



Is there a case for God?

Part 2

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Ancient Stoics talked a lot about God or gods. But who is this Stoic God? Does the Stoic God even remotely resemble what we mean by God (in a Judaeo-Christian sense)? In this miniseries, Kai Whiting explores these questions.

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In Part 1, I put forward the case that accepting the existence of the Stoic God was a profoundly rational position that did not contradict contemporary scientific discoveries. As promised, I will now discuss how the Stoic God can help you connect more deeply with Nature.

The Stoic God is envisioned in the pantheistical sense, which means that God is embedded in Nature and does not exist outside of it. As with most pantheist beliefs, the transcendental experience is one that is deeply interwoven with natural processes. It is obtained through the leading of an environmentally sensitive way of life that is both self-aware and conscious of the needs of other humans, non-human animals, and plants. Personally, I find that this is the most direct and sensible way to interpret Zeno's call to "Live according to Nature".

A Stoic's reverence for Nature is a product of Stoic theology, which emphasizes the providence of Earth's natural system, as the giver and sustainer of life (words typically used

to describe God). It also highlights the duty of care that Stoics have towards the environment. An environmentally considerate lifestyle also aligns with Musonius Rufus' calls for simplicity and frugality – actions that don't give rise to the environmental destruction we now see, caused as it is by greed and caprice.

Stoicism is not a faith, nor does it call us to have a faith in science. Instead, it calls us to act virtuously, as dictated to us by our roles and the facts at hand. To obtain facts, we must be committed to observing reality and collecting empirical evidence. Under a Stoic framework, collecting facts is not an end but rather the means with which we can all seek the cosmopolitan harmony that Zeno dreams of in his utopic visions that constitute his Republic. Acknowledging facts helps to understand what is at stake and prevents us from mistaking false impressions for truth.

If you find yourself doubting the connection between the Stoic God and the environment, ask yourself this: How just, wise or self-controlled, is it to encroach upon wildlife populations and squeeze them out of existence? How just, wise or self-controlled, is it to value money or financial shares over clean air and water? Surely, being wise requires a realistic outlook on the problem and an ability to recognize

that a commitment to virtue is the only thing that will lead to human flourishing and planetary health. I believe that it is only by acknowledging the essence of God in everything around you that you can fully appreciate Marcus Aurelius' advice to take the "view from above." In other words, God's eye view allows you to recognize that everyone is merely part of a limb that belongs to a much bigger animal – one you can choose to work for or against.

In my mind, reflecting deeply on the universe's interconnected and interdependent web frees us to pursue truth based on respect for Nature, which is surely the foundation for a more accurate, fairer, and kinder path to happiness. Can we progress along such a path by removing God from the mix? Perhaps. But the ancient Stoics didn't seem to think so, and I myself remain unconvinced. In Part 3, I will delve into a more personal story about how my belief in the Stoic God has affected my day-to-day decisions and how it might affect your own.

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