

AUG - SEP 2019

# THE ACROPOLITAN

*A Magazine on Philosophy, Culture & Volunteering*



## FEATURE

Philosophy & Religion:  
What is the Difference?

Health for the Soul

Epigenetics – How to Lead Our Live

Stoic Nuggets of Wisdom

Schedule of Public Events

  
NEW ACROPOLIS



PHILOSOPHY

CULTURE

VOLUNTEERING

# THE ACROPOLITAN

In Ancient Greece, the Acropolis referred to the sacred centre, that lay higher than the rest of the city. It was a place of inspiration; a bridge that enabled citizens to connect to the divine, evoking the expression of the higher human virtues. Deriving inspiration from its purpose, The Acropolitan Magazine serves as a tribute to every citizen yearning for these higher principles in all aspects of Life: **Truth, Beauty, Justice, Goodness.**



**PHILOSOPHY** when practical, helps us to know and improve ourselves. It is a way of life, not an intellectual attitude, committed to the best aspirations of humanity.



**CULTURE** broadens our understanding of life, and fosters a spirit of mutual respect and solidarity, strengthening human dignity and facilitating harmonious coexistence.



**VOLUNTEERING** is the natural expression of a spirit of union with life and humanity, which manifests in the practice of values such as unselfishness, commitment and striving for the common good.

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10

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## Contents

### 04 Health for the Soul

By Delia Steinberg Guzman

### 06 Footsteps of an Ancient Athenian

By Manjula Nanavati

### 10 Philosophy & Religion: What is the Difference?

By Pierre Poulain

### 15 Epigenetics How to Lead Our Lives

By Fernando Schwarz

### 18 Stoic Nuggets of Wisdom

By Vineet Lalan

### 22 Schedule of Public Events

## From The Editorial Desk

Dear Reader,

This issue of The Acropolitian Magazine is an invitation for the idealist-philosopher, who takes real responsibility, and seeks to empower real change in the world, leading by his own personal example. Such a person dares to transcend the boundaries of his comforts, to dig deep within, and encounter the “well-spring of good”. And the health of his soul expresses itself in the manner in which he conducts his life, choosing a measured response to each circumstance, each moment an opportunity to serve!

Our world today needs heroes who, despite the array of personal, professional, and financial obligations, dare to encounter the mystical dimension of life, by honoring a human being’s ethical duty. The articles that follow investigate WHY this is so necessary, and HOW we might set off on such a philosophical adventure. Let us together, Discover, Awaken, and Transform!

Hariato H Mehta, *Editor.*



ge Courtesy: by BenKode / unsplash / CCO

# Health for the Soul

**By Delia Steinberg Guzman**

*Delia Steinberg Guzman is the President of International Organization New Acropolis.*

Concerns about all sorts of issues are increasing around the world, survival is becoming more and more difficult in many countries, and confrontations for the most absurd reasons are on the rise, however important they may seem to those involved. Yet, in spite of all of this, there is a growing desire to achieve a better level of health.

Of course, this is not the case everywhere in the world. How can one desire good health when there is no food or water, when terrible epidemics strike with little apparent cause? We are referring here to the so-called developed countries in general, although

even there it is also becoming difficult to keep up a certain standard of living. In those countries, however, health has become a constant concern. And not only health, but also food.

*If our mind is not in a good condition, if our emotions are disordered, if we fall into excesses of tiredness and hyperactivity, what can we expect from the body, which is the mirror of ourselves?*

It is surprising to see that, as hundreds of people are juggling to ensure that their money lasts until the end of the month, there are increasing problems of obesity and being overweight, starting with children. While for others extreme thinness has become an obsessive fashion.

Either we are becoming decidedly contradictory, or we don't want to analyze what is happening around us.

Let us look at the best of situations, that is, when we have the opportunity to fill our shopping basket with all sorts of goods. We are so saturated with different kinds of advertising that we no longer know what is good and what is bad for our health. In the end, we mistrust everything that is offered to us...

While one product is hyped up by some to be the



Jonny Atiad / Vinsplash



ultimate panacea for wellness and anti-ageing, there are others who denigrate it as a life-threatening poison. What do we do? Who is right and how do we make a calm choice about what is most suitable for us?

Totally opposing diets are promoted; what is approved of by some is vilified by others.

In the same way, many health treatments are called into doubt; what was positive yesterday is no longer recommended today and even banned. Age-old techniques are abandoned as being harmful, while new experimental treatments are welcomed, even if their final results are not entirely known. We hear a lot of talk about the placebo effect of some medicines, to the extent that one wonders: and if it is true, what does it matter, as long as it makes us feel better? Might this widely proclaimed "placebo effect" not perhaps include some other functions of the human body that are set in motion by particular stimuli?

The issue of food (for those who are able to feed themselves) we will leave in the hands of experts. Although we are convinced that the Earth should receive better treatment from those who exploit it. Industrialisation, competition in production and prices have meant that natural products have ceased to be natural. What a paradox! Organic items are much more expensive than those that come to us from large-scale distributors.

We believe that we should look for a varied and simple diet; exaggerated flavourings do not come from the Earth but from our desires to embellish everything.

With regard to health, we are convinced that, apart from those diseases that have a well-defined origin in the body, many elements come from other aspects of ourselves. If our mind is not in a good condition, if our emotions are disordered, if we fall into excesses of tiredness and hyperactivity, what can we expect from the body, which is the mirror of ourselves?

A mind in a good condition has its ideas duly organised, avoiding doubts and conflicts between different ideas, which never lead to the necessary clarity. A healthy mind also helps to organise the body.

With the emotions, it is not just about them being disordered – which they tend to be – they become harmful when they allow themselves to be absorbed by resentment, envy, jealousy, aggression, suspicion of plots and slanders by others. This is indeed poisonous because, no matter what we eat, negative emotional flavourings can be very harmful to the digestion.

Do we know how to rest, regardless of the time we have available? Not if the mind is full of circular ideas and we are disturbed by emotions. In this way, we fall into excessive action so as "not to think", or into laziness in order "not to think about anything".

