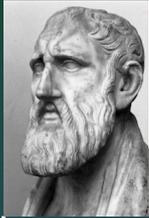


Stoicism

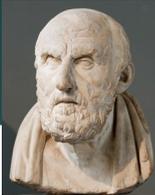
A Philosophy to Live By

Know thyself.
Nothing in excess.
Surety brings ruin.

A Chronology in Antiquity



ca. 300 BCE
Zeno of Citium



ca. 230 BCE
Chrysippus



ca. 129 BCE
Panaetius



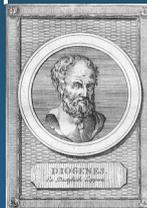
ca. 4 BCE – ACE 65
Seneca the Younger



ca. 50 - 135
Epictetus



ca. 262 BCE
Cleanthes



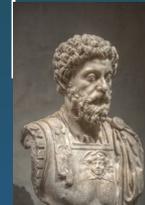
ca. 155 BCE
Diogenes of
Babylon



ca. 110 BCE
Posidonius



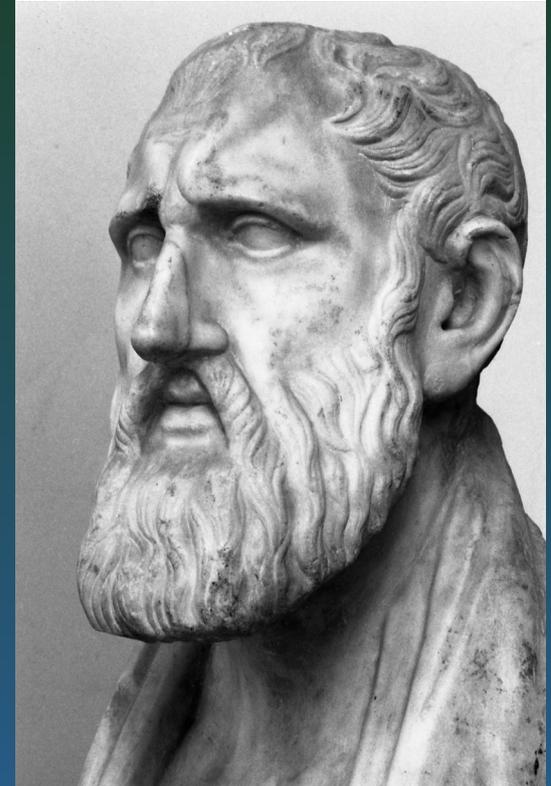
ca. 20 - 101
Gaius Musonius
Rufus



26. April, 121 –
17. March, 180
Marcus Aurelius

Zeno of Citium

- Merchant who shipwrecked, ended up in Athens, and found solace in Socrates' teachings
- Took tutorship under Crates the Cynic
- Stoicism born out of misfortune, and inspired, in part, by Cynic and Socratic principles



The Death of Zeno

The manner of [Zeno's] death was as follows. As he was leaving the school he tripped and fell, breaking a toe. Striking the ground with his fist, he quoted the line from the Niobe:

“I come, I come, why dost thou call for me?”

and died on the spot through holding his breath.

– Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, Book VII, translated by Robert Drew Hicks

So what did Zeno say?

What is Stoicism?

- The path to living a good life is a path to *eudaimonia* (“~~happiness~~ / tranquility” or “a good flow of life”, “flourishing”)
- The way to achieve *eudaimonia* is “**living in accordance with Nature**”, where “Nature” is *Logos* or “**Reason**”
- *Logos* dictates that we follow the **four cardinal virtues** in order to achieve *eudaimonia*:
 - 1 Wisdom/prudence
 - 2 Justice
 - 3 Temperance/Self-control/Moderation
 - 4 Courage/Fortitude

Areté

- *Areté* as “virtue” or “excellence” ~ “excellence of character”, that one can be good only by being virtuous
 - 1 **Wisdom:** understanding how to act and feel correctly;
 - 2 **Justice:** knowing how to act and feel well in our relationships with other people, at the individual, familial, or communal level, and knowing how to act generously and with positive benevolence, with friendship and affection;
 - 3 **Temperance:** knowing how to act and feel well in situations arousing other more negative, uncontrollable emotions such as anger, fear, envy, or anxiety;
 - 4 **Courage:** knowing how to act and feel correctly in situations of danger or significant challenge, in facing things seen as fearful (e.g. death, disaster).

