THE DIVERGENCIES OF BELIEF which led so many of the Skeptics to their skepticism increased as the cultural dominance of Athens declined and that of Alexandria and then Rome grew more vigorous. The one philosophic school which seems to have maintained itself as a sect with orthodox doctrines was that of the Epicureans, for the De rerum natura of Lucretius proposed no thesis which Epicurus himself could not have subscribed to,\(^1\) though it dates from at least two hundred years after his death. We have seen how the school of Plato developed into a form of Skepticism which differed only in detail from that of the Pyr-

\(^{1}\) See E. Zeller, History of Eclecticism (Philosophie der Griechen, dritter Teil, erste Abteilung), trans. by S. F. Alleyne (London: Longmans, 1883), p. 26: “Though many deviations from pure Epicureanism are perceptible in Lucretius, on closer inspection they will be found to refer to traits which merely concern the form of the poetic presentation, but do not affect the scientific theories. The same may be said of other philosophers among the later Epicureans concerning whom tradition has told us something.”
rhetoricians. As for the Stoics, their later disciples, if we count men like Seneca among them, took their sustenance wherever they found it to their taste. Unfortunately Zeno and Cleanthes had no sacred bard who, if only because of the beauty of his verses, preserved a systematic account of what doctrines they upheld unanimously. The works of outstanding Stoics, such as Panaetius and Posidonius, have come down to us only in mutilated form. When we come to Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, not to speak of Seneca, their interests were so largely ethical that it is next to impossible to untangle their metaphysical doctrines from their sermons. But this is typical of the period with which we are at present dealing. When men maintain that the purpose of philosophy is to teach a prudent way of life, they cannot be expected to dwell on topics which would serve only to upset one's peace of mind. At the same time it is only fair to remember that if anything does survive of ancient philosophy, it is thanks to the Church Fathers, and they, it goes without saying, were not interested in preserving error except to the extent that it would serve as a horrible example to Christians.

In contrast to the capitulation of the Skeptics, the later Stoics maintained their faith in reason, but it was the reason of their intellectual ancestors, not their own. With due allowances made for the lost works, we can say definitely that in the writings of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius the reason of which they speak is either a supernatural order, Nature, God, or Fate, which was the termination of the reasoning of their teachers, or simply a catchword which they use when they want some ground for their ethical ideas. One seldom finds any chain of reasoning in either man. In short it is not unfair to say that Stoicism had by their time become a religion whose basic tenets never were to be questioned. They used the word "reason" continually; but what they

2 Ludwig Edelstein is now at work on an edition of the fragments of the latter. His article, "The Philosophical System of Posidonius," American Journal of Philology, LVII, 3, No. 227 (1936), 286 ff., gives one a synthetic account of what is left of the man whom Strato called "the most widely learned among our philosophers" (xvi. 2. 10).
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meant by it was more frequently "authority" or "tradition" than logical processes

I

1. In the fourth book of his *De finibus*, which is Cicero's refutation of Stoicism, we find him objecting to the "asperities of style and roughness of manners" of the Stoics, but making an exception of Panaetius who "shunned their gloom and sourness" and was "gentler in his doctrines and clearer in his speech" (iv. 28. 78), but who, interestingly enough, "constantly quoted Plato, Aristotle, Xenocrates, Theophrastus, and Dicaearchus." If Cicero is to be trusted, Panaetius was also a confirmed eclectic. He abandoned the old Stoic theory of the *ekpyrosis* (Ps-Philo *De aeternitate mundi* xv. 76) and held that the world was indestructible. We are also told, by Epiphanius (*De fide* ix. 45), that he did not accept divination and said that theology was nonsense, though Zeller rejects this. He argued against the use of astrology on the grounds that twins, who must have the same horoscope, nevertheless led different lives (Cicero *De divinatione* ii. 42). He also rejected the [Platonic] theory of the immortality of souls (Cicero *Tusculanae disputationes* i. 32. 79), on the ground that whatever is born must perish and souls are born, as is proved by the fact of pain, for whatever feels pain is susceptible to sickness and whatever may become sick may also die. Thus he was no orthodox Stoic. In fact from what remains of his opinions, he was a moralist, a cultivated man of parts, without much to offer in the way of metaphysics.

