

STOIC PERSPECTIVE

• Ancient wisdom
for modern minds •

MODERN DAY STOIC



*Timeless insights
on how to think and live*



S-Perspective





MODERN DAY
STOIC

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First edition

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PART I.
The Foundation of Stoicism



Chapter I. The Power of Mentality

"It's not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters." — Epictetus

Stoicism emerged as a prominent philosophical system during the Hellenistic period. It gets its name from the decorated porch (*stoa poikilê*) in the Agora at Athens, where the first generation of Stoic philosophers gathered and gave lectures.

Despite the physical disappearance of the Athenian porch, Stoic philosophy continued to thrive and gained popularity throughout the Roman era and beyond. This entry provides an introduction to the fundamental doctrines and arguments of Stoic philosophy, which encompass physics, logic, and ethics, emphasizing the interconnectedness of these components. We also explore the historical context of the school, examine the existing sources of Stoic doctrine, and consider the lasting philosophical impact of the Stoics.

The Stoic school was established around 300 BCE by Zeno of Citium and was influenced by various philosophical teachings. Zeno, who extensively studied Socratic dialogues, learned from the Cynic Crates and drew insights from Plato's Academy and the Megarian School. The *Stoa* competed with Epicurus' school in Athens, leading to comparisons between Stoic and Epicurean perspectives. Cleanthes of Assos succeeded Zeno as the leader of the *Stoa*, followed by Chrysippus of Soli, who played a prominent role in systematizing Stoic philosophy until 206 BCE. Later, Diogenes of Babylon became the "*scholarch*" in the mid-2nd century BCE.

Some scholars argue that this transition marked a shift from the "*Old Stoa*" to "*Middle Stoicism*," although the validity of this classification is debated. Nonetheless, the latter term often encompasses the work of Stoic philosophers in the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE. During the 2nd century, Stoic views faced criticism from the Academic philosopher Carneades, which was countered by Antipater of Tarsus, Diogenes' successor.

This period also witnessed increased engagement with Platonic and possibly Aristotelian doctrines, reaching its peak with Panaetius in the latter half of the 2nd century BCE and his student Posidonius in the 1st century BCE.

Stoicism gained popularity in the Roman period. While not identifying as a Stoic himself, Cicero extensively engaged with Stoic theory in his philosophical works and drew inspiration from Panaetius' treatise, "*On Proper Functions*" (*De Officiis*).

The Imperial era saw prominent figures associated with the Stoic school, including the philosopher Arius Didymus, who served in the court of Emperor Augustus, and Seneca, who advised Nero. Epictetus, a former slave, faced exile from Rome by Domitian along with other philosophers, and his teachings, recorded by his student Arrian, greatly influenced Marcus Aurelius, the Roman Emperor from 161 to 180 CE. Hierocles, a Stoic philosopher in the 2nd century CE, contributed to the field with his detailed treatise on psychology and ethical theory, "*The Elements of Ethics*." Throughout its existence, the Stoic school experienced evolutions in views and shifts in focus.

The extent of these intra-school developments and disagreements remains a subject of ongoing scholarly debate.

“Choose not to be harmed and you won’t feel harmed. Don’t feel harmed and you haven’t been.”

— *Marcus Aurelius*

The Stoics practiced a technique called *Turning the Obstacle Upside Down*. It involved viewing problems from a different perspective and finding potential good in every negative aspect. For example, when someone responds rudely or reluctantly to your attempt to assist them, instead of seeing it as a difficulty, this exercise suggests it can help you develop virtues like patience or understanding. Similarly, the loss of a loved one can be seen as an opportunity to exhibit fortitude.

This philosophy is similar to Obama's approach of turning negative events into teachable moments. Rather than resorting to damage control during the Reverend Wright scandal, Obama addressed the situation with candor and maturity, which led to a groundbreaking speech on race. While entrepreneurs often capitalize on opportunities, Stoicism takes a different perspective. According to Stoic philosophy, everything can be viewed as an opportunity, including obstacles and setbacks. By cultivating a dispassionate response and choosing to see every situation as an opportunity, we can transcend our initial impressions and embrace a wider perspective.



***“The impediment to action advances action.
What stands in the way becomes the way.”***

— *Marcus Aurelius*

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

In the 21st century, we can apply the teachings of ancient Stoics to our everyday lives. Adopting their mindset and lifestyle can prove useful, especially in our current setting. 2020 has been a challenging year for everyone, from pandemics to economic collapse, protests, wildfires, and the growing consumerism lifestyle. There are countless obstacles, and it's easy to succumb to stress and difficulties.

Feeling angry or sad is normal, but it becomes a problem when negativity consumes us. Stoicism offers ways to overcome this and achieve a simpler, more peaceful life.

