Paper 5: Living in society

Everything we do is done with respect to other people and with regard to our living in human society. We live in a rich and complex community in which, in deeply complicated ways, everyone is dependent upon everyone else. To take a simple example, it is immediately obvious that the young infant is entirely dependent upon his or her mother. But in order to carry on the business of parenthood, to feed, to clothe, and to provide medicines for her child, the mother is of course dependent upon a whole network of other people. Should there ever have been an individual who lived in a completely self-sufficient manner, entirely independently of others, we must say that such a person is an exceptionally rare and unusual phenomenon. Some few people do nevertheless maintain that they are self-sufficient, relying on no one, uncomfortable with the very idea that they are supported by others and that they in turn have obligations to contribute to the society in which they live. Indeed, some people like this have been known to declare that there is no such thing as society, and to prefer a view of the world in which each individual acts selfishly in pursuit of their own interests, essentially unmoved by the plight of others who have needs that they are powerless to fulfil for themselves. At best, such a view is ignorant and mistaken: at worst it reveals of those holding it a lack of humanity.

If the network of support and co-operation that binds people into communities were to weaken beyond a certain point or fail altogether, it is readily apparent that human culture would end.

> Stoic arguments seek the health of the individual human being, to be sure. But as they do so, they never let the pupil forget that pursuing this end is inseparable from seeking the good of other human beings. For philosophy's mission […] is not to one person or two, not to the rich or the well-educated or the prominent, but to the human race as such. And all human beings, following philosophy, should understand themselves to be linked to all other human beings, in such a way that the ends of individuals are intertwined, and one cannot pursue one's fullest good without at the same time caring for and fostering the good of others.
>
> (Martha Nussbaum 1994, pp. 341–2)

In discussing how we should live in society and how Stoicism approaches this question, Seneca says:

> No school has more goodness and gentleness; none has more love for human beings, nor more attention to the common good. The goal which it assigns to us is to be useful, to help others, and to take care, not only of ourselves, but of everyone in general and of each one in particular.
>
> (Seneca, *On Clemency* 3.3, trans. Hadot 1998, p. 231)

In this paper we shall look at how the Stoic lives in society, and how they deal with the realities of daily interaction with others.

🕮 **Read Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 2.1.**

In this entry of his notebook Marcus undeniably paints a gloomy prospect of the coming day. No doubt he will also meet with competent, honest and faithful people, if not frequently, then at least some of the time. But Marcus' present task is to remind himself how he should respond to the 'meddling, ungrateful, violent, treacherous, envious, and ungrateful' people with whom he anticipates coming into contact. Many people either rarely or never take the trouble to consciously think through how best to deal with 'difficult people'. Perhaps because such difficult people just are a fact of life, many people, most of the time, simply respond to them on a moment by moment basis, getting angry (not necessarily in their presence), being critical, or even plotting against them, as seems appropriate on some intuitive level. Operating in such an ad hoc fashion is, fairly clearly, unlikely to encourage any real improvements on the part of difficult people, and it certainly does not promote a tranquil and unperturbed life for those who employ this approach.

The Stoics claim that it is entirely possible to live amongst, and to work with, difficult people at the same time as remaining wholly unruffled and undisturbed by their actions. It may even be possible, with judicious care, to reform such people. Indeed, as has been indicated previously, the Stoics were famous for their unfailing serenity.

