allow you to address details and consequences, that you may have missed.

When you have completed it, we recommend watching it once a week. While watching the vision board, slideshow or motivational mind-movie, try to really imagine that you are in the scene, by engaging all your senses. Allow yourself to fantasize! The more vividly you can fantasize the better because it will transform the way you see yourself today. You won’t feel as stuck when things get tough, because you have already “been to the mountaintop” through your motivational mind-movie.

The best way to predict your future is to create it. Make sure to include all areas of your life. Here is an example:

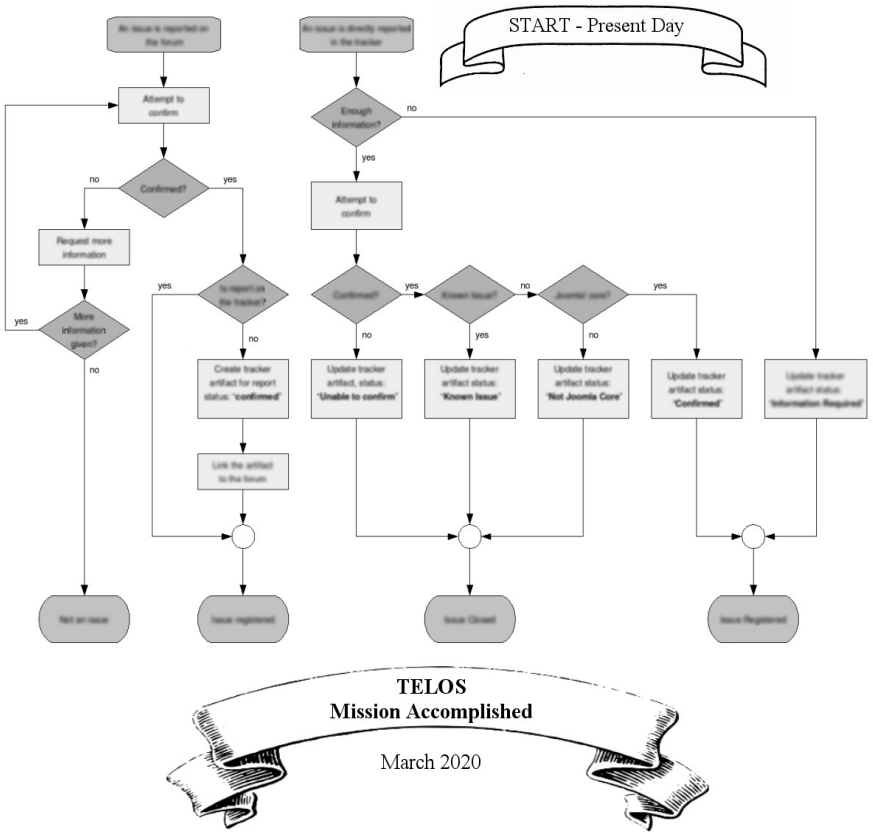


Plotting Your Path To Realize Your Vision On a Flow-Chart.

It is recommended that you plot out your path, towards your vision in a graphical way, so that you engage the right side of your brain. You may have another way, but creating a big flowchart on a whiteboard or on Excel, or through flow-chart software- or however you want to do it, is ideal for this task.

Start by defining, on the one end, your present situation, and on the other, the top 5-6 aspects or cornerstones of your end-vision. The purpose of the flowchart is to help you lay out a road map to get from one place to the other by setting milestones along the way, with specific dates they have to be accomplished by, synchronizing the flow, and dividing the process into smaller, achievable tasks that will eventually lead to your end vision.

Here is the general idea of what your flow-chart may look like:

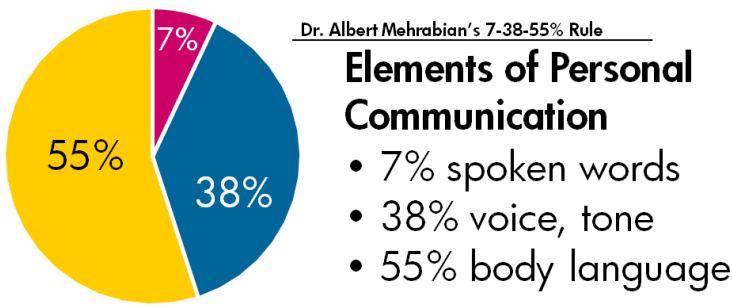

START - Present Day
Attempt to confirm
Confirmed?
no
yes
Request more information
More information given?
yes
no
Create tracker artifact for report status: 'confirmed'
Enough information?
no
yes
Attempt to confirm
Confirmed?
yes
no
Update tracker artifact, status: 'Unable to confirm'
Known Issue?
no
yes
Update tracker artifact status: 'Known Issue'
Joomla! core?
yes
no
Update tracker artifact status: 'Not Joomla Core'
Update tracker artifact status: 'Confirmed'
Update tracker artifact status: 'Information Required'
TELOS
Mission Accomplished
March 2020

ASKESIS VI.
MASTER OF RHETORIC®
Influence Others With Ease

Background: Persuading others is a very important ability in anything you want to do and can play a great role in achieving your goals and dreams. It is one of the most popular seminars which I am asked to teach, to my corporate clients, because it gives their personnel confidence, effectiveness and facilitates communication and the spread of ideas within the company itself.

The method is the same as we have followed up to now and is explained in Section 1 of this book in, Core Concepts, where you read about Aristotle's masterpiece, The Rhetoric, where he presents the concepts of Ethos (credibility), Pathos (emotion, imagination) and Logos (logic, reason), as the three traits an orator must have, in order to engage, influence and persuade his audience.

Scientific experiments conducted by Dr. Albert Mehrabian, Professor Emeritus of Psychology, UCLA, show that Pathos is much more important, when one is trying to influence and persuade others. As can be seen from the chart below, nonverbal communication (body language, eye contact, tone of voice etc) accounts for 93% in importance.



The teaching of presentation skills, usually requires a coach and a group setting, so that it can be done in a 'real' environment, but you can explore this yourself, by doing it, preferably with at least one person watching you.

In this Askesis you will be standing in front of **a video camera** (and a small group if you are with others) so that you can have a more realistic view of your delivery and impact.

Name: **MASTER OF RHETORIC®**

Purpose: To train and improve our skill of influencing and persuading others.

Instructions: Think about a presentation you want to make in front of a group of people or to someone in particular (your boss, investor, client etc). Think about what you want to persuade or influence them about. What actions do you want them to take?

An example addressing a group: Imagine that shortly, you are going to present yourself to the entrance-committee of a very ancient and prestigious school of Self-Leadership. Many of those people whom you greatly admire and have deep respect for, have been initiates/alumni of this academy. They will be comparing your presentation to hundred of other applicants. Prepare a presentation, applying Ethos, Pathos, Logos of Aristotle's "Rhetorical Triangle" to convince them, to let you join their institution.

Write down your points to prepare under each principle point:

ETHOS: What is your personal history and integrity in relation to the subject matter? What impressions, qualities or values do you want to leave behind?

Write down your introduction which should include a greeting, the subject you want to talk about as well as your full name, occupation and relationship to this subject.

Write down the values and impressions you seek to stress.

PATHOS:

Write down your Emotional arguments:
"I am really passionate about…..." or "I know that you are passionate about…(dreams)...." or "I know that you are concerned about….(fear)..."Explain your 'Why' in simple words.

LOGOS:

Write down your Logical Arguments:
(Show a real life example if possible.)

Conclusion:

Write down the Summary or Conclusion of your arguments, as a "Call to Action":
Example: And that's why …..….(call to action)…."

When you have your presentation ready, deliver it to your audience (or to yourself if you can't get anyone) and **film yourself doing it**.

Reviewing the video will tell you a great deal. Focus especially on your body language and other non-verbal communication such as eye-contact, breathing, posture etc.

- How do you see yourself?
- Do you come across as having the Ethos, Pathos and the Logos required to persuade your audience?
- What do the others think?

Repeating this process until you can accept yourself, as a capable and effective speaker, will greatly improve your chances of others seeing you in a similar manner.

For a fun way to improve your presentation and persuasion skills, you can explore a game version of The ALKISTIS Method®, in the following link: www.alkistis.net/game.html

ASKESIS VII.
ACHILLES' HEEL REVISITED®

Find Your 'Blind-Spot' of Self-Sabotage

Purpose: To find your 'Blind Spots' in order to eliminate self-sabotaging thoughts and actions, as well as heal the past, give it a new interpretation or simply let it go.

Background: In Greek mythology, when the God Achilles was a baby, it was foretold that he would die young. To prevent his death, his mother Thetis, took Achilles to the River Styx, which was known to offer powers of invulnerability. She dipped his body into the water, however, as Thetis held Achilles by the heel, his heel was not washed over by the water of the magical river. Due to the invincible strength given by the water of the river Styx, Achilles grew up to be warrior who survived many great battles. In the Trojan war however, a poisonous arrow shot by Paris was lodged in his heel, the very point the holy water had not touched, leading to his death. 'Achilles' heel' became a metaphor for a fatal weakness in spite of overall strength.

Think about a very limiting belief that you have about yourself. For example: "I am not enough." (ie You feel that you are not worthy of more love, not worthy of more attention, not worthy of more happiness - you feel that you are somehow lacking or 'faulty' especially compared to others).

This is a false belief that many people began believing between the tender ages of two and eight.

> **Scientific Note:** Childhood amnesia, also called infantile amnesia, is the inability of adults to retrieve episodic memories

(memories of situations or events). Most psychologists agree it can range from two to eight years old.*

*Joseph, R (2003). "Emotional Trauma and Childhood Amnesia". Consciousness & Emotion. **4** (2): 151–179

*Bauer, Patricia J.; Larkina, Marina (2014). "Childhood amnesia in the making: Different distributions of autobiographical memories in children and adults". Journal of Experimental Psychology: General. **143** (2): 597–611.

This is when we all may have misinterpreted certain events happening in our life. Having a low self-esteem or self-confidence, can almost always be traced back to this time in your distant past, which you have long forgotten - namely your 'Blind Spot'.

Before we begin the main Askesis, here is a warm-up to demonstrate how your optical blind-spot symbolizes your emotional blind-spot. Close your left eye and hold this book at arm's length with your right hand while focusing on the cross (X). Very slowly, move the book toward you and back again. Somewhere between ten and fifteen inches away (12 cm) the circle will seem to disappear.

The reason for this 'gap' in your sight, is that there is an area on your retina, where it attaches to the optic nerve, that does not contain any light sensitive cells.

In the same way, we live everyday with individual blind-spots, but do not take notice of them. We have memory and emotional blind-spots reflecting unconscious factors, that slip our awareness 'receptors'.

Now, we will explore an important blind-spot that is sabotaging us in so many ways. The one that cut us us off from fully accepting ourselves and feeling whole.

Name: **ACHILLES' HEEL®**

Instructions: Begin by simply relaxing. (Note: This exercises works best after listening to one of the mp3 on Deep Relaxation Page www.alkistis.net/free_mp3.html as in this state of inner peace, your memory will be much more clear and focused.)

Please read the entire Askesis through before you begin. There are three stages.

The First Stage

Begin by simply relaxing… Take a deep breath and with your imagination, go to back to the place where you grew up, your childhood home.

You are going back to the home that you lived in between the ages of two and eight. If you lived in more than one home between those ages it doesn't matter, your mind will pick the right one and, now imagine that you are standing on a street, just outside that home.

Imagine that you are walking through the front door. You are now inside that home. Take a moment to allow the memories to flow in...Those familiar things, those familiar smells, those familiar sounds... And imagine that you are drawn like a magnet towards the bedroom where you slept as a child.

Now, imagine that you are just outside that bedroom. Your hand is on the door handle, you are about to go inside... You know that inside that room…. is your own self... as a little child.

As you step in , your eyes immediately meet...You greet your younger self with warmth and affection.... Now prepare to ask your younger self some questions... And as you ask each question the authentic answer will naturally spring forth in your mind.

The first thing you are asking your younger self is, 'Are you happy or unhappy?'

Ask your younger self another question 'Who loves you?' and the answer will come up immediately.

Ask if your younger self feels loved. Then ask, "Who are the people raising you?" (Usually mommy and daddy but that could also include grandparents or relatives).

Now ask, "Is there anything that (the people raising you) do or not do, say or not say, that make you feel not lovable enough?"

Now ask your younger self, very clearly, "Who is rejecting you?" - "What are the people around you doing or not doing that make you feel rejected?" (It could be children at school, siblings or it could be neighbors' children.)

Now, focus on what kind of things did those people often say to the child.

Try to find the thoughts that made your younger self feel incomplete or cut off from love / acceptance. Try to remember something being said about your younger self, that has led your younger self to fear being rejected, to feel that she/he was not good enough, something to do with feeling that she/he was not smart enough or pretty enough or attractive enough or not doing what she/he was expected to do.

When and where did your younger self first get this perception, of being rejected? Or not worthy, "good enough", or somehow imperfect. (This is has sometimes been referred to as "The fall from grace/paradise/wholeness".)

The Second Stage

Write your thoughts and feelings or record yourself speaking about it on video. What revelation did you have, about how this child felt and how it interpreted the events? Have you found the blindspot ?

The Third Stage

Write a letter to your younger Self from yourself, as an adult (ie now). Go ahead and offer that child your warmest

feelings of love and support, and also clarifying why that child had misinterpreted the world back then. Offer reasons why the people in its life, may have been critical. Give your scope upon the situation now that you are an adult looking back into this child's life. Writing this, may be a healing experience as it will free yourself from deeply rooted self sabotaging thoughts.

Here is an example of such a 'Letter of Love and Reassurance to your Younger Self' and how it can be structured:

Dear K.….. (Use the name you were called as a child.)

(Express your love and admiration to your Younger Self.)

You are so beautiful and amazing! So intelligent and brilliant in your own special way… The way you draw those beautiful drawings of angels, only goes to prove that you are a pure and kind soul… The way you climb those trees and run, shows how strong and powerful you are…

(Show them where exactly they have misunderstood or misinterpreted certain acts or words of the parents or teachers or bully.)

Now that you are so young, you sometimes hear your parents fighting in the middle of the night. They are arguing with each other, as they have some difficulties. This doesn't mean that they don't love you, that there is anything wrong with you in any way. You are worthy of all the love in the Universe. In the whole history of the the Universe, there will never be a person created exactly like you. You are perfect in every way. You are simply here to learn and grow through all things that may happen in your life… etc…

(Reassure them that you will always be present, and that everything's going to work out fine in life.)