One technique is *Negative visualization*, where we prepare ourselves for negative situations. By considering the reality that everything can be taken away from us, we can better guard our soul and have a good temperament.

Memento Mori reminds us of the shortness of life, not to be grim, but as inspiration to focus on what truly matters. It's crucial contemplation to determine what we want to accomplish and what we want out of life.

A View from Above helps us gain perspective. It reminds us of our place in the vast cosmos and questions the significance of our problems in the grand scheme of things. While our problems matter to us, it's important to let go of trivial and meaningless things. These practices can be applied to our daily lives in the 21st century. In an age where we are more connected but feel more lonely, Stoicism can be a useful philosophy to embrace.

We will explore these points further in the book and provide more details to fully grasp them.

A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Stoicism's principles align remarkably well with modern psychological practices, particularly those related to emotional well-being. Central to Stoicism is the belief that our emotional responses are predominantly shaped by our perceptions, not merely by external events. This philosophy mirrors the cognitive-behavioral approach in psychology, which posits that our thoughts significantly influence our emotions and behaviors.

At its core, Stoicism encourages us to focus on what we can control and let go of what is outside of our control. This perspective aligns with the concept of "acceptance" in modern psychology, which emphasizes the importance of accepting things as they are rather than fighting against them.

Stoic techniques such as self-reflection and goal setting, can cultivate a sense of purpose and direction in our lives. This is consistent with research findings in positive psychology, which suggest that having a sense of meaning and goals contributes to overall well-being and life satisfaction.



"Just as nature takes every obstacle, every impediment, and works around it—turns it to its purposes, incorporates it into itself—so, too, a rational being can turn each setback into raw material and use it to achieve its goal."

— *Marcus Aurelius*

SUCCESSSES IN APPLYING MODERN STOICISM

Throughout history, numerous individuals have successfully utilized Stoic principles to overcome challenges and achieve their goals.

One such example is the story of James Stockdale, a Vietnam War veteran who endured seven years as a prisoner of war. During his captivity, Stockdale relied on Stoic practices to maintain his mental resilience and survive the harsh conditions he faced. He later credited these practices with helping him cope with the traumatic experiences of war.

Nearly *600* prisoners of war were repatriated from Vietnam in early *1973* during Operation Homecoming. This group, which included Navy Vice Adm. James B. Stockdale, consisted of U.S. POWs who had endured the longest wartime captivity in the nation's history. Vice Adm. Stockdale, an iconic Naval aviator, holds the distinction of being the only three-star admiral to have worn both aviator wings and the Medal of Honor.

James Bond Stockdale was born on December 23, *1923*, in Abingdon, Illinois. He briefly attended Monmouth College in his home state before enrolling in the U.S. Naval Academy. After graduating in *1947*, he pursued a career as a pilot and earned his wings in *1950*. Over the next 15 years, he steadily rose through the ranks and was selected by the Navy to pursue a master's degree in international relations at Stanford University. Despite his academic pursuits, Stockdale's true passion lay in flying, which led him back to the cockpit when the Vietnam War began.

By the late summer of *1965*, Stockdale had already completed nearly *200* combat missions.

On September 9, while serving on his third tour of duty, he was commanding Carrier Air Group 16 on a mission over North Vietnam when his A-4 Skyhawk was shot down.

He ejected over a small village and was subsequently captured.

Stockdale was taken to the infamous "*Hanoi Hilton*," a prisoner of war camp in Hanoi known for its brutal treatment of inmates. As the highest-ranking Navy officer held as a POW in Vietnam, Stockdale endured nearly eight years of captivity in the camp.

Throughout his ordeal, Stockdale displayed remarkable resilience and leadership. Despite suffering from broken bones and enduring harsh conditions, he became a source of inspiration for his fellow prisoners. His unwavering courage and determination earned him the respect of his captors and fellow servicemen alike.

Stockdale's story is a testament to the indomitable human spirit, highlighting the sacrifices made by those who serve their country. His experiences serve as a reminder of the strength and resilience that can be found even in the most challenging circumstances.

Another modern-day example is that of Ryan Holiday, a best-selling author and marketer who has written extensively on Stoicism. After experiencing setbacks and struggles in his career, Holiday turned to the teachings of Stoicism for guidance and found it to be a powerful tool for personal growth and resilience.

Ryan Holiday is a highly acclaimed writer and media strategist, known worldwide for his bestselling books including *Conspiracy*, *Trust Me, I'm Lying*, *The Obstacle Is the Way*, *Ego Is the Enemy*, and his latest work *Courage is Calling*.

