



# THE STOIC

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## Stoic morality

### CHUCK CHAKRAPANI

Morality is said to exude charisma. From Socrates to Gandhi, people who held no formal power exuded moral authority and have attracted people drawn by their moral charisma.

The morality of a Stoic is based on Stoic virtues. When we practice the Stoic virtues – practical wisdom, justice, courage, and moderation - we practice Stoic morality.

#### Choosing our role models

But things are never that simple. Most of the time it is obvious to which direction the moral compass points. But not always. This is because just learning the concept is not enough. As Brittany Polat points out, learning these principles from a reliable source is important but not enough. The people we learn from should also be our role models. If our teachers don't have personal moral commitments, neither will we. When faced with a moral dilemma we can visualize our teachers: "What would [our role model] do?"

#### Balancing our obligations with our morality

As Stoics, we place little value on externals such as money, job and the like. But where does this leave us if we need money or a job to look after those we are concerned about? How do we reconcile the virtue of justice (which includes caring for others) with ignoring the externals? Meredith Kunz considers this problem and offers suggestions as to how to walk this fine line. In the final analysis, what we can be sure in offering to others are our trustworthiness, patience, temperance, cooperativeness, and

to maintain good relations with others.

#### Placing emphasis on indifferents

A major impediment to Stoic morality is to ignore virtue but instead concentrate on indifferents like money and power. Concentrating on an indifferent like wealth, while disregarding virtue almost completely, fails to notice the importance of cultivating a virtuous character. It falls short because it focuses on "Stoic" life hacks for the accumulation of wealth rather than on how one learns not to make moral errors, says Kai Whiting.

#### Irony animated by despair

Irony is a way of looking at life that can seem vigorous, witty, and subversive, but it fosters moral disengagement and alienation, says Sharon Lebell. It militates against unguarded, open-hearted expressions of truth. Sincerity is the unsung attitude one brings to living a truthful life. From the point of view of irony culture this could seem vulnerable and uncool but Stoics know better.

#### Controlling our desires of opinion

We have desires of need - such as food when we are hungry and water when we are thirsty. They can be, and are, easily satisfied. And then there are desires of needs – wealth, power, food and drinks that far exceed our needs. These desires are insatiable and this is where we, as Stoics, need to practice moderation.

Also in this issue, Piotr Stankiewicz talks about dealing with stress from a Stoic perspective.