

# STOICISM

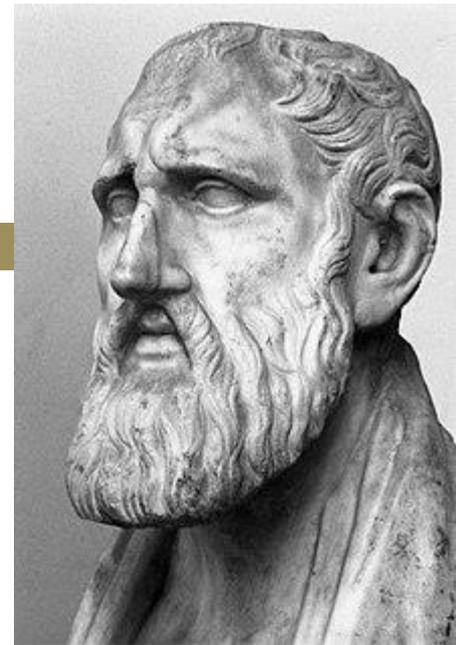
DR. STEPHANIE SPOTO  
SSPOTO@MPC.EDU  
MONTEREY PENINSULA COLLEGE

Gentrain

15 November 2018

# From Zeno to Epictetus

- Zeno of Citium (336-264 BCE)
  - ▣ Born in Citium, Cyprus
  - ▣ Stoics named after *stoa*
- Seneca (d. 65 CE)
  - ▣ born in Cordoba in Hispania  
→ raised in Rome
- Epictetus (c. 55-135 CE)
  - ▣ born a slave at Hierapolis, Phrygia (present day Pamukkale, Turkey)
- Known primarily for contributions to ethics

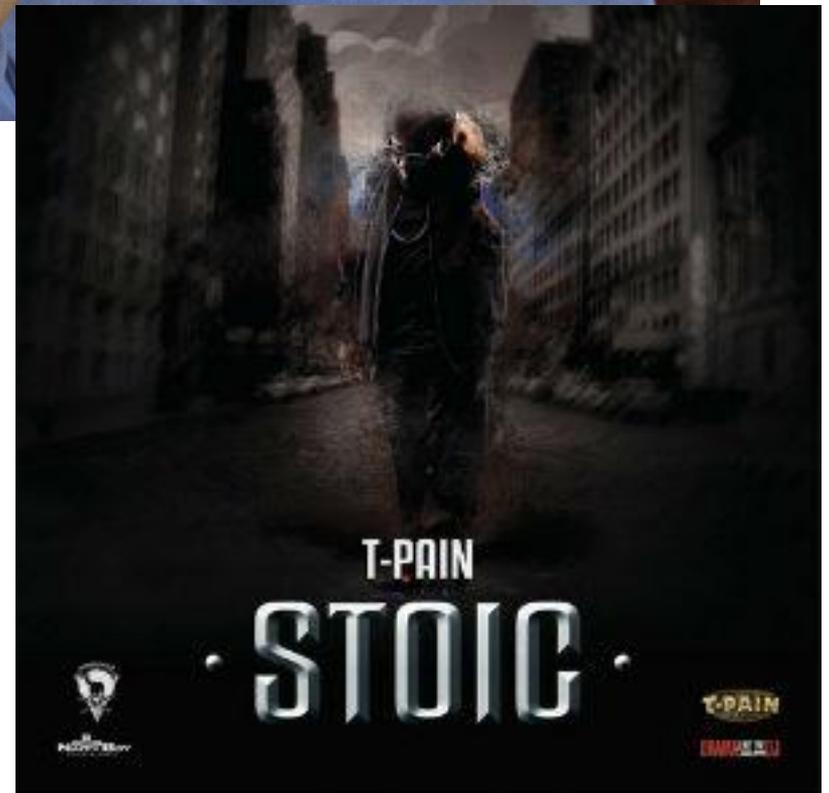


# What is a Stoic?

---



# Stoicism in popular culture



# What did the Stoics believe?

- Action in accordance to nature → highest good, leads to happiness
- There exists 'objective reality' (nature) → orderly, regular, discernable by human reason
- Human life (in accordance with nature) can be ordered by reason
- Reason is an ordering power → order of nature intelligible → order of nature ordered by cosmic intelligence (Logos, Reason, Providence)