2. The investigations of Edelstein help us to a clearer understanding of Posidonius. The goal of philosophy, according to him, was threefold: to lay down the presuppositions of knowl-

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4 Cicero, in spite of his admiration for Panaetius, proceeds to show that his criticism of Plato is unfounded.
edge, to discover general, not special, statements, and to understand the whole, not the individual. He visualized the world as the product of two archai, one of which was active, the logos which was resident in matter, the other passive, matter utterly without quality, the substratum which in Plotinus was to be potentially everything and actually nothing. This matter was the substance and stuff of all things, but is known to us always as of some shape and quality. The distinction between the Two Worlds in this thinker arises from the way things are presented to us and the way in which they are in themselves. We make a distinction between the essence of things and their matter, but in reality there is no such distinction. One is always in danger of reading too much into a statement of this sort, but it looks as if Posidonius realized the importance of sharply differentiating between our intellectual construction of the world and the world itself, not simply that knowledge is different from its object—for almost anyone would be willing to admit that much—but that we use formulas, apply images, to the objects of knowledge which are our own and not pictures of that which we are trying to understand.

Just how far he believed the reason to be creative of forms or patterns of thought, we do not know. But that the schemata in which we envision things are ours and not contributed by the things which we know seems to have been one of his fundamental principles. The resemblance between this idea and Kant's theory, both of space and time as forms of perception and of the categories as projections of our methods of understanding, is striking. Moreover, it will be noticed that God, whom Panaetius identified with the active logos, but who is nevertheless contained in matter, is also substance without form, whereas in Aristotle the active reason, like the Unmoved Mover, is form without matter. But this makes God a universal noumenon, not apart from the phenomena in existence, but entirely apart from them in our

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5 Edelstein, op. cit., p. 290.
6 Ibid., p. 292.
thought. Diogenes Laertius (vii. 148) emphasizes the pantheism of Chrysippus and Posidonius together, saying that they both believed the real nature (οὐδὲν) of God to be the whole cosmos and the heavens, but we can put little confidence in this report, since he had previously said that, according to Posidonius, the heavens were the guiding force of the cosmos (vii. 139), which would mean no more than that, as in Aristotle, the sphere of the fixed stars was the ultimate cause of all change this side of the Unmoved Mover. But for every metaphysical fragment, there are several ethical fragments, so that we can assert nothing firmly about the metaphysical and epistemological views of this philosopher until the critical edition, promised by Edelstein, is published.

3. When we come to Epictetus, we find little about appearance and reality. He represents that orientation of metaphysics toward theology which was to supplant the kind of philosophy for which the classical philosophers were the spokesmen. In discussing Providence, a favorite topic of the Stoics, he is not satisfied with rational proofs but insists on bringing in simple everyday experiences also as evidence supporting the cosmological proof of a provident Deity. In his Discourses (i. 6) God is no longer that omnipresent spirit infusing all things, binding them together in sympathetic and organic union, but is clearly a creator. If He had made colors, he says, and not our visual power, what good would it have been? If He had given us eyes and nothing to see, that would have been equally futile. And if He had made both but had not created light? “Surely from the very constitution of the things which have been perfected we are used to showing that it is in every way the work of a Creator (τεχνίτων) and in no way put together without a plan” (i. 6. 7). Here we have a conception of God which harks back to the Demiurge of Timaeus, not to either the Unmoved Mover, or the Lawgiver of Cleanthes, or the cosmic Pneuma, or the happy gods of Epicurus, remote from all earthly interests. In fact, when he begins to speak of God’s creating animals for human food, for farming, even for making cheese (i. 6. 18), one begins to wonder

7 Ibid., p. 322, n. 131.
whether one is not reading Bernardin de Saint-Pierre in Greek translation. Appearance and reality have now become the City of Man and the City of God. Anticipating Marcus Aurelius, he says (i. 9. 1) that one is not a citizen of Athens or of Corinth, but of the cosmos, "the greatest and noblest and most extensive of all . . . a society of men and God . . . [from Whom] the seeds have descended not merely into my father or my grandfather, but into all things that are generated and grow on earth, and above all into rational beings, for they alone happen to commune with God, since they are linked to Him in the harmony of reason" (i. 9. 4).

