



**PHILADELPHIA**  
**STOA**

## **21st-Century Stoicism: Developing Character, Living with Purpose**

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## My Journey to Stoicism

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*Imagine yourself in the company of many kind friends. Perhaps you meet in a sports club, at work, or in a church. You've been meeting with these good friends for many years.*

*Now imagine one day, one of those friends asks you for help. They ask you to join them on an adventure. So together, you head off on an exciting journey into the unknown.*

*But along the way, things turn sinister. Your friend takes the wrong path, and you both quickly find yourselves immersed in danger, dishonor, and destitution.*

*Then your friends abandon you, leaving you to deal with their mess. Alone.*

*You're confused, hurt, disoriented, scared, and suffering.*

*What do you do?*

*This is my story about my journey to Stoicism.*

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## My Journey to Stoicism

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*“Some things in the world are up to us, while others are not. Up to us are our faculties of judgment, motivation, desire, and aversion—in short, everything that is our own doing. Not up to us are our body and property, our reputations, and our official positions—in short, everything that is not our own doing.” — Epictetus, Enchiridion*

# Why do we need a philosophy of life?

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## ■ Direction and Purpose

- A philosophy of life provides a framework for understanding our place in the world
- It can help us find purpose and guide our actions

## ■ Consistency

- It promotes integrity so that our actions align with our **Values**

## ■ Self-Understanding

- Developing a philosophy of life requires deep introspection.

## ■ Resilience

- Having a framework for understanding and interpreting the world and a philosophy of life can help us navigate adversity and challenges.

## ■ Moral and Ethical Grounding

- A philosophy of life helps to ensure that our actions align with our ethical principles, promoting social cohesion and improving our relationships

# What is Stoicism?

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Stoic virtue focuses on the Cardinal virtues of Wisdom, Courage, Justice, and Temperance

## Flourishing = Eudaimonia

### ■ Definition

- Eudaimonia means flourishing, good spirit & happiness.
- Aristotle described it as “the highest good humans could strive toward - a life “well lived.”

### ■ Eudaimonia and Stoicism

- In Stoicism, eudaimonia is achieved through the pursuit of Virtue and maintaining one’s character

### ■ Philosophical Context

- Eudaimonia goes beyond momentary happiness and instead leads to lifelong fulfillment

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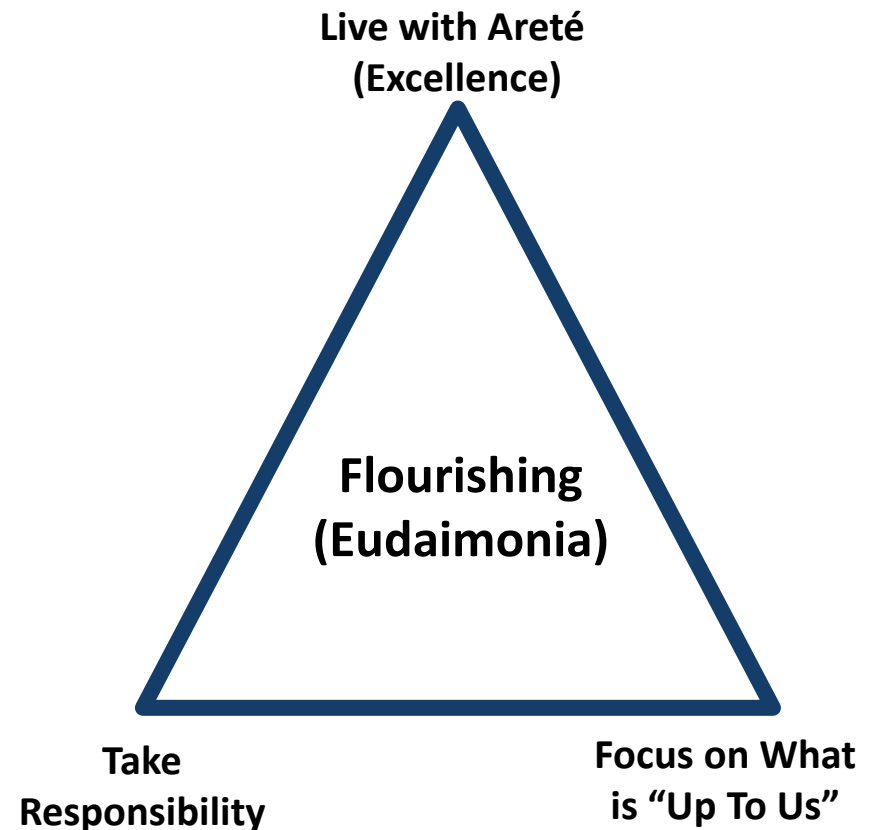
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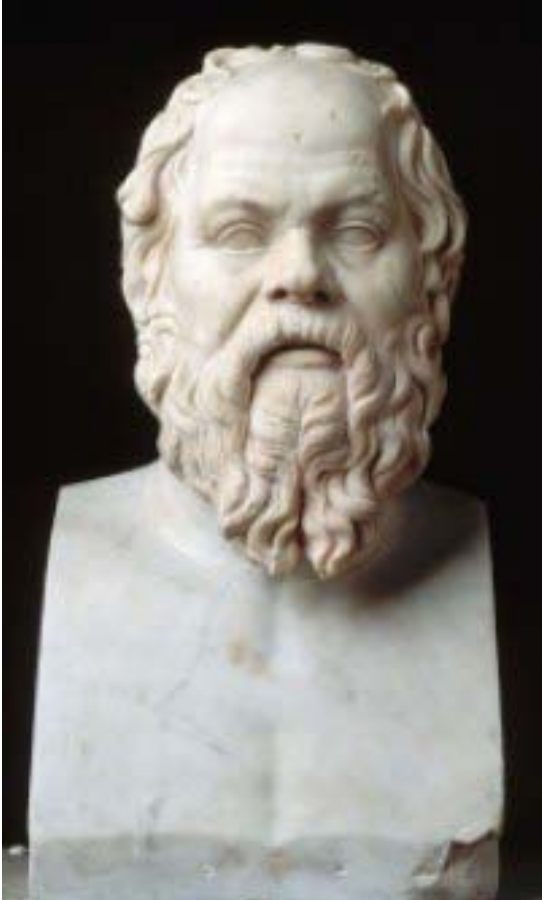
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## Stoic Triangle