✎ **IN YOUR JOURNAL. In paragraph 2.1 Marcus makes several different points that, if he can bear them in mind and act appropriately in consequence, will enable him to retain his Stoic serenity in the midst of any upset caused by difficult people. Carefully read this paragraph again, and identify the points that Marcus makes.**

(1) For the Stoics, the fact that people behave badly has a strikingly obvious explanation: **they have 'no knowledge of good and bad'**. Difficult people simply do not see things the way the Stoic does. Rather, they value indifferent things and feel threatened when the indifferent things in which they are interested are themselves threatened. But Marcus, having 'beheld the nature of the good' knows that he himself cannot be harmed by anything that difficult people do. The harm they cause is in fact

self-inflicted, and results from their having not been shown that the good for human beings consists in developing and exercising a virtuous (i.e., excellent) character. (2) Nevertheless, even difficult people possess a rationality which is identical to that of the Stoic sage – it's just that for these people their rationality has not been tutored. Marcus reminds himself that **difficult people have a nature that is 'akin' to his own, in that all people share with him a mind that is a portion of the divine mind of God**. (3) In consequence of this insight Marcus declares that **he cannot be harmed by such people** (as we noted above), and further (4) **he has no grounds to be angry with them** (5) **nor to hate them**.

(6) The idea of sharing a common nature (the rationality and mind of God) is extended to embrace the idea that **all people 'come into being to work together'** – upon which Marcus gives us the examples of a foot, a hand, an eyelid or one row of teeth, none of which can function properly without their opposite number. (7) Indeed, **'to work against one another is contrary to nature'**, is contrary to how we have been created and what is proper to us as sentient creatures. Specifically, to be angry with someone is to 'work against them', and is contrary to nature, which means it is contrary to *our* natures as human beings endowed with reason.

These points merit further investigation.

The Stoic account of why people act as they do

🕮 **Read Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 6.27, 7.26, 8.14 and 10.37.**

People pursue what they believe will benefit them. Their capacity to judge what is truly beneficial may be, as the Stoics think, flawed, but all the same says Marcus, they have the right to 'strive after what they regard as suitable and beneficial' (6.27). Our becoming upset at the actions of others, Marcus suggests, denies them the right to do as they see fit. This idea is expanded upon in 7.26 where Marcus talks in terms of a 'conception of good and evil'. Clearly, those aiming to perfect their characters as Stoics hold a very different view of what is truly good and bad (as we saw in Paper 1), and it is perfectly obvious why bad people do bad things; from their own perspective what they do is *good*, since they benefit from what they do, or at least they think they do. Seeing that this is the case, not only can we understand why people do bad things, we begin to anticipate what they are likely to actually do. If we attempt to answer Marcus' question, 'What ideas does this person hold on human goods and ills?' (8.14) we may even be able to second-guess someone's actions. If we do this well, what they do 'will not seem extraordinary or strange', indeed, what they do can be regarded as inevitable, given their beliefs, to the extent that those beliefs 'constrain' the agent to act as they do.

But in trying to understand other people, we must not loose sight of trying to understand *ourselves*. In 10.37 Marcus reminds us to examine ourselves before we examine others. With respect to our own actions it is imperative that we ask of ourselves, ‘What is *my* aim in performing this action?’ To be sure, finding ways of responding to this question has been the underlying project of the present Course.

Accepting other people

🕮 **Read Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 5.17, 5.25, 7.1 and 7.22.**

Other people do what they do because they think it is for the best. And we have to accept that, and decide to remain calm and untroubled when we find ourselves affected by the actions of ‘people of bad character’ (5.17). If someone harms us, that is *their* affair (5.25). Our responsibility as Stoics who claim to possess the insights of philosophical wisdom is to respond with virtuous actions on every occasion.

We may mistake Marcus’ tone in 7.1 for pessimism. Certainly he is resigned, but that resignation results from powerful and deeply cherished philosophical principles. As we saw in the previous Paper, Stoics believe that we have been assigned our own unique destiny which we have a duty to live up to. Bad behaviour, ‘vice’, just is a fact of life for human beings – it is a part of everyone’s destiny. Do not be surprised when it is encountered, for ‘This is something that you have often seen.’