Health, which is affected by every aspect of the human being, including a good education based on the highest moral values, deserves everyone's special attention. It is possible that, if we all enjoyed good health, many of the world's problems would begin to be solved in all the areas which trouble us today. ★★★

# In the Footsteps of an Ancient Athenian

**By Manjula Nanavati**

*This article is the result of a trip I recently made to Athens, Epidaurus, Olympia and Delphi. Walking through its stunning archeology, pausing at monuments, and gazing spellbound at its sacred temples, I couldn't help but ponder what might have inspired such a civilization.*

Nursing at her bosom, Greece nurtured such an altitude of knowledge and amplitude of wisdom that it came to be called the cradle of Western Civilization. Herodotus, regarded as the Father of History, lived here. Solon envisioned the origins of Democracy here. Socrates, for some the Father of Philosophy, taught in its marketplaces. Phidias the sculptor created his monumental masterpieces to adorn its temples. Democritus conceptualized a cosmos built of atoms. Hippocrates, whose oath modern doctors still swear by, practiced here. Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles and Aristophanes molded theatre in its arenas. Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle established discipular schools here, and their insights became the foundation of modern mathematics, philosophy and science.

So influential was the Greek tradition in almost every sphere that even when the entire Greek Peninsula had become a province of Rome, it was Greek art, culture, language and learning, that was absorbed by Rome, leading the Roman poet Horace to remark, "Captive Greece captured her rude conqueror."

As the ruins came to life, a rich fabric of the daily activities of an ordinary citizen began to vividly weave itself together in my imagination, and my understanding of the Ancient Greek tradition deepened. Let us travel back in time, to retrace the steps of a fictional protagonist, Demetrius, on what might have been a typical day.

It is 400 BCE. Athens has gained political power, economic growth and cultural heights. Democracy has taken root and most of the city's inhabitants live in the polis. The agora is the centre of social, commercial and civic activity. It is a holiday today, and Demetrius is strolling through a busy market. He passes several majestic public buildings that



function as seats of government, and numerous beautiful temples dotted all over the agora, devoted to Apollo, Aries, and Zeus, where throngs of people enter with offerings. The Bouleuterion is quiet today. It is the place where offenders are tried in front of 500 citizens, who vote on their guilt or innocence.

Demetrius makes his way to the Monument of Heroes: 10 majestic bronze statues stand, signifying each of the 10 tribes of Athens. Every citizen belongs to one of these clans, membership of which confers rights and privileges as well as duties and obligations. Looking up at the imposing, handsome statues, Demetrius is reminded of each one's courage, and commitment to the ideals of Truth and Justice. On the pedestal below the statue of his clan, he reads pertinent notices: lists for military conscription, public honors, and of particular interest to him, the introduction of new legislation. He has come to partake in the lively discussion around the advantages and disadvantages of a new law, and to listen to the voices of those whom he respects. As he makes his way home, he weighs all that he has heard, for he knows that a society is only as just as the people that constitute it. How he would cast his vote if called upon, is a responsibility he must take very seriously.

That evening Demetrius, with his wife and young son, finds his way up the Sacred Path to the Acropolis, the higher city, to participate in the holiday festivities. Built elevated on a hill, this spiritual heart of the city is a collection of magnificent temples, dominated by the resplendent Parthenon dedicated to the goddess Athena, the patron goddess of the city. It is an architectural poem, an ode to beauty, proportion and harmony. Its 46 white marble columns, 10 meters high, tower over the polis below, and are visible from every part of the city. The moment your gaze travels upwards, they serve as a constant reminder of the sacred.

So influential was the Greek tradition in almost every sphere that even when the entire Greek Peninsula had become a province of Rome, it was Greek art, culture, language and learning, that was absorbed by Rome.



Demetrius and his family make their offerings to the colossal, glittering statue of Athena, and then move towards the Theatre of Dionysus, the arena dedicated to the God of Wine and Enthusiasm, and perhaps the most loved deity in Athens. They have watched many performances here; the tragedies of Sophocles and Aeschylus, and the comedies of Aristophanes. Demetrius chuckles at the memory of a particular comedy that he attended in his youth, which had made wry and mocking references to Socrates. He wondered if Socrates was fully aware of the rising antagonism towards him. But he concluded with admiration, that for a man like Socrates, nothing would deter his pursuit of truth.

The family seats itself amongst seventeen thousand spectators. Today, there is a musical competition, and Demetrius looks forward to acknowledging with cheers and tribute, the performances that will elevate the audience to an experience of Beauty, for that is understood to be the primary purpose of Art.

His son's chronic cough surfaces, and Demetrius exchanges a worried glance with his wife. Perhaps next week he will make the journey to Epidaurus to visit the Sanctuary of Asklepios, the God of Healing. There among priests and medical practitioners, his son would benefit from the hot springs, the cold baths, and the purifying ceremonies. With the enforced rest under eagle-eyed observation, and the administration of medicinal herbs and roots, Demetrius feels hopeful that his son will be healed, for he knows well that a healthy, robust body is vital, as a fitting receptacle and aid for a clear, elevated mind.

He wanted his son to be well for the Sacred Games at Olympia. He remembers the last games, 4 years ago with pleasure. The games had grown in prestige with the passing of time, and were part of a religious festival in honor of Zeus. Heralds were sent all over Greece to announce the festival dates, and military battles ceased in an Olympic truce, to guarantee safe passage to travelers arriving from all over the Mediterranean basin. The Games began with the lighting of a torch at the altar of Hera, the rising flame a symbol of purification and illumination, a result of right effort. Treasure was offered by each city-state at the Temple of Zeus, that housed Phidias's masterpiece, a 43-foot-high statue of Zeus in ivory and gold. Although the statue was breathtaking, Demetrius was captivated by the friezes depicting the 12 labors of Heracles. He remembered fondly explaining to his son that a hero is one who overcomes his human condition, dedicating his life to something greater than himself, using not just

A hero is one who overcomes his human condition, dedicating his life to something greater than himself, using not just strength, skill and daring, but intelligence, patience and humility.