I will always be here, in you, beside you to guide you, to hold you in good times and in bad. I am your inner guardian. I will always love you. You have a bright future ahead of you. etc…

Suggestion: Put this letter in an envelope and mail it to your present address. You will receive it within a week. You will feel a deep peace.

Now About Your Comfort Zone…

Formulating your Ideal, Compelling Future Vision is great, but how is it supposed to happen if we just meditate on it? The answer is - it won't. Realizing your 'Ideal, Compelling Future' needs you to take MASSIVE ACTION… Here is a true story that can inspire you.

In ancient Greece, a young man by the name of Demosthenes, dreamed of becoming a great speaker, but whenever he opened his mouth, he was nervous, awkward, and troubled by both a speech impediment and a stutter. According to Plutarch his speech suffered from "a perplexed and indistinct utterance and a shortness of breath, which, by breaking and disjointing his sentences much obscured the sense and meaning of what he spoke."

Demosthenes however was determined to be a great speaker, so to overcome his difficulties, he put pebbles in his mouth, to slow himself down, and spoke loudly towards the sea for several hours every day. In time, he eliminated his stutter and overcame his speech impediment. His voice grew louder, stronger, and more confident.

Demosthenes went on to become one of the greatest and most famous orators in history. According to one account, when asked to name the three most important elements in oratory, he replied "Delivery, delivery and delivery!"

What can we learn from this true story?

In order to achieve excellence or even improvement in any area of your life-skills, you must be willing to move out of your comfort zone. No movement equals no progress.

As you go through the curriculum and exercises of The ALKISTIS Method®, you must be willing to feel clumsy, awkward and practice regularly, in order for you to move to a higher level of competence.

SECTION 3
Philosophical Foundations

Philosophical Foundations

Image (CC) 2.0 : Raphael's 'School of Athens', in The Vatican, Italy

The ALKISTIS Method® has been particularly inspired by the work of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle as well as the Stoic School.

Although over two millenniums have passed since 'The Golden Age' of Greece, (480 BC-320 BC) the legacy of the Greek philosophers can still inspire, motivate and empower us towards success and happiness, a unique state of being, which the Greeks call Eudaimonia.

"Eudaimonia" **is Human Flourishing**

A wonderful Greek word, it literally means,

"To be filled with positive spirits."

Eudaimonia is the most sought-after experience for any human who takes their life seriously. It encapsulates 'The Good Life' here on Earth, during our lifetime; Happiness, Fulfillment, Freedom, Love and Success… Eudaimonia, was the raison d'etre of Classical Greek philosophy, and subsequently, it became the foundation of free civilization.

In the **Declaration of Independence of the United States**, Thomas Jefferson writes:

> " We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

The Declaration of Independence, National Archives, Washington D.C.

The founding fathers stated in the Federalist Papers that:

> " A good government implies two things: first, fidelity to the object of government, which is the happiness of the people; secondly, knowledge of the means by which that object can be best attained."

For the Classical Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, happiness is the final end or goal that encompasses the

totality of one's life. It is not something that can be gained or lost in a few hours. It's about playing with a long term strategy.

Image (CC) 2.0 : The Supreme Court building on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., an example of Greek Revival Architecture, completed in 1935. It was designed by Cass Gilbert and built of white marble, exactly like the Parthenon.

Happiness is the ultimate value of your life as lived up to this moment, measuring how well you have lived up to your full potential as a human being.

Their preoccupation with developing human potential began around 600 B.C., when there was a transition from myth to reason. In other words, mythological or religious interpretations of the world were increasingly replaced by scientific, evidence-based questioning and reasoning. For example: A river that used to be perceived as a "Who", a conscious being with 'his' own thoughts and feeling, started being perceived as an "It". The 'magical' world of nymphs and gods, began giving way to scientific realism.

Greek philosophers thought deeply, set up public debates and wrote books about how human beings can take charge of their destiny, reach their full potential, not in the afterlife, but here on Earth.

"Happiness depends on ourselves." - **Aristotle**

The concept of happiness as a basic human right, may seem obvious to you now, but when the ancient Greeks conceived it, it was a radical paradigm shift. No longer were the gods responsible for our happiness, we humans had to take responsibility for our own life.

At that time, when other ancient civilizations, focused on happiness in life after death, mainly for royalty, and where vast resources were allocated to creating gigantic pyramids and mausoleums, the Greek philosophers had the audacity to occupy themselves with improving the capacity of ordinary citizens, to find happiness in this life, not after death.

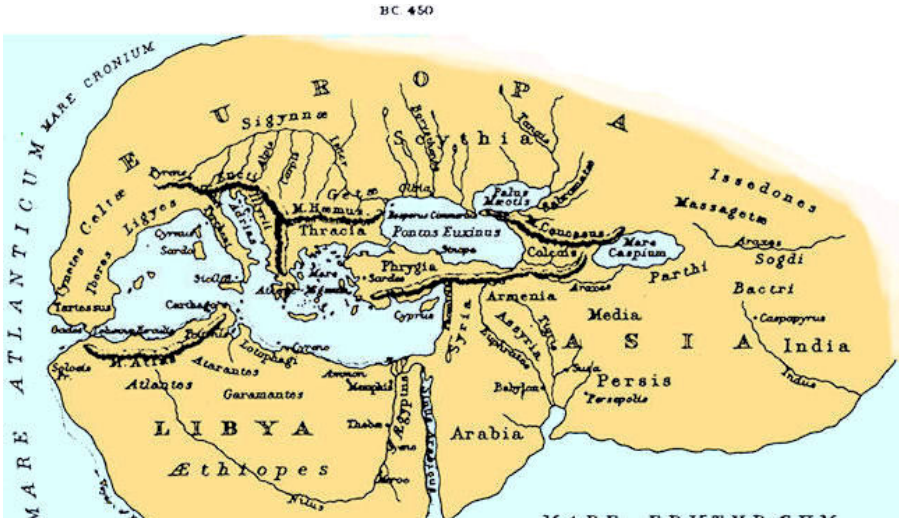


Image (CC) 2.0 : The world according to Herodotus 450 BC

During the 'Golden Era' of Greece, the Greeks produced some of their highest achievements in the arts and philosophy. The insights they reached are so radical, powerful and important, because they are essential, basic truths that have withstood the test of time, beyond culture, religion and dogma, unifying humankind; The Greeks invented such things as Comedy, Democracy, Public

Education, the Olympic Games, Freedom of Religion and Trial by Jury...

The Greeks cultivated Areté

Areté: The Path of Excellence In Body, Mind & Spirit

In their search for the Truth and of the Ideal way of living, the Classical Greek philosophers held the highest esteem for a quality they called **"Areté"**. (Gr. αρετή)

No English word or phrase adequately captures the exact meaning of Areté. The nearest equivalents are **'excellence'** and **'virtue'**.

This is what the Greeks strived for in all their endeavours. Areté was the pinnacle of their value-system, especially excellence of character.

For **Plato**, Areté is mainly associated with moral excellence. It involves four specific moral virtues of Prudence, Courage, Temperance and Justice; It's something they all share, a special, unnamed quality - namely their essence. It is clearly related to Goodness, but it's not the same thing.

For **Aristotle**, something is excellent when it manifests its unique purpose (Greek: Telos). The unique, defining quality of human beings, for Aristotle, what makes them distinct from other animals, is the capacity for rational thought. Human excellence, then, involves the correct use of reason and logic, principally in connection with a moral choice.

Areté is defined by the perfect balance between two extremes. It is about the right measure, the right proportion. In ancient Greece, the temple of Apollo at Delphi bore the inscription Meden Agan (μηδὲν ἄγαν) - 'Nothing in excess'. This should not be confused with meaning the 'middle way' as in mediocrity. The Greeks held that a human being should be constantly improving and evolving towards excellence.

This is one of the most famous maxims that one finds engraved on marble and painted on ancient vases. Nowadays, it is found at the

entrance of many university libraries and academies all over the world.

“AEIN APIΣTEYEIN” … “Ever To Excel”

Image (CC) 2.0: Boston College Library has the motto: “AEIN APIΣTEYEIN”

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The phrase is derived from Homer's famous epic the Iliad; It is used in a speech Glaucus delivers to Diomedes. During a battle between the Greeks and Trojans, Diomedes is impressed by the bravery of the mysterious young man and demands to know his identity. Glaucus replies:

> "Hippolochus begat me. I claim to be his son, and he sent me to Troy with strict instructions: Ever to excel, to do better than others, and to bring glory to your forebears, who indeed were very great ... This is my ancestry; this is the blood I am proud to inherit."

Let’s take a moment to feel the power of that phrase that is coming to us from over two thousand years ago from Homer’s “Iliad”...

They are the words of a young man, a brave warrior, who is proud of his heritage, knows who he is and knows what his values are. He has self-leadership, and a clear sense of purpose. This is something much deeper than having mere ‘self-confidence’, it is Areté, excellence.

To a person of Areté (moral excellence) there are no dilemmas. They don't exist. Point being, your only true possession is your character, your honor. Only this will lead to Eudaimonia.

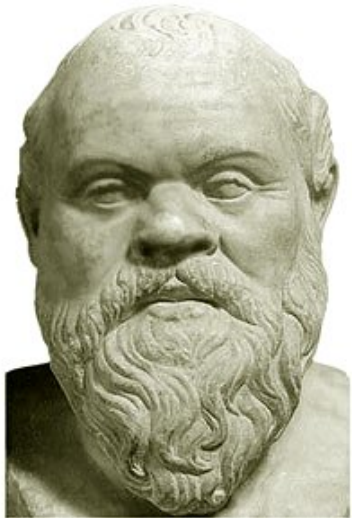
According to the Greek philosophers, Areté, moral εxcellence is what we must all strive for, everyday of our lives, if we want Eudaimonia, and turn it into a habit. As Aristotle says,

"We are what we repeatedly do ...
Excellence is therefore a habit."

Take a moment to self-reflect on your thoughts about the path to Eudaimonia through Areté, moral Excellence.

Following, is a short summary of the three great classical philosophers - also known as the 'Classic Trio'. This is by no means an overview of all their teachings, but only the insights they presented, that inspired The ALKISTIS Method®.

Socrates



"Know thyself."
(Ancient inscription at the temple of Apollo in Delphi,
Greece adopted by Socrates as his motto.)

Socrates was born in Athens, Greece in 460 BC and has a unique place in the history of happiness and personal well-being as he is the first known figure in history to argue that happiness is actually obtainable through human effort.

Like most ancient peoples, the Greeks had a rather pessimistic view of human existence. Happiness was deemed a rare occurrence and reserved only for those whom the gods favored. The idea that one could pursue happiness for oneself was considered hubris, a kind of overreaching pride and was to be met with harsh punishment by the gods. Many Greek myths warned of this horrible fate.

Against this fatalistic backdrop, the optimistic Socrates enters the scene. The key to happiness, he argues, is to turn attention away from the body and towards the mind's inner world. By self-inquiry and the harmonizing of our desires, we can learn to pacify the mind

and achieve a state of inner tranquility. According to Socrates, leading a moral life is to be preferred to an immoral one, primarily because it leads to a happier life.

We see right here, at the beginning of Western philosophy, that happiness is at the forefront, linked to other concepts such as virtue, justice, discernment, based on understanding the ultimate meaning of human existence, beyond religion.

The Roman Stoic philosopher Cicero once said that Socrates... "..Wrestled philosophy from the heavens and brought it down to Earth." One could say he was a sort of Prometheus - taking fire from the gods and giving it to humans, thus giving them the tool to determine their own destiny. Prior to Socrates, Greek philosophy consisted primarily of metaphysical or scientific questions, such as: Why does the world stay up, suspended in space? Is the world composed of one substance or many substances?

But living amidst the horrors of the Peloponnesian War, where Athens had lost to Sparta, Socrates was more interested in essential existential, ethical and social issues: What is the best way to live? Why be moral when immoral people seem to benefit more? Do the rich live better than the poor? Is happiness about satisfying one's deep desires or is it about being good and acting with honor?

According to Socrates, examining oneself, our motives and actions, is the most important task one can undertake. Self-observation alone, will give us the knowledge necessary to answer the question **'**How should I live my life?**'**

When we turn our gaze inwards and focus on self-knowledge, Socrates proposed, we will soon discover our true nature and potential. And contrary to the opinion of the masses, one's True Self according to Socrates is not to be identified with what we own, with our social status, professional achievements or even with one's own body. Socrates believed that philosophy had a very important role to play in the lives of individuals on a very fundamental level:

"For you see what our discussions are all about and is there anything about which a man of even small intelligence would be more serious about than this: What is the way we ought to live? **- Socrates**

The Pursuit of Happiness According to Socrates

"Most excellent men, are you not ashamed to care for the acquisition of wealth and for reputation and honor, when you neither care nor take thought for wisdom and truth in the perfection of your soul... "
- Socrates (The Apology, Plato 399 BC)

All human beings naturally strive after happiness, thought Socrates, for the pursuit of happiness (Eudaimonia) is the greatest goal in our life. And everything we do, we do because we think it will make us happy. We therefore label what we think will bring us happiness as 'good'. And those things we think will bring us suffering and pain we label as 'bad'.

So it follows, that if we have a mistaken conception of what is good, then we will spend our lives frantically chasing after things that will not bring us happiness- even if we attain them. Socrates has been proven right after all, by modern science: Scientific surveys in many countries over decades proved that most blue-collar working people are just as happy as rich people, and teenagers from working class families describe themselves as happier than teenagers from affluent families.

The point here is that obtaining wealth and power are fine but are not ends in themselves, we must also satisfy our soul, which seeks love, connection, contribution, harmony in order to be truly fulfilled. That may seem like an understatement- everyone knows that, but how many of us have lost track of what is really valuable and good for us, in our pursuit for the stars? And on the same note, concerning the quality of life our achievements offer us, how many of us actually have the time or peace to actually enjoy it?

According to Socrates, if one devoted themselves to mindfulness (in Greek = prosoche) and sincere inquiry, they will soon be led to a more appropriate view of the Good and what happiness and success really is.

There is one Supreme Good, he claimed, and possession of this alone will secure our happiness. This Supreme Good thought Socrates, is obtained through Moral Excellence, Virtue, Honor, "Areté".