# Morality not purely cultural

- If knowledge of moral values, and these values constitute the order of culture → from order of nature (not convention)
- True values are from nature & reason → constant, universal
- Answer seemed near
  - ▣ Reason orders human life & orders regularities of nature → also what understands/discerns the order
  - ▣ Morality must be in accordance with nature → morality determined by reason
- Reason, not convention, must discerns what is universal in human values and essential in human nature
- Humans different than animals
  - ▣ For humans to act in accordance with their nature is to act in accordance to their rationality.
- Therefore MORAL LIFE = RATIONAL LIFE

# Virtue is sufficient for happiness

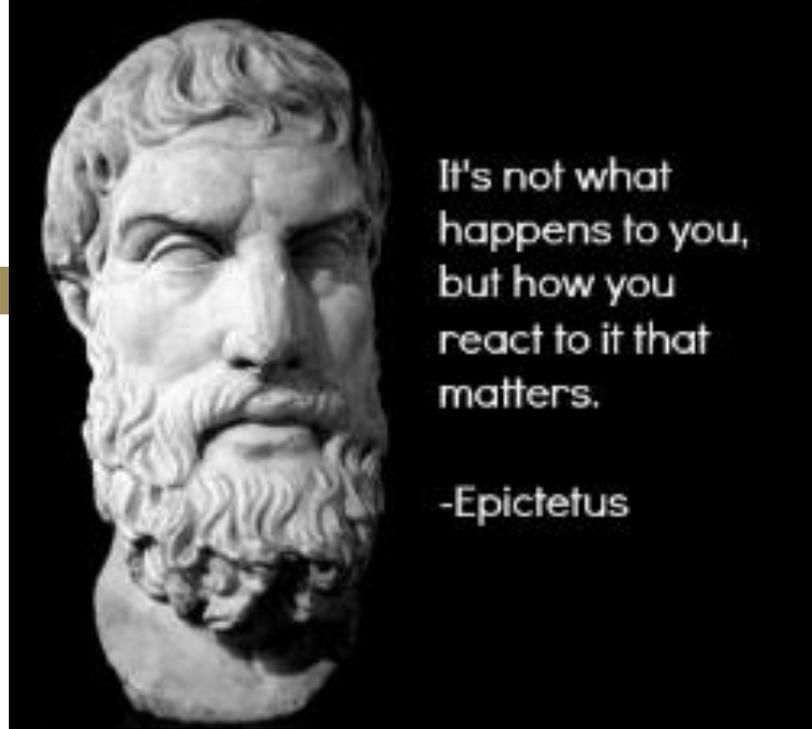
- Natural = norm for truth and right; for human beings and nature, the natural is the rational
- However, people's values different than this → often do not conform to reason by only to convention, impulses, appetites
- Stoics encouraged people to align their values to their nature → leads to happiness



"He was a Stoic's Stoic."

# Stoicism and Apathy

- All things (good and bad) are ordered by Logos → must accept fortunes without feeling
- God orders misfortune to harden and strengthen the soul → develops character and inner strength
- Apathy important in Stoic thought → the desired state of the soul, achieved as the true condition of happiness
  - ▣ Apathy: *a-pathos* no feeling
  - ▣ If fortunes are good → do not become too elated, respond rationally
  - ▣ If fortunes bad → do not become resentful, but respond rationally



# Emotional, not rational, indifference

- Unlike ‘epicurean,’ ‘stoical’ is not misleading with regard to its philosophical origins.
- Emotions like fear or envy (or impassioned sexual attachments, or passionate love of anything whatsoever) either were, or arose from, false judgements
- The sage – a person who had attained moral and intellectual perfection – does not indulge or experience passion and emotion
- Strong commitment to the rational against the emotional and irrational
- Requires training, self-denial, self-discipline
  - ▣ “the Stoic life” and “the Stoic virtues”

# All vices equally vicious

- Roman Stoics Seneca and Epictetus, emphasize the doctrines that the sage is immune to misfortune and that *virtue is sufficient for happiness*.
- Phrase ‘stoic calm’ perhaps encapsulates the general drift of these claims.
- More radical claim: only the sage is free while all others are slaves & that all those who are morally vicious are equally so.

