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Chapter 1

Stoicism: A Philosophy for Our Time

As we write these words and then you read them, AI may be taking the world by storm. Yes, Artificial Intelligence, but also at the same time, Ancient Ideas. And to be more specific, some powerful perspectives from Stoic philosophers of long ago are suddenly spreading across contemporary culture in many countries at once and making a big difference in people's lives and work. Ancient Stoicism, born in Greece and then refreshed and in a sense rebranded in imperial Rome, can help you think in new and powerful ways about the challenges and opportunities you face every day. Its aim is to free you from whatever troubles you and may be holding you back. Its purpose is to give you a new form of strength and courage that's crucial in such a turbulent and uncertain world that we all face right now. And it's rooted in the greatest source of power for good that you have: your character.

In this chapter, we look at what's behind the current appeal of this very old and yet revolutionary way of thinking, feeling, and acting. And in the process, we can rediscover what's perhaps the most profoundly useful view of philosophy ever developed.

A Way of Thought for Our Time

In just the last few years, Stoic philosophy has suddenly become wildly popular around the world, gaining massive attention across such diverse cultural domains as business, sports, entertainment, and the military. Books about the Stoics and their ideas are selling in the millions and hitting national bestseller lists over and over. Podcasts, websites, online discussion groups, and even sales of Stoic-themed T-shirts, medallions, and coffee mugs are surging. Tattoo artists are turning out renderings of Greek and Latin words, variously placed on the bodies of adherents to this ancient philosophy. Public speakers are picking up on the trend. There are business meetings, professional sports team gatherings, and military mindset training sessions that now focus on Stoic ideas. Top executives at banks, hospitals, tech companies and manufacturing firms are waking up and coming alive to the possibilities that Stoic ideas awaken. And at college campuses across the country, overflowing classes are now being offered on Stoicism, while even much younger students are beginning to show an interest.

It may be that this surprising trend is in part a rebound effect from a widespread sense of cultural distress, and even an entertainment industry in dynamic interplay with it, that in many ways have together become increasingly coarse, loud, and superficial over the years. It could also be a reaction against the toxic aspects of social media, the ever-growing stressors of modern work and family life, the decline of organized religion, and the increasing political ugliness on display around the world. In addition, this development might in part be a reasonable response to all the fear and uncertainty highlighted by the many new dangers of sudden lethal violence in everyday life, an ongoing global war on terrorism and gang threats that has no clear end in sight, and increasingly obvious and catastrophic climate change. Then, add in all the fast-paced economic and technological disruption that threatens to increase more, along with emerging threats to democracy and world peace, the lingering effects of the last Great Recession and, of course, the frightening and massively destabilizing Covid-19 pandemic.

While artificial general intelligence looms over us as both a great promise and big peril, and we're often told a large asteroid careening through space just might have us in the crosshairs, it's understandable that people want to get their bearings, calm down, and find ways of dealing with all the dangers and challenges that surround us. Whatever the sources are of this new hunger for a sense of purpose, personal meaning, inner strength, mental balance, and resilience in life, Stoicism as a result is going viral. There is a huge new desire expanding through many parts of the world for more information on the ideas deriving from this school of ancient Greek and Roman thought that has influenced major thinkers from distant times to the present day.

Hot philosophy in America

It's rare for any form of philosophy to become highly popular in the United States, where we the co-authors live, and where a great deal of this new interest in the Stoics has been centered. To be blunt, our nation is a country that's often considered a nonintellectual or even anti-intellectual place of practical-minded "doers." But philosophy in fact has made major incursions into American life before.

During our founding period, the political ideas of thinkers like Aristotle, John Locke, David Hume, and Charles de Montesquieu were widely discussed. For a couple of decades in the late 19th century, the thoughts of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and many other philosophers in New England, within and around a form of thought known as transcendentalism, became common table talk among educated people and strongly influenced many aspects of life at the time. Then at the dawn of the 20th century, philosophers like William James and John Dewey sparked a brief boom across several decades in what came to be known as pragmatist philosophy, with ideas that filtered into many domains of American life.

Existentialism had a cultural run in the postwar 1940s and '50s, but mostly among the Beat poets, authors, artists, and musicians. Zen Buddhism and other Eastern philosophies then experienced a broad popularity in the 1960s and '70s, at first in what was broadly called the peace and love hippie counterculture, and then with widely spreading effects, spurred in part by the Beatles and other prominent celebrities and culture influencers, along with the increasing popularity of such healthful practices as yoga and meditation. And of course, the reverberation of that movement continues today.