Common Myths and Dispelling Them

- 1 “Stoics are unfeeling.”
- 2 “Stoics are passive.”
- 3 “Stoics are individualistic.”

~~“Stoics are unfeeling.”~~

Two dichotomies

- **Dichotomy of control**

Some things are under our control, while others are not under our control.

- Internal vs. External events

- **Sovereign principle**

Make it, therefore, your study at the very outset to say to every harsh external impression, “You are an external impression and not at all what you appear to be.”

- First judgments vs. Rational deliberation (Automatic judgments vs. Things as they are)
- Think of those automatic judgments as emotions or false beliefs about reality

Quotes from Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, translated by William Abbott Oldfather

~~“Stoics are unfeeling.”~~

Exercising the two dichotomies

- **Postpone your responses**

...it is best, therefore, to apply remedies to oneself as soon as we feel that anything is wrong, to allow oneself as little license as possible in speech, and to restrain one's impetuosity: now it is easy to detect the first growth of our passions: the symptoms precede the disorder.

- **Contemplate the sage**

...anger has nothing useful in itself...for a virtue, being self-sufficient, never needs the assistance of a vice: whenever it needs an impetuous effort, it does not become angry, but rises to the occasion, and excites or soothes itself as far as it deems requisite...

Quotes from Seneca, *Of Anger*, translated by Aubrey Stewart

~~“Stoics are passive.”~~

At break of day, when you are reluctant to get up, have this thought ready to mind: “I am getting up for a man’s work. Do I still then resent it, if I am going out to do what I was born for, the purpose for which I was brought into the world? Or was I created to wrap myself in blankets and keep warm?” “But this is more pleasant.” Were you then born for pleasure – all for feeling, not for action? Can you not see plants, birds, ants, spiders, bees all doing their own work each helping in their own way to order the world?

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, translated by Martin Hammond

~~“Stoics are passive.”~~

Stoic (Meta)physics

- Pantheistic, that God is in nature and Nature is providential
- This does not imply passivity; it merely informs us to
 - **consider the consequences of our actions** before acting wisely, justly, temperately, and courageously
 - *based on the best information we have at our disposal, act or don't act* depending if it's virtuous
 - **hold our expectations**
- It rests on the premise that the mind is the only thing truly and completely within our control

~~“Stoics are passive.”~~

Indifferents

- Stoics agreed with Socrates that virtue is the only good
- Stoics also agreed with the Cynics (their predecessors) that *virtue is both necessary and sufficient for a eudaimonic/flourishing life*
- They distinguished between:
 - preferred indifferents (health, wealth, education)
 - neutral indifferents (cake, tea, new apartment)
 - dispreferred indifferents (disease, war, illness)
- **Aim for virtue, prepare for indifferents**

~~“Stoics are individualistic.”~~

Nor can I be angry with my kinsman or hate him. We were born for cooperation, like feet, like hands, like eyelids, like the rows of upper and lower teeth. So to work in opposition to one another is against nature: and anger or rejection is opposition. (II.1)

Again: each creature is made in the interest of another... It follows that the good of a rational creature is community. It has long been shown that we are born for community. (V.16)

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, translated by Martin Hammond