Areté**: The path to Eudaimonia**

If one is pursuing well-rounded happiness, one cannot avoid Areté. Areté is the 'fast-track' to happiness, fulfillment and personal success, according to Socrates.

An individual is considered virtuous, if their character is made up of the moral qualities that are accepted as the highest human qualities. They are the Four Cardinal Virtues: courage, temperance, prudence, and justice. They were living values, taught in schools and in the Olympic Games of Ancient Greece.

This concept can be summarized in the simple formula:

Areté (Moral Excellence + Virtue + Honor)
=>> Eudaimonia (Happiness + Success)

But if all individuals naturally desire happiness, and if it is only by becoming virtuous that one can attain happiness, then a simple question arises - Why do so many people fail to become virtuous and instead choose to commit 'bad' acts?

Socrates maintained that the answer to this question is that these people are ignorant. If they truly knew that what they are doing was 'evil' and the repercussions on their happiness, they would refrain from such an action; It would actually be in their self interest to do so, because they would understand that only if they were virtuous could they be truly happy.

Socrates held that all evil acts are committed in ignorance… About 500 years later, Jesus Christ was to say "Forgive them Father, for they know not what they have done." Of course, that does not mean we will not avoid or stop people from harming us, but at least we do not have to respond in the same way, and destroy our own virtue. Don't let toxic people drain your energy.

The Originator of Authentic, Servant Leadership

Socrates can be acknowledged as the originator of "Authentic, Servant Leadership" which is a tendency more and more nowadays in enterprises and organizations since the 60's; This is an approach to leadership that emphasizes building the leader's legitimacy through honest relationships, built on an ethical foundation, with followers whose input is valued.

"The way to gain a good reputation is to endeavor to be what you desire to appear." - Socrates

The person you want to be true to is yourself, not what others want of you, or the false image you have had to adopt to please or intimidate others. As Shakespeare wrote in Hamlet, "To thine own self be true." You must strive to present this true image to the world. This is what **'**Ethos**'** dictates and this is what is also best for you.

A lot of unhappiness and stress is caused by pretending you are someone that you are not. Socrates warns against that. Although you may have to do this on occasion to advance your interests, you must try to avoid falsehood as much as possible, because it could have dire consequences; not only for you and your well-being, but for the society that you and your loved ones live in.

No one can dispute that our professions may give us our daily subsistence, but we need to strike a balance between our personal 'standards' and what is required for results. Authenticity is an art and a goal well worth pursuing..

Achieving this authenticity is an ongoing process that involves mindfulness prosoche and the exercising of vigilant, questioning of the world, our beliefs- to test if they hold true. One of the most important contributions was introduced by Socrates, who by applying a radical approach to understanding, turned the history of human thought on its head. His approach was none other than… The Socratic Approach.

The Socratic Approach

"Socrates… was one of the greatest philosophers the world has ever known. He did something that only a handful of people in all history have been able to do; he sharply changed the whole course of human thought; and now twenty-four centuries after his death, he is honored as one of the wisest persuaders who ever influenced this wrangling world…"
- Dale Carnegie, Pioneer in modern leadership training

Socrates created the first recorded rational approach to personal development at a time when mysticism and dogma were rife. He believed that we can only arrive at the truth by questioning our own assumptions, on a regular basis.

" I cannot teach anyone anything,
I can only teach them to think." - Socrates

According to Socrates, what often causes suffering is our own misguided and irrational beliefs. We are our own imprisoners, our own torturers, we cling to our toxic, self-sabotaging beliefs, even when they hurt us.

"An unexamined life is not worth living." - Socrates

The consequences of an unexamined life are tremendous. So how do we free ourselves from our self-made prisons in our mind?

Socrates taught that what we need to do is learn how to ask ourselves critical questions; not just assume that our 'mind chatter', the generalizations and preconceptions we hold, are always true. Socrates taught that we shouldn't believe everything we think. On the contrary, he taught that it's often self-deception in the form of a 'lie' or a 'distortion of the truth'.

So we need to constantly question and test our thinking, to arrive at the truth or the solution. Harvard professor of 'Emotional Intelligence' Daniel Goleman, analyses this phenomenon in his book 'Vital Lies, Simple Truths - The Psychology of Self - Deception'.

The art is in maintaining our objectivity; being able to observe our own self in order to become aware of how our attitude, intention and behaviour participate in the formation of the problems we are actually trying to solve.

What was Socrates' approach? Did he tell people they were wrong? Of course not, that is for amateurs. He was a master. His whole technique consisted of a series of questions. Also known as 'The Socratic Method', it was based upon setting up a debate or dialogue for getting to the objective truth.

He strategically asked questions to which his 'opponent-doubter' would have to agree. As he kept on winning one admission after another, he put the person in a 'positively-inclined' state ie open to accepting the objective truth. He kept on asking questions until finally, almost without realizing it, his 'opponent-doubters' found themselves embracing a conclusion they would have bitterly denied just a few minutes earlier.

In a study, published in the Huffington Post, by Don Joseph Goewey, subjects were asked to write down their worries over an

extended period of time and then identify which of their imagined misfortunes did not actually happen:

"Lo and behold, it turns out that 85 percent of what subjects worried about, never happened, and with the 15 percent that did happen, 79 percent of subjects discovered either they could handle the difficulty better than expected, or the difficulty taught them a lesson worth learning. This means that 97 percent of what you worry over is not much more than a fearful mind punishing you with exaggerations and misperceptions."

That's not to say fear is bad. Fear is a motivator; it forces you to think, to take action on important matters. But too much fear is disabling. It paralyzes you and stops you from taking the path you should take. As with everything, a balance must be maintained. Courage is a virtue. Cowardice and recklessness are vices.

Let us take a moment to apply Socrates's simple method as regards to generalizations we hold true. Based on the Socratic Approach we need to ask, 'Is this generalization true?" Perhaps it was true once, but no longer is or it may not be true at all. Using our Logos do this exercise below:

1. Take a general belief you have about yourself, others, your environment, or the world in general. A perspective, such as: "One has to sweat for his daily bread; nothing comes easy", or "One can never really trust one's employees", or "Politicians are only looking after their interests."

2. Search to find one exception to this general statement. e.g. . "One has to sweat for his daily bread; nothing comes easy, except for that time, when that deal came right into my lap", or "All employees are not trustworthy, but there was one employee in particular who proved that was very trustworthy, beyond any doubt', or "All politicians are looking after their own interests, but so-and-so wasn't."

3. If such a (new, truer) statement is formulated, then this means that the (original) 'general' statement was imprecise and is discredited.

This opens the way for more exceptions of the (original) general statement. One exception can dislodge our (false) belief and free us of its 'chains'.

4. We need to therefore ask that part in us which made the generalization to take this exception(s) into consideration, or at least let it co-exist with it.

When we have dislodged the first stone, we can then keep ourselves open to finding other examples and slowly come to formulate a statement much closer to the truth. This gives us a bigger and better scope of things.

The Socratic Approach of questioning the truth of everything we think, will lead us to a better understanding of ourself and our authentic needs and wants. Beliefs which we hold true shape our daily lives and become the conscious or unconscious comfort zone.

Wisdom from Within

Another characteristic of Socrates's philosophy was the concept of the 'inner, innate wisdom' which according to him, we all have.

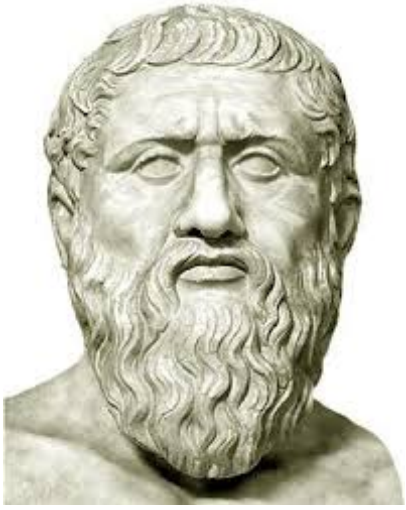
Without giving a full explanation, Socrates referred to his 'inner voice' as his 'Daimonion' (δαίμων), which literally translates into 'an inspiring spirit'. In Plato's books Apology 31c, and in Republic 496, he suggests that it is this inner voice which allowed him to become a true philosopher.

The concept of the innate deep wisdom within us has to do with trust. Trusting to listen from deep within. We face the world, with all its challenges. At our deepest level we need to trust ourselves in 'knowing', beyond all our mind 'chatter' and 'self-doubt', that we have the potential and wisdom to navigate our own ship.

It is remarkable that Socrates, though he propagated flawless, adamant, logical reasoning, also referred to an illogical force called 'Daimonion', whom he attuned to. Allowing guidance, inspiration and wisdom from 'an inspiring Spirit' signifies that all knowledge is

not attained only by reasoning, but also by intuition- a necessary "feeling" force, where one has to be inwardly silent to listen.

Plato



"For man to conquer himself is the
first and noblest of all victories." - **Plato**

Born in 428 BC, into a prominent and wealthy family in the city state of Athens, Plato was an aristocratic man with superb athletic physique. His real name is thought to have been Aristocles; Plato may have been a nickname, either given to him by his wrestling coach in reference to his broad shoulders (in Greek 'Platon' means broad), or because of his broad intellect or forehead.

He studied under Socrates and then devoted his life to one goal; helping people reach a state of what he termed 'eudaimonia' meaning success, happiness and fulfillment.

Like his teacher Socrates, Plato thought that the truth could not be reduced to simple formulas, and then just "applied", whenever it's convenient. Rather, it had to be discovered by each person for themselves; but not in isolation. Partners and dialogue are indispensable. It requires a process. It is for this reason that all his writings are in the form of dialogues (Greek; dia through and logues

words, logic) of imaginary discussions, in which Socrates, his mentor, is always given a starring role in conversing and debating issues.

For Plato, however, true insights come from a timeless sphere of eternal truths; the world of Ideas; a higher world, of which this material world that we perceive is just a shadow. In order to find happiness, Plato maintained, we need to have the Guiding Light of the Idea of True, Eternal Love and Goodness.

"Be kind, for everyone you meet
is fighting a hard battle." **- Plato**

Among his over 36 works are The Republic, The Symposium, The Laws, The Meno, and The Apology. Most of them have the purpose of showing how these high ideals and ethics can be applied to our private life and to politics for a just and civilized society. For example in The Republic, Plato was the first in history to contend that people had a right to free education by the State, that women too should be educated, and that women would make just as good rulers as men. These were revolutionary proposals at the time and in many places of the world, they still are.

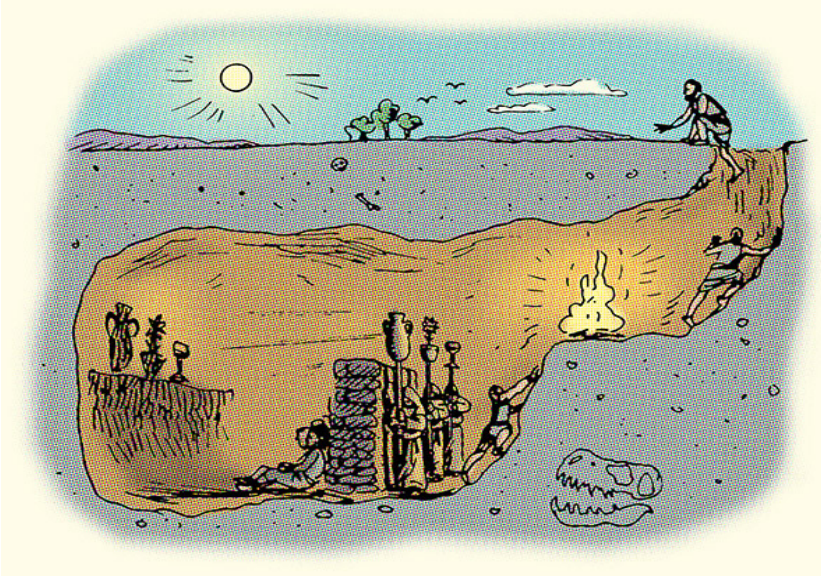
Plato contributed several very powerful insights for making life more fulfilling, which concern us.

The Cave Allegory: Prisoners of our Thoughts

We rarely give ourselves time to think carefully and logically about our lives and how to live them. Apart from our own inner 'beliefs' which we hold true, we often just go along with popular opinions, like 'Fame is great', 'Money is Power' etc. In the 36 books he wrote, Plato showed this common sense to be filled with errors, prejudice and superstition. Plato's answer, like his teacher Socrates, is "Know Thyself' - or at least try to, and to do so means the beginning of self inquiry.

Expressing his more metaphysical nature, Plato maintained that our body is nothing more than a vehicle for the soul, a sort of biological

virtual reality suit. Through philosophy, we could expand our mind and come to the realization that what we perceive as reality is only a shadow of a greater reality. He explained this concept in his work, The Republic, using a simple allegory; the Allegory of the Cave. It illustrates the need for more self-reflection and self-knowledge and the consequences of not doing so.



Description of the Cave Allegory: In a fictional dialogue between Socrates (Plato's teacher) and Glaucon (Plato's brother), Socrates describes a scenery deep in a cave where a group of people have lived since infancy. These people have always been chained in such a way that they cannot move their heads in any other direction, than to a blank wall in front of them. Behind them there is a fire and between the fire and them, there is a path on which other people pass, holding up various objects. The shadows of these objects, project on the wall, but not the shadows of the people carrying them. The chained people see the moving objects and begin to ascribe forms and meaning to them.

When one of them is freed and shown the reality outside the cave, he comes to understand that the shadows on the wall do not reflect reality at all. From this point on, he can perceive the true form of

reality (e.g. the true objects) rather than the mere shadows seen by the prisoners.

According to Plato, every prisoner that was freed also had the obligation to return to the cave and help free the other prisoners, although he may be mocked by them and even have to face hostility.

Furthermore, Plato stresses the social-responsibility aspect of Self-inquiry and Self-reflection, in that when one finds his way out of the cave, he is meant to and of help others do the same.

"The measure of a man is what he does with power."
- Plato

Subjecting your view of reality to examination, rather than accepting it at face value, as we do for so many things, along with the rest of the 'cave dwellers', is the path of the wiser leader (the philosopher - king). The more you understand the true reality of the world around you and inside you, the less the decisions you make will be affected by your biases, preconceptions, superstitions and emotions, something Plato compares to being dragged around by wild horses.