One of the readings for Paper 4 was Chapter 7.57 from the *Meditations*, where Marcus says: ‘Love only that which falls to you and is spun as the thread of your destiny; for what could be better suited to you?’ Specifically, in 7.22, Marcus says that we should love ‘those who stumble’, and that such love will arise in us when we recall that such people ‘do wrong through ignorance and against their will’. Marcus concludes by remarking that in any event, the ‘wrongdoer’ cannot actually harm us, because the only harm we can suffer is to fall into vice, as we saw in Paper 1; only our *projects* can suffer harm, whereas we ourselves as moral agents are invulnerable. Should we think we are harmed – subject to our not falling into vice – we would be mistaken.

The equanimity of the wise person

Sometimes we fall prey to foolish or malicious people, who think badly of us and who attempt to portray us in a bad light for reasons, we now recognise, that make sense from *their* perspective.

🕮 **Read Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 4.18, 9.27 and 9.34.**

The Stoic remains completely indifferent to what other people think or say of them. As practitioners of the Stoic art of living, it makes no difference to us and our capacity for acting well that other people may be thinking badly of us or spreading malicious gossip. We must remind ourselves often that when the bad person supposes that ‘their criticisms harm or their praises bring benefit’ (9.34), they are simply mistaken. And we must not make the same mistake ourselves by believing that their criticisms or praises mean anything to us.

If we are confident that we are acting as we should, there is no need for us to think even for a moment of amending our actions in the hope that others who have criticised us will come to approve of us. Not that criticism should always be dismissed out of hand, for we should remain alert to the possibility that we have made a mistake and need to do something differently. But when we do adjust our course, this is done not to appease criticisms (though such appeasement may in fact occur), but in order that we should do the right thing.

And just as the gods show goodwill to bad people 'through dreams and oracles' by means of which they obtain the indifferent things that they want, we should likewise show goodwill (9.27).

🕮 **Read Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 5.32, 10.30 and 11.13.**

In a way, it would be rather silly for one living the philosophical life to be troubled by an 'ignorant and uncultivated soul' (5.32). And it would be wholly unacceptable to get angry with such people, or for us not to 'soon forget our anger' (10.30) once it has arisen. For feeling anger towards wrongdoers would amount to discarding, or at least temporarily forgetting, the bulk of Stoic teaching. To accept this teaching, in part, is to accept that we do not in fact have anything to feel angry about.

Marcus points to the core of Stoic ethics in 11.13 where he reminds himself that the person who feels contempt or hatred for him must look to their own thoughts and actions. *For this is in that person's power*. How Marcus will react to this person is in *his* power, and this is where he will apply himself, to make sure that he never does anything that merits contempt or hatred. And this is done by striving on all occasions to do what is appropriate, demonstrating virtuous thought and action, and aiming to make progress in the development of an excellent character. Although we seek no reward in adopting this way of life, if we find ourselves 'neither disposed to be angry at anything nor make any complaint' (11.13) we will be in receipt of the serenity for which the most outstanding Stoics were famed.

Working with others

Marcus points out in 11.13 that we should be 'kind and good-natured to everyone, and ready to show this particular person the nature of his error'. So the Stoic philosopher, although indifferent to the behaviour of others, does not remain wholly aloof and wholly disinterested in their conduct. As we will now see, Stoics believe that they have a responsibility to promote a well-ordered and harmonious society.

🕮 **Read Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 4.4, 9.23 and 12.26.**

The responsibility that the Stoics believe they have to always treat people fairly and considerately, not to get angry with them nor to chastise them without at least making the attempt to teach them better ways, stems from the fact that we are all 'fellow-citizens' (4.4). The state of which we are 'fellow-citizens' is not, on the Stoic view, the state in which we happen to reside or to which we owe some patriotic duty, but is the state comprising the entirety of rational beings. Recognising this to be the case, the Stoic realises that their responsibility to perfect their own character must extend to serving the community of rational beings as a whole by embracing the duty to 'contribute to the perfecting of social life' (9.23). Precisely because other people are also rational, or at least have the potential for rationality, the Stoic thereby becomes responsible for others no less than he or she is responsible for themselves. The Stoic injunction to adopt and live by the virtues makes sense only if there is some readily identifiable medium in which virtuous activity can take place, and clearly that medium is the society in which we live, conceived (in today's terms) as the global human community. Furthermore, to briefly broach a topic that has been omitted from this Course, many present-day Stoics will be in agreement that our responsibilities extend beyond the human community to the global environment as a whole, with respect to which we have deep obligations of responsible stewardship, as more and more people (most of them non-Stoic, of course) are coming to realise.