The same dualism, moreover, which is seen in the two Cities, reappears in the dualism between soul and body. Plato in Gorgias (493a) had said that the body is our tomb, playing upon the words soma and sema, and quoting two lines from the Phryxus of Euripides8 which ask whether we are not dying as we live and living when we have died. Death thus in the minds of many thinkers was a release of the soul (the "vital principle") from its prison. But in spite of Plato's play upon words, he gives us a Socrates who does not treat his body with contempt, though he does refuse to be its slave, who is not an ascetic, though he is not a voluptuary either. By the time of Epictetus, the status of the body had changed. Despite Stoic materialism, the body is one of the main obstacles to freedom; it is beyond our control. The Encheiridion (1, 2) opens with a distinction between those things over which we have power and those over which we have no power. The latter include along with property, reputation, and business, the body. He even goes so far as to say that "disease is an impediment to the body, but not to our power of choice, if we do not give in to it. Lameness is an impediment to the leg, but not to our power of choice. And say this when anything happens to you, for you will find it an impediment to something else, but not to yourself." Or again, in the Discourses (iii. 22. 21), "My poor body is no concern of mine. Its

8 There is some question of the source of these lines. See the commentary of Dodds in his edition of Gorgias (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 300. But Dodds assigns them to Phryxus.
parts are nothing to me. Death? Let it come when it will, either to the whole or to a part of it.” If you keep the body clean, as you would keep a tool clean and free from rust, that suffices (iii. 1. 43). The care of such things is no task for a free soul, but belongs to Another, as he terms God. And in spite of his having said that the body should at least be kept clean, he also says (Stobaeus, Vol. V, p. 1105) that we tend it though it is the dirtiest thing that exists. Suppose we had to do for our neighbors’ bodies what we do for our own?  

In the views of Socrates the body is that which must be controlled lest it overpower the soul. He is depicted in both the Apology and the Symposium as one who could withstand bodily pleasure not by denying the demands of the body, but by temperance. But in Epictetus the body has become an alien thing, a piece of flesh which one can completely reject. Free yourself first, he says (Discourses iv. 1. 111), from the most trivial things, a pot, a cup, then a tunic, a little dog, a horse, a bit of land; then free yourself from your body, its members, your children, your wife, and your brothers. Egotism and asceticism could hardly go further. The soul is thought of as something utterly alien to the body, as it is to material possessions and other people. Wife and family are impediments to one’s freedom; therefore they should be rejected as if they were old drinking vessels or domestic pets. Like the body, they contain the soul as in a prison. The body in turn, like them, is simply part of the natural order to which, it appears, the soul does not belong. That wife and children too have souls and that they might reject their husband and father for the sake of their own freedom do not seem to occur to Epictetus. It is his own freedom which alone matters. The mind is free to give assent (iv. 1. 66 ff.), to withhold it, to despise death, to refuse to do something, to desire or not to desire. And presumably he never stopped to think of how our thoughts are distilled from our sensations, of

9 Using Diogenes the Cynic as an exemplar, he also says that the body can show that the simple life is not injurious to it (Discourses iii. 22. 86 ff.). One wonders what difference it would make whether the body were injured or not.
how our desires would have no object were it not for our bodies, of how death itself is the death of the body. His dualism is so complete that he overlooks the bodily origin of the psychic life. So complete a dualism was no part of the rationalistic tradition. None of the four dominant schools preached either sensualism or asceticism, for they all understood that giving in to desire or refusing to give in was equally extreme. They saw the ethical problem as that of coping with temptation. “Nothing in excess” was the acknowledged motto of the *Nichomachean Ethics*, and in the remains of Zeno and Epicurus we find similar slogans. Just as Plato realized that the appetites must have their day in court, and even in his ideal republic made a place for the appetitive class of men, so Epicurus, when he posited pleasure as the norm of the good, knew that our love of pleasure must be moderated by the rational consideration that it might well be followed by pain. Zeno is reported by Diogenes Laertius (vii. 10) to have defined a *pathos* as an “irrational modification of the soul contrary to nature, an exaggerated desire.” But, if Cicero is not mistranslating Zeno in the *Tusculan disputations* (iv. 2 and 47), what he meant by a *pathos* was perturbation, a violent emotional drive, and not any bodily sensation whatsoever. And Plutarch insists (De virtute morali iii.) that according to the Stoics, the passive and irrational part of the soul is not cut off from the rest of the soul but should be under the control of rational judgment. The extreme asceticism of Epictetus derives more directly from Diogenes the cynic than from the early Stoics.