We often do at least one of three things with incoming sensory information; delete, distort, or generalise. Often we do varying combinations of all three. Here is a guideline on the three mental chains we often foster, that create a lack of perspective:

Deletion – Omitting certain aspects of our experience by selectively paying attention, focusing on specific parts, and deleting the rest from our conscious awareness.

Distortion – Distorting our experience, leading to being frightened of a harmless situation, or being intimidated by certain people, and misinterpreting what is being said.

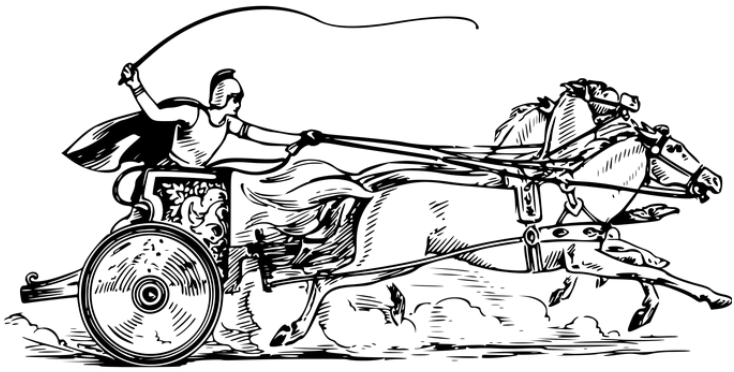
Generalisation – Drawing conclusions about ourselves, others or situations in general, based on a particular personal experience, hearsay, or other trends of thought.

The Charioteer Allegory: Self Leadership

From Plato also comes the vision of the three-part nature of the soul, or psyche, as explained though the allegory of the charioteer. A concept with great depth, it furnishes an unmatched visualization of what a human is, and why he does what he does.

The Charioteer represents reason, the part of the soul that must guide itself to truth and happiness (Eudaimonia). One horse represents rational or moral impulse, the positive part of passionate nature (e.g. honor, righteous indignation), while the other represents the soul's irrational passions, appetites, and lustful nature.

Without expanding into Plato's metaphysical descriptions, the purpose of the Charioteer is to direct the entire chariot, ie the soul, towards enlightenment, while keeping the horses aligned and in balance, a difficult task, given that one wants to rise to the heavens, and the other to return to earth.



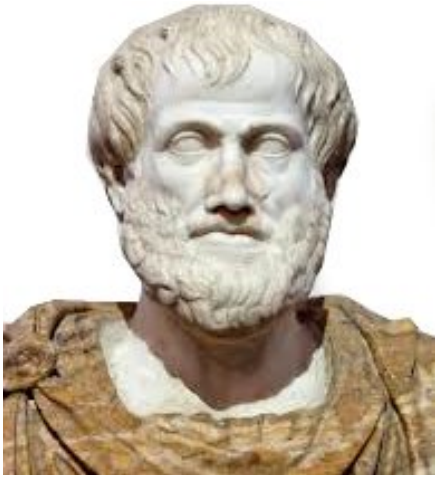
The Greeks saw these elements of the soul as real forces, like electricity that could move a man to act and think in certain ways. Each element has its own motivation and desires: Reason seeks truth and knowledge. Passion seeks food, drink, sex and material wealth. Honor seeks glory and recognition with modesty and temperance.

Plato believed Reason to be the loftiest aim, but each force, if properly harnessed and employed, becomes part of our self-mastery and can contribute to a person's Eudaimonia. Achieving this

harmony of soul and self-alignment, Plato argues, is a precursor to tackling any other endeavors of life, like leading others.

This powerful concept of the Charioteer is borrowed by The ALKISTIS Method® to help visualize the relationship between Ethos, Pathos and Logos, since they represent a similar dynamic.

Aristotle



"Educating the mind, without educating the heart,
is no education at all."
– **Aristotle,** 'Rhetoric' 4th century BC

Aristotle is one of the greatest thinkers in the history of western science and philosophy, making contributions to logic, metaphysics, mathematics, physics, biology, botany, ethics, politics, agriculture, medicine, dance and theatre. He was a student of Plato, who in turn studied under Socrates.

Aristotle was born around 384 B.C. in the ancient Greek Kingdom of Macedonia, where his father was the royal doctor. He grew up to be arguably the most influential philosopher who ever lived, with many nicknames like 'The Master', or simply 'The Philosopher'.

His first big teaching commission was tutoring Alexander The Great, to whom he taught his leadership skills. When Alexander the Great went out to conquer the whole of the known world, Aristotle headed off to Athens, to study under Plato for a while, until eventually branching out on his own.

In 335 BC, he founded the Lyceum, the first scientific institute, based in Athens, Greece. He was one of the strongest advocates of a liberal arts education, which stresses the education of the whole person, including one's moral character, rather than merely learning a set of skills. According to Aristotle, this view of education is necessary if we are to produce a society of happy, as well as productive individuals. For Aristotle, philosophy was about practical wisdom being of service to society.

What Makes People Happy ?

"All people seek one goal; Eudaimonia (Success and Fulfillment)... The only way to achieve true success is to express yourself completely in service to society... First, have a definite, clear, practical ideal - a goal, an objective. Second, mobilize the necessary resources to achieve your ends; wisdom, money, materials, and methods. Third, adjust all your means to that end..." - **Aristotle**

More than anybody, Aristotle enshrines happiness as the central purpose of human life and a goal in itself. As a result he devotes more space to the topic of happiness, than any thinker prior to the modern era. He too, like Socrates and Plato before him, concluded that happiness depends on the cultivation of virtue (Areté). Aristotle was convinced that a genuinely happy life required the fulfillment of a broad range of conditions, including physical as well as mental well being. In this way, and being of a practical nature, he introduced the idea of a science of happiness, in the classical sense, as a new field of knowledge.

Essentially, Aristotle argues that virtue is achieved by maintaining the ‘Golden Mean’, which signifies moderation; the balance between two excesses. Aristotle’s doctrine of the Mean is reminiscent of the teachings of many religions, such as Buddha’s Middle Path. It was a widely accepted idea. As inscribed on the

temple of Apollo at Delphi, “μηδεν αγαν”; "nothing in excess". (Not to be mistaken for mediocrity, it is more self-mastery).

One of Aristotle's most influential works is the Nicomachean Ethics, where he presents a theory of happiness, that is still relevant today, over 2,300 years later. The key question Aristotle seeks to answer in these lectures is "What is the ultimate purpose of human existence?" In other words, what is that end or goal toward which we should direct all of our activities?

Everywhere we see people seeking pleasure, wealth, fame and honor. But while each of these has some value, none of them can take the place of the ultimate good, that which humanity should aim for. Towards that ultimate end, an act must be self-sufficient and final, to be "that which is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else" (Nicomachean Ethics, 1097a30-34), and it must also be attainable by man.

Aristotle claims that nearly everyone would agree, that happiness is the end which meets all these requirements. It is easy enough to see that we desire money, pleasure, fame and honor only because we believe that these goods will make us happy. It seems that all other goods are a means towards obtaining happiness, while happiness is always an end in itself.

In the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle suggested that good and truly successful people all possessed distinct virtues. He proposes that we should become better at identifying what these are, so that we can nurture them in ourselves and honor them in others.

He zeroed in on eleven basic virtues as a guideline over 2000 years ago: courage, temperance, liberality, magnificence, magnanimity, pride, patience, truthfulness, wittiness, friendliness and modesty. Indeed, not a bad mix of attributes to possess as a leader, whether one is a CEO, a politician, or a parent in today’s world.

Balance in Character and The Middle Path

Expanding on the idea of balance, Aristotle also observed that every virtue, seems to be smack in the middle of two vices. It occupies

what he termed - the ‘Golden Mean’ between two extremes of character. In book four of his ethics under the charming title of, ‘Conversational Virtues, Wit, Buffoonery, Boorishness’ Aristotle looks at ways people are better or worse at conversation. Knowing how to have a good conversation is one of the key ingredients of the good life, Aristotle recognized. Who can argue with that?

Some people go wrong because they lack a subtle sense of humor and that’s ‘the boor’; someone useless for any kind of social intercourse because he contributes nothing and takes offense at everything. But others carry humor to excess; ‘the buffoon’ cannot resist the joke sparing neither himself nor anybody else. This character will try to provoke laughter saying things that a man of taste would never dream of saying…

So the virtuous person is in the ‘golden mean’ in this area; witty but tactful. Definitely an art to be shared, Aristotle even drew up a table of too little, too much and just right around a whole host of virtues. He wrote,

> “Anybody can become angry - that is easy, but to be angry with the right person and to the right degree and at the right time and for the right purpose, and in the right way - that is not within everybody's power and is not easy.”

Moral goodness, and happiness says Aristotle, is a result of habit. It takes time, practice, and encouragement, so Aristotle thinks people who lack virtue should be understood as being unfortunate rather than being wicked. (As if they have a ‘disability’.)

What they need isn’t scolding or being thrown into prison but better teachers and more guidance. We need to protect ourselves from disabled people, not attack them, and we need to expand our understanding of others. Self-leadership is an art which includes the understanding of oneself and others. (See chart on next page.)

We can't change our behavior in any of these areas at the drop of a hat, but change is possible eventually, especially if we have a deep desire to improve ourselves.

"We are what we repeatedly do.
Excellence is therefore a habit." **- Aristotle**

The table in the next diagram depicts the path of virtue, Aristotle's Golden Mean expressing the balance between deficiency and excess.

DEFICIENCY of VIRTUE (vice)	VIRTUE	EXCESS of VIRTUE (vice)
Cowardice	Courage	Rash
Insensible	Temperance	Dissipation
Stinginess	Generosity	Wastefulness
Chintzy	Magnificence	Vulgar
Aspersion	Magnanimity	Vainglory
Indolence	Industrious	Overambitious
Indifference	Caring	Controlling
Self-deprecation	Honest	Boastfulness
Boorishness	Charming	Buffoonery
Quarrelsome	Friendliness	Obsequious
Lying	Truthful	Tactless
Impatient	Tolerant	Doormat
Timid	Confident	Domineering
Fickle	Loyal	Gullible
Unsure	Vigilant	Impetuous
Cowardice	Protective	Bully
Fearful	Patient	Impulsive
Rudderless	Flexible	Rigid
Naïve	Practical	Cynical
Wimpy	Assertive	Arrogant
Selfish	Nurturing	Martyr
Paranoid	Confident	Arrogant
Pushover	Careful	Stubborn

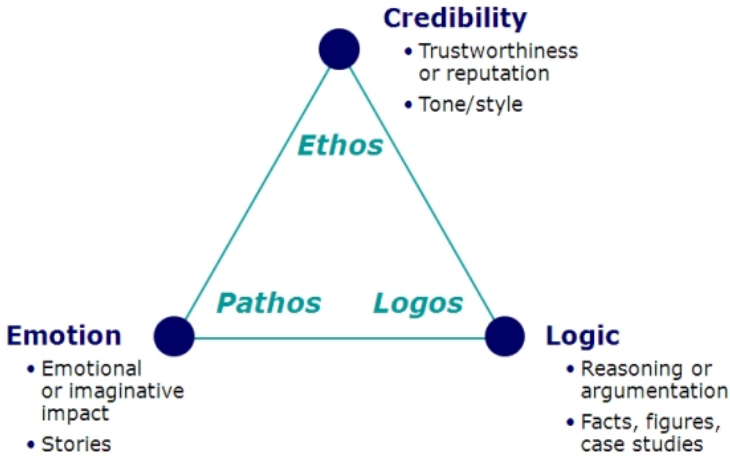
The Art of Persuasion for Leaders

Like many people, Aristotle was struck by the fact that the best argument doesn't always win a debate. He wanted to know - why

does this happen and what can we do about it? He had lots of opportunities for observation.

In Ancient Athens, many decisions were made in public meetings often in the Agora (the open marketplace) of the town square. Orators would vie with one another to sway popular opinion. Aristotle observed the ways audiences and individuals are influenced by many factors that don't strictly engage with logic or the facts of the case. It's irritating, and the reason many serious people tended to avoid the marketplace and populous debate.

So, Aristotle wrote the first ever manual on the art of persuasion. He called it 'The Rhetoric'. We already discussed in the introduction. In it he presents the concepts of Ethos, Pathos, and Logos, as the traits an orator must have in order to influence and persuade his audience.



He also referenced two more, lesser known traits, that of Telos (ending), meaning the purpose or attitude of a speech, and Kairos (time, weather), meaning the particular setting, context, atmosphere, time, and place that a speech occurs.

It is these concepts and their extended application to ourselves that form the backbone of The ALKISTIS Method®.

Stoicism

"Does the light of a lamp shine and keep its glow until its fuel is spent?" Why shouldn't your truth, justice, and self-control shine until you are extinguished?"
-Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 12.15

Stoicism is an ancient Greek philosophy developed by Zeno of Citium around 300 B.C. Stoicism was greatly influenced by the teachings of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and other schools of philosophy that preceded them. Famous philosophers of Stoicism include, Zeno of Citium, a former slave, Epictetus, the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, the Roman statesman Seneca The Younger, and the arch-enemy of Julius Caesar, Cato the Younger. The wide variety of these, demonstrates that Stoicism is applicable to all walks of life.

The term "stoic" was taken from the "stoa poikile", meaning "painted colonnade" (in the 'Agora' ie marketplace) where Zeno used to teach, instead of at the more established lyceums and academies. (In modern times, we often use the word 'stoic' referring to someone who remains calm under pressure and avoids emotional extremes.)

The philosophy asserts that Virtue brings true happiness and fulfillment. Virtue ie ethical and moral well-being by having a will which is in agreement with Nature, and by practicing the Four Cardinal Virtues (from Socrates/Plato's teachings):

- **phronêsis** (Practical Wisdom)
- **dikaiosunê** (Justice)
- **sôphrosunê** (Temperance)
- **andreia** (Courage)

As an ethical doctrine, the goal of Stoicism is freedom from anguish or suffering, through the pursuit of reason and "apatheia"(Greek word meaning apathy, ie dispassionate, objective, unemotional and having clear judgment). It teaches indifference and a "passive" reaction to external events on the grounds that nothing external can be good or evil, offering equanimity in the face of life's highs and lows.

