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Synopsis: In my Junior undergraduate year in early 2014, I attended a Stoicism-centric philosophy class. Among our first tasks as students was writing out our impression of what relevance Stoicism currently held in our lives. My response details the impact Stoic philosophy has in my moment-to-moment thought process, and it's apparent effects on my behavior over time.

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Stoicism is a reference against which I may evaluate the quality and integrity of my life. I am able to refer to the actions, speech, and behaviors of those that dedicated their lives to understanding and embodying "the good life." Through Stoicism, I can withstand great stresses without being compromised or losing perspective. I am able to maintain peace, integrity, and independence of mind in the presence of people in positions of power.¹

I am thankful for all I have in times of prosperity and difficulties. I have learned to accept everything I experience with a frame of mind that accounts for the cause of the experience, its composition, its relationship to myself, and its function and relationship to the world. Every hardship is an opportunity best suited to confronting it. Every situation is an opportunity to learn from others, whatever the context.²

Stoicism allows me to perceive the human role in nature and act in accordance with it. I have come to see the human race in the frame of a commonwealth with a symbiotic nature with the physical nature of the world. The common link between human beings is the faculty of reason. Reason is the quality that makes us rational animals. Human beings are social creatures that must work together in order to

¹ The last sentence of this paragraph refers to several situations, such as one in which the philosophy and sociology programs at my university were under threat of moratorium (and my response), and another in which I visited the state capital as a student representative in a bid to convince officials to secure funding for state universities. I assessed everything that I did during these circumstances by the precedents set by the ancient Stoics.

² I refer here to Marcus Aurelius' and Epictetus' practice of viewing each situation in terms of its individual parts, asking ourselves what our role is in relation to these parts, the function of the parts in the order of the universe, our role in relation to the universe itself, and what use we might make of these parts as practicing Stoics. Continually reminding ourselves of the transient nature of external things allows us to better and more securely appreciate preferable things (for the time we have them) and withstand difficulties (for the time they last).

survive, with a pervading desire to communicate. In a word, Stoicism has enabled me to perceive others as brothers and sisters; not by blood, but by design by whatever forces that be.³

Stoic philosophy allows me to place all assignments of value on doing my best, and doing the right thing. I take full responsibility for my words and actions. I focus intently on determining the foundation of my judgments, choices, and decisions, and I survey them for quality, purpose, and consistency.⁴

Stoicism allows me to calmly bear with losses, and mentally prepare myself for losses to come. It affords me the ability to see the connection between these losses to Nature's global patterns. This permits me to understand, account for, and better weather the more difficult and taxing aspects of human life. In a word, I am better able to "accept things for what they are" in regards to necessary life events without being utterly compromised should they happen – at least thus far.⁵

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³ The human role in Nature is to live in accordance with it through careful self-examination and exercise of our rational and social faculties. Our reasoning abilities enable us to recognize the patterns and mechanics that make up our world. We are then empowered to determine how our particular qualities as a social and rational beings are integrated into this order.

⁴ The nature of Stoic practice is highly personal. No one is closer to one than oneself; the true nature of intentions, judgments, opinions, desires, and fears is discoverable and limited only to oneself. Paraphrasing Epictetus, a Stoic teacher can only accomplish so much; if a student is failing to properly apply Stoic tenets, the fault is either the teacher's, the student's, or in parts both. Yet the student's earnest efforts to apply the philosophy are a necessary condition in advancing. The practicing Stoic is both the craftsman and the material.

⁵ At this point in my life I had experienced things that I was certain would have completely overwhelmed me prior to my taking up Stoicism. At the same time, I was keenly aware that there would be more difficult, severe hardships I might face later on. All the while I was careful not to assert to myself that I definitively knew my full grasp of Stoic tenets. This thought process continues to the current day – I am experiencing new variations of difficult themes I'm aware many persons (past and present) have experienced, and that these difficulties serve as valuable tests and experience for practice.