Another fundamental difference between the dualism of Epictetus and that of the school to which he is usually assigned lies in his conception of God. God in early Stoicism is the *Pneuma*, the cosmic spirit which pervades the whole universe, and if some doctrinal name must be given to this idea, the traditional name of pantheism is the most appropriate. But God in Epictetus descends from the Demiurage of *Timaeus*. He is referred to frequently as *Another*, as if his name were too holy to be mentioned. He is the Creator who “has made the sun and the fruits [of the trees], the
seasons, the society and communion of men with one another” (Discourses iv. 1. 102). As Oldfather points out in his translation of the Discourses,10 just as Job says, “The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away,” so Epictetus says (iv. 1. 104), “Did He not bring you forth? Did He not show you the light? Did He not give you fellow workers? Sensations? Reason? And as what did He bring you forth? Was it not as a mortal? Not as one to live on earth with a little flesh and to contemplate His order to join with Him in His procession and festival for a little while?” We are all begotten of God and He is the father of men as of the gods (i. 3. 1). What then is God’s nature? “It is likely,” he says (ii. 8. 1 f.), “that where is the essence of God, there is that of the good. What then is God’s essence? Flesh? Not at all. Land? Not at all. Fame? Not at all. Intelligence, understanding, right reason. Here therefore solely is the essence of the good to be sought.” It is probably an inference from this that makes him exclude animals from partaking of God’s nature (ii. 8. 10). The Cosmopolis is a society of God, the gods, daimones, and men. The rest is God’s creation. The similarity between this and the Christian conception of the relation of God to man and the rest of the universe is striking and it is easy to see why pagans who accepted this type of philosophy could also accept Saint Paul.

4. The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius were written almost a century later than the works of Epictetus. Between the two men came Seneca, but in view of the hopeless confusion of his thoughts, there seems to be little reason to include him in a study of this sort. His influence was great, to be sure, and eclecticism such as his is also an evasion of logical responsibility. But his type of mind, like Cicero’s, was that of the amateur philosopher and there is no evidence which I have been able to unearth of his having made any contribution to the progress of our subject. He does exemplify the breakdown of rationalism but he is simply an example of it. His doctrinal position might be almost anything. The Emperor was of course an entirely different type of man. His meditations were

apparently jotted down during his campaigns in Dacia, and if they show nothing else, they illustrate how Stoicism could become a solace rather than primarily an intellectual discipline. That the two outstanding Roman Stoics who have survived should be one a slave and the other an Emperor is in itself significant, for it symbolizes that brotherhood of man in the City of Zeus of which the Christians were to make so much. The very idea of a cosmopolis was based in part on the rejection of the distinction between Greek and Barbarian, and in the contrast between these two thinkers one finds a similar rejection of the distinction between men of low and high social station. It took very little time for this attitude to disappear, for as soon as the Church became an organization rather than a collection of individuals whose bond was their common beliefs, rank had to be introduced and therefore also a hierarchy of both power and prestige. One might reply that, regardless of all that, all men were equal in the sight of God. But men were not dealing with one another as if they shared God's sight. Marcus Aurelius himself did not abdicate and there will always be some question of the extent to which he applied his religious ideals. Fortunately that is not a problem which we have to solve in this book. This is a study in the history of a few ideas, not a series of biographies.

