STOICISM

AS A

MORAL SYSTEM
The question which has baffled in turn the philosophers of all ages — the problem which must forever continue to be the chief solicitude of the thinking portion of humanity, i.e., in the language of ancient philosophy, "What is the supreme good of man?" In other words, What is he to do in order to attain, that is, to enjoy the happiness of secure

In the whole broad, fertile field of philosophy, one part has been more cultivated, or produced more abundant harvests, or more varied fruit than has that portion relating to the life of man — its virtues and how to attain them. Its aspect how to cultivate them.

There are some, from the savage to the sage, who have not an ideal as to what the supreme good of man is — of what life might be. The barbarian or man of perception rather than reflection, draws his ideal of a happy mankind from vague, somewhat divined, some successful warrior, who knows battle of death, whose life is entirely one of self-aggrandizement. To occupy with a pure heart his laborious work without the care, the love, the joy, the work, the rest, he would need. Solomon was rich in all the moments pleasurable for the happiness of man: he wrote in his own every gift, — wisdom, wealth, honor, the same cup and sweet joy; the whole of himself collected, he had a secret of the world, the earth, the pleasure, sufficient to give, exact satisfaction and only must that set he must conclude that life like its duties as well as its pleasures.

Thus ideas of life as someone are the members of the human family itself ever as similar, many of them, that their advocate and believer, reaching
Advent grooming into a few philosophical schools and religious sects. In the question of the duty of man, there have been manifested by one of these schools an attempt, the value and beneficial influence of which were time, the reader-valued, or not, to be generally recognized. Refer to that given by

Most of the schools of ancient philosophy agree that a life according to nature is the duty", the happiness", the supreme good of man, but they differ in nuance in the interpretation of nature. To determine what is nature is the difficulty. Natural nature because worse perceived.

In order to understand the influence exerted by Stoicism, it is necessary to make a short examination into the doctrine which postulated and the nature condition on which they held a theory.

During the school of the fourth century, the Greek mind was sombering through every form of speculation, reaching from one scheme to another, from absurd conclusion to another. All inquiry and physical speculation ended in skepticism. Moral research had given no better results. In the intellectual world all was anarchic: in the moral it was more orderly. Skepticism had entered here. The Academics questioned the superiority of one over the other. The existence of the gods were more universally, the immortality of the soul denied. No act was bad in itself; the worst crimes were more wrong only in public custom. Self-gratification was the vindication of the Epicureans, the Cynical, and the Epicurean schools. It has been said that the pleasure-seeking schools come from the nature of the times.
It is true, property was insecure, and it would be very natural and natural for them, to conclude to enjoy it while they had it in possession. Let us eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we shall die. I think, however, it is an error to attribute the rise of these schools to the insecure position which Greece at this time occupied. Greek independence had been lost to Alexander. But that, at the beginning only meant the loss of independence by one of her states, or a very little more. As far as self-feeling was concerned, that belonged to last one of her states at a time, now to Athens, now to Sparta, now to Thebes. At this time the leadership, being in Macedonice, was not in any more hostile hands than often before, nor to be with in those of pure Hellenic blood. To all appearances property and life were now more secure than when Demar and Xenex and their Spartan broods hovered over the Attic peninsula. Besides, I think the very insecurity itself cannot primarily be referred to the luxury and idleness which had crept in from the East. There have always been pleasure-seekers, and they need no school for their maintenance and propagation. It is necessary to conclude that all the pleasure schools are effects of the same cause. The first certainly were contributory causes for latter ones. Indeed we may go further and say that, after the first got a foot-hold, it would serve as a cause for itself by condemning property less as appreciated, if its value, and less attention would be paid to its security, and, being insecure even avoided and Ordinarily turn to its immediate enjoyment.

Whatever may have been the cause of their origin, we find these three schools in existence at the close of the fourth century B.C.
opposition, pleasure, beauty, and mental, was the great object of life,—all that was worthy the attention of a man. The lyrical denounced sensual gratification, harkened unworthy sage and lenient only intellectual enjoyment.