Cicero, in *De Finibus*, has Cato putting the point:

*“For just as a drowning man is no more able to breathe if he be not far from the surface of the water, so that he might at any moment emerge, than if he were actually at the bottom already ... similarly a man that has made some progress towards the state of virtue is none the less in misery than he that has made no progress at all.” (De Finibus, IV.48)*

# Seneca On Anger

- Latin work by Seneca
- Explores anger in the Stoic context
  - Offers therapy for anger: prevent and control
- Should not merely control, but utterly destroy the passions and their hold on people

*We shouldn't control anger, but destroy it entirely—for what "control" is there for a thing that's fundamentally wicked?*

*—Seneca, De Ira, iii.42*



L. ANNÆI  
S E N E C Æ  
P H I L O S O P H I  
D E I R A,  
A D N O V A T V M.

L I B. P R I M V S.

C A P V T I.

**R**EGISTI à me, Nouate,  
vt scriberem quemadmo-  
dum posset ira leniri: nec  
immeritò mihi videris hunc  
præcipuè affectum perti-  
nuisse, maxime ex omnibus tetrum  
ac rabidum. Ceteris enim aliquid quieti placidique inest; hic totus concitatus, & in impetu doloris est: armorum, sanguinis, suppliciorum, minimè humana feruens cupiditate: dum alteri noceat, sui negligens; in ipsa irruens tela, & ultionis secum multa tracturæ avidus. Quidam itaque è sapientibus viris iram dixerunt breuem insaniam. æquè enim  
A im-  
po-

# Neo-Stoicism

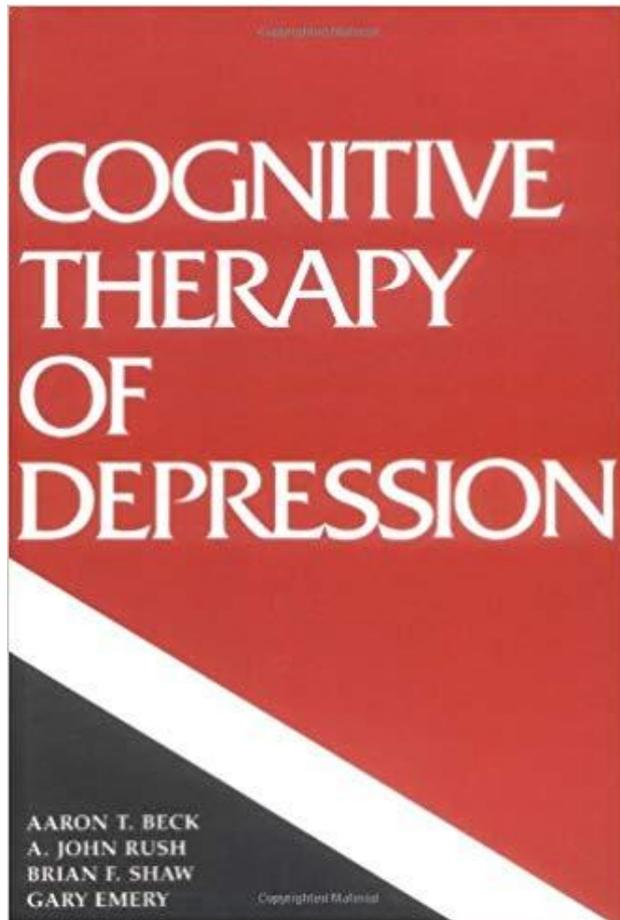
## *Stoicism and Christianity*

IUSTVS LIPSIVS.



- Justus Lipsius (1547 — 1606) Flemish philologist and humanist
- Attempted to combine the beliefs of Stoicism and Christianity
- Explores contemporary political events through stoic lens
- Neostoicism: practical philosophy → the basic rule of good life is that the human should not yield to the passions → but submit to God.
- Four passions: greed, sorrow, fear, joy
- Humans have free will, but everything is under the control of God → all tends towards God
- Similar to classical Stoics, belief that humans not bound by passions is free

# Modern Stoicism and Psychotherapy



- Stoic philosophy was the original philosophical inspiration for modern cognitive psychotherapy
  - ▣ Dr Albert Ellis' Rational-Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT), the major precursor of CBT.
- Quotation from *The Handbook of Epictetus* taught to most clients during the initial session of traditional REBT by Ellis and his followers: "It's not the events that upset us, but our judgments about the events."
  - ▣ Became the element of “socialization” in CBT.

# Next week

---

**Tuesday Nov 20, 2018**

**8:45-9:50 Art and Architecture of the Roman Republic, Gamble**

**10:00-10:50 The Expansion of the Republic, Tom**

**Thursday Nov 22, 2018**

**No Class**