But the current wave of fascination with Stoicism may be the biggest and broadest spread of interest in an ancient philosophy that America has ever seen. It certainly seems to be the fastest growing, at least if current trends continue.

The Stoic formula

At its core, the philosophy of Stoicism is about personal freedom, individual excellence, inner power, human equality, healthy communities, vibrant societies, and a radical recipe for inner tranquility and the possibilities of outer peace in the face of challenge, threat, adversity, massive uncertainty, and wildly unprecedented opportunity. We obviously live in a time of high anxiety, widespread throughout the population. While the dangers around us seem to be increasing at a rate never experienced before, our trusted institutions for helping us deal with the challenges of life appear to be stumbling and crumbling around us, throwing us more on our own in recent times. Where can we turn for help and resources?

Stoic philosophy seems to answer the life guidance needs that we now have in abundance. And a broad generalization may be safe to make about the motives most people have for their interest in it at present. Some people are attracted to Stoicism as a way to cope, while others see it as a way to conquer. But both these paths are based on developing inner character.

REMEMBER

In fact, if Stoicism had a general motto, it just might be:

To Cope and Conquer with Character.

Many people combine within themselves these two desires, to cope and conquer, to shun all feelings of victimization and emerge victorious from our crazy cauldron of modern challenges. Individuals who want both these things perceive in this ancient philosophy a collection of surprisingly novel resources they never suspected they could find in ancient thought and use for practical results. On the surface of Stoicism, there are many tips and techniques for thinking and acting in new ways that can be amazingly helpful for dealing with the stresses we all face, affording us a new sense of calm and confidence as we navigate our daily difficulties and race into the future.

What Does "Philosophy" Even Mean?

The word "philosophy" comes from two Greek root words: *philo,* meaning love, and *sophia*, meaning wisdom. In its origins, philosophy was thought to be, simply, "the love of wisdom." And of course, an object of love is always a distinctive thing: When you lack it, you pursue it, and when you have it, you embrace it. So, philosophy is etymologically the pursuit and embracing of wisdom, which is itself just embodied insight for living well.

The Roman lawyer, political advisor, and prominent Stoic author Seneca (4 BCE–65 CE) once put the insight like this:

> In the first place then, if you approve, I'll draw a distinction between wisdom and philosophy. Wisdom is the perfect good of the human mind. Philosophy is the love of wisdom and the endeavor to attain it. (*Letters* 89.4)

WARNING

In another place, Seneca says what he thinks philosophy isn't, as well as what it really is. And his words are as relevant now as they were in his day:

> Philosophy is no trick to catch the public — it's not devised for show. It's a matter not of words but of facts. It's not pursued so that the day may yield some

> amusement before it ends, or that our free time might be relieved of a tedium that irks us. It shapes and builds the soul. It orders our lives, guides our conduct, shows what we should do and what we should avoid. It sits at the helm and directs our course as we hesitate among uncertainties. Without it, no one can live fearlessly or with peace of mind. Countless things that happen every hour call for guidance, and such advice is to be sought in philosophy. (*Letters* 16.3)

Reflecting later on why he or anyone needs philosophy as a help in this world, the same Stoic thinker writes these words, as if addressing philosophy itself with his urgently felt needs:

> What should I do? Death is on my trail and life is slipping by. Teach me something I can use to face these troubles. Give me courage to meet hardships, make me calm in the face of the unavoidable. Relax the confines of the time allowed me. Show me that the good in life doesn't depend on life's length but on the use we make of it. (*Letters* 49.9–10)

We can see here the depth and urgent practicality of what Seneca seeks. He values philosophy and the wisdom it brings for its needed usefulness in helping us to use all other things well. To pursue and practice wisdom is the key to everything else. But then, what is wisdom, exactly? How should we think about it? Many people in our time seem to get it wrong.

What Wisdom Is and Is Not

Wisdom is never just a collection of short, clever, and insightful sayings about life. It's not mainly about slogans that could fit on a bumper sticker, ball cap, or T-shirt. In fact, it's never at all at its essence a matter of simple statements or propositions about the world, or even about living in it, but rather it's meant to be an inner reality within the soul, a progressively realized capacity of deep discernment for living well. When we attain a measure of genuine, authentic wisdom, we begin to grow stronger in it, or it begins to grow stronger in us. It's a lifetime adventure of deepening that will help any other adventure go better.