The Three Disciplines

There are three areas of application of Stoic philosophy:

The Discipline of Assent. (Greek: Sunkatathesis) This has to do with how we allow ourselves to perceive the world around us. When we control our perceptions, we get mental clarity; the ability to assent to true impressions, dissent from false ones, and suspend our judgment (epoché ie Greek for 'suspension of judgment') toward uncertain ones. It concerns how we should judge our impressions so as not to be carried away by them into anxiety or disturbing emotions.

The Discipline of Will (Greek: Orexis) This has to do with how we align and apply our will with the course of Nature; A wise person would seek to harmonize his inner Logos, with the greater cosmic Logos, just like a musician attunes his/her instrument to the symphony orchestra. When we do this, we can deal with anything the world puts before us.

Discipline of Action. (Greek: Hormê) This has to do with the actions we take or do not take towards a desired outcome; when we direct our actions properly and justly, we are effective and get results. The discipline has to do with the development of the skill to take the right action (Kathekon), at the right time (Kairós), for the right reason (Orthos logos).

Vincit qui se vincit.

(Stoic motto in Latin ie He conquers, who conquers himself.)

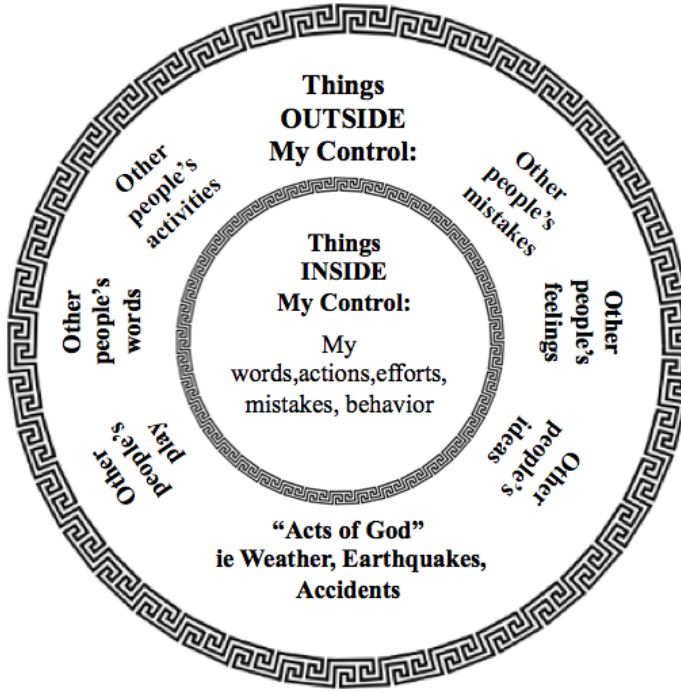
Let's look at how these three main disciplines would look in practice:

The Discipline of Assent

1. Immediately **recognize what is in or out of your control.**

   A stoic realizes that only his/her thoughts and intentions are truly within their sphere of control; everything else is ultimately uncontrollable.

   > "The chief task in life is simply this: to identify and separate matters so that I can say clearly to myself which are externals and not under my control, and which have to do with the choices I actually control. Where then do I look for good and evil? Not to uncontrollable externals, but within myself to the choices that are my own."
   >
   > - Epictetus, Discourses, 2.5, 4-5



The 'Dichotomy of Control', is a central idea that the Stoics held and practiced. It is the original concept behind the Christian Serenity Prayer,

> "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things that I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference".

Here is how Epictetus puts it in his Enchiridion (a sort of Stoic manual):

> "Some things are within our power, while others are not. Within our power are opinion, motivation, desire, aversion and, in a word, whatever is of our own doing. Not within our power are our body, our property, reputation, office, and, in a word, whatever is not of our own doing."

2. **Passions and emotions** such as fear, lust, anger, envy, resentment etc **are personal choices**, regardless of outer circumstances.

   This is based in Epictetus' teachings that there can be no such thing as being the 'victim' of another, you can only be a victim of your own thoughts. It's all about self-discipline.

   > "Keep this thought handy, when you feel a fit of rage coming on, it isn't manly to be enraged. Rather, gentleness and civility are more human, and therefore manlier. A real man doesn't give way to anger and discontent, and such a person has strength, courage and endurance-unlike the angry and complaining. The nearer a man comes to a calm mind, the closer he is to strength."
   >
   > - Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 11.1.5b

   In other words, anger is weakness of will. Are you going to be a puppet of your anger or appetite? Just because someone calls you a name, does that mean you have to jump? Just because your anger says 'jump', do you have to jump? Not if you are the master of your destiny.

   > "Frame your thoughts like this - you are a mature person, you won't let yourself be enslaved by this any longer, no longer pulled like a puppet by every impulse, and you'll stop complaining about your present fortune or dreading the future." - Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 2.2

3. **Awareness/Assessment of Self and of Circumstances**

   > "Above all, it is necessary for a person to have a true self-estimate for we commonly think that we can do more than we really can."
   >
   > - Seneca, On Tranquility of the Mind, 5.2

   How can you really be considered self-aware if you refuse to consider your weaknesses, patterns and instincts? Are you ready to have that "hard-talk" with yourself? Be careful of dangerous

overestimation of yourself or of situations. Understand that awareness is freedom.

> "The person is free who lives as they wish, neither compelled, not hindered, nor limited - whose choices aren't hampered, whose desires succeed, and who doesn't fall into what repels them. Who wishes to live in deception, tripped up, mistaken, undisciplined, complaining, in a rut? No one. These are base people who don't live as they wish; and so, no base person is free." - Epictetus, Discourses, 4.1.1-3a

In Greek, the word, 'Oiesis', self-deception and 'Hybris', hubris, are seen as dangerous traps that we set for ourselves. We must exercise self-awareness at all times, otherwise, we may have a tragic end, like the hero Oedipus.

> "Zeno would say that nothing is more hostile to a firm grasp on knowledge than self-deception." - Diogenes Laertius, Lives of the Eminent Philosophers, 7.23

4. **Objective, Free Thinking**

Don't get caught up in all the drama and other illusions of the ego. Be careful not to allow toxic thoughts to slip in, by being constantly vigilant.

> "Your mind will take the shape of what you frequently hold in thought, for the human spirit is colored by such impressions." -Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 5.16

> "Drama, combat, terror, numbness, and subservience, every day these things wipe out your sacred principles, whenever your mind entertains them uncritically, or lets them slip in." -Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 10.9

> "Hold sacred your capacity for understanding. For in it is our ruling principle that won't allow anything to enter that is neither inconsistent with nature nor with the constitution of a logical creature. It's what demands due diligence, care

for others, and obedience to God."

-Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 3.9

The Discipline of Will

1. **Cultivate** Fortitude and Resilience through **positive habits**, because "We are what we repeatedly do", as Aristotle taught.

   Stoics believed that it is great to be inspired, from time to time, but real transformation happens in small, consistent steps that work such as waking up early in the morning, making our bed each day, meditating, journalling, fasting regularly etc. Because a strong soul is better than good luck.

   "We must undergo a hard winter training and not rush into things for which we haven't prepared."

   -Epictetus, Discourses, 1.2.32

   "The rational soul is stronger than any kind of fortune - from its own share, it guides its affairs here or there, and is itself the cause of a happy or miserable life."

   -Seneca, Moral Letters, 98.2b

2. **Live with Kindness and Virtue;** it will make you invincible.

   "Kindness is invincible, but only when it's sincere, with no hypocrisy or faking."

   -Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 11.18.5.9a

   The Stoics studied Plato and Socrates who taught that the real secret to philosophy is learning to love.

   "Dig deep within yourself, for there is a fountain of goodness ever ready to flow if you will keep digging."

   -Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 7.59

   "The wise person can lose nothing. Such a person has everything stored up for themselves, leaving nothing to Fortune, their own goods are held firm, bound in virtue, which requires nothing from chance, and therefore can't be

either increased or diminished."
-Seneca, On the Firmness of the Wise, 5.4

3. **'Amore Fati'** is about accepting your fate.

When something happens that we dreaded would happen, what is more intelligent to dwell on: Wishing that it hadn't happened or figuring out what to do about it, and possibly even benefitting from the event?

This premise, that we don't control what happens to us but we do control how we respond to what happens to us, is expressed in this quote from Marcus Aurelius:

"The impediment to action advances action,
what stands in the way becomes the way."

In this way, there is no such thing as a setback or a problem or an obstacle, there's simply an opportunity to try a different strategy. It's maybe not what we thought, or were expecting, but it's what we need to do. Perhaps it's not what we would have preferred, but still good enough to work with. Obstacles feed our determination to succeed, like gasoline feeds the fire. This is what the Stoics call, "Amor Fati" ie love of one's fate. There is a belief that difficulties can bring out the best in us:

"Igne natura renovatur integra."
(Motto in Latin: Through fire, nature is reborn whole.)

Throughout history great men and women have responded to problems, obstacles and adversity in a similar way :

"Don't seek for everything to happen as you wish it would, but rather wish that everything happens as it actually will - then your life will flow well." -Epictetus, Enchiridion, 8

Some people mistake Amor Fati for being fatalistic, leading to non-action. On the contrary, it's about accepting what has happened and using the time to re-group resources, in order to proceed to the next steps. It is, in fact, the only useful and

practical thing you can do. Everything else is a waste of time and energy.

4. Meditation on Mortality **'Memento Mori'**

   The literal translation of this is 'Remembering you will die". Stoics meditate daily on their mortality to revive their commitment to a principle centered life, to be more grateful and free from being anxious.

   Imagine a soldier who is leaving for duty tomorrow, not knowing whether they'll return or not. How would they behave and see things? Firstly, they'll get their affairs in order. They will handle their business. They will tell their family and children how much they love them. They wouldn't have time for quarrelling or petty matters. In the morning they are prepared to go, hoping for the best, but knowing that they might not come back.

   > "Let us prepare our minds as if we'd come to the very end of life. Let us postpone nothing. Let us balance life's books each day… The one who puts the finishing touches on their life each day is never short of time."
   >
   > -Seneca, Moral Letters, 102.7b-8a

The Discipline of Action

1. Stoics live according to the **cardinal values** that lead to Virtue and Eudaimonia; Experience has proven that when wealth and power are targeted for their own sake, it leads to a feeling of emptiness.

   > "How much better it is to be known for doing well by many than for living extravagantly? How much more worthy than spending on sticks and stones is it to spend on people?"
   >
   > -Musonius Rufus, Lectures, 19.91.26-28

   Stoics believe that their virtue and honor are the greatest treasure and they would not 'sell out' at least not as readily as people with

low moral standards. This moral backbone makes them unshakable in the most challenging circumstances.

2. Solving Problems through a **View From Above**

When we see the bigger picture, we can more easily find solutions and things begin to 'click'. A great idea can come from this raised perspective.

> "How beautifully Plato put it. Whenever you want to talk about people, it's best to take a bird's eye-view and see everything all at once - of gatherings, armies, farms, weddings and divorces, births and deaths, noisy courtrooms or silent spaces, every foreign people, holidays, memorials, markets - all blended together and arranged in a pairing of opposites." -Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 7.48

Marcus Aurelius told himself: "Many of the anxieties that harass you are superfluous… Expand into an ampler region, letting your thoughts sweep over the entire universe."

3. **Do your duty.**

> "Never shirk the proper dispatch of your duty, no matter if you are freezing or hot, groggy or well, rested, vilified or praised, not even if dying or pressured by other demands. Even dying is one of the important assignments of life and, in this as in all else, make the most of your resources to do well in the duty at hand."
>
> -Marcus Aurelious, Meditations, 6.2

Like Aristotle, who spoke of the "Telos" (ie the purpose) the Stoics believed that every person, animal and thing has a purpose or a place in nature. Think of a symphony orchestra, and each musician has their role to play in the Grand Plan of Nature.

> "On those mornings when you struggle with getting up, keep this thought in mind - I am awakening to the work of a human being. Why then am I annoyed that I am going to do what I am made for, the very things for which I was put into

> this world? Or was I made for this, to snuggle under the covers and keep warm? It's so pleasurable. Were you then made for pleasure? In short to be coddled or, to exert yourself?" -Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 5.1

4. **Be Pragmatic**.

> "That cucumber is bitter, so toss it out! There are thorns on the path, then keep away! Enough said. Why ponder the existence of nuisance? Such thinking would make you a laughing-stock to the true student of Nature, just as a carpenter or cobbler would laugh if you pointed out the sawdust and chips on the floors of their shops. Yet while those shopkeepers have dustbins for disposal, Nature has no need of them..." -Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 8.50

So in other words, don't wait for perfection or utopia, be pragmatic and make the best of it. There's always more room to maneuver and negotiate than you think. As Seneca wrote,

> "Apply yourself to thinking through difficulties - hard times can be softened, tight squeezes widened, and heavy loads made lighter for those who can apply the right pressure." (On Tranquility of Mind, 10.4b)

Stoicism is a clear path for entrepreneurship, for personal happiness, for navigating a world that is inherently unpredictable. It's a philosophy for self-made individuals, for resilient and robust individuals, for resourceful people who understand that they don't control outside forces, but they can control their internal forces.

Inspired by Socrates, who lived and died by his values, the Stoics are not prepared to 'sell-out' what they value most; Tranquility, fearlessness and freedom. As Epictetus explains, so simply.

> "What is the fruit of these teachings? Only the most beautiful and proper harvest of the truly educated - tranquility, fearlessness and freedom. We should not trust the masses who say only the free can be educated, but rather

> the lovers of wisdom who say that only the educated are free."

The correct approach of practicing Stoicism

Although Stoicism provides an excellent philosophy for navigating through life, it should not be confused with self-repression or denial. A modern Stoic should seek the support and advice of professionals in certain situations.

SECTION 4
Scientific Foundations

The Scientific Foundations

Science has advanced a lot since the time of the ancient philosophers and has added a great deal of knowledge to the matters they discussed. The amazing thing though, is that the basic insights they developed back then, are still valid, relevant and widely used today.