By the doctrine of these schools every restraint in praise and every incentive to virtue were taken away; and patriotism, friendship, benevolence, pitiableness, all denounced. Consequently, jesters, buffoons, and serenades alluded almost every family as essential to respectability. Ornaments, jewels, splendid attire and all the appointments, which luxury could suggest, were fast becoming necessities in all respectable families.

The conquest of the East by Alexander formed a union between the two continents, very deleterious to European morals. As it introduced art and learning into Asia, it brought home nothing but luxury and vice. It also called forth excessive emigration. Attracted by wealth, the Greeks were seeking homes in the absolute East. Unlike their ancestors, who clung to Greece as the clearest land on earth, in obedience to those who taught that patriotism would do for the weak and wretched and children, but was altogether unworthy a sage, they sought homes wherever the golden fingers of luxury pointed. The unparalleled growth of Alexandria, the great commercial center, and the rival and successors of Athens as a seat of learning, may largely be attributed to the spirit of pleasure-seeking then raging among the sons of Hellen.

The northern nations of Europe were not yet emerging from barbarism, but in the polished state of Greece and Rome, philosophy and oratory were taught by ancients; refined to every degree of dignity and refinement.
Although Rome now abounded in schools and offered adequate facilities for an education, the Roman youth could not become educated as a philosopher, poet, or orator, without having completed the studies in the Greek world that were especially won this time by those who desired to become popular orators. The same critic's grace and elegance must be imbued directly from its mother soul, that time rhetoric and oratory were taught by the philosopher. While the Roman had more under training he would unconsciously receive a great many of the peculiar opinions of the master.

The decline of the three pleasure seeking schools, the Lyceum, Cyzicus and Epidaurus, and of the Academia, were peculiarly adapted to the great and luxurious line. The principles of the first three schools, encouraging temporal indulgence, personal gratification, would find an easy acceptance with the wealthy students. Greek and Latin, denying the immortality of the soul, questioning the existence or power of the gods, putting in issue even the superiority of man over animal, were little designed to encourage virtue or restrain vice. As their doctrine spread among the vile, it was abundantly abhorred.

Such was the condition of exodus as in the fourth century B.C. Everything nothing denounce, everything selfish, encouraged. Nothing conform to enduring and severe the virtues, nothing to restrain the vicious. The great need of Greece and of Southern Europe at this time was one a system of thinking we would pacify the restless mind, and melodious a system of moral or pure practical virtue. This was partially realized in Sicily.
Gene, the founder of the State philosophy, was born at Corinth on the island of
Corinth about 820 B.C. On reaching his manhood he went to Athens, where he spent
forty years studying with the various philosophers there most noted. He then opened his
school, which he continued to teach until his death—a period of fifty-eight years. Having
mastered the doctrine of the principal schools of philosophy he was well fitted to become
the founder of a school which should rival the Phcenecian, and that most immoral
school, the logical, which added to intellectual pleasure a continuance, and a mis-
treatment of others.

The philosophy of Gene is one of virtue, practical rather than of vain speculations
and theories. It is the doctrine of self-control. Every appetite, desire, lust, was given no
control, but it be controlled; it being our duty to use all intelligently and in accordance
with the highest principle of virtue. Live according to Reason, in different a
like to pleasure and pain. Under the reign of reason will flourish knowledge, temper-
ance, justice, kindness, benevolence, humanity.

With them, there were no degrees of virtue, but there was one of vice. If one truth
was more true than another, and one falsehood more false than another, then in
between friend and friend, sin and sin, there is no difference.