REMEMBER

Some aspects of this life-discernment can be captured in proverbs, aphorisms, or epigrams, but such statements at their best simply spark reminders, or new insight, a better orientation, a little needed tranquility, or a proper form of action in the world, and are never themselves the heart and soul of what wisdom really is. It's a state of heart and mind. And in saying that, we're using the ancient metaphor of the heart as referring to the center or core of our souls or selves in our fullness and complexity.

In a real sense, wisdom is a form of being in the world that doesn't live in sentences but in you, if you're wise. Wisdom is a state of mind and heart that affects your thoughts, feelings, attitudes, choices, and actions — forming and molding them all to better suit who you are and what the world is.

The prominent Stoic philosopher Epictetus ("ep-ic-TEE-tus," c. 55–c. 135 CE) once said this about philosophy and the wisdom it brings:

> What is it to do philosophy? Isn't it to prepare yourself for whatever happens? (*Discourses* 3.10.6)

The Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (121–180), another prominent Stoic thinker in his own right, and a man who had studied the thoughts of Epictetus, puts it this succinctly:

> What then can guide us through life? Only philosophy. (*Meditations* 2.17)


TIP

Essentially, wisdom is about two things — guidance and guardrails. It's then manifested in two ways. Imagine first a bright light shining forth in the darkness at the top of a steep hill far away, signaling where the key to your best life may be found. Wisdom is your ability to see and follow that light. Or envision wisdom alternatively as the capacity to use a GPS with directions giving you guidance on how to get to that illuminated hilltop. The road to it will be steep and twisty and there will be many dangers along the way.

The other aspect of wisdom, in augmentation of the guidance it gives, is the system of guardrails it provides. Like those low metal barriers found alongside modern roads through mountainous terrain, the guardrails of wisdom will protect you as you proceed and keep you from falling off the side of the road into an abyss, and crashing down in the valley below. Wisdom points you in the right direction and protects you as you go. Philosophy at its best is simply about pursuing and embracing the powerful inner and outer transformation that real wisdom can provide in your life.

Two sides of philosophy

These statements about philosophy and wisdom in the previous sections may surprise you if you've had an introductory philosophy course in almost any college or university in the past 50 years. About a hundred years ago, academic philosophy — the study of philosophy in the context of higher education — took a more formal or theoretical turn, perhaps in emulation of the natural sciences whose success and progress have been extraordinary.

And yet those sciences themselves were once part of philosophy. Throughout much of early modern history, the discipline of philosophy was divided into

"Natural Philosophy" and "Moral Philosophy." Natural philosophy was thought of simply as a study of the natural world in which we live. But as specific investigative techniques for learning more about various subject matters in the world began to be developed, natural philosophy gradually gave rise to the various disciplines of science that we know today, like biology, astronomy, physics, chemistry, psychology, and so on. In ancient times, it was the philosophers who studied all those things, trying to get their bearings in the world and seeking a deeper knowledge of the context in which we all live.

When the various empirical sciences defined themselves as distinct disciplines and spun off from the mothership of philosophical endeavor, a set of topics then broadly referred to as "moral philosophy" was basically what remained. It was mostly about us as people, as selves, and about our main forms of engagement with the broader world, encompassing matters of ethics, epistemology, or the theory of knowledge, logic, the philosophy of language, social and political philosophy, metaphysics, philosophy of religion, aesthetics, and other such areas. In modern classrooms for the past century or so, an introduction to philosophy might tackle a variety of topics outside the range of issues addressed by the various natural sciences, but in some ways the methods of approach used by philosophers now could look quite similar.

When philosophy professors approach such things as the nature of knowledge, our understanding of goodness, or theories of political organization, they tend to engage in activities of conceptual exploration and technical argument that can seem much like the scientific pursuit of understanding that goes on across campus in the various science lecture rooms and labs, but without all the elaborate equipment and mathematical formulas. And yet, with a focus on theory and a strict formalization of investigation meant to arrive at accurate and helpful theories, philosophy during the past century unintentionally but increasingly moved farther away from such issues as meaning and purpose, or how best to live and be in the world, questions that we all eventually confront in our daily lives and that modern Stoicism takes as its focus. From ancient times, Stoicism had theories about the world and our lives, but the purpose of theory was to provide for practice, to suggest ideas for daily living.