His exceptional body of work and teachings have garnered a significant following among prominent leaders and figures across various fields, including NFL coaches, world-class athletes, TV personalities, political leaders, and individuals from diverse backgrounds.

In his conferences, Ryan Holiday imparts timeless wisdom and state-of-the-art marketing strategies to audiences worldwide, representing top companies across the globe. However, at the heart of his teachings and conferences lies Stoicism, the philosophical doctrine that highlights our ability to control our responses despite the uncontrollable circumstances we encounter in life.

As a Speaker, he demonstrates the practical application of Stoicism in our daily lives, offering a framework for conquering obstacles, conquering new challenges, and navigating the vicissitudes of life with resilience.

Ryan Holiday embarked on his journey to global success at the young age of 19, when he made the bold decision to leave college and become an apprentice under the esteemed Robert Greene, the renowned author of *The 48 Laws of Power*.

Following a prosperous marketing career as the Director of Marketing at American Apparel, Ryan Holiday took the entrepreneurial leap and established Brass Check, a creative and marketing consulting agency. This prestigious agency has provided invaluable guidance to top-tier companies such as Google, TASER, and Complex, as well as acclaimed musicians and influential authors, including Tony Robbins, Arianna Huffington, Robert Greene, Vani Hari, and Tim Ferriss.

Moreover, Ryan Holiday is the visionary behind Daily Stoic, an email meditation channel that serves as a practical guide to Stoicism.

By the age of 33, Ryan Holiday's profound and philosophically-driven books had sold over four million copies and spent more than 200 weeks on the Bestseller Lists. In addition to his work with Daily Stoic and his personal blog, where he eloquently explores various aspects of life, dealing with challenging individuals, self-reflection, humility, philosophy, reading, learning, research, and strategy, Ryan Holiday contributes his insightful perspectives to esteemed media outlets such as the New York Times, USA Today, New York Observer, & many others.

These are just two examples of many individuals who have used modern Stoic practices to overcome challenges and find success in their personal and professional lives. Their stories serve as inspiration for us to incorporate Stoic principles into our own lives and see the positive impact it can have.

MISCONCEPTIONS & CHALLENGES

Like any philosophy or practice, Stoicism also has its share of misconceptions and challenges that may hinder individuals from fully embracing it. One common misconception is that Stoicism promotes emotional detachment or suppression. However, this is not the case. Stoicism encourages individuals to acknowledge and process their emotions in a rational manner, rather than being controlled by them.

a. Stoicism has often been associated with advocating for a withdrawal from the world.

Stoics focus only on what is within their control; does this imply that they disregard the broader demands of their time? On the contrary, two prominent ancient Stoics, Marcus Aurelius and Seneca the Younger, dedicated their lives to public affairs. Marcus Aurelius, as one of the virtuous Roman emperors, especially exemplified this commitment.

As described by Thomas de Quincey, Marcus Aurelius embodied the essence of Stoicism:

It must be remembered that Marcus Aurelius was by profession a Stoic; and that generally, as a theoretical philosopher, but still more as a Stoic philosopher, he might be supposed incapable of descending from these airy altitudes of speculation to the true needs, infirmities, and capacities of human nature. Yet strange it is, that he, of all the good emperors, was the most thoroughly human and practical.

— *de Quincey, The Caesars (1851)*

Epicurus says: ‘The sage will not engage in public affairs unless he must.’ Zeno says: ‘The sage will engage in public affairs unless he cannot.’”

— *Seneca, On Leisure 2.2*

Anyone who is quick to anger should abstain from rare and curiously wrought things, like drinking-cups and seal-rings and precious stones; for their loss drives their owner out of his senses more than do objects which are common and easily procured. This is the reason why, when Nero had an octagonal tent built, an enormous thing and a sight to be seen for its beauty and costliness, Seneca remarked, “You have proved yourself a poor man, for if you ever lose this you will not have the means to procure another like it.” And indeed it did so happen that the ship which conveyed it was sunk and the tent lost. But Nero remembered Seneca’s saying and bore his loss with greater moderation.

—Plutarch, On Controlling Anger 13 (461f-462a)

b. Some imagine Stoicism to be a grim approach to life.

Again, not at all. Stoics are more likely to be characterized by a subtle sense of humor when faced with circumstances that others may perceive as somber. While Stoics do value moderation, it is not because they reject pleasure entirely. Rather, moderation allows for the cultivation of lasting and natural pleasures.

Stoics are generally expected to maintain an optimistic disposition, and Seneca even suggested that some of them could benefit from lightening up a bit.