~~“Stoics are individualistic.”~~

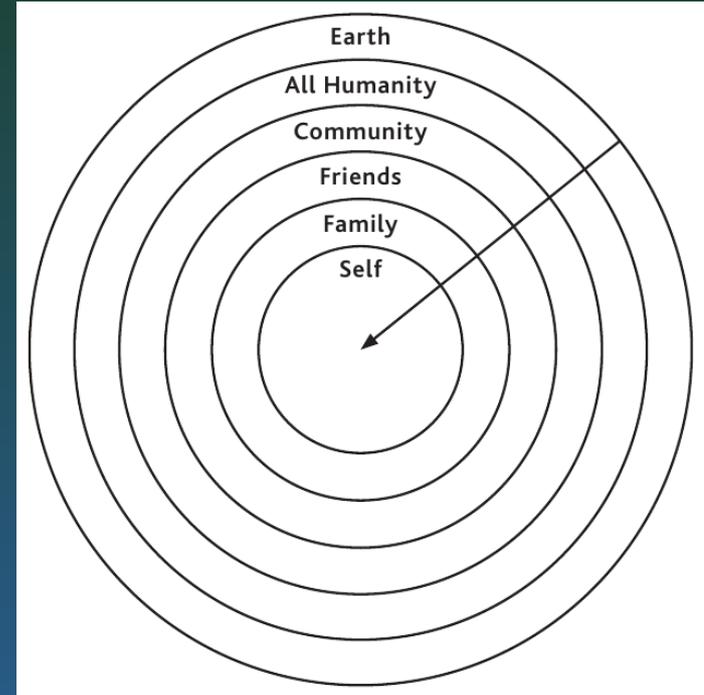
Stoic Cosmopolitanism

- **Hierocles’ circles**

If what is said by the philosophers regarding the kinship of God and men be true, what other course remains for men but that which Socrates took when asked to what country he belonged, never to say “I am an Athenian,” or “I am a Corinthian,” but “I am a citizen of the universe”?

Epictetus, *Discourses*, translated by William Abbott Oldfather

Image credit: Whiting, K. & Konstantakos, L. (2021). *Being Better*. P. 120.



The Stoic Disciplines

- Discipline of **desire**: accepting our fate, *amor fati*
 - More generally, accepting the consequences
 - Are they indifferents? Detach and prepare. Is it virtuous? Aim for it.
- Discipline of **action**: living in harmony with mankind
 - Act in accord with virtue, act for the common welfare of all, and act fate-permitting or knowing that the outcomes are not under your control
- Discipline of **assent**: mind our judgments
 - Ask yourself whether to assent/agree to or without assent/agreement from your judgments – are they true or are they false representations of reality?

Exercising the Stoic Disciplines

- Discipline of desire
 - *Premeditatio malorum* / “negative visualization”, *Memento mori* / “recalling death”, contemplating the present
- Discipline of action
 - Community service, contemplating the sage, Hierocles’ circles / the view from above
- Discipline of assent
 - Journal, postponing judgment / rational deliberation, contemplating the sage, contemplating the present

Modern Stoicism

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
 - Donald Robertson
- Applying Stoicism to Modernity (e.g. social justice, environmental sustainability & climate change)
 - Kai Whiting
- More research is informing us, especially the psychological, e.g. self-sufficiency

Thank you and Support us!

- 1 You can find out more about Berlin Stoics at berlinstoics.com. You can create an account with us and subscribe to keep updated with our events and news. We also host a meetup page at meetup.com/Berlin-Stoics/. We make sure to update both sites regularly.
- 2 Please donate to Berlin Stoics at <https://www.berlinstoics.com/donate> if you found our presentation worthwhile and are looking forward to participating further with us, or just if you enjoyed what we offer.
- 3 If you aren't in Berlin, but you're interested in joining a local Stoic chapter in your area – these are colloquially called Stoa – then check out The Stoic Fellowship organization at stoicfellowship.com and search for a Stoa near you.
- 4 Lastly, if you'd like to continue learning more about Stoicism, you can find some resources at <https://www.berlinstoics.com/resources>.

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Next events

1 Check out berlinstoics.com/events

2 We welcome you to attend our next events:

- *Stoic Care* discussion online
Wednesday 23. February at 18:30
GMT+1
- *Introduction to Stoicism* presentation
online Monday, 21. March at 18:30
GMT+1

- Monthly Book of the Month: next is *If A then B* by Shenefelt and White, a non-technical book on the history and development of the field of **logic**, beginning with Aristotle and the Stoic Chrysippus
- all online, podcast review backup
- *Introduction to Logic* presentation
online Monday 18. April at 18:30
GMT+1
- Weekly Discussions/Excursions

The events are open to everyone and is free of charge. You can RSVP on either our meetup page or our website.*