TIP

We can make something like a rough division, running through the centuries, of two contrasting forms of philosophy:

- Theoretical philosophy, which is about analysis, argument, and the advancement of our ideas
- Practical philosophy, which is about analysis, argument, and the advancement of our lives

There's a sense in which the fruit of analysis and argument in the one case is an assessment that provides a new twist in our intellectual understanding, and in the

other case, it's more like a new orientation or form of advice, which looks like a new twist on interpreting, feeling, and doing. But both endeavors count as proper philosophy, and each should relate to the other, because all is, in the end, somehow one.

And by the way, the best and deepest advice for living well will often look more like musings based on theory rather than like imperatives, nudges, or even helpful suggestions. The best theory advises us on new ways of thinking about something that puzzles us, which can then apply to the rough and tumble of daily life as well as to the theoretical conundrums of the seminar room. The founding Stoic philosophers did a lot of theorizing, but their ultimate intent and aim was practical. As Seneca writes:

> Philosophy is both theoretic and practical; it contemplates and at the same time acts. (*Letters* 95.10)

Philosophy and life

As an aside, we should point out that vocal critics of philosophy — who frequently don't really know what they're talking about because they've never been serious students of the discipline — often complain about the study of philosophy, and especially its theoretical side, for never making any progress throughout the centuries. But this is just false. Ancient thinkers, philosophers during the Middle Ages, Enlightenment figures, 19th- and 20th-century intellectuals, and many professors of the subject in our time have made tremendous progress in understanding very difficult matters, and in many ways. But there are of course some subjects and ultimate issues that make theoretical leaps forward extremely difficult. Marcus Aurelius says:

> Things are wrapped in such a veil of mystery that many good philosophers have found it impossible to make sense of them. (*Meditations* 5.10)

He then adds in the same passage:

> Even Stoics have trouble.

We all hit intellectual limits eventually. But Marcus quickly turns from a concern with theoretical understanding and its boundaries to the more practical side of philosophy, and says to himself, in his capacity as emperor:

> Don't be a Caesar drunk on power and self-importance — it happens all too easily. Keep yourself simple, good, pure, sincere, natural, just, god-fearing, kind, affectionate, and devoted to your duty. Strive to be who your training in philosophy prepared you to be. Stay in awe of your Source and serve humanity. Life is short.

> The only good fruit to be harvested in this world requires a pious disposition and charitable conduct. (*Meditations* 6.30)

Many students for a very long time have signed up for a first philosophy course hoping to get their bearings in the world, and have discovered to their surprise that the professor seemed to spend most of the time talking about words like "Truth" or "Knowledge" or "Good" or "Justice" along with other bits of language that were then mined relentlessly for their conceptual content, to see precisely what ideas might lie behind them. But the Stoic teacher Epictetus, talking with one of his students who wanted to go give his own lecture on theory in such a way, focused on words, asks him:

> Is it for this then that young men should leave their homelands and parents, to come and listen to you interpret words? When they get back home, shouldn't they be people who are tolerant, helpful, imperturbable, and serene? Shouldn't they be furnished with equipment for the journey of life that will empower them to endure everything that happens to them, and to endure it well and in a way that's a credit to them? (*Discourses* 3.21.8,9)

REMEMBER

We often think we need information when the real need is transformation. In the ancient world, philosophy was meant to be a transformative path, a way of life, and not just a mode of thinking, or the cumulative and codified results of such thinking. Philosophy was and is a particular embrace of life, along with a release of whatever gets in our way of living with inner peace, real excellence, and full flourishing in this world with others, while helping other people around us to do the same thing in a manner that's right for them.

The Stoics also dealt with words, of course, and the ideas encoded in those words, or else we wouldn't have their teachings available to us today. But they always used their words and ideas with a practical end in view. Elsewhere, Epictetus says:

> What's the fruit of these ideas? There could be no better or more proper fruit for people who are receiving a real education than tranquility, fearlessness, and freedom. (*Discourses* 2.1.21)

He even indicates later that he wants to help his students become good people who, precisely because of that goodness, are in a sense invincible. And this can never come from just collecting, reading, and memorizing philosophical ideas. It will only result from living them. In another passage Epictetus says:

> It's one thing to have bread and wine stored away, and another to use them. When you take something in, it's digested and distributed around the body and turns into muscle, flesh, bones, blood, a good complexion, and good lungs. Stored things may be available for you to bring out and display whenever you want, but they don't do you any good at all, apart from gaining a reputation for having them. (*Discourses* 2.9.18)

TIP

It's in the end not what we have collected or know, but what we do with what we know, and what we become because of it, that matters most.