The two worlds of Epictetus are to be sure reproduced in the Meditations. But it is interesting to observe that here the alternatives are clear-cut and overtly stated. It is a matter either of atoms or of God. "Either Providence or atoms," Marcus writes (iv. 2), "and from abundant evidence it is clear that the cosmos, as it were, is a city." What the abundant evidence is he does not tell us nor does he tell us why the alternative is atoms and God, that is, Epicureanism and Theism, for traditional Stoicism had been no less materialistic than Epicureanism. He may be thinking of the element of chance in the latter and the strict determinism of the

11 The text of Marcus Aurelius is notoriously difficult and in many places corrupt. I have therefore not hesitated to make full use of C. R. Haines's excellent edition, translation, and notes in the Loeb Classical Library, though, it goes without saying, my interpretation of the work is my own.
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former. For, if he wished to believe in Providence, he could hardly believe also that the future was not determined. He was faced with the same problem that confronted some of the early Fathers when they tried to reconcile the dogma of free will with the dogma of God's knowledge of the future. This comes out more clearly when he states the premises of his philosophy (x. 18). “If not atoms,” he says, “then nature, which brings order into all things.” But the order here is not a causal order but a teleological order. “The worse are for the better, and these for one another.”

In a third place (viii. 17) the alternatives are not atoms and God, Providence, or Nature, but atoms and the gods, both of which were retained by Epicurus. A fourth statement of the case (ix. 39) is clearer still: “Either from one intelligent source all things as in one body flow together and the part ought not to find fault with what happens for the sake of the whole, or there are atoms and nothing other than a medley and a scattering.” But again Epicurus was able to conceive of a world made of falling atoms and neither a medley nor a scattering. For the swerving of the atoms did not destroy the prevailing order. It was in fact introduced to account for the conglomerations of atoms which comprised the macroscopic objects.

More difficult to understand is the combination of the idea of a source from which the order flows and the idea of a whole which embraces everything. One would imagine that such a whole would include the source itself and in any pantheistic system this would be true. Later, in the Italian Renaissance, Bruno and later still Spinoza were able to use the phrase Deus sive Natura without obvious compunction or apology and, as early as the ninth century, Erigena made nothing more than a verbal distinction between the creative and the created. But Marcus Aurelius retained the distinction as an orthodox Christian would have done, and God was excluded from the order of nature as its creator and preserver. In that event one might have expected him also to raise the question of how we could know that which transcended the natural order and to have ended perhaps in some form of mysticism, if not in the
negative theology. But he either did not see the question or had no answer to it. And he even went so far as to suggest (x. 6) that the cosmos is not subjected to any external power. I may be reading too much into this, for in this place he is talking of a power which might injure the cosmos, but the total phrasing is such as to make one believe that the cosmos is all-inclusive and that therefore there is no power beyond it. A rationalist, aware of his intellectual technique, could not have upheld both positions, for one can scarcely say that the cosmos contains both God and the world and also that God created the world and is outside it.

Marcus also believes that his tightly organized cosmos is good. That it might be evil does not occur to him. There is no more proof given, or attempted, in the Meditations that what is “according to Nature” is good than there was in his earlier predecessors. Someone might have suspected that the natural was bad and that salvation was to come from resisting nature. Marcus seems to have been incapable of conceiving of the cosmic animal as anything but good. “For nothing is harmful to the part which is helpful to the whole” (x. 6). Yet, again as in Epictetus, many a part was permitted to suffer and even to die and was urged to accept suffering and death on the ground that they were mysteriously of advantage to the Whole. What advantage could there be to the whole in the death of a man if that man was an integral and indeed a necessary part of the whole, as an arm or a leg might be necessary to the complete man? Did not the whole suffer from that loss? In reply one could only be told that, whether one knew it or not, all was for the best. But what the best was was never revealed.

The confusion of ideas becomes even clearer when one considers his conception of the role of the human body. The body (iii. 3) is but the vessel which contains the soul: "On the one hand are intelligence and a daimon, on the other earth and gore."