# Virtue is the Only Good

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## Why Virtue Is The Goal

- **Virtue is “Up to Us”**
  - Virtue is an aspect of an individual’s character, and exercising it is entirely “Up to Us”
- **Virtue is Self-Sufficient**
  - Virtue is self-sufficient and self-fulfilling, providing an intrinsic source of well being
- **Virtue is Intrinsic, Not Instrumental**
  - Stoics view virtue as valuable in and of itself, not as a means to achieve external ends
- **Virtue Leads to the Right Action**
  - Stoics emphasize the importance of aligning our thoughts, intentions, and actions

# Virtue is Self-Sufficient

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## — Kindness in Different Circumstances —

### ■ Wealthy Jennifer:

- Generously uses her wealth to:
  - Donates to charities
  - Raises money for abused women
  - Uses her resources to assist those in need
- **Her wealth empowers her acts of kindness.**

### ■ Impoverished Jennifer:

- Jennifer loses all her money
- Despite financial constraints, she extends her help by:
  - Volunteering at local homeless shelters for women
  - Sharing meals with the less fortunate
  - Offering emotional support to abused women
- **Her kindness stems from her actions, not material resources.**



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## The Self-Sufficiency of Virtue

### ■ Jennifer's Kindness

- Is independent of her financial status
- Stems from her character, not her possessions
- Resides in her actions, decisions, and attitudes

### ■ Jennifer's Virtue is Self-Sufficient

- Virtue is self-sufficient, needing no external rewards
- It's about the intent and quality of actions, not their outcomes.
- Jennifer's virtue is completely within her control

## Instrumental Value of Compassion vs. Intrinsic Value of Compassion

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### Compassion as Instrumental

- Compassion is valued for the outcomes it achieves
- It could improve one's reputation and strengthen a relationship
- Its purpose is to attain positive results
- Without expected results, there's less incentive for compassion

### Compassion as Intrinsic

- The value of Compassion is inherent, independent of outcomes
- It is practiced because it's the right and good thing to do
- It prioritizes character over the consequences of our actions

