

Of the post-Aristotelian schools, Stoicism, which was founded by Zeno (334-262 B.C.), maintained that philosophy & study of nature serve to promote a particular way of life; nature was rational & purposeful, & such a life, then was not to be aimed at pleasure [Epicureanism], but virtue. They sought happiness through wisdom, a wisdom of which to control what lay within human power & to accept with dignified resignation what had to be. Stoics were profoundly influenced by Socrates who faced death with serenity & courage. To have super control over the emotions in the face of death, Socrates served as an authentic exemplar to follow.

A. Wisdom & Control vs. Pleasure:

1. **Aimed at happiness through wisdom, not pleasure.**
2. **Wisdom involved controlling what laid within our power & acknowledgement that we can't control all events, but we can control our attitude.**

Epictetus wrote:

“Demand not that events should happen as you wish; but wish them to happen as they do happen, & you will go on well.”

3. Control one's attitudes by creating a mental picture of what the world must be like & how we fit into this world

4. **The world is an orderly arrangement where humans & physical things behave according to principles of purpose:**

(a) All of nature operates according to reason & law; (b) Reliance upon the idea that God is a rational substance existing in all of nature, in all things; (c) God is a pervading substantial form of reason that control & orders the whole structure of nature whereby God determines the course of events.

Since universal reason directs every activity of the world, each event must be purposed. As a result, optimism can emerge because not matter what happens, it is the result of the of the necessary actions guided by universal reason pervading all of nature-**this must be the best of all possible worlds. Thus, choose to be optimistic; it is up to you.**

B. Stoic Theory of Knowledge: Sensation-Based

1. Epistemology is important for 2 reasons (1) They laid the foundation for the materialistic theory of nature & (2) provided the basis for their conception of truth or certainty.
 2. Like Epicureans, they believe all knowledge is built upon & presupposes sensations, but unlike Epicureans, they do not believe that all sensations are equally trustworthy-for some are true & others are false, just as common sense suggests. Thus, the problem is how to tell which sensations are true ones, esp. if all we have to go on are the sensations themselves.
 3. Their basis for materialistic theory of knowledge & truth stems from their account of the origin of ideas: words express thoughts; thoughts are originated by the impact of some object upon the mind. The mind is blank at birth & builds up its store of ideas as it is exposed to objects. These objects make impressions upon the mind through the sense of vision like a seal leaves its imprint on the wax. Repeated exposure increases number of impressions, develops out of memory, & enables us to form more general conceptions beyond the objects immediately before us.
 4. A judgment that something is “good” or “true” is the product of the mechanical process of impressions. Our thinking starts with impressions.
 5. How we know which sensations are true from those that are false are because “cataleptic sensations” (cataleptic is formed from Greek noun, *katalepsis*: “grasping or seizing”) we experience. These sensations are true & more importantly carry with it their own mark of truth. When we have these sensations we can't help but assent to them for they “seize” our assent. Cataleptic sensations are the Stoic criteria of truth.
 6. Knowledge is assent incapable of being overturned. The cataleptic sensations is its foundation. All of our knowledge (directly or indirectly) is built upon sensations. Without them, knowledge would be impossible.

7. Everything that happens, happens for a reason as dictated by the plan & purpose of the cosmos. Everything must be as it is because its occurrence is rationally dictated by the determinative force of reason. Thus, every event in this rational world is both rational & necessary. Universal reason directs the occurrence of what does happen. Thus, every event is what is rationally possible. As a result, everything that happens must happen & there is nothing we can do about it. What occurs must occur. The only thing that is not necessary is the realm of thought. One can either accept or reject, in the mind, the course of events.

C. Matter as Basis for All Reality:

1. The nature that this sensation-based knowledge reveals is one that is subject to rational order: (a) All that is real is material; (b) Everything in the whole universe is a form of matter. thus, Stoics embrace a materialistic conception of the world. (c) **All living creatures are a compound of matter & form;** (d) **Matter is an indeterminate passive principle** whereas **form is a determining active principle** (its nature or governing principle): e.g., for humans it is reason; (e) Neither can exist apart from the other.

D. God is in Everything:

1. To say that God is fire, force, or *logos*, or rationality & that God is in everything leads us to the idea that of all of nature is filled with the principle of reason or purpose: (a) The material substance of God is mixed with what otherwise would be motionless matter; (b) matter behaves the way it does because of the principle of reason; (c) The continued behavior of matter in accordance with reason is called natural law, the law or principle of a things's nature. (d) Thus, the material world is pervaded by this “dynamic force” which acts purposefully, not mechanically. (e) This “dynamic force” or “reason”, which may be described as the “soul of the universe,” “universal reason”, “god,” or “cosmic power” organizes & governs the entire universe from within (not from outside of the universe). (f) Reason is the guiding principle of the world (totality). In individual things there is a rational element that controls it.

E. World is Fully Deterministic:

1. All things are under the control of the logos. The order of the whole world is based upon the unity of all its parts & what unifies the whole structure of matter is fiery substance that permeates everything.
2. What happens is not just the only possible result of the pre-existing conditions, it is the best possible result of those conditions-for to think otherwise would be to suppose reason, the *logos*, god, or providence does not aim at the “good.”