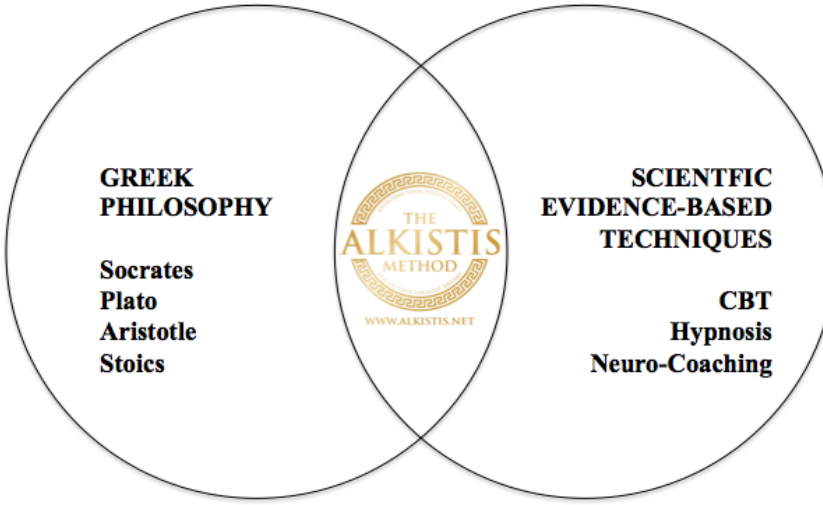
According to philosopher Wilfrid Sellars, this is due to the difference between what he calls the "scientific image" and the "manifest image" of the world, i.e. the scientific and the common-sense viewpoints respectively. He concludes that we should always use both because, while scientific knowledge is far more sophisticated than common sense, it tells us little about things like values and normativity, ie what we consider good or bad.

The ancient philosophers may, for example, have been wrong about some of the scientific details as regards the physiology of the brain, but everything they said about the functioning of our mind and how we can improve it was correct and still forms the basis of many of today's evidence based psychotherapies, like Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT).

The reason for this, is that no matter how much our knowledge and technology have advanced, we still have to deal with the same basic

issues - unhealthy emotions like fear, frustration, anger and anxiety, and our search for happiness and eudaimonia.

The uniqueness of The ALKISTIS Method® is that it effectively integrates modern scientific, evidence-based techniques such as neurocoaching, Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT), etc., with the ageless wisdom of ancient Greek philosophy for achieving optimum results.



Scientific & Evidence Based Techniques

The year 1879 is commonly seen as the start of psychology as an independent field of study, when German scientist Wilhelm Wundt founded the first laboratory dedicated exclusively to psychological research in Leipzig, Germany. Wundt combined philosophical introspection (the direct observation or rumination of one's self, as opposed to extrospection, the observation of things external to one's self), which is what psychology had been called till then, with actual science involving laboratory experimentation and the gathering of evidence.

Scientific research by leading institutions like Harvard and M.I.T., have since then made startling discoveries about the human brain, specially in recent decades. Some of these insights can help leaders dramatically improve employee morale, productivity, and retention. An important result of this research and was the development of neurocoaching, a fusion of applied neuroscience, performance psychology and neurolinguistics. It gives emphasis to neurology and engaging the whole nervous system to get the desired results, by using neurological or 'embodied thinking' processes, rather than and advice style model. The benefits and potential of neurocoaching cannot be overstated. If Self-Leadership is our goal, this approach can offer us our basic techniques for successfully reaching it.

In this section we will get a brief overview of some of the advances that have brought us to a modern approach for optimizing human performance.

As we will also see that, as stated above, these techniques fall perfectly in line with the insights and teachings of the ancient philosophers, for the simple reason that our we, as people, including our problems and desires, haven't changed since then.

Behaviourism and Pavlov's Dogs

Behaviourism is the theory that behaviour can be explained in terms of conditioning, without appeal to thoughts or feelings, and that psychological disorders are best treated by altering behaviour patterns.

The origins of this theory lie with Ivan Pavlov, the first Russian Nobel laureate, who is best known for his famous 1901 experiment, usually referred to as "Pavlov's Dogs", in which he developed the concept of the "Conditioned Reflex".

The experiment showed that when a buzzer was sounded simultaneously as food was presented to a dog, the dog come to connect the sound of the stimulus (buzzer) with the presentation of the food, and begin to salivate even if the food was not present.

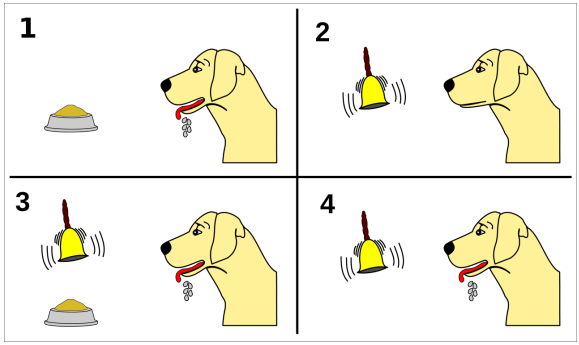


Image (CC) 2.0: The famous experiment of Nobel Prize Winner, Dr.Ivan Pavlov

His research caused a revolution in training, learning and therapy approaches. The idea of 'conditioning' as a form of (automatic) learning and training for humans, became the basis of what we know as modern Behaviorism, a new psychology based on training new, positive, desired behaviors, sometimes in a matter of minutes rather than through many years of psychoanalysis.

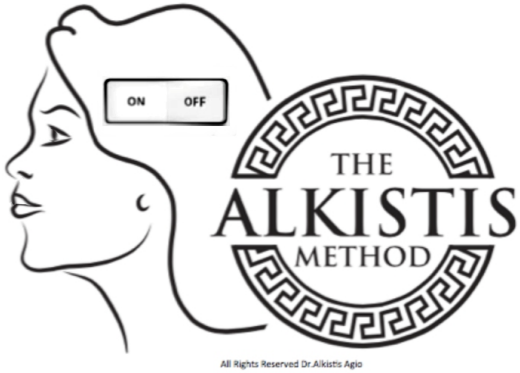
The truth is that all of us have been trained in certain ways, with limiting beliefs and patterns of behaviour, a bit like circus animals. In the circus, for example, a trainer will tie a young elephant's foot to a post, with a cord and each time the little elephant tries to walk away, it gets painful cuts by the chord. Over time, it develops the deep belief that it should not, and cannot break free and it gives up. Thereafter, even when the cord is removed, the elephant continues acting as if it still existed.

Much in a similar way, as little kids, growing up, our family and the specific culture that we were surrounded by gave us clear signals and punished us when we did something they did not agree with. Slowly, we became 'programmed' unconsciously to act like them and talk like them, and think like them.

So, now as conscious adults, who want to take charge of our life, we must become mindful and selective. We need to ask ourselves which of those beliefs that we learned earlier on in our life or our career, are no longer useful.

The "A-Ha!" realization is that "YES", we people can be re-trained in new behaviors regardless of our age. It does not, and need not require years and years of therapy to change our limiting thoughts and behaviours so we can take control of our lives. The brain is simple to reprogram when there is a will to do so.

Just because something is simple and straightforward though, does not make it less powerful or effective. This evidence-based knowledge is being applied in all sorts of fields where a new "stimulus" will cause a "whole new, improved response" in people: It's like we can just flip a switch (on-off) in our mind, for new, excellent, extraordinary results.



This natural healing system that each one of us is born with, which allows our brains to overcome our phobias and traumas by 'flipping a switch' to a new thought/stimulus, is very a very important tool in taking charge of ourselves.

It allows us to to reprogram our minds and through continuous application, change the way our mind works and the way it perceives ourselves and the world.

This is something the ancient philosophers knew very well, and applied in practice. As Aristotle famously said:

"We are what we repeatedly do ...
Excellence is therefore a habit."

Note: If you are interested in experimenting with "flipping a switch" or "pressing a button" to alter your state, write down what you wish to change and go to this link here:

www.alkistis.net/medallion.html

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Albert Ellis was an American psychologist who in 1955 set forth the first cognitive-behavioral therapy, the 'Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy' (REBT), in which he proposed that emotional and behavioral problems could be relieved through a process of cognitive restructuring or, put more simply, the changing of faulty thoughts and beliefs through examination and understanding. This treatment model represented a major shift from the dominant treatment model of the day, Freudian psychoanalysis, which emphasized the bringing forward of subconscious thoughts as a way of changing behavior.

Ellis got his ideas from an old and trusted source - the ancient Greek philosophers, and more specifically from Socrates' Maieutic method of inquiry (which we discuss in the chapter on Socrates, in Section 3) and Aristotle's notion of Prohairesis.

Prohairesis (Ancient Greek: προαίρεσις; variously translated as "moral character", "will", "volition", "choice", "intention", or "moral choice") represents the choice involved in giving or withholding assent to impressions, in other words, the choice we have on how we interpret things. The use of this Greek word was first introduced into philosophy by Aristotle in the Nicomachean Ethics. It is what distinguishes human beings from all other creatures.

According to Aristotle (and later Epictetus), nothing is properly considered either good, or bad, aside from those things that are within our own power to control, and the only thing fully in our power to control is our own volition (prohairesis) which forms our impressions. By exerting their prohairesis (will, volition, or choice), people can choose rationally their impression of an event and how to deal with it.

> "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom." - Dr. Viktor Frankl

In the 1960s, another psychologist, Aaron Beck, identified fifteen specific ways in which our beliefs can drift away from reality and cause depression, anxiety, and other difficulties. He called these cognitive distortions, and he, too, believed that re-aligning one's cognition with reality would reduce suffering. His work was similarly built on the framework of the Greek philosophers.

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a psychosocial intervention that is the most widely used evidence-based practice for improving mental health. Guided by empirical research, CBT focuses on the development of personal coping strategies that aim at solving current problems and changing unhelpful patterns in cognitions (e.g. thoughts, attitudes or belief), behaviors, and regulating emotions. Though it was originally designed to treat depression, it is now being successfully used for many mental health conditions, but also for leadership training.

The CBT model is based on a combination of the basic principles from behavioral and cognitive psychology. It differs from historical approaches to psychotherapy, such as psychoanalysis where the therapist formulates a diagnosis based on looking for the unconscious meaning behind behaviors. Cognitive Behavioral therapy focuses on the actual behavior or problem caused by a diagnosed mental disorder, not the disorder itself. The role of the therapist is to support the client in finding and practising effective strategies to decrease the symptoms of the disorder.

Primary characteristics which distinguish CBT from other forms of therapy can be summed up with the following points:

- The focus is on the current problem instead of its historical influences.
- Emphasis is on using evident behaviour changes, to determine progress.
- Treatment is clearly specific.

Behaviorism and CBT in Practice

The ALKISTIS Method® uses a combination of the scientific and evidence based neurocoaching techniques mentioned in this chapter to accomplish a wide variety of outcomes, helping you to:

- Perform Optimally
- Enhance Focus
- Tame Anger and Anxiety
- Build Cooperation
- Overcome Past Traumas
- Resolve Conflict
- Develop Body Language
- Increase Creativity
- Accelerate Learning

Stress & Coping Research

There's a large body of research on mechanisms of psychological stress and coping strategies known as the "stress and coping" literature. Richard Lazarus' seminal cognitive appraisal model of stress and coping provided the basis for the cognitive model of emotions employed in most CBT. This theory states that the amount of stress experienced is proportionate to the extent by which the perceived demands (or level of threat) in a situation outweighs your perceived ability to cope (or control the outcome).

This leads to the "goodness of fit hypothesis" (GOFH), proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which states that healthy coping consists of matching our coping style to the level of control we have

over problems in daily life. In other words, the hypothesis says that people will suffer less stress if, on the one hand, they accept events appraised as beyond their control, employing "emotion-focused" coping to reduce distress, and on the other hand they actively problem-solve events perceived as under their control.

This hypothesis is related to the Dichotomy of Control (and the Serenity Prayer). Research on the "goodness of fit" hypothesis and other aspects of the stress and coping literature may therefore provide indirect support for this central hypothesis of self-leadership through the types of techniques taught in The ALKISTIS Method®, Stoicism and Greek Philosophy in general.

In the next section we will explore the function of the brain from a scientific perspective.

Brain User's Manual

Probably the best known model for understanding the structure of the brain, in relation to its evolutionary history is the famous triune brain theory, which was developed by Paul MacLean in the 1960s, which defines three levels of brain activity: The Reptilian, The Mammalian and The Neocortex.

Although this model is currently seen as an oversimplified organizing theme by some in the field of comparative neuroscience, it continues to hold public interest because of its simplicity. While technically inaccurate in some respects, it remains one of very few approximations of the truth we have to work with and is quite sufficient for our purposes.

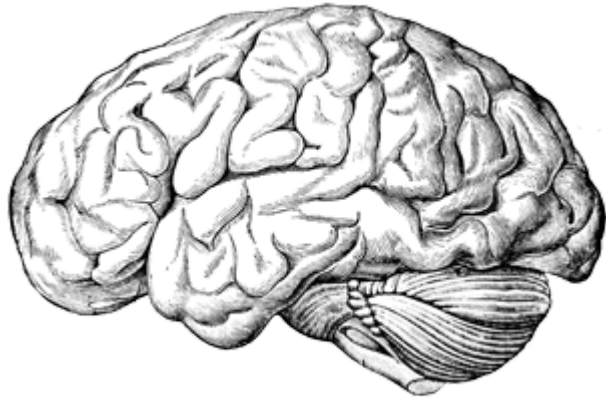


Image (CC) 2.0: A drawing of the human brain.

More specifically, the three levels of brain activity, are:

The Reptilian Brain, the oldest of the three, which appeared over 500 million years ago in fish, and controls the body's vital functions such as heart rate, breathing, body temperature and balance. The reptilian brain is reliable but tends to be somewhat rigid, compulsive and re-active.

The Mammalian (or limbic) Brain, which appeared over 150 million years ago and can record memories of behaviours that produced agreeable and disagreeable experiences, so it is responsible for what are called emotions in human beings. The main structures of the limbic brain are the hippocampus, the amygdala, and the hypothalamus. The mammalian brain is the seat of the value judgments that we make, often unconsciously, that exert such a strong influence on our behaviour.

The Neocortex first assumed importance in primates only 2-3 million years ago, and with its two large cerebral hemispheres has culminated into what we have come to recognize as the human brain. These two hemispheres have been responsible for the development of human language, abstract thought, imagination, and conscious, strategic thinking.

These three parts of the brain do not operate independently of one another. They have established neural pathways of interconnections through which they influence one another.

One of the problems we have as humans, is that most people allow their reptilian or mammalian brain to make decisions for them, especially when we feel threatened, instead of applying the neocortex, the most recently evolved section of the brain.

The reptilian brain functions based on "fight-or-flight" reactions. Just imagine how a reptile, such as a lizard reacts when it is feeling threatened. It will either 'fight' which means it will attack, or it will take 'flight', which means that it will "run off" from the scene, as fast as it can. Both of these activities need ample injections of adrenaline.