PRESENT DAY PHILOSOPHERS ON STOIC PHILOSOPHY

Many philosophers in our own day have rediscovered Stoic wisdom. Here's a sample of what they say about it.

"Stoicism is a practical philosophy for everyday life. It's about being in control of your emotions and not letting them control you." —Massimo Pigliucci

"The Stoics believed that true happiness comes from within, not from external circumstances." —William B. Irvine

"Stoicism is the philosophy of courage. It teaches us to face our fears and overcome them." —Stephen Hanselman

"Stoicism is the philosophy of personal responsibility. It teaches us to focus on what we can control and let go of what we cannot." —Donald Robertson

"Stoicism is a philosophy of personal ethics informed by its system of logic and its views on the natural world." —Nancy Snow

"Stoicism is about finding inner peace and happiness through acceptance, not by avoiding negative emotions." —Tanner Campbell

"Stoicism is a philosophy that emphasizes reason, ethics, and personal responsibility." —Brad Inwood

"Stoicism is a way of life that emphasizes the development of self-control and the acceptance of what we cannot control." —John Sellars

"Stoicism . . . teaches how to live a supremely happy and smoothly flowing life and how to retain that even in the face of adversity." —Jonas Salzgeber

"Above all, Stoicism aims to make you skillful at life. . . . It sculpts your moral character into someone who is content, joyful, resilient, and able to take actions that make the world a better place." —Matthew J. Van Natta

Using Wisdom with the Stoics

In this section, we're going to stick with the quotable Epictetus for a moment more. He was often concerned over some of his young students who came to study with him to learn a bit of theory about the world, and perhaps even more theory about our ways of living in the world, and were enjoying themselves so much that they wanted to stay in school and stick with theory as a sort of refuge from the world, instead of taking their new insights back into the world. When you read Epictetus, you quickly realize what a good teacher he was — full of great stories, images, metaphors, analogies, and even jokes. He was vivid and memorable. He comments in an interesting metaphorical way on those students who get really excited about the study of philosophy and seem to want to live only in their ideas, books, and seminar rooms. Imagining a conversation about such a person, and with such a person, he says this:

> But what happens is that people behave like someone who's on his way back to his homeland when he passes a great inn, and it delights him so much that he stays there. "Man, you've forgotten your purpose. You weren't traveling *to* the inn but *past* it." — "But it's really nice." — "There are plenty of nice inns, and lots of pretty meadows, too, but only as places on the way. You have a different mission, to return to your home and put an end to your family's fear, and to engage in your duties as a citizen by getting married, raising children, and holding the customary offices. You didn't come into the world to go around finding pleasant locations to enjoy, surely, but *to live* where you were born and where you're a citizen." (*Discourses* 2.23.36–39)

We were born into this world to live in and with its challenges as well as its opportunities, with its discomforts and conveniences, its pains and its pleasures, and are meant to use philosophy as a way of doing so, across all circumstances, wisely and well. But how can we do this? We need some sound advice, some helpful guidance. And philosophy offers exactly that.

The prominent Stoic thinker and highly placed political advisor Seneca speaks about this to one of his friends and writes in a letter:

> Do you really want to know what philosophy offers humanity? Philosophy offers counsel. (*Letters* 48.8)

And in another place, he says even more succinctly:

> Philosophy is good advice. (*Letter*s 38.1)

WARNING

This is not always what we get in modern philosophy classes and academic philosophy books. Seneca saw the problem even in his time. He writes:

> We're taught how to debate, not how to live. (*Letters* 95.14)

There is of course nothing wrong with debate. Ideas are often developed through it. And people can discover truth or become persuaded of it through the reasoned presentation of ideas in the form of rational argument that is found in debate. But while debate can be a useful technique of philosophy, it's never the point of it.