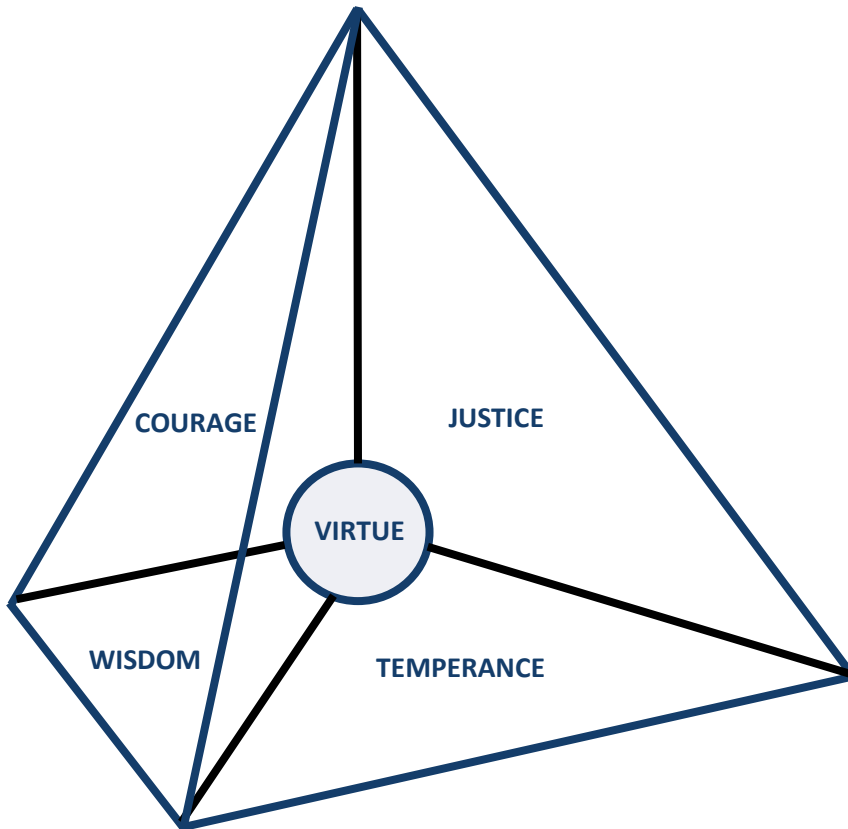
### Intrinsic Virtues

- Shapes character and guides consistent actions, irrespective of unpredictable outcomes
- Leads Stoics to pursue virtue for its own sake

**The intrinsic value of virtue molds our character and fosters personal growth.**

# Unity of Virtues: The Harmonious Integration of Moral Excellence

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- **Interdependency of Virtues**
  - All virtues are interconnected. They work together to guide our actions and decisions.
- **Unity of Virtues**
  - All virtues are different aspects of a single underlying virtue
- **Holistic Approach**
  - Virtues should be developed together rather than focusing on one at a time

Stoics believe in the unity of virtues, a concept that suggests all virtues are interconnected and one cannot truly possess one virtue without all others.

# Stoic Practice

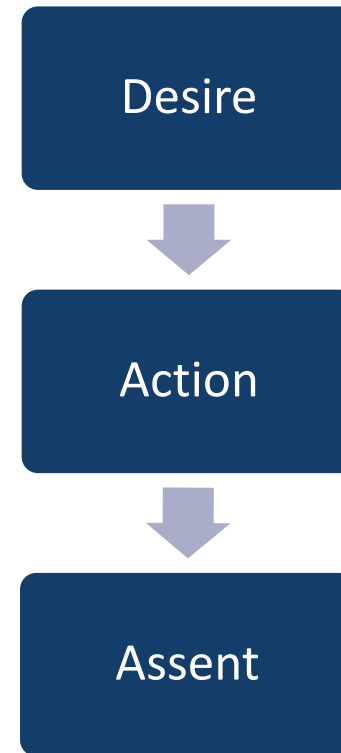
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## Cardinal Virtues



Virtues serve as the moral compass

## Three Disciplines



The three disciplines are a practical framework for personal growth

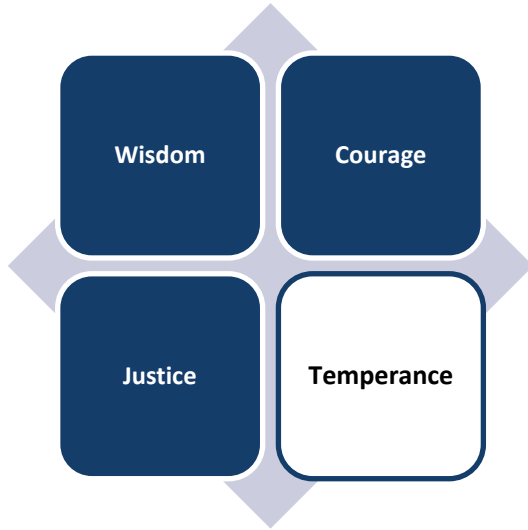
# The Four Stoic Cardinal Virtues

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By striving to cultivate these four virtues, individuals can lead a life that's both moral and fulfilling and resilient in the face of life's inevitable hardships and uncertainties.