Andy Montgomery / Flickr



strength, skill and daring, but intelligence, patience and humility.

Artistic competitions were a big part of the games, and poets, sculptors, musicians, and painters also showcased their works, competing for prizes. These were called the Musical Games, named for the Muses, the inspiring nine Goddesses of the arts, such as literature, music, dance, and drama. And artists were celebrated not just for their craft, but for their ability to transmit the aesthetic ideal as purely as possible.

At each of the sporting events, athletes competed in the nude as a symbol of purity, and as a tribute to the gods, for the gift of a healthy body that served as a temple for a healthy mind. Poets composed paeans for victors, and Demetrius had taken pleasure in pointing out to his son that while achievement was recognized, it was honor, fair play, and integrity that was gloriously applauded.

The various events included running, long jump, the discus throw, javelin, wrestling, and equestrian. But the chariot races were his favorite. As the thundering of the chariot wheels and the horses' hooves mingled with the roar of the immense crowds, Demetrius felt a sense of shared kinship with his fellow Athenians, a bond of fraternity and belonging, a sense of identity and a rousing spirit of honor.

Let us leave behind Demetrius and his family, as they partake of the public feast at the close of the evening. For a moment, let us ponder the life and times of Ancient Greece. Let us marvel at the minds that envisioned cities whose very design and function gave its citizens purpose, inspiration, and identity; the constant reminder to live up to the highest ideals, and a culture that fostered a connection with the sacred, through ethics, aesthetics, and metaphysics.

Perhaps my imagination paints an idyllic picture. But can we dare to emulate the men who sowed the seeds and watered the roots of trail-blazing ideas that flourished into a golden age of civilization?

Instead of looking outwards, let us look inwards, and reach for the higher city within ourselves, where lies the best of our human potential. Let us traverse the inner Sacred Path to reach an inner pinnacle, with perseverance, strengthening its foundation brick by brick, with heroic qualities: the daring to traverse the unknown, the courage of our convictions, and the steadfast commitment to lofty ideals. Let us build such a towering edifice on the golden pillars of Truth, Justice, Goodness and Beauty, as beacons to illuminate our direction forward, and as a shrine that strengthens our shared identity and purpose: a universal fraternity that strives together, reaching for the stars. ★★★



Arthur Yell / Zurnsplash

While achievement was recognized, it was honor, fair play, and integrity that was gloriously applauded.

COVER FEATURE

# Philosophy & Religion: What is the Difference?

**By Pierre Poulain**

*Pierre Poulain is the founder of New Acropolis in Israel, and was its National Director until 2016. Today he is the Coordinator of Countries for the regions including Asia, Africa, and Oceania.*

Article originally appeared in Hebrew in the Acropolis Magazine of New Acropolis Israel, Oct 2009.



When I write an article for this magazine (Refers to the Acropolis Magazine published by New Acropolis Israel in Hebrew), I usually pick an event from the daily news to comment on. Today I will not fail in this habit, but I have chosen to comment not on an event, but a personal experience which had occurred in a class, at the New Acropolis center in Tel-Aviv.

We had a one day seminar, with theoretical and practical exercises about philosophy and the path to wisdom, and during this seminar I answered some questions. One of the questions was: What is the difference between philosophy and religion?

I must say that at first I felt that the response had to be obvious... but in fact, it was not. And the more I thought about it, the more I felt it would be interesting to develop the answer as a short article... so here we are.

### What is Mystic?

First, we'll have to define the Mystic. The Mystic may lie at the origin of the religious sentiment, but in fact it belongs neither to Religion, nor to Philosophy: it belongs to itself. The mystic experience is always a personal experience, it is an awakening of the consciousness to "something" that exists beyond the visible appearances.

In this aspect, the mystic is what really makes the difference between man and animal. Most animals can feel an event - like an earthquake - or a human sentiment stronger and better than a human can. But they cannot imagine another plane of reality - the one we call the invisible, or the spiritual one - and build a relationship with it. Man can.

The Mystic experience allows man to access a new frame of reality, and either by curiosity or necessity he may choose to explore it through Religion, Philosophy...or both.

When it is present within religious systems, the mystic brings the need to unveil a truth which lies beyond the orthodox institutions. This is why all religions have an ambiguous relationship with their own Mystics....they are seen with envy and distrust at the same time; like the Hassidim in Judaism, the Sufis in Islam, or the Gnostics in Christianity.

The mystic experience allows the discovery of a secret, but not to demonstrate it to others. It allows one to reach new and higher states of consciousness and to experiment a wider range of life's experiences based on the development of new functions, such as imagination, intuition, pure discernment, which exist in potential in every human being. The mystic experience is possible when this potential becomes concrete. Fernando Schwarz writes: "We have to conquer those states of consciousness, to make them ours, and we can only live them without trying to understand them."

## Mystic and Religion

The Religious experience is fundamentally based on faith, and not on the acquisition of knowledge. It gathers men and women around the same faith in higher principles, which can be a God - like in the Monotheistic religions - Gods or Goddess, but also ideas or virtues, like a cult to the ancestors. "This explains why it is possible to consider that there have been religions without God." (Jacqueline Vallont, Le Livre des Religions - 1989 - Ed. Gallimard, France)

The mystic is present when we consider the "internal" - or psychological - aspect of the religion. It is in relation with the personal faith of the believer, and can only be considered, by the external observer, as something subjective.

But to understand the religion, we have also to consider a more "external", or sociological aspect, where the religion becomes an institution whose aim is to venerate God - or any accepted higher archetype - through rituals and ceremonies, and to maintain the Dogmas recognized by the believers.

Once again, I want to emphasise that a religion may exist without a belief in God. Schwarz writes, "A religion is not defined by the notion of God, but by the concept of the Sacred." ... And the "sacred" is the level of the human consciousness which allows us to be in a relationship with the Archetypes.