They asserted that the perfection of happiness—happiness being the great object of life
resided in the perfection of virtue. But what, according to their idea is virtue? They be-
lieved the world peopled with gods and genie, and that every soul had its holly
duty assigned him. Virtue was living in harmony with this divine, and in accord-
ance with the will of the supreme order, this order being subject to fate and guiding all
things in a predetermined course. But all this meant no more than live according
to nature. This was their interpretation of that maxim. To the popular mind, and
true to such a natural philosophy must address itself if it would accomplish the
desired good - it means no more than that there is a right enduring independent of
present pleasure or pain, and that virtue is an knowing and doing the right.
Darwin's doctrine of the interference of geology - of simple, elementary and crude, physical
laws very closely allied to Christianity. The agency of length and devil was a popular
law; one essential element, in the Jewish creed; and Christ himself represented
him playing a prominent part in the administration of mundane affairs.
As to the beneficial influence of such a doctrine here come be our doubts. These geniuses
are to submit, that the presence of virtue is in society. A very large proportion of amoral
and average are convinced in secret - with the accompanied, in the hope that they will get
something unknown to others than themselves. Instruct in a people a firm belief that all
their deeds, good or evil, are surveyed by another being - a being of infinite power
and you have put up one of the strongest bars in the barrier vagaries-nice.
It is true that for the rejection of the doctrine of immortality and future retribution, they
removed one of the greatest incentives to virtue. This, however, was largely compensated by
belief in immediate reward or punishment. Forward to be given, or a punishment
the inflicted, immediately or at no distant day, the same as if they were for some ef-
scient than more worthy rewards, or over their penalties hidden away behind the
limbo future.
It may be, probably is true that the doctrine of the equality of race, and of races
is unfavorable to the development of virtuous lives. This, however, is essentially the
same as the Christian doctrine, which makes one distinction in degree of holiness.
and wickedness. Every life is God's or it is wrong. There is no compromise. It is
either or neither. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point
be guilty of the whole. And whoever shall mock his brother is a sinner,
and judges himself to be a critic, all his righteous actions are as defiled as his eternal
life is in him. Thus before God, not
a man therein are are two sorts of the same sinness, our own of all holiness;
and the approbation and disapprobation of his fellowmen is an important force which
must be taken into consideration in resolving the conduct even of a State. But
this one of man and sort of Christian theology.

We have seen that Stoicism resembles Christianity in the belief in the administra-
tion and interference of angels and devils, and in their falloffs distinguishing between
the degrees of perdition and of grace.

They further resemble in the general doctrine of indifference. Indeed, a closer exam-
ination than we have a space here to make will show a great deal of Stoicism in
Christianity, as set forth by the Bible. The Christian must keep all earthly pleasures
but three, and endure pain and affliction as blessings in disguise. Then
noblest of his immense earthly possessions and his children, Job but said, "The
Lord gives, the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Under the addition
of affliction of bodily torture he only said, "What, shall we accept good at the
hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? But thus we see an additional el-
ment, and it is the characteristic element of Christianity, humility through depen-
tence upon the divine. Stoicism is self-control and independence; Christianity self
control and dependence.

The self-control of Stoicism did much to prepare mankind for Christianity.
obedience to one law leaves the way to obedience to another. The self-control of the Stoics was
neither a matter of mere subjection to an authority nor a matter of mere subjection to a
kind of self-government of which we ought to find infinitely more in Christianity.

They were wise in the mere control over self; the virtue lies in avoiding the
sin. But the early Church, and especially the priests and monks, seemed to find some
social sanction native in the control over self, and this led to the reception of the de-
vice of self-denial, which, introduced from the East, became very prevalent all over
southern Europe.

Such are brief are a few of the fundamental moral doctrines of Stoicism. Other
philosophers have formulated more complete systems: the Doctrinale and Platonist with
their belief in the immortality of the soul and its future reward or punishment, may
seem to offer greater endurance to an eternally life; than does this simple system, but
it is to be doubted if any of them did actually exert a better influence upon men's
lives, or did forth with their works than did Stoicism.

Stoicism in the Roman world developed in a line opposite to its principal
influence, Epicureanism. It at length remained indifferent to pleasure for it saw
the gods which flowed from human and divinity at once. It saw, commanded the
man to be happy, and one on the deities making vigorous efforts to exclude or expel the
happiness especially arising from the East, and from declination Greece, from which it had
already sucked the very life-blood.