The dualism here is existential not merely qualitative, for death is

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12 Haines refers his readers to Saint Paul (I Thess. 4:4) along with other authors for this commonplace. In Meditations iv. 41, Marcus Aurelius quotes Epictetus' remark, "You are a little soul bearing up a corpse."
the emergence of the "little soul"—Hadrian's *animula*?—from its shell or husk, as a baby emerging from its mother's womb. The sheath or body is simply that which surrounds the "hidden thing within us" (x. 38). Our organs are the instruments of the soul, differing from the workman's tools only in being attached to the body. When they are cut off from the cause which moves them and halts their motion, they are like the weaver's shuttle, the writer's pen, the charioteer's whip. If one asks why the microcosm differs in this respect from the macrocosm, in which all forms a single whole, the answer is not forthcoming. Marcus Aurelius switches his point of view at this point as Epictetus does. When he wants to preach resignation, the cosmos becomes a Whole of which the individual is but a small and trivial part; when he wishes to emphasize the goodness, the admirable order of the cosmos, he introduces the creator and legislator of the whole as a being outside it. So when he is interested in moral counsel, he will think of the human being as a material vessel enclosing an immaterial soul which will escape at death. But when he is thinking of the relation between soul and body, the body becomes a tool or set of tools for an end which it is incapable of achieving. It is the less honorable and mortal part of a man which must be kept in a position of subordination to the more divine portion (xi. 19). It is irresistible to ask why God should have given us bodies since they seem to be only a hindrance to the good and an obstacle to the moral life. One might imagine that if bodies are instruments, they would serve some purpose in a purposive universe. One can hardly think of Marcus Aurelius as a Roman Fichtean to whom the overcoming of one's opposite was the very essence of morality.

The vagueness of his conception of the universal order appears once more when he speaks of our role in the Cosmopolis (vi. 42). We are all fellow workers in the achievement of one goal, some of us intelligently, some blindly. The difference would seem to indicate that, whether we know it or not, we work toward this single end, for he goes on to say that even the man who grumbles and seeks to hinder this purpose co-operates in accomplishing it. "For
the cosmos has need of such too.” And yet he also urges one not
to play the part of the clown in the comedy, a part which is bad
in itself but is not without significance in the play as a whole.\textsuperscript{13}
But why not? the clown might ask and ask it reasonably. And how
can I avoid playing the part which Nature or God has assigned
me? I did not write the play nor may I change my lines. If the
grumbler co-operates in the order of the Cosmopolis, why not the
clown? To resist might well be to deny the role which has been
given me. There is surely little consistency in preaching both
resignation to God’s commands and also resistance to them. The
problem becomes the more puzzling when one reads that all things
are intertwined “and the union is sacred and hardly anything is
alien to anything else. For [everything] has been harmoniously
arranged and together forms the one cosmos. For there is both one
cosmos made of all things and one God pervasive of all, and one
substance and one law, a reason common to all intelligent animals,
and one truth, if in fact there is one final purpose of all things
of the same kind and of animals sharing the same nature” (vii. 9).
Here we have first the proposition of the interconnectedness of
all things to form a single whole. That whole is permeated by
God, so that here the God who is outside of creation is forgotten
and we revert to Stoic pantheism. The argument to the existence
of one law, substance, reason, and truth seems to be based upon
the single purpose which may be attributed to all things belonging
to one class. This would seem to imply that everything in the
universe is homogeneous, though the universal genus could be
broken up into various species, each with its own purpose, but the
specific purposes are nevertheless “harmonious” with the general
purpose. This harmony would be shown in the life of the Cosmic
Animal. But once again, if that is to be accepted, then must we
not also accept the inevitability of whatever occurs as part of that
life?

How then could there be alienation of an individual’s purpose
from the universal purpose, from God’s purpose? How would it

\textsuperscript{13}See Chrysippus, fr. 1181 (von Arnim, p. 339).
be possible for anything to happen contrary to nature? Why should the body, inferior to the soul, distract the soul from the truth, the law, or the good? Such questions are not faced by Marcus Aurelius. For, as a matter of fact, he has no philosophic system in the sense of a reasoned body of propositions. The Meditations are a set of religious dogmas, the inconsistency of which is no more disturbing to its author than prayer would be. The philosophy he accepts was accepted prior to the writing of the Meditations; their author had already accepted it before he jotted down his beautiful and moving thoughts. They were written for himself, as their title indicates, not as arguments but as directions to the good life. Their premises were accepted as authoritative, and if they were inconsistent, that was nothing that need disturb anyone. Just as Christians were able, and indeed in one case, delighted, to work from mysterious logical puzzles, so the two Roman Stoics whom we have been discussing saw no need to criticize the thoughts which their masters had expressed. Acquiescence in paradox could go little farther. How little we shall see later.