Thus, we can say that a religion - whichever religion - does not have exclusivity over the Sacred, neither the monopoly over its relationship with man. A religion administers the mystical experience and gives a framework, an environment where this mystic experience can take place and be repeated. But it does not allow a reflection upon this experience.

*The mystic experience is always a personal experience, it is an awakening of the consciousness to "something" that exists beyond the visible appearances.*

## Mystic, Religion... and Philosophy

Bertrand Vergely, a French philosopher wrote: "Philosophy is not a science, neither a religion or life itself, but it is indispensable to 'be'. This paradoxal relation resumes the etymologic signification of the word: Love of wisdom. To be Wise is to know how to fight against ignorance. To be wise is also to be able to control one's own passions (...) When a man reaches such a control over himself, he allows the real man which is hidden within himself to arise, which is man free from ignorance and violence." ("La Philosophie", Ed. Les Essentielle, France)

Continuing the words of Vergely, I'll say that to be wise is also to be able to orient all human activities: science towards Truth, art towards Beauty, and the Mystic - or the experience of the Sacred - towards the "Just", the "Good" or the "Ethical".

In this way, Philosophy preserves the Religion from Fanatism and Extremism. Let us see why....

In all religions, God is understood as a Being superior to humanity, a being without beginning or end, that can have a direct relationship with those who are offering him prayers and sacrifices. In this relationship, the role of man is to obey the divine will - either directly, or through a special interlocutor, such as a priest, or through a given revelation, such as a divine book like the Torah. Doing so, by respecting God's commandments, man will benefit from God's protection. Thus, for the believer, the good, the right way to live consists of obeying an external authority.

The God of Philosophers is different.... here we shall not find the concept of a "personal God", a God of a Nation or a God of a Tribe. Instead of a "supreme being" we shall find here a concept linked to the notion of the Universal Law, such as *Dharma* in India, *Theos* in Greece, or *Maat* in ancient Egypt. We could say that what matters more for the philosopher is the Law, and not so much the maker of the Law.

This brings us to what may be the main difference between Religion and Philosophy: the ethical and moral rules of the philosopher are not to follow an external obligation, but are born from an internal, or "self" need, a result of experience - including the mystic experience - and of the development of the consciousness, slowly matured with time. The philosopher has to follow the voice of his own Ethical need, his "Voice of Silence" as it is sometimes called in the East... not the external voice of a God.



Thus the philosopher does not have to pray to venerate his "God".... the only acceptable cult he can follow would be to act in all situations, in all places and at any time, in a moral and ethical way conform to *Dharma*, *Theos* or *Maat*... whatever name we choose to refer to what can be considered as the Law of Nature.

This is a difficult Path. A path where man can fall and rise again, and fall, and rise.... making the effort to find the Truth and to Live it will always be more difficult than "doing what we are told to do." But it is a Path which leads to Wisdom, and those who have begun to walk it are slowly becoming the Path itself, making it impossible to quit it.

### Mystic, Religion, Philosophy... and Universality

Philosophy gives a universal dimension to consciousness, which is the capacity not to limit oneself to one aspect of the reality - or the Truth - but to integrate the whole. Thus the Truth of the philosopher will always be a universal Truth, a general law valid for all its formal aspects, and not something applicable only to one specific form, such as one religion, one culture, one tribe....

In reality Philosophy and Religion are not opposed, but are aimed to complement each other. Religion without Philosophy encourages the danger that leads to a specific truth – i.e. not Universal - the truth of one group, or of one individual mystical experience, which will be opposed to the Truth of other groups or individuals. This, in essence, can only be the shadow of the Truth. Religious fanaticism appears from a lack of consciousness of the universal, which is brought by philosophy. Philosophy without the mystic leads to a limitation of the reality to the visible only, transforming the Love of Wisdom into an intellectual exercise which is not able to encompass the complexity of the human and universal reality: the harmony between visible and invisible, temporal and eternal.

In synthesis, we cannot compare between Philosophy and Religion. The mystical experience is present in the philosophical path, as in Religion, but the aim of the Philosopher is more to understand the mystical experience, in order to reach a transformation of consciousness and become one with the "divine" inside, rather than encountering an external God.

As Plato wrote: "Man is God... but he has forgotten it." ★★★



# Epigenetics

## How to Lead Our Lives

**By Fernando Schwarz**

*Fernando Schwarz is the founder and National Director of New Acropolis France.*

Translated from Spanish by Gilad Sommer. Originally appeared in the Revista Esfinge 04.2019.

Most scientists are convinced that living beings are a product of their genes and that we are predetermined by a genetic program inherited from our ancestors, condemned to suffer. The last 20 years of biological research have completely transformed this belief. They have shown that we can be proactive in our lives, transform ourselves, change our behaviors, and go beyond ourselves towards sometimes unsuspected horizons. The research of Dr. Bruce Lipton (1) has revealed that the environment in which the cellular membrane operates controls the behavior and physiology of the cell, activating and deactivating the genes. These discoveries are opposed to the opinion of established scientists who claim that life is controlled by the genes, highlighting epigenetic science as one of the most important fields of study today.

"The discovery of the impact of the environment on the functioning of the cells radically changes the idea we have about the immutability of the genetic code. It is also a proof that emotions regulate the expressions of the genes. (...) Whatever their content, our thoughts penetrate the body in the form of energy – an emotional, mental, psychological or spiritual energy. It leads to biological reactions that later are registered in the memory of the cells. This is how our biography is gradually adjusted to the biological systems, and this is achieved as the days go by."

Epigenetics is defined as the science that studies transmissible and reversible changes in the expression of the genes, which are not accompanied by a change in the genetic medium, that is, without changing the DNA. These changes

can happen spontaneously or as a result of stress, as a response to the environment and other external factors. Epigenetic phenomena act as interrupters, they activate and deactivate the expression of the genes, depending on the circumstances, and in various degrees. Consequently, they allow many unprogrammed combinations between genes, through the phenomenon of methylation (2).