Seneca makes the same point and expands on it in a latter correspondence. Our teachers can make mistakes in how they present philosophy to us, and we then often go on to repeat the same errors that we've been open to emulating because of our own inappropriate motives:

> There are indeed mistakes made through the fault of our advisors who teach us how to debate and not how to live. There are also mistakes made by the students who come to their teachers to develop not their souls but their wits. (*Letters* 108.23)

WARNING

Young philosophy students recently introduced to the power of sound reasoning easily become arrogantly argumentative, intensely critical of others and their ideas, and simply insufferable know-it-alls. They can become exactly the wrong sort of ambassador for the philosophical life. Seneca wants to cut this off and writes to his younger friend who is making his way in the discipline of ideas, and is presumably proud of his progress:

> But you should never boast about philosophy, because if it's used with insolence and arrogance, it's been dangerous for many. Let philosophy strip off your faults, rather than helping you call out the faults of others. (*Letters* 103.5)

Happiness and freedom

Seneca is always bringing his initial reader and then all of us back to his view of what philosophy is all about:

> My advice is this: That all study of philosophy and all reading should be applied to the idea of living the happy life, that we should not hunt out archaic or outlandish words and eccentric metaphors and figures of speech, but that we should seek guidelines that will help us, statements of courage and spirit that may at once be transformed into realities. We should so learn them that words may become deeds. (*Letters* 108.35–37)

His correspondence partner is concerned about the many forces in life that he feels to be oppressive, and the difficult things we can't avoid, like disease and ultimately death. Seneca writes:

> You ask, "How can I free myself?" You can't escape necessities, but you can overcome them. It's said that: "By force a way is made." And this way will be given to you by philosophy. Go then to philosophy if you want to be safe, untroubled, happy, and ultimately if you wish to be — which is most important — free. There is no other way to attain this end. (*Letters* 37.4)

In another place he says about the ups and downs of life:

> The power of philosophy to blunt the blows of chance is beyond belief. (*Letters* 53.12)

And he writes:

> As much as you're able, take refuge with philosophy. She'll treasure you in her heart, and in her inner fortress you'll be safe, or at least more so than you were before. (*Letters* 103.4)

At a relatively advanced age, he says:

> Philosophy gives us this gift: It makes us joyful in the very sight of death, strong and brave no matter what physical condition we may be in, cheerful and never failing even if the body fails us. (*Letters* 30.3)

We often make fundamental mistakes in our approach to life that render us vulnerable to anxiety, worry, and fear. We sleepwalk through our days, far too often, and are surprised at what happens to us as a result. Seneca at one point concludes with this advice to his friend:

> Let us then rouse ourselves so that we can correct our mistakes. Philosophy, however, is the only power that can stir us, the only power that can shake off our deep slumber. Devote yourself wholly to philosophy. You're worth of her; she's worthy of you. Greet each other with a loving embrace. (*Letters* 53.8)

REMEMBER

Seneca has the view that, as long as we live, we should be learning how to live. And he's convinced that this will be provided by an ongoing training in philosophy. Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius seem wholeheartedly to agree.

When to go to philosophy

Marcus even expresses the idea that any situation is perfect for the study of philosophy, so no good excuses are ever available to anyone who would rather put it off until another time, and perhaps another situation. He basically says this to himself during a war, while he's leading the way in defending Rome: So you think you don't have time for philosophy because you're facing great pressures, perhaps exhaustion, and endless responsibilities? It's a surprising general truth that, because of the nature and universal applicability of philosophy:

> Clearly, no situation is better suited for the practice of philosophy than the one you're in right now. (*Meditations* 11.7)

At one point, the philosopher Seneca weighs in and suggests to his friend:

> Find a list of the philosophers. That very act will compel you to wake up when you see how many men have been working for your benefit. You'll want to be one of them yourself. For this is the most excellent quality the noble soul has within itself, that it can be roused to honorable things. (*Letters* 39.2)

He later adds this great thought:

> Philosophy did not find Plato already a nobleman; it made him one. (*Letters* 44.3)

TIP

We should go to philosophy for clear ideas and helpful principles, and the most useful of these are meant to lead to practices — habits and routines of thought, feeling, and action that will put the ideas into play in the tough and wonderful world around us, transforming us along the way so that we can become, be, do, and feel all that is our calling as alert, alive, conscious beings of reason. We are all on a journey that can often perplex us, but that will also develop and grow us when we let it. And philosophy can help us with that.

If you're intrigued by what these Stoics have to say about philosophy and its proper role in life, then read on. There aren't many schools of thought in our time that make such promises and offer such perspectives. You may find here much that you can use. You might even become a Stoic yourself. But the aim of the great Stoics of the past wasn't really to recruit and make other people Stoics, but rather to help us all become good people, ready for life and well prepared to live in all the best ways.