People who have anger management problems, who often 'attack' others either physically or verbally have allowed their reptilian brain to 'hijack' their thinking; The adrenaline injections, 'block' the functions of the 'neocortex', reducing their capacity for rational thought.

People who allow their mammalian brain to do their thinking for them will always be at a loss, if they do not step-back and question their beliefs before getting caught up in a self-created 'melodrama', and creating arguments based on false beliefs and distortions that are not true or valid.

Let us take a moment of self-reflection: When was the last time your reptilian brain 'hijacked' your brain, and you lost your temper? Notice the results that occur when you allow that to happen? What sort of person do you become? Who would you be without that anger/frustration/ego? Who could you be, if you allowed your mind to work at full capacity, as Aristotle would say, with Areté?

Neuroscience tells us that the brain can constantly learn, our whole life long, and that we can acquire new, more useful beliefs that will get us to where we want to go from now on. Here is where the neocortex of our brain comes in.

The neocortex is the part of our brain, capable of conscious self-reflection, imagination and metacognition (thinking about our thinking processes). Metacognition is also a very important part of Prosoche ie observing, organizing and managing your thoughts and energy.

It is the most evolved and most recent ‘updated software’ of our brain. It is also the seat of Ethos, and ‘higher-level’ thinking, such as visualization and strategizing. It is solutions-oriented and not fear-based like the reptilian brain. The neocortex offers a new inner freedom to those who use it.

Rewiring your Brain

From Fear, Frustration and Anxiety to Calm, Confidence and Self-leadership.

People spend the majority of their life living under stress. Stress is when your body's knocked out of ‘order’ (homeostasis); the stress response is what your body innately does to return itself back to ‘order’. That's the first definition of resilience .

There are three types of stress. Physical stress is from an injury, an accidental fall or trauma, Chemical stress from viruses, bacteria, blood sugar levels, heavy metals, hormones, foods and hangovers, and emotional stress like traffic jams, internet disconnections, second mortgages, single parenting and your doing your taxes.

Each one of those things knocks your brain and body out of balance, so all organisms in nature have evolved to tolerate short-term stress. For example, if a deer is chased by a pack of wolves and escapes, fifteen minutes later it goes back to grazing, and its stress is over.

Human beings are different though, in that we can turn on the stress response just by thought alone. You can begin to think about some future worst-case scenario and because the privilege of human beings is that we can make thought more real than anything else, we can focus on that fear-thought to the exclusion of everything else,

and we can knock our body out of physiological balance (homeostasis) just by thought alone.

Our unconscious mind believes it is actually in that experience in the present moment. Or on other occasions we focus on past bitter memories that are 'written' in the recesses of our brain and like magic, we bring them to life through dwelling on those old traumas, and in that moment it is real. So the hormones of stress push the genetic buttons that create disease. No organism can tolerate living in emergency mode for extended periods of time without it eventually becoming sickness. So if you can turn on the stress response just by thought alone, and we know that the hormones of stress regulate genes that create disease, it's easy to conclude that your thoughts can make you well too.

The hormones of stress give the body and brain a rush of energy (mainly adrenaline) and it's like a narcotic. It becomes a drug and people become very addicted to the adrenaline and other stress hormones. They use the problems and conditions in their life to reaffirm their emotional addiction so they can reaffirm who they think they are; ie the bad relationship, the bad job, the terrible circumstances, all of that is in place because the person needs to reaffirm their emotional addiction. So then if you become addicted to your own chemicals through (illusory) thoughts, when it comes time to change them, just like an addict, you will try to stop the new, positive thoughts from coming into your mind.

Let us say, you have been having insecure thoughts for the past twenty or thirty years. It is going to feel very familiar, even comfortable. "I am insecure" will be a 'normal' thought for you. Whenever you say "I AM…. (anything)" what you are saying is that you are commanding your mind and body towards a certain result / Telos/ destiny / outcome.

The moment you decide you are no longer going to think insecure thoughts, your body is going to look back up at your brain and say "Hey! I modified my receptor sites for you so many years ago, we've been doing this for twenty years… I'm counting on those chemicals coming… and now you're telling me that we are just going to stop

this ‘routine’?” It will start sending signals back to the brain to make the same choice as you have been making for so long! If you keep that period going on for weeks or months it's called a temperament or a personality trait: He has a bad temper, she gets hysterical, he throws tantrums easily, she has anger management issues, etc…

So your twenty years of hatred, bitterness, anger or your fifteen years of fear and insecurity is the very reason that you get sick, or feel exhausted, or you’ve lost your enthusiasm for life. “Why are you so angry?” people ask. “Well this experience happened to me nine years ago…” An article in Scientific American recently claimed that scientists have found that 50% of what you say about your past is not true. We make up stuff in our head, looking to reaffirm that we are “right”. Remember Plato’s Cave Allegory? It is amazing how much people distort things in their mind.

Living by those same familiar emotions means that nothing new is happening in our life, so we feel safe, because we are at least alive ie. we have survived another day on Earth. The body literally is living in the past and we can not create a new future holding on to the emotions of the past. We are basically trying to predict the future from the past. That's called anxiety, neurosis and insomnia. We're missing out on the possibility to be grateful, the possibility to be in wonder, to feel really alive, the possibility to feel at peace and fulfilled.

Most people have to hit a point of crisis where they finally start taking their attention off their outer world and start to ask themselves some bigger (self-reflective, philosophical) questions: Who amI ? What is a greater expression of myself? What would I have to change to be happy? What do I really want after all? Who in history do I admire that I want to be like? They begin to contemplate and speculate and rehearse who they could become. Actually, the mere process of thinking about who we can become, begins to change our brain. (See also image below on neurogenesis.)

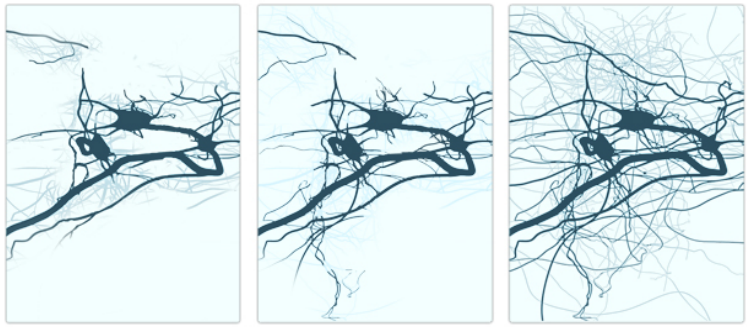


Image (CC) 2.0:I Neurogenesis - growth of new neural connections.

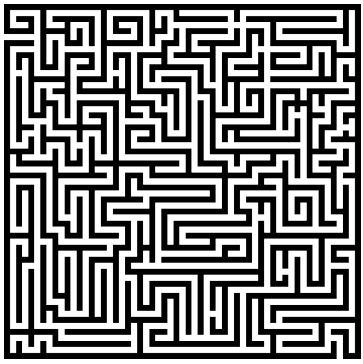
When you combine a clear intention with an elevated emotion that's heartfelt, you move into a new state of being. You can begin to remind yourself every single day of who you want to be. Through regular practices, like meditation, you begin to cause your brain to fire in new sequences and new patterns and new combinations and you make your brain work differently. According to neuroscience your brain begins to fire and create new circuits. You are essentially rewiring your brain.

"We become what we repeatedly do." - Aristotle

When you are asking open-ended questions, the frontal brain lobe, like a great symphony leader, looks out of the landscape of the entire brain and begins to select different networks of neurons and seamlessly pieces them together to create a new mind, and the moment the brain begins to fire in tandem, the frontal lobe creates a picture and that picture is called an intention and when you can make

that picture more real than anything else and you begin to feel inspired by it, and your body's no longer living in the past. You begin a new state of being, with new values and actions and this creates a new reality.

The more we practice a new state, the more it becomes the default setting. Scientific studies have shown that it takes as little as sixty-six days to take on a new habit. Many Askesis in The ALKISTIS Method® aim to create new habits and new default settings, for new outcomes.



Hypno-Learning and Meditation in Alpha State

The use of hypnosis and meditation has been scientifically proven to be an effective tool to increase memory, mindfulness and to reprogram our brain for new habits.

This was well known to the ancient philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, who gave a great deal of attention to the relationship between the soul and the body. The schools that they founded incorporated vigorous physical and musical training. Now, thousands of years later, science is proving how much our physical state affects our mental and emotional state, and how we can ‘manipulate’ our physiology to develop our full potential.

At the root of all our thoughts, emotions and behaviours is the communication between neurons within our brains. Brainwaves are

produced by synchronised electrical pulses from masses of neurons communicating with each other.

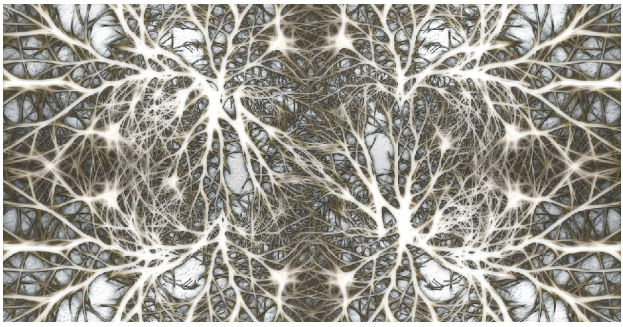
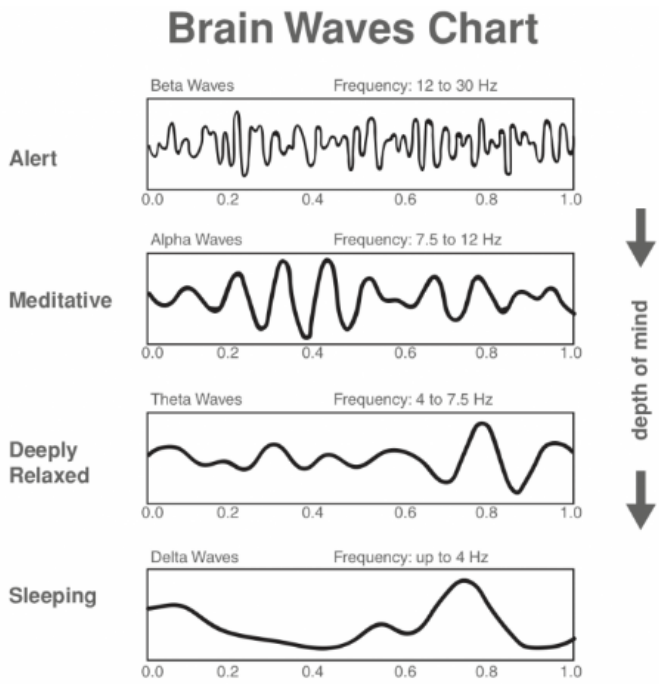


Image (CC) 2.0 : Neural networks, ‘firing’ electrical pulses to each other.

Our brainwaves change according to what we’re doing and feeling. The higher frequencies are dominant when we feel hyper-alert. When slower brain waves are dominant, as in hypnosis, we can feel relaxed, slow, dreamy and open to suggestions or instructions. In Meditative (Alpha) and Deeply Relaxed (Theta) states, the mind becomes a receiver, much like a radio or television, tuning into a specific ‘Learning Channel’.

The benefits of hypnosis, hypno-learning, meditation and hypnotherapy for learning new, constructive thinking habits and overcoming negative habits are discussed in Section 2, Askesis on “Deep Relaxation through Guided Visualization” mp3. They are:

- Calms your nerves and helps you handle stress better in general.
- Cultivates the process of self-induced deep relaxation, so that you can 'relax yourself' at will.
- Increases your mindfulness, allowing you to become more intuitive.
- Offers space to insert deeply empowering positive affirmations for personal transformation.
- Relieves migraines and other psychosomatic stress related symptoms.



The ALKISTIS Method® practitioners apply hypno-learning and meditation techniques for overcoming limiting habits and reprogramming our brain for outstanding performance. In order to take charge of our life, we should start by taking charge of the 'automatic' programs running in 'robot-mode' since we were young.

We use hypno-learning to tap into the deepest depths of our consciousness and to upgrade all areas of our life.

See also www.alkistis.net/free_mp3.html

Epilogue

OVERCOME YOUR DEEPEST FEARS
THE
ALKISTIS
METHOD
REALIZE YOUR GREATEST DREAMS
WWW.ALKISTIS.NET

"Memento Mori" **The Ultimate Key To Inner Freedom?**

"Let us prepare our minds as if we'd come to the very end of life. Let us postpone nothing. Let us balance life's books each day. … The one who puts the finishing touches on their life each day is never short of time." - Seneca

Each person's life, is an "odyssey", an adventure, a journey. Your life will have its ups and downs, and then it will all come to an end someday over the horizon. Just look around in nature and you will be reminded.

"Memento Mori" ie the practice of meditating on the inevitability of death and the transience of life, was common amongst Greek and later Roman philosophers. In one of the most illuminating passages, The Meditations, Marcus Aurelius asserts the Stoic and Socratic view that true philosophy is mainly in "waiting for death with good grace." (Meditations, 2.17).

To modern people like you and I, this may sound like an awful idea. Who wants to think about their death?

But what if instead of being afraid of it and not embrace this truth, we did the exact opposite? Take charge of it. What if meditating on that fact, was The 'Ultimate Key' to living life to the fullest and to our freedom?

In Plato's renowned dialogue in his work Phaedo, he describes how composed Socrates was in his final hours. "Although I was witnessing the death of one who was my friend, I had no feeling of pity, for the man appeared happy both in manner and words as he died nobly and without fear." (Phaedo, 58e)

Xenophon writes that Socrates, faced his death-sentence by the court with absolute serenity and fortitude, and that it was "generally

agreed that no one in the memory of man has ever met his death more nobly." (Memorabilia, 4.8).

In this book you have been offered a wealth of information and The Askesis, inspired by some of the greatest minds of all history, to make the best of yourself and of your life..

The Greek philosophers advise that it wise to meditate each evening on being grateful for our life and awaken every morning, planning our day as if it were on, or very near the last day of our life. The reason is that this "view from above", the greater picture of our life, can liberate us from pettiness, reactions and self-created drama. It is a way of focusing on the "here and now" and this is the irony: By contemplating on our own death, we can intensify our appreciation of life. Hence the motto, "Seize The Day" from (Latin) Carpe Diem and (Greek) άδραξε την ημέρα. In short, TAKE CHARGE !