II

In neither Epictetus nor Marcus Aurelius is there more than a hint of their method. They both proclaim the supremacy of reason as the Stoic's guiding principle, but it is hard to find more than one or two passages in which reasoning plays any part. Both men are assertive. They know what they believe and their dicta are simple pronouncements, not arguments. Whether they are talking to themselves or to their pupils, they are not critical of their assumptions or inferences. These works are not works of discovery but of exposition. This does not save them from the objection that they are inconsistent, but it would be unjust to accuse them of proceeding from dogma, since they do not seem to attempt anything more. One might almost say, and this would certainly be true of the Emperor, that their words are a kind of
prayer, communion with themselves as representatives of the divine. They are exercises in self-investigation, examinations of conscience.

The Stoic tradition was to them what the Biblical tradition was to be to the Christians. To them it was a matter of faith and as such something the questioning of which would be absurd. When Marcus Aurelius flatly says that the alternatives are atoms or God, he surely cannot be intending to analyze the logical possibilities. He is talking in rhetorical terms and he would only have needed to stop and think in order to realize that there were nonatomistic philosophies which were not Stoic and also not pantheistic or even theistic. The great historical misfortune was that Aristotle had called his Unmoved Mover God, and the Demiurge was sufficiently like the Creator to mislead even Christians into thinking of him as Yahweh. One imagines that the impetus to turning philosophy into religion was the increasing feeling of personal insecurity as city-states vanished into kingdoms and kingdoms into empires. The Multitude naturally continued their pagan habits and it made little difference to them whether Apollo turned into Saint Sebastian and Orpheus into the Good Shepherd or not, for the metamorphosis was slow enough not to seem revolutionary. There were enough similarities between the rites of the new religion and those of the old to soften the transition. It is always a small group of intellectuals who symbolize an age for historians of culture and for us it is bound to be the surviving philosophers. We have no way of knowing how much Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius were read by the general public. There is no mention of either, for instance, even in Eusebius who went out of his way to find anticipations of Christianity. Yet we can say that as far as the intellectuals were concerned, the insecurity was real and the acceptance of dogma probably a comfort. For just as in Lucretius the dominant note is that of removing fear, so it is in both of our Roman Stoics.

It is interesting to observe that in Marcus Aurelius the problem of truth becomes that of avoiding mendacity. It is no longer a question of the criteria of truth—he knows what the truth is both
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substantively and constitutively. The substance of truth is Stoicism and its constitution the order of nature. There is no problem here. But there happen to be people who do not tell the truth. “The liar,” he says (ix. 1), “is impious towards the same divinity [Nature]. For the nature of the whole is the nature of reality. And in fact reality (πά οὐρά) is closely related to all things that have been. And again the same is called truth and is the first cause of all truths. Accordingly he who lies willingly is impious inasmuch as he creates disorder by making war against the order of the cosmos. For he is making war who has conducted himself so as to be in opposition to the truth. For having begun to conceive of things by the grace of nature, through his neglect he can no longer distinguish the false from the true.” It would look then as if the apperception of the truth is a gift of nature, not of education, and here Marcus Aurelius may simply be referring to the cataleptic impressions, though this is a conjecture on my part. The truth is a reflection of the things that are, but what is error? How is it possible? There is no clear answer to such questions, for in one place Marcus Aurelius says that one should speak “from within oneself” (xi. 19),\(^{14}\) but does this mean “by the lumen naturale”? Does he believe that we have innate ideas obscured by sin? Is he thinking of some sort of natural intuition? It is next to impossible to tell, unless one makes the historical guess that he is thinking of Plato’s reminiscence or the Stoic doctrine of self-evidence. Yet, even if one of these guesses were correct, we should still be in a quandary about the injustice of Nature, the divine, which endows one man with better insight than another. Nor is the problