



# Thoughts of a Philosophical Fighter Pilot: 431 (Hoover Institution Press Publication)

*James B. Stockdale*

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Vice Admiral Stockdale was on active duty in the navy for thirty-seven years. As a fighter pilot operating from an aircraft carrier, he was shot down over North Vietnam in 1965. As the senior naval officer among the prisoners of war in Hanoi for seven and a half years, he was tortured fifteen times, put in leg irons for two years, and confined in solitary for four years. This experience was the crucible for his philosophical thought on issues of character, leadership, integrity, personal and public virtue, and ethics. Much of his philosophy is drawn from the stoic philosophers, especially Epictetus, whom he had read before his capture. The selections in this volume converge around the central theme of how man can rise with dignity to prevail in the face of adversity—lessons just as valid for the challenges of present-day life as they were for the author's Vietnam experience.

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