# Temperance and Courage



## Temperance

- Balance
- Self Control
- Personal Well Being



## Courage

- Upholding Virtue
- Overcoming Fear
- Personal Integrity

# Justice and Wisdom

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## Justice

- Universal Kinship
- Moral Integrity
- Social Harmony



## Wisdom

- Understanding
- Perspective
- Moral Judgement

## The Three Disciplines of Stoicism

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Desire



Action



Assent

**“The Discipline of Desire”**, deals with the *acceptance* of our fate

**“The Discipline of Action,”** which has to do with *philanthropy* or love of mankind

**“The Discipline of Assent,”** which has to do with *mindfulness* of our judgments

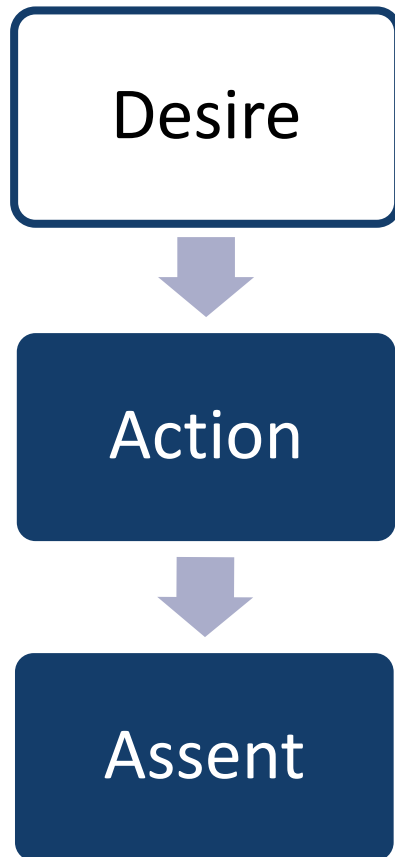
The three disciplines of provide a comprehensive approach for managing desires, directing actions, and choosing our responses to external events.



# The Discipline of Desire

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*“Seek not for events to happen as you wish but wish events to happen as they do and your life will go smoothly and serenely.” - Epictetus*



## ■ Stoic Psychological Exercises

### ■ Amor Fati

– Love of one's Fate

### ■ Virtues Associated with the Discipline of Desire

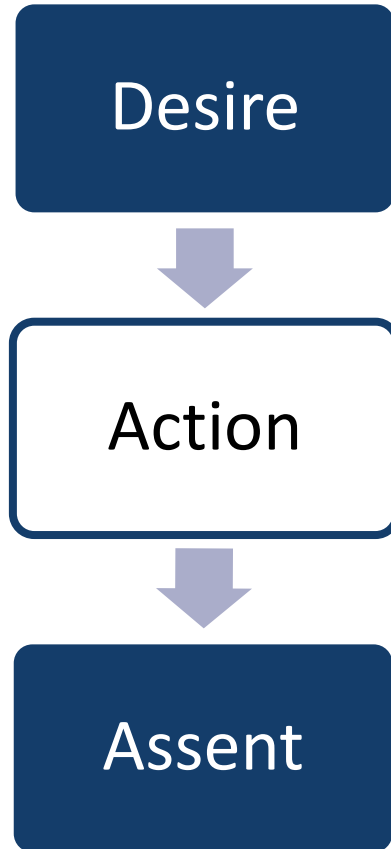
– Courage

– Temperance

# The Discipline of Action

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*"Waste no more time arguing what a good man should be. Be one."*  
– Marcus Aurelius

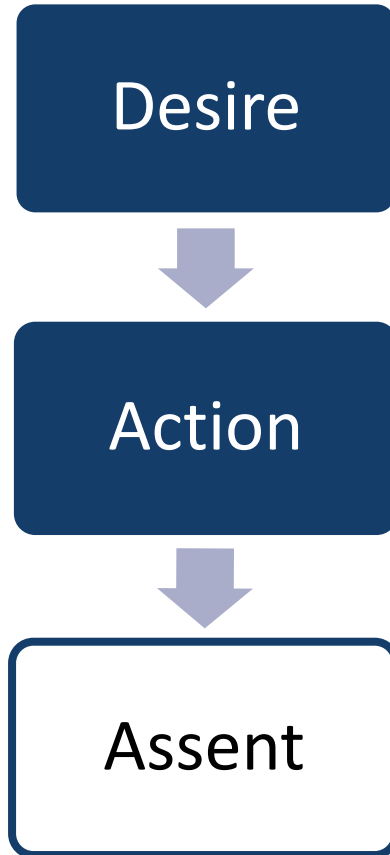


- Fostering a flourishing love for mankind
- Embracing the results of one's actions
- Establishing a connection between Justice and philanthropy
  - Justice