The Stoic aims at the betterment of the individual and the betterment of society both at the same time. If someone behaves better than they did before, this is of course better for that individual, but it is also better for society at large.

This is why, not only does the Stoic not get angered by the bad behaviour of others, but will also 'instruct them ... and show them the truth' (6.27).

🕮 **Read Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 8.59, 9.11 and 12.16.**

Again (as we saw in 9.27) Marcus suggests that we should model our response to bad people on the gods, pointing out that the gods are kind to such people, helping them 'to certain ends, to health, to wealth, to reputation' (9.11; see also 7.70), and that our own capacity to be kind has been granted *to us* by the gods expressly for this purpose. In this Chapter (9.11), Marcus gives the impression that being kind is a fall-back position we should adopt if our primary purpose to show people 'the error of their ways' should fail. It is fairly clear, though, that Marcus understands trying to help others to be the supreme act of kindness, for we have seen that he talks in terms of having love for those who 'do wrong through ignorance' (7.22). (See also: 6.39, 7.13, 7.31, 7.65 and 11.1.)

🕮 **Read Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 8.23, 8.43, 11.4 and 11.18.**

These extracts from the *Meditations* serve as a summary of the points we have discussed in this Paper. The 'Ninth Rule' in 11.18 provides us with basic guidelines as to how we should ‘show them the error of their ways’ (9.11). There is a real danger that, in trying to ‘persuade them’ (6.50), the Stoic philosopher will come across as a pompous, self-righteous, interfering busybody. Indeed, in 10.36, Marcus imagines that in his final moments as he lies dying, there will be some around him who will be pleased to see the back of him, ready to say: ‘What a relief to be finally freed from this schoolmaster; not that he was ever harsh with any of us, but I could sense that he was silently condemning us.’ (*Meditations* 10.36, trans. Hard.) We cannot contribute to the betterment of society and to the improvement of the individual if everything we say is rejected as self-opinionated imposition.

Yet we have been blessed with a philosophical insight granted to only a few people, and this being so imposes a duty on us, if not to urge everyone to become a Stoic, then at least to encourage people to pay closer attention to what should really matter to them as human beings and to the effects their actions have upon the welfare of others and upon their own interests.

IN YOUR JOURNAL. Read the ‘Ninth Rule’ of *Meditations* 11.18 again, and specify precisely the attitudes that Marcus says we should adopt when advising others of their errors.

When dealing with other people we must consistently be kind and sincere, and our actions and words must not be ‘hypocritical or a mere façade’ (as they would be, for instance, were we trying to encourage someone to moderate or eliminate their anger, whilst being known for having an uncontrollable temper ourselves). We should advise people ‘quietly’ and ‘mildly’, even whilst they are attempting to harm us. We must be tactful and advise without being sarcastic or reproachful, ignoring any temptations to ‘impress the bystanders’; and if we are aware that bystanders are present, we should simply disregard them and proceed to offer advice ‘as one person to another’.

Nobody likes to be reproached, and advice that aims to be friendly, considerate and kind can all the same often come across as negative criticism, mistaken as intending to shame and degrade. Nobody likes to be condemned, and trying to mend people’s ways will often be met with a hurtful and affronted rejection.