In today's fast paced, greed driven society, people experience deep levels of anxiety and having 'lost religion' to science, there is a real vacuum which Greco-Roman Philosophy can help fill. In recent years it is experiencing a rebirth, through a movement called "Modern Stoicism". Many famous people have espoused it from Nelson Mandela, Bill Clinton, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Victor Frankl, Bill Gates, Warren Buffet to Nassim Nicholas Taleb. It is not by chance that Steve Job had once said, "I would give up all my technology for an afternoon with Socrates."

Stoicism is, in sense, the Western world's answer to Buddhism. Modern Stoicism, like Modern Humanism too, is increasingly appealing to people who:

- Want to live an ethical life informed by science and reason
- Want their philosophy to be at the same time coherent and flexible enough to adjust to new times and circumstances.

Even though over two and a half thousand years have passed, the way of Greco-Roman philosophy is eternal and is universal for all humans. It is a set a values and practices, which anybody can apply

and benefit from, regardless of their faith, to make them inwardly strong and free no matter how challenging a situation may be.

Here is an example of such a person:

Rhonda Cornum (born October 31, 1954) is a former United States Army officer and the Director of Health Strategy for TechWerks. She is a surgeon, having earned a doctorate in biochemistry and nutrition from Cornell University.

As a flight surgeon with the 229th Attack Helicopter Regiment, then-Major Cornum was aboard a Black Hawk helicopter on a search and rescue mission, looking for a downed F-16 pilot, during the Persian Gulf War. When the helicopter was shot down on February 27, 1991, she suffered two broken arms, a broken finger, a gunshot wound in the back, and other injuries. After regaining consciousness, she said her first thought was "Nobody's ever died from pain."

Cornum was captured, made a prisoner of war (POW), and sexually assaulted by one of her Iraqi captors. She was first taken to Basra and then held prisoner for a week in Baghdad and released on March 5, 1991. In addition, she was subjected, with other prisoners, to a mock execution. Nevertheless, when she was the senior-ranking prisoner, she took responsibility for other POWs.

In an interview with the New York Times, she said, "The sexual assault ranks as unpleasant; that's all it ranks... everyone's made such a big deal about this indecent assault, but the only thing that makes it indecent is that it was non-consensual. I asked myself, 'Is it going to prevent me from getting out of here? Is there a risk of death attached to it? Is it permanently disabling? Is it permanently disfiguring? Lastly, is it excruciating?' If it doesn't fit one of those five categories, then, it isn't important."

She continued, "There's a phenomenal amount of focus on this for the women but not for the men," citing the "mistreatment of [fellow POW] Major Jeffrey S. Tice of the Air Force, who had a tooth explode from its socket when he was tortured with jolts of electricity."

Cornum resumed her military career after she returned to the United States. (Source: She Went To War, The Rhonda Cornum Story)

Such inspiring stories really teach us by example, the way of thinking of a truly free human being. A person who TAKES CHARGE of their thoughts and not the other way around. This self-leadership is achieved through practice and repetition as we have seen through the Askesis section of this book.

Each day, a practicing philosopher clears his/her mind through reading or meditating on their values (see askesis on "Personal Mission Statement"). This daily askesis rejuvenates and reminds us who we really are and what we are really here for. Every night before sleep, a practitioner goes over their day and identifies mistakes and feels healthy pride in worthy accomplishments. This is reminiscent of the evening self-reflection exercises taught by one of the greatest Greek philosophers, Pythagoras (c. 570 – c. 495 BC), whose "Golden Verses" teach:

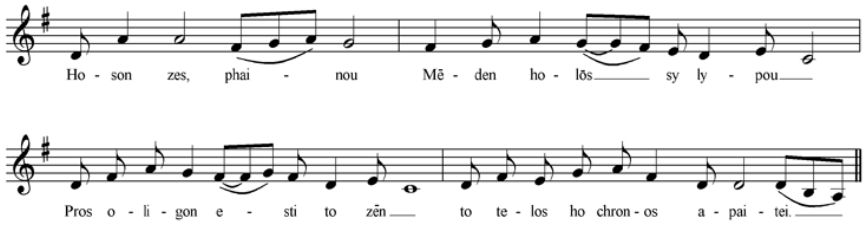
> "Do not receive sleep on your tender eyes, before you have thrice gone through each of the day's deeds: Where have I failed myself? What have I done? What duty have I not fulfilled?"

And are these not the very same questions that we will all eventually be asking ourselves at a ripe old age, when we will be reflecting back on our life, to determine if it was well-lived? "Memento Mori" therefore, just may be the key to a fulfilling life and to our freedom. "TAKE CHARGE"!

Song of Seikilos

As long as you live, shine,
Have no grief at all.
For your life is short,
and time will claim its toll.

The Seikilos epitaph is the oldest surviving complete musical composition, including musical notation, from anywhere in the world. The epitaph has been variously dated, but seems to be either from the 1st or the 2nd century AD.



See Youtube video: Ancient Greece: Song of Seikilos

Links to Lifelong Learning

"Gyrasko diae pola didaskomenos" **(Greek:** γηράσκω δ' αἰεὶ πολλά διδασκόμενος) — "As I grow older I keep being taught new things" a quote by Solon the famous Athenian lawmaker (whose legal work was the basis for Roman law) showing the philosopher's way of being always inquisitive and open-minded.

I. The ALKISTIS Method® E-Learning Course

Your personal odyssey of self-reflection begins with the basic online course led by Alkistis Agio, filled with both written and a video-explanations of each Askesis. On-demand lecture videos, practical exercises, discussion forum, real-world homework assignments and self-reflection practices.

http://www.alkistis.net/e_learning.html

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Do you feel a 'calling' to help people out of their 'Prison of the Mind'? Once you have understood that your well-being is intricately related to the well-being of your fellow human beings, you are already a 'philosopher' and can answer that 'Calling'. As Plato and Socrates taught; anyone who has escaped the 'Cave' of shadows and ignorance, has the obligation to help others escape too. The special curriculum of The ALKISTIS Method® is the ideal tool for personal and professional development. Completing the online course or doing an introductory seminar **is a prerequisite** for application.

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Overcome your greatest fears and weaknesses with the exclusive, private one-to-one sessions with Dr. Alkistis Agio.

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A mentor is someone who will help you pose the questions, keep your focus, and avoid biases and preconceptions that may affect your thinking.

It is a very old relationship. The word "Mentor" first appeared in Homer's Odyssey, when the goddess Athena took on the appearance of an old man by that name, in order to guide young Telemachus, Odysseus's son, in his time of difficulty.

It has since evolved to mean trusted advisor, friend, teacher, coach and wise person. History offers many examples of such mentoring relationships: Socrates and Plato, Hayden and Beethoven, Freud and Jung, etc. It is a fundamental form of human development where one person invests time, energy and personal know-how in assisting the growth and ability of another person.

It is best if the mentor is someone with experience, such as a professional coach/therapist. The very act of hiring of a mentor or coach is a step in your process of becoming serious about bringing change into your life.

The ALKISTIS Method® forces you to question your beliefs, your values and your assumptions about reality. As such, a very appropriate coaching approach is the "The Maieutic Method", also known as The Socratic Method. The word is

derived from the Greek word “Maia” (midwife)", in that it is similar to assisting a birth.

Maieutics holds that many important lessons and truths cannot be taught directly from an instructor to a student/client. Instead, the client must deduce them himself, from his or her own experience, by interacting with an instructor who will ask the appropriate questions. The mentor’s job is to help his client spread his/her wings, not fly for him.

For more information on how you can hire Dr. Alkistis Agio or trained members of her team.

www.alkistis.net/programs.html

VIII **‘Golden Medallion’ of the** The ALKISTIS Method®

Since ancient times, jewelry has been used for raising awareness and for triggering empowering 'states' of consciousness. The Golden Medallion is based on Ethos, Pathos, Logos and can be used as a mechanism or device for 'triggering' your imagination and your capacity to envision your future more clearly…

www.alkistis.net/medallion.html

Contact our head office in central Athens, Greece
for any further inquiries: info@alkistis.net

www.agiorgiti-residence.com/stoic.html

Take a moment to reflect on your thoughts after reading The ALKISTIS Method®

How can these ideas that have been presented to you here so far, relate to you, and your fears and your dreams?

If you like, write a short testimonial for others to enjoy the benefits of The ALKISTIS Method®. Note: Ideally, your testimonial should be something specific that reading this book has already changed in your life, or you wish to apply from now on.

In sending your testimonial you are agreeing that it may be shown on promotion material for The ALKISTIS Method®, either in print or published on the world wide web.

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Testimonials

Your testimonial is deeply appreciated and it will encourage others to read this book, and TAKE CHARGE of their life. Simply go to the www.amazon.com sales page for this book.

"The ALKISTIS Method provides both philosophical and practical approach to hone your skills of Self-leadership. This Method offers a full spectrum of view points, from Aristotle and his philosophical teachings in ancient Greece to best techniques in training your brain through NLP."

Raz Choudhury
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The ALKISTIS Method calls up the very oldest philosophies to create some perspective, in the information age.
An extremely worthwhile read."

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London, England

"I find The ALKISTIS Method to be enlightening and practical. There is a wealth of useful information and exercises that assist one to reflect on simple questions which we usually shy away from, forcing one to face our reality. It gives us the necessary tools to achieve an understanding of oneself and our strengths."

Katerina Ferentinos,
Wealth Management
Merrill Lynch, New York, USA

"Alkistis is a very inspiring coach and trainer."

Paul Efmorfides,
Founder of COCO-MAT, Greece

"Alkistis has a unique, enlightening perspective."

His Excellency Abdelhadi Alkhajah,
United Arab Emirates

"Studying philosophy, especially Aristotle, has taught me to think clearly; I feel that it has helped me, even more than my MBA to become a billionaire."

Reid Hoffman
Founder of LINKEDIN
Billionaire Entrepreneur
Palo Alto, California

The Self-Leadership Quiz

How well do you lead yourself? Take the quiz below to find out, so that you can benefit much more from everything you are about to learn in The ALKISTIS Method®.

Instructions: On a scale of 0-15, where 0 is "rarely" and 15 is "often" rate yourself on these characteristics:

1. You 'check-in' with your feelings, know what's important, and get in touch with your deep source of peaceful power.

   Your score (0 - 15): _____

2. You are alert about the challenges and obstacles that you (and your team) need to solve. You are clear about the outcome you want, and take charge of the responsibilities and actions.

   Your score (0 - 15): _____

3. You have an overview of the direction that you are heading towards, and often visualize the fulfillment of the vision.

   Your score (0 - 15): _____

4. You are able to connect your talents and abilities to the requirements, setting targets, and aligning your thoughts and actions to your personal mission statement.

   Your score (0 - 15): _____

5. You have a 'roadmap to success' with the important milestones and you make a realistic assessment of the resources available, while setting realistic standards of performance.

   Your score (0 - 15): _____

6. You cultivate a support network and team, inspiring them with your vision that will benefit everyone.

   Your score (0 - 15): _____

7. You motivate yourself and find meaning on a daily basis, rewarding your achievements and progress, however small.

Your score (0 - 15): _____

8. You are grateful for each moment, focusing on the positive, you immerse yourself in the 'flow of creation' sometimes losing track of time.

Your score (0 - 15): _____

9. You maintain a positive attitude, adapting to situations as they arise, accepting that 'it's never going to be perfect', but still doing your best every step of the way.

Your score (0 - 15): _____

10. You view problems as opportunities in disguise and rise to the challenges, bypassing obstacles with solutions and taking massive action.

Your score (0 - 15): _____

11. You are focused and compelled forward, as you follow what brings happiness, fulfillment and abundance for you and other stakeholders.

Your score (0 - 15): _____

Now, **add up your score** and read the analysis on the next page:

Total: _____

Congratulations for taking action!

This is the analysis of your scores:

145-165 **"Gifted"** You are gifted in terms of leading yourself, and now you can take that gift and improve how you are leading others, and yourself; The ALKISTIS Method® will empower you to TAKE CHARGE.

110-144 **"Promising"** You show a satisfactory level of self-leadership, and as you focus on improving, you can move towards having outstanding results; The ALKISTIS Method® will empower you to TAKE CHARGE.

75-109 **"Inconsistent"** You show some signs of self-leadership, but you need to put in much more effort to express your dormant potential; The ALKISTIS Method® will empower you to TAKE CHARGE.

35-74 **"Unsatisfactory"** Although you have self-leadership skills, you need to take your personal development much more seriously. You can make leaps if you decide you want to; The ALKISTIS Method® will empower you to TAKE CHARGE.

0-34 **"Failing"** Are you sure that you want to be a leader? You may have what it takes down-deep inside, but you really need to get a lot more focused and committed to your goals and personal development, which, thankfully, The ALKISTIS Method® will empower you to TAKE CHARGE.

About The Author

"My life's mission is inspiring professionals, to live up to their full potential by living according to timeless Hellenic values."

Dr.Alkistis Agio is a world class speaker, author and consultant with over twenty years experience in working with professionals to transform fear, frustration, anger and anxiety into calm, confident self-leadership, through her proven method, "The ALKISTIS Method®". Of Greek origin, she grew up in Montreal and has worked in Italy, France, Germany, Greece, the United States and the United Arab Emirates. She speaks five languages. Alkistis Agio studied International Banking at the Chartered Institute of Bankers in London, and later got a Master's in Integrative Psychotherapy and a Phd in Transpersonal Counseling. She has studied Neurocoaching and has served as a trainer for the Dale Carnegie System for several years before developing her own method.

Her clients include some of the largest companies in the world; she has trained millions of professionals in person and via online courses to take charge of their life. She has volunteered as trainer for www.solidaritynow.org (a humanitarian organization supported by UNHCR).She is on the board of advisors for the main magazine on Modern Stoicism: THE STOIC, and is co-organizer of 2019 STOICON (Annual meeting of Stoics worldwide). Founding member of The Stoic Society of Athens (Hosted at www.agiorgiti-residence.com).

Dr. Alkistis Agio is the author of several books:

- Thalassa, The Spirit of The Mediterranean (Self published)
- You Can Realize Your Dreams (Cosmos Publishers New York)
- The Answer is Within (Kedros Publishers)
- Greece's Secret Energy Gates (Kedros Publishers)
- Happiness Now (Fereniki Publishers)
- Euphoria (Amazon)
- TAKE CHARGE & The STOIC C.E.O. (Amazon)