# The Discipline of Assent

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*"Choose not to be harmed, and you won't feel harmed. Don't feel harmed, and you haven't been." - Marcus Aurelius*



- Living in Accord with Reason & Truthfulness
- Monitoring & Evaluating Judgements
  - Wisdom

# Askesis: The Path to Inner Transformation

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## ■ Meaning of Askesis

- Derived from ancient Greek, meaning "exercise" or "training."
- Practical discipline for self-transformation

## ■ Purpose of Askesis

- Cultivating wisdom and virtue
- Developing resilience and inner strength
- Attaining tranquility in the face of challenges

## ■ The Role of Askesis in the Stoic Way of Life

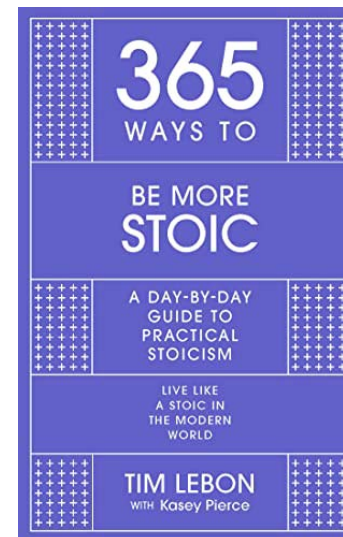
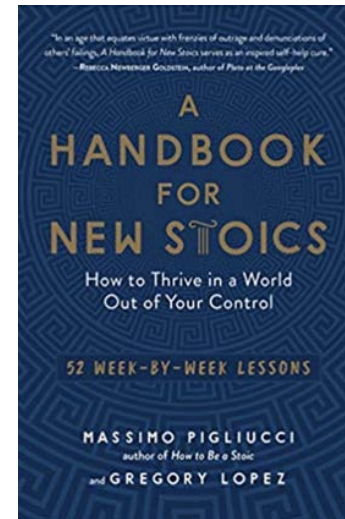
- Integration of philosophy into daily existence
- Transformation of attitudes, values, and behaviors



*Marcus Aurelius*

# Stoic Practices for Mindful Action and Self-Improvement

- **Self-Examination**
  - Regularly reflect on personal thoughts, actions, and emotions.
- **Journaling**
  - Keep daily records to note personal progress and areas for improvement.
- **Pre-meditation of adversities**
  - Imagine potential challenges to increase resilience.
- **View from above**
  - Visualize your life from a distant perspective for clarity and insight.
- **Indifference practice**
  - Concentrate on aspects within personal control, be indifferent to those outside it.
- **Negative visualization**
  - Imagine the loss of possessions or privileges to promote gratitude.



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## **Conclusion**

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# Why choose Stoicism as a life philosophy?

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## ■ Virtue and Ethics

- Stoicism provides a strong moral framework, focusing on virtue

## ■ Practicality

- Stoicism is a practical philosophy. It provides actionable advice on how to deal with real-life situations and emotional challenges.
- Stoicism is more about how to live than about theoretical constructs.

## ■ Emotional Management

- Stoicism offers a technique for managing negative emotions and cultivating positive ones. Strong negative emotions often stem from incorrect beliefs, and we can achieve a more balanced emotional state by working on changing these beliefs.

## ■ Mindfulness and the Present Moment

- Stoicism encourages us to focus on the present moment and not to worry too much about the past or the future. This aligns well with many principles of mindfulness and can contribute to a greater sense of well-being.

## ■ Living in Accordance with Nature

- Human nature: Pro-Social + Reason
- Applying reason to our decision-making improves both ourselves and society

# A Stoic Thought Experiment

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***"How might Stoicism assist Utilitarianism from the perspective of a Humanist?"***

————— **Here are three questions to consider** —————

***Stoicism might assist Utilitarianism to remedy its main critiques, for example:***

- Utilitarianism discounts individual rights and justice by often prioritizing overall happiness at the expense of individual rights or justice.

**Question 1: Can Stoic principles assist rule Utilitarianism?**

- Utilitarianism could theoretically require extreme sacrifices from individuals if it would lead to greater overall happiness.

**Question 2: Can Stoic threshold limits assist rule Utilitarianism?**

- Utilitarianism relies on measuring and comparing conscious experiences, which are subjective phenomena that are difficult to compare across individuals.

**Question 3: Can the Stoic virtues assist preference Utilitarianism?**