> On a warm and sultry day, when Epictetus was sitting quietly at home, a neighbor came to seek his advice. After the usual friendly greetings, the neighbor said:
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> ‘When my father died my elder brother took possession of our farm, and he makes me work for him from morning till night, giving me only sufficient food and clothing for a bare existence. How can I compel him to give me a fair share of my father’s estate?’
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> EPICTETUS: Philosophy promises no one any material benefit; otherwise it would be promising something beyond its power. The material a philosopher works with is the art of living contentedly.
>
> NEIGHBOR: Well, what about my brother’s ill behavior?

> EPICTETUS: That is a matter for your brother's concern; not yours.
>
> NEIGHBOR: How then, is his ill treatment of me to be corrected?
>
> EPICTETUS: Bring him to me and I will speak to him, but I have nothing to say to you, nor do I make any promise to you about his behavior.
>
> NEIGHBOR: But supposing after you speak to him, he still refuses to treat me fairly? Isn't there any way whereby he can be compelled to do so?
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> EPICTETUS: Nothing worthwhile is created suddenly any more than a grape or a fig is created overnight. If you tell me that you want a fig, I will answer that the growth and development of a fig takes time. First, the fig tree must grow and blossom; later the tree will bear fruit, which later still must mature and ripen. As a fig tree does not bear fruit suddenly, don't expect the fruit of the human mind to be created instantaneously.
>
> (Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.15, paraphrase by Bonforte 1974, p. 72)

There are no guarantees when it comes to trying to mend someone's bad behaviour, and, in any event, the Stoic philosopher will pursue such a course 'with reservation'. Epictetus will speak to the bad brother, but he cannot promise that his words will make any difference. Mending the bad brother's unkind and unjust attitudes is something that Epictetus and his neighbour must cultivate, as one would cultivate a fig tree. One must be subtle and one must be patient.

If the bad ways of human beings could be cured quickly and easily with no more than a whisper of good advice, then we would be living in a world very different from the one we in fact inhabit, for in that world the quantity of human evil would be minuscule, and hardly more than a glance of disapproval would be required to correct the most diabolical of schemes. But as Epictetus intimates, turning people from bad ways is a most uncertain business. But it is right that we should attempt it. When we fail, or when we secure only limited results, we will have to accept that we have done the right thing, and we must nevertheless go on living in a world in which bad people go about their business, just as they did all those centuries ago when Epictetus tried to advise his neighbour.

> One day when Epictetus entered the Agora, he heard his students arguing heatedly about the punishment that should be inflicted upon a thief and an adulterer. After listening to the heated discussion for several minutes, Epictetus said to the obvious spokesman of the group, 'Why are you so angry at these men? Shouldn't you pity them because they are ignorant of what is for their good and what is for their evil? Show them the error of their ways and you will see that they will correct their faults. If they do, you will have the pleasure of knowing that you have helped convert evil men to good men, but if they don't mend their ways, they will continue to be what they are, men of evil.'
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> SCHOLAR: Shouldn't these men be destroyed before they commit more crimes in our village?

> EPICTETUS: No. These men are blind; not in their vision that distinguishes white from black, but in their Reason, that distinguishes good from evil. If your question is stated on the basis of reason, it would be similar to your saying, 'Shouldn't this blind man and that deaf man be destroyed, because one is blind and the other is deaf?'
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> SCHOLAR: But, if we set these men free, what guarantee do we have that they will not repeat their crime and thus set an example for others to do the same?
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> EPICTETUS: Let me state once again the basic rule of our philosophy: the greatest harm that a person can suffer is the loss of the most valuable possession, his Reason. The harm he creates for himself is not transferred to others. Therefore, there is no reason for others to become angry because a person commits a crime against himself.
>
> (Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.18.1–10, paraphrase by Bonforte 1974, p. 154)

Again, we meet with the Stoic principle that we are in fact immune from harm, and that the bad person, in falling into vice, is really doing harm to themselves, and not to anyone else. And this being the case, Epictetus asks his students why they should get angry at the bad person, for the bad person has (without realising the truth of it) committed the crime against himself. Epictetus continues the above Discourse, saying:

> Why, then, are we angry? Because we attach such importance to the things that they take from us. So, don't attach importance to your clothes, and you are not angry with the thief. Don't attach importance to the beauty of your wife, and you are not angry with the adulterer. Know that the thief and the adulterer have no place in the things that are yours, but in those that belong to others and are not in your power. If you dismiss those things and set them at nought, with whom are you still angry? But as long as you set store by these things, be angry with yourself rather than with the thief and the adulterer.
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> For just consider: You have beautiful clothes; your neighbour does not. You have a window, and wish to air them. He does not know what man's good consists in, but imagines that it means having beautiful clothes, the very thing that you imagine too. Then, shall he not come and carry them off? When you show a bit of food to hungry men and then gobble it down alone, don't you want them to snatch at it? Don't provoke them; don't have a window; don't air your clothes.
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> Something similar happened to me the other day. I kept an iron lamp by my household shrine. Hearing a noise from my window, I ran down. I found the lamp had been stolen. I reasoned that the one who had lifted it had felt something he couldn't resist. So what? 'Tomorrow,' I said to myself, 'you will find one of earthenware.' For a man loses what he has.
>
> (Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.18.11–16, trans. Dobbin 1998, p. 37)

Exercises

Please continue writing your daily Journal, and for the next few weeks concentrate specifically on dealing with other people, and on dealing with ‘difficult people’ should you encounter any. If you make any efforts to mend their ways, make a detailed record in your Journal of what you say, how they respond, and whether your efforts make any difference or not. If there are any people with whom you do not get on very well, or with whom you have fallen out, consider the options for mending fences. Use your knowledge of Stoic ideas to counsel yourself with respect to how you might undertake such an exercise, and if it seems appropriate and the opportunities arise, try to restore friendly relations.

1. Explain why the Stoics say that ‘it is not people’s actions that trouble us’ (*Meditations* 11.18, ‘Seventh Rule’).

2. Have you ever been worried by what other people think or say of you? Will your knowledge of Stoic philosophy make any difference as to how you react to other people’s opinions in the future?

3. To what extent does Marcus’ position as Emperor invalidate the *Meditations* as a source of advice and inspiration for its modern readers? (With reference to 11.18: ‘ … how I was born to preside over them, as a ram over his flock … ’)

4. Seneca discusses the nature of friendship in Letters 3, 9 and 48 (*Letters from a Stoic*, pp. 34–6, pp. 47–52 and pp. 96–7).

(a) What is the purpose of friendship, according to Seneca?

(b) Do you think that your capacity for ‘practising friendship’ has been affected in any way by your acquaintance with Stoic philosophy?

In his book, *On Duties*, Cicero remarks that cases can arise in which expediency seems to conflict with honour. In the following thought-experiment, he asks his reader to imagine that there has been a crop-failure and that consequently a terrible famine has ravaged the island of Rhodes. What few provisions remain can be had only at enormously inflated prices. A merchant from Alexandria is aboard his ship bringing a large shipment of corn to the stricken island.

> He is aware that a number of other traders are [also] on their way from Alexandria – he has seen their ships making for Rhodes, with substantial cargoes of grain. [When he arrives,] ought he to tell the Rhodians this? Or is he to say nothing and sell his stock at the best price he can get? I am assuming he is an enlightened, honest person. I am asking you to consider the deliberations and self-searchings of the sort