The Stoics were even called upon to take the field against the opposite evil, instead
of whole life. Rome was a constant battle against the two extremes, the discipline
of the Roman army of self-denial being almost fatally prevalent at the time of
The Caesars, under the strain of jealousy and increasing internal dissension, had to compromise their own authority. The Caesars found themselves obliged to legislate upon this subject. Hence Caesar nominated those who had fewer than three children, and imposed a penalty upon women under forty-five years of age, who bore no husband or children. Augustus increased the penalty to arrest its prevalence, and also to increase the revenue. The laws of compensation increased the number of slaves; and thirty years after it had been made, the Roman law became demanded of him its repeal. He had those who were married to one woman, those who were not on the other; the latter appeared in greater numbers, deceitful.

The Stoic philosophy made great men and good citizens. It has been followed by the produce of the ablest and most-worthy emperors and Roman emperors. You will find no more worthy men than the Antonines. As successions sat on the throne of the Roman Empire who so fully deserve to govern their fellow-men as did the Apostles. A man of integrity, temperance, humanity, and justice, he was a nearer model Christian than any of his Christian emperors. Hating and ruling by reason, he lived and ruled upright, and by right, and sound and humanity. The Great Constantine and his successors, performants, princes, and preservatives of the Christian faith, all departed more widely from the principles. An idid Policies of whose name has so ignoromously wrought with infancy. It one his dose in justice and perfection as far as attainable by man. To pursue himself for this he sought to distinguish the appetite enlightened by understanding, regulate the passions, and subdue the wild heart, which, according to the intimation of Aristotle, assisted people to ascend the throne of a deep.
Hence, regardless of pleasure, diligent in all duties, he sought to win for the
sake of the people. His diet was always simple, and such as would qualify him
to The meanest laborer, clarity, a virtue hardly attributable to persons from the
bitter turn, he sought not to simulate, but rather to prove, the beneficence of his
proceedings. A thousand barbers, a thousand cup-bearers, a thousand cooks, were dis-
tributed in the several offices of luxury, and all the number of humble could be
expected only to the insects in an summer day. And the baron and simple,
themselves lived like kings. A barber, beside a large salary, received an allowance
or twenty servants, and one elegant horse. Citizens who met an ambush must
mount, and salute him. If we remember that this was the state of affairs for a
long period preceding the reign of Julian, if we remember the manner in which
the Constantine squandered his reproach, and that he was act-
ated by an earnest desire to achieve the overburdened and disturbed populace
am si mon might forgive him if he seem inclined to the other extreme. Whatever the fault
might show off its sad justice and opulently to him the honor and gratitude of not
the due to one, who, during these dark times of savage passion at once ruled the
millions of the Roman world.

If a man were called upon to fix a period in the history of the world during which
the condition of the human race was most happy and content prosperous he would
without hesitation say that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the acces-
sion of Commodus. To the right stories, the Antonines. It was given to one man
the most peaceful and prosperous half of the period of eighty years. The
luck came home to be some of the influence exerted by Augustus, An-
sensible to grief, pain, pleading, riches, honor, ambition, the Stoics devoted themselves to the study of society, and with an unusual science seldom equalled by public men laboring for the good of mankind. Being practical in the art of well-ordered peace, perhaps, energy and foresight, might be expected in Stoicism. Stoicism is working this country today. It is Stoicism that this age needs. The existence and stability, the borrowed kingdom, the fraud and deceit, and general corruption which is now undermining our government, all other countries have little confidence in, and we little ourselves, is due to the Stoics who hold their place among us, though not bearing the name of the founder, whose selfish principle they represent—now practice.

Had Stoicism conferred any other benefits than simply those which come from its constant battle against base and unrighteousness, poverty must forever remain grateful, and would the philosophy of Greece be one of the greatest blessings of earth? Had it not long ago to speak in its praise beside those of the East, the Antinnes and Julian it would at least its place in the first rank of the benefactions to unborn.

C. W. Allen.