Gordon Johnson / Pixabay

Although discoveries related to epigenetics are relatively recent, the concept was brought up in 1942 by Conrad Hal Waddington (3), (from Greek epi, "Beyond": beyond genetics). Epigenetics encompasses properties, a code over a code, as Joel de Rosnay explains very well in his last book *The Symphony of the Living World* (4): it is a biological "meta-software", that profoundly changes the classical view of the genes. Epigenetic change is not a mutation, but a modulation of the expression of the genes through behavior or environment. Genetics and epigenetics are compared to the text of a book and the process of reading, in which every individual interprets the book in a different way, through their experience, their imagination... Others compare genetics with a partiture, and epigenetics with the interpretation of the symphony. The big question is how to become the director of the orchestra of one's own partiture.

*Epigenetic phenomena act as interrupters, they activate and deactivate the expression of the genes, depending on the circumstances, and in various degrees.*



Gordon Johnson / Pixabay

What we experience influences our physical state, our psychological state, our life course and our mind and plays an important role in the epigenetic modulation of the expression of the genes.

We inherit our genome, but we have the freedom to act over our epigenome, on an individual and collective level, and in the evolution of our society, in accordance with the interactions we establish with each other. These phenomena can be amplified today, in one direction or another, through the use of social networks. In the epigenetic world, everything is reversible, which emphasizes the importance of taking responsibility over our lives and to clarify our choices. Our behavior and our will to act can transform us. With epigenetics, we can redirect the negative "psychosomatic" processes in a direction that benefits our health and our mental equilibrium.

The five key words for a successful reorientation are nutrition, exercise, anti-stress, pleasure and harmony. They interact harmoniously and require a discipline of life that the ancients of the East and the West have recommended as preventative approaches, having interest in the mutual influence between the mind and the body.

Current studies demonstrate that the ancestral practices of meditation, yoga, forms of dynamic meditations such as Tai chi chuan and Qi Gong can have positive effects on the metabolism of our body and over some disfunctions, such as hypertension. Thanks to these studies, ancient wisdom and new discoveries have found a point of convergence.

Today we know that all these techniques for the relaxation of the body and the regulation of breathing allow us to reach a high level, both of concentration, as well as relaxation, and that patients, especially those with cancer, having practiced them, together with healthy nutrition, were able to modify their cancerous cells, making them normal again. Recent studies have also demonstrated that, in situations of great stress, such as in the case of victims of the holocaust or of hunger, genetic modifications can be inherited for generations by those who have not lived it, but today we know, reversal is possible.

Therefore, nutritional habits, physical activity, pollution, stress, worries, our social and family relationships and happy and unhappy events can influence our life course and our state of mind



and carry out an important role in the epigenetic modulation of the expression of our genes. Therefore, to be surrounded by true friends or to live a stable emotional life, to flourish internally, can only have beneficial effects, not only to our physical health, but also to our health in general.

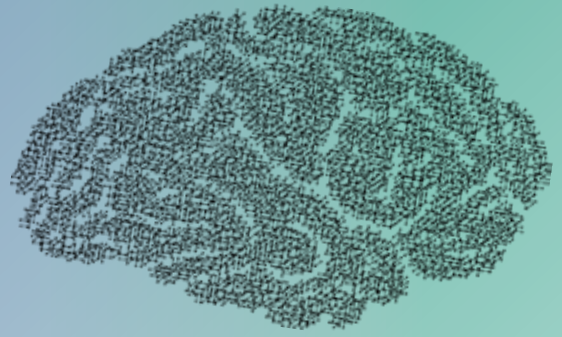
Dawson Church (5) describes how our mental state influences our genes. He demonstrates that beliefs, intentions, meditation, altruism, optimism, cooperation, confidence... have a consequent effect on the genes of stress, which are especially involved in the processes of aging and immunity.

In conclusion, the relation that we establish with our external and internal environment is crucial to help us transform ourselves and to extract everything that stimulates the elevation of our self.

This is also a collective challenge. It is essential to understand that we cannot just change ourselves individually, but we need to change also the way we live together. To do this, we must reconnect ourselves with higher objectives, as colonel Arnaud Beltrame demonstrated with his self-sacrifice (6). The entire nation is grateful for heroic people. He knew how to confront the challenge that is imposed on us: to find the delicate equilibrium between liberty and security. His example allowed us to take into account that other approaches are possible and that we should never bow to fate. ★★★

#### Footnotes

- (1) Bruce Harrold Lipton (born 1944) is an American developmental biologist, ex-researcher in the Faculty of Medicine in Stanford, Lipton, Bruce H. *The Biology of Belief: Unleashing the Power of Consciousness, Matter and Miracles*. Hay House Inc. 10th Anniversary Edition, 2016 Lipton, Bruce H., Bhaerman, Steve. *Spontaneous Evolution: Our positive future and how to get from there to here*. Hay House Inc, 2010.
- (2) A chemical modification that consists of adding a methyl group (CH<sub>3</sub>) to a substrate. In the DNA, methylation occurs when a methyl group is added instead of an atom of hydrogen to one of the four bases of nitrogen. In this way, that sequence of the DNA is annulled, and cannot produce proteins anymore.
- (3) A British developmental biologist, paleontologist and geneticist (1905-1975).
- (4) Rosnay, Joel de. *The Symphony of the Living World. How epigenetics is going to change your life (La symphonie du vivant. Comment l'épigénétique va changer votre vie)*. Les Liens Qui Liberent. 2018
- (5) Researcher of energetic healing (born 1956) and writer Church, Dawson. *The Genie in your Genes: Epigenetic Medicine and the New Biology of Intention*. Energy Psychology Press, 2014
- (6) Arnaud Beltrame was a lieutenant colonel in the French Gendarmerie Nationale who was killed by a terrorist after having exchanged himself for a hostage.