> of man who would not keep the Rhodians in ignorance if he thought this would be dishonest but who is not certain that dishonesty would be involved.
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> In cases of this kind that eminent and respected Stoic Diogenes of Babylon habitually takes one side, and his very clever pupil Antipater of Tarsus the other. Antipater says that all the facts must be revealed, and the purchaser must be as fully informed as the seller. According to Diogenes, on the other hand, the seller must declare the defects of his wares as far as the law of the land requires, but otherwise – provided he tells no untruths – he is entitled, as a seller of goods, to sell them as profitably as he can.
>
> 'I have brought my cargo, I have offered it for sale, I offer it as cheap as other dealers – perhaps cheaper, when I am over-stocked. Whom am I cheating?'
>
> Antipater argues on the other side. '[…] You ought to work for your fellow-men and serve the interests of mankind. These are the conditions under which you were born, these are the principles which you are duty bound to follow and obey – you must identify your interests with the interests of the community, and theirs with yours. How, then, can you conceal from your fellow-men that abundant supplies and benefits are due to reach them shortly?'
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> 'Concealing is one thing,' perhaps Diogenes will reply, 'but *not revealing* is another. If I do not reveal to you, at this moment, what the good are like – or the nature of the Highest Good – I am not *concealing* that information […]. I am not obliged to tell you everything that would be useful for you to know.'
>
> 'Oh yes, you are,' Antipater will reply, 'if you remember that nature has joined mankind together in one community.'
>
> (Cicero, *On Duties* 3.50–3, trans. Grant 1971, pp. 177–8)

Cicero concludes by remarking that neither Diogenes nor Antipater is saying, 'Since this action is expedient, I will do it regardless of its being wrong.' Diogenes' position is that selling at a high price is expedient, but is not in fact wrong, whereas Antipater says that (despite its being expedient) selling at a high price would be wrong. (Diogenes of Seleucia on the Tigris in Babylon, *c.* 228–140 BC, was fifth scholarch of the Stoic school and was the teacher of Antipater of Tarsus, *c.* 200–*c.* 130 BC, who was the sixth scholarch.)

5. Imagine that you are the merchant bringing the desperately needed corn to Rhodes. Would you keep silent about the other merchants who are also on their way, and sell your corn at the highest price you can? Or would you tell the inhabitants about the other merchants, and sell at the standard price? Explain your reasons.

Here is another case devised by Cicero:

> Suppose that a good man is selling his house because of certain faults that he knows and that others do not know, say, that it is unsanitary but thought to be salubrious, or that it is not generally known that vermin can be found in all the bedrooms, or

> that it is structurally unsound and crumbling, but no one except the owner knows this. My question is this: if the seller does not tell the buyers these things, but sells the house at a higher price than that at which he thought he would sell it, will he not have acted unjustly or dishonestly?
>
> 'He will indeed,' Antipater claims. 'Give me an instance of "failing to show the path to someone who is lost" (something which is prohibited in Athens on pain of a public curse) if it is not this: allowing a buyer to rush into a deal and succumb through his error to being thoroughly deceived. Indeed it is more than failing to show the path; rather it is knowingly to lead someone into error.'
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> And Diogenes again: 'If someone has not even encouraged you to buy, surely he hasn't forced you? He advertised something that he didn't want, and you bought something you did want. If those who advertise a villa as "good and well built" are not thought to have deceived you, even though it is neither good nor methodically built, then it's much less the case for those who haven't praised their house. Where it is up to the buyer to judge, how can there be deceit on the part of the seller? Indeed, if one need not accept responsibility for everything that was actually stated, do you really think that one need do so for something that was not stated?* What is more foolish than for a seller to recount the faults of the very thing he is selling? What could be more absurd than for the auctioneer to say, "I am selling an unsanitary house"?'
>
> (Cicero, *On Duties* 3.54–55, trans. Griffin & Atkins 1991, p. 120)
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> * [Translator's note:] Diogenes is made to allude to a provision in Roman law (*Digest* XVIII.I.43) whereby the seller is not bound by professions he makes in advertising for sale as long as the qualities claimed are such as the buyer can judge for himself.

6. Imagine that you are the vendor selling the unsanitary house. Would you tell the prospective buyer the truth about the house? As before, explain your reasons.

Please make copies of your exercises on living in society and send them to your tutor at the Stoic Foundation, using the address at the bottom of page 1 of this Paper.

If you have any queries about the Course or the reading material, please feel free to raise them with your tutor.

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