Games will also be beneficial; for pleasure in moderation relaxes the mind and gives it balance. The more damp and the drier natures, and also the cold, are in no danger from anger, but they must beware the more sluggish faults—fear, moroseness, discouragement, and suspicion. And so such natures have need of encouragement and indulgence and the summons to cheerfulness.

— *Seneca, On Anger 2.20.4*

We must be indulgent to the mind, and regularly grant it the leisure that serves as its food and strength.

—*Seneca, On Tranquility of Mind 17.7-8*

Stoics place great importance on humor as an alternative to anger when faced with provocation. Seneca recounts a political example from Cato, a revered Stoic figure.

As Cato was arguing a case, Lentulus—that violent partisan, remembered by our fathers—gathered as much thick saliva as he could and spat right in the middle of Cato’s forehead. Cato wiped off his face and said, “I’ll assure everyone, Lentulus, that they’re wrong when they say that you’re not worth spit.”

— *Seneca, On Anger 3.38.2*

c. Some individuals mistakenly perceive Stoicism as advocating an indifferent approach towards others.

This is not the case. In fact, Stoicism emphasizes empathy and compassion towards others, grounded in a deep understanding of our shared humanity and interconnectedness.

Further characteristics of the reasoning soul are love of its neighbors, truth, compassion, and valuing nothing above itself. . . .

— *Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 11.1.2*

This is the first promise that philosophy holds out to us: fellow-feeling, humanity, sociability.

— *Seneca, Epistles 5.4*

I should not be unfeeling like a statue; I should care for my relationships both natural and acquired—as a pious man, a son, a brother, a father, a citizen.

— *Epictetus, Discourses 3.2.4*

Many Stoic teachings share common ground with the central tenets of other philosophical or religious traditions, serving as prime examples. However, the Stoics arrive at their conclusions through reason rather than faith, making their approach more appealing to many individuals on that basis.

One challenge in practicing Stoicism is maintaining consistency and applying its principles in everyday life. It can be easy to fall back into old habits and patterns of thinking, especially when faced with difficult situations. This is why it's crucial to regularly reflect and journal about our experiences, as well as actively incorporate Stoic practices into our daily routines.

Undesirable habits disrupt your life and hinder the achievement of your aspirations. They pose a threat to your well-being, both mentally and physically, while also squandering your time and energy.

- So, why do we persist in engaging in these behaviors?
- And more importantly, is there anything that can be done to address them?
- How can you eliminate detrimental behaviors and adhere to positive ones instead?

The **BONUS** Chapter of the book will provide highly detailed information on this subject.

STOICISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

As we progress further into the 21st century, there are indications that Stoicism will continue to exert influence and impact modern society. The rise of mindfulness and awareness of mental health has led to increased recognition of Stoic practices as effective tools for emotional resilience and well-being.

Additionally, Stoicism's emphasis on personal responsibility and self-improvement aligns with current trends towards individual empowerment and a growth mindset. In a fast-paced world where individuals seek ways to enhance their lives and find meaning, Stoicism offers practical and proven solutions.

In the digital age, Stoic teachings are becoming more accessible through various online resources, including podcasts, videos, and social media accounts dedicated to modern Stoicism. This accessibility allows for a wider reach and adoption of Stoic practices in the 21st century.

Overall, it is evident that Stoicism will continue to have a significant impact and relevance in the modern world, serving as a timeless philosophy for personal growth and well-being. Therefore, it is crucial to explore and apply its principles in our daily lives to lead more fulfilling and meaningful lives. We eagerly anticipate the evolution and adaptation of Stoic practices in the ever-changing landscape of the future. The journey of self-improvement and resilience is an ongoing process, and Stoicism will undoubtedly remain a valuable resource for individuals.

Furthermore, Stoicism has gained recognition in various industries such as business, sports, and therapy. Its principles of resilience, focus, and self-control have proven to be valuable traits for success in these fields. For instance, business leaders like Tim Ferriss and Arianna Huffington credit Stoicism with helping them make better decisions and manage their emotions in high-pressure situations. In sports, athletes like LeBron James and Tom Brady have expressed how Stoic practices have aided them in maintaining mental toughness and performing at their best under pressure.

Stoicism has also been incorporated into therapeutic approaches, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT). These therapies draw upon Stoic principles to assist individuals in managing their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in a more rational and mindful manner.

MAKE CHARACTER YOUR MOST PROMINENT EXPRESSION

“For philosophy doesn’t consist in outward display, but in taking heed to what is needed and being mindful of it.”

— *Musonius Rufus*

The monk adorns himself in his robes.

A priest dons his collar.

A banker dons an expensive suit and carries a briefcase.

A Stoic lacks a uniform and defies stereotypes.

They cannot be identified by appearance or sound alone.

The sole means of recognition? Their character.