*The relation that we establish with our external and internal environment is crucial to help us transform ourselves and to extract everything that stimulates the elevation of our self.*

# Stoic Nuggets of Practical Wisdom

By Vineet Lalan



When we say the word "Stoic" nowadays, we mainly refer to a person who is emotionless. However, Stoicism is an ancient stream of Philosophy; its principles and ideas are very practical and executable in our day-to-day life and its relevance to our times today can't be overstated. Stoicism is said to have started around 300BC. It was a very interesting time, when a lot of changes were happening in the world, after the death of Alexander the Great, who perhaps left a bigger impact on the world than we might think. It can be argued that the changes gave rise to a materialistic approach to life, where the need of external conquest became stronger than the inner conquest over oneself.

As per this narrative, it follows that this external approach was expressed in various aspects of life. For example, the traditional noble role of the Politician, as defined by Plato and others, which was to serve the people by bringing justice into society, had devolved into the pursuit of power. Religion had become dogmatic and lost its essence, and the distorted notion of luck bound the human potential from blossoming. There was an overall decline in ethical principles.

The stoic philosophy came as a practical solution to this period of crisis. The most beautiful thing about it is perhaps, that it didn't claim to invent anything new. Instead, it simply revived the ancient principles, making them more applicable based on the historical context and character of the people of the times.

As a glimpse into the Stoic approach to life, this article will investigate three short quotes, that capture a philosophical point of view that I believe is relevant and practical even for our times today.

“We cannot choose our external circumstances, but we can always choose how we respond to them.”

- Epictetus (Discourses by Epictetus)

Although Epictetus lived his life as a slave, he was considered to be a free man. Despite his external circumstances, his approach and response to life's circumstances emerged from a unique sense of choice.

If we are dependent on external factors like fears, expectations of other people, or circumstances of life, then where is our freedom? This sounds simple. But when we look at our day-to-day encounters, many times we miss this principle. Often we blame others for our failures and we blame external factors for our troubles. Because of this we suffer and struggle to liberate ourselves. In attempting to do so, however, we try to control things which are in reality not in our control, and if we don't realise it, we end up wasting time and energy, and all our efforts go in vain. This, in turn, results in unhappiness.

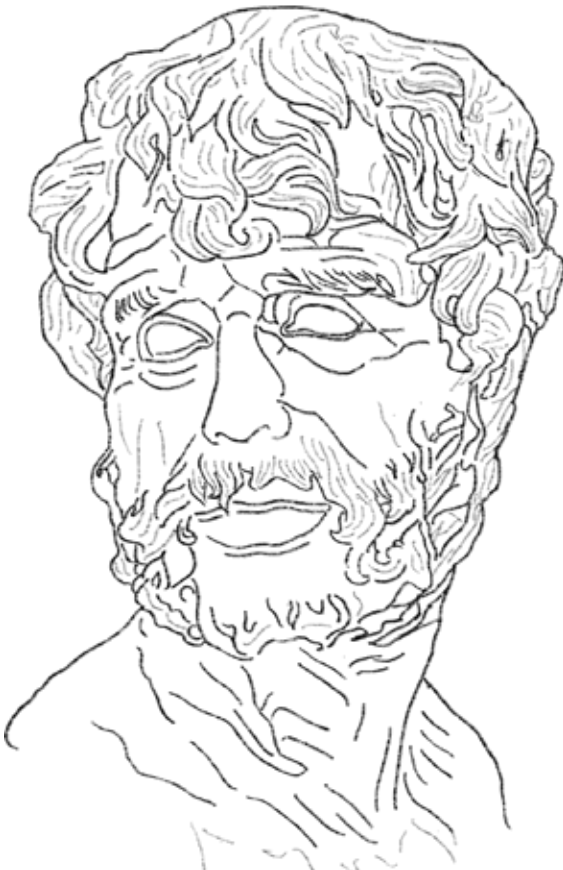
Instead, if we really understand and discern between what is in our control and what is not, we naturally find ourselves in harmony with life. Epictetus declares that we can change our attitudes towards the circumstances. We might discover that while circumstances may not change, we can choose a measured and intelligent response to them, rather than react to them. We might use the challenging circumstances as opportunities to grow and learn, with joy and a spirit of adventure, rather than become a victim, submitted to fate. For example, when I am badly stuck in traffic rather than to break my head with frustration, in anguish and anger, I might choose to use the opportunity to listen to some good music, realising that traffic is not something I can control, and therefore there is no point in getting frustrated. Why not be wiser in our response, and always make the most out of each situation?

“Dig within; There lies the well-spring of good: ever dig, and it will ever flow.”

- Marcus Aurelius (Meditations)

.....

*In our core nature as human beings, lies the fountain of goodness. The deeper we dig, beyond the layers of opinions, feelings, habits and vices, we might connect to this nature, which is pure, virtuous and good.*



Whereas Epictetus was a slave, Marcus Aurelius was a Roman Emperor. He was known as a man of dignity and perhaps was a good example of what Plato would have called a "philosopher-king". He used to write down his deep reflections about life and what he learnt from it in a personal diary, which later became a most beautiful book of philosophy called *Meditations*, which contains deep and enriching wisdom that is still very relevant for us today.

*In our core nature as human beings, lies the fountain of goodness. The deeper we dig, beyond the layers of opinions, feelings, habits and vices, we might connect to this nature, which is pure, virtuous and good.*

Marcus Aurelius said that it is virtue that defines a human being. And that the human being, in his true nature is good. Digging inside is like looking within for causes and answers, and not outside. Who I am at my core? What drives me? What are my motives? Usually it is difficult to do this reflection, as we may find many things inside which we may not like. For example, we might find we are influenced by vices such as selfishness, greed, and rigidity.

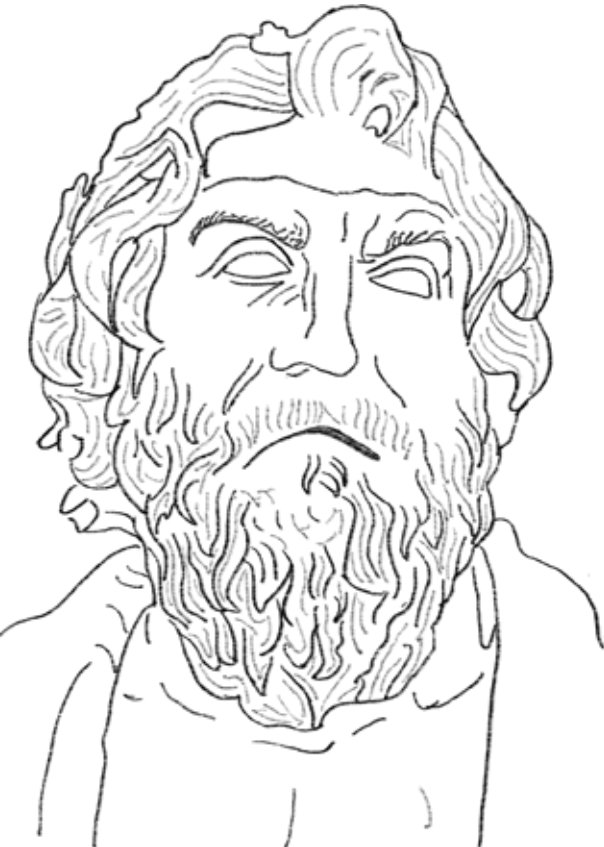
But Marcus Aurelius discovered through his experiences that beyond all this, in our core nature as human beings, lies the fountain of goodness. The deeper we dig, beyond the layers of opinions, feelings, habits and vices, we might connect to this nature, which is pure, virtuous and good.

As an aspiring philosopher, this digging is my constant inner work, to remove the mud, the vices like selfishness, envy, jealousy, etc. The more I do this, the more I find that virtues (light) flow out, which were earlier blocked by vices (shadows). As men and women of virtue, we will become like rocks – stable and unshakable in our human resolve. What happens when waves hit the rocks?

**“Life, if well lived, is long enough.”**

**– Seneca (On the Shortness of Life)**

Seneca, in *On the Shortness of Life*, spoke about a few things related to the length of our life which we, at times, take for granted. Many times we complain that life is short, but when we reflect on what we do with our time, we will see that most of the time the things we do are not relevant and, in a way, we waste a lot of our time. Then we feel that life is short since we don't use the time to search what we really want to do. It's important to ponder and ask genuine questions to ourselves: What is the purpose of my life? Do I spend time on this purpose? Or do I just keep the main thing aside and get consumed with the other demands of life?



The time to live is here and now. It's not in the future. At times, people say that I will do things needed for survival now, and live the life of my dreams in the future, after retirement. To a Stoic Philosopher, this would be illogical. When we leave the main thing of our life to be sought in the future, do we know whether we will even be alive at that time? Do we know for sure whether we will be alive tomorrow? It is a hard reality. But it is based on the truth that life needs to be lived here and now! We have no control or certainty over tomorrow. So, we should maximise our life in the present and live each day fully as if it were the last.

.....

*When we leave the main thing of our life to be sought in the future, do we know whether we will even be alive at that time?*

When I wake up in the morning with this attitude towards life, I will know how to live and actively take every opportunity life will give me to live my main purpose. If I do this every day then I will not feel that life is short, because I'm actually doing all the things that I set out to do, everyday. When life will end, I will have no regrets, I can confidently say that I did justice to life. This is the art of living suggested by the Stoics.

When we look at Stoic philosophy, it might sound a bit sharp and hard for us to abide by. But perhaps this is because it is based upon the Truth of life and is practical in a very different way than we understand now. For us, for example, it is practical to fulfil the needs of survival, such that life in the future will be peaceful. But when we look at the laws which govern life, we see that many of our actions are not in sync with the laws of life. To a stoic, anything which is not in line with these laws is not logical because we are an integral part of life.

It is not possible to do justice to stoic philosophy in a short article. But these few quotes can open up a world of real investigation, and invite us to face life with a different perspective. The most interesting thing is that the Stoics offered practical guidance to face the challenges of their times. It seems that their approach might be viable in the present as well, as means to liberate ourselves from a sense of hopelessness and lack of meaningful purpose, to reveal our true human potential. ★★★



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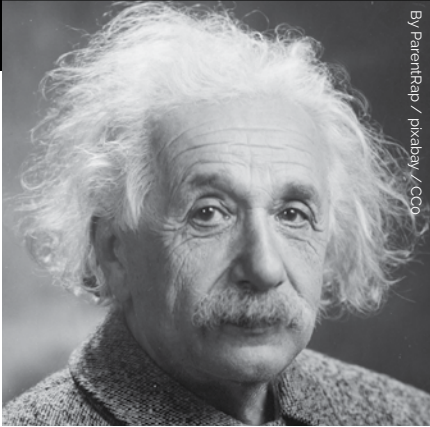
# Schedule of Public Events **MUMBAI**

## KHAR

Talk

**3 AUG  
SATURDAY**

6-8 pm  
Free Admission



By ParentRap / pixabay / Cco

## Albert Einstein - Path to Discovery

"The ideals that have lighted my way, and time after time have given me new courage to face life cheerfully, have been Kindness, Beauty, and Truth." - Albert Einstein

Could the same ideals that drive a Philosopher, also drive the inspiration for a Scientist? We shall explore this iconic scientist's philosophical legacy, as it is relevant for us today.

## COLABA

Talk

**24 AUG  
SATURDAY**

6-8 pm  
Free Admission



By Gerd Althmann / Pixabay

## Daring to Dream of a New and Better World!

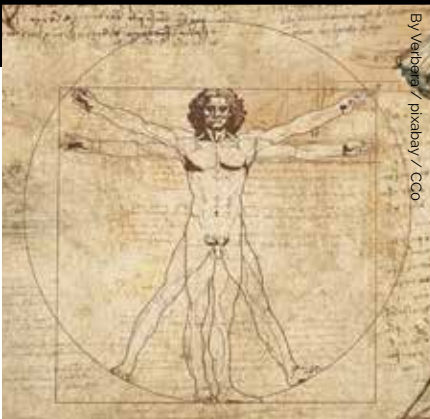
The Dream of a New and Better World belongs to us all. What keeps us from living this dream? Maybe it requires a few audacious philosophers who "dare". Together we will explore how this dream may be a reality, and our role in this journey.

## KHAR

Talk

**24 AUG  
SATURDAY**

6-8 pm  
Free Admission



By Verbeur / pixabay / Cco

## Renaissance: Here & Now

How might we as individuals, and as society, give impetus to a new Golden Age in our own times? Together let us dare to imagine the rebirth of civilization; characterized by Truth, Beauty, Justice, and Goodness.

AUG//SEP 2019

# Schedule of Public Events **MUMBAI**

## COLABA

### TUESDAY

Open House

**27 AUG**

Course Starts

**3 SEP**

## KHAR

### WEDNESDAY

Open House

**28 AUG**

Course Starts

**4 SEP**

7:30-9:30 pm  
Pre-Registration  
Required



## Living Philosophy – Discover Awaken Transform

This is an introductory course on practical philosophy that establishes the basic foundation of every aspiring Philosopher. The course weaves a journey through a comparative study of principles of Eastern and Western Civilization, to develop sensitivity towards the eternal principles of life.

Together we will explore the Mystery that is hidden in life and what it means to be a philosopher. The course is to inspire you to ask the great questions of life, and to give you tools to face personal and collective challenges.

#### Testimonials:

*“The LP course is a real awakening. You learn from various cultures like ancient Egypt, Greece, China, India... and your eyes are opened to essential insights from around the world. But the most significant journey is the one you make within yourself, inspired by these teachings.”* –Sangeeta Iyer

*“New Acropolis’ Living Philosophy course opened my mind and heart to a whole new way of viewing the world and living life. It brought back a sense of wonder, meaning and purpose, and showed me that each one of us can be so much more than what we limit ourselves to.”* –Trishya Screwvvala

*“After joining this course, I had a different perspective towards life. The ancient myths and wisdom, which were just stories for me till then, slowly started making sense and I started connecting them with my own life. This gave me a glimpse of how much I need to work on my internal growth, in order to become a better person. This course was the ignition to change the course of my life. :)”* –Samarth Shetty

AUG//SEP 2019

# Schedule of Public Events **MUMBAI**

## COLABA

Talk

**7 SEP**  
**SATURDAY**

6-8 pm

Free Admission



By Heinz Klier / Pexels

## Stoic Lessons for a Practical Life

There is often a contradiction we face between what is "Practical" and what is "Truthful". Yet, Stoic philosophers show us that to be "Truthful" is the only way to be "Practical". Their candid advice is not always easy and comfortable, but maybe that's exactly what we need.

## KHAR

Talk

**7 SEP**  
**SATURDAY**

6-8 pm

Free Admission



By Jhonatan Saavedra Perales / Unsplash / CCO

## Seizing the Opportunity of Change

Change is inevitable and perhaps even necessary for true happiness. Yet we often fear change. How might we learn to accept changes, and use transitions as golden opportunities for inner growth?



AUG//SEP 2019

# Schedule of Public Events **MUMBAI**

## KHAR

Talk

**14 SEP**  
**SATURDAY**

6-8 pm  
Free Admission



By Olivier / Wikimedia Commons Images 4.0 CC SA 4.0

## Hercules Today: Birth of a Hero

Half man - half god, this hero of Ancient Greece is said to represent the archetype of Man, having fulfilled his purpose by overcoming challenges. Perhaps the story of his trials is a window into the glorious potential of each one of us today.

## COLABA

Talk

**28 SEP**  
**SATURDAY**

6-8 pm  
Free Admission



By ValVesa / Unsplash / CC0

## Lighting the Inner Spark – Symbolism of Fire

Throughout history, the image of Fire has been used as a symbol of the celestial. Fire symbolizes creation, purification, renewal, illumination, and has always inspired human beings. Join us to investigate the symbolism of Fire.

AUG//SEP 2019

# Schedule of Public Events **PUNE**

## PUNE

Talk

**3 AUG  
SATURDAY**

6-8 pm

Free Admission



By Wikimedia / pixabay / CC0

## The Way of the Samurai

While in the very act of fighting a gruesome battle, it is said that the Samurai were able to recite beautiful poetry. They were governed by strict codes of conduct founded on human principles such as fraternity, courage and discipline. And their expert skill is often attributed to their inner strength of character. Join us as we explore how their warrior spirit can inspire us in our own battles of daily life.

## PUNE

Talk

**24 AUG  
SATURDAY**

6-8 pm

Free Admission



## Theatre Beyond Entertainment

To participate in the theatre as an actor or audience was an essential part of being a citizen of the state in ancient Greece. In any form of theatre, the artiste or actor enacts a role and for a few moments adopts the character that he plays. Don't we also wear many masks in life, playing many roles?

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# Schedule of Public Events **PUNE**

## PUNE

Talk

**7 SEP**  
**SATURDAY**

6-8 pm

Free Admission



By Wikimedia Images / Wikimedia Commons / CC BY PD

## Alchemy - The Art of Transformation

Science today doesn't take seriously the ancient science of Alchemy which is reduced to trickery, meaningless symbols and foolish attempts to turn lead into gold.

But hidden under the layers of dust is Alchemy, an art and a science that explored the unchanging laws of nature. In its principles lie secrets, formulas which guide the human being to the art of truly living a meaningful life!

## PUNE

Talk

**14 SEP**  
**SATURDAY**

6-8 pm

Free Admission



By Sammie Vasquez / Unsplash / CC0

## Overcoming Fear

Courage is not the absence of fear; it is to move forward in spite of it. Can we develop these virtues within us, inspired by those who have dared to do so? Let us explore the possibility of change towards a better version of ourselves, one step at a time.



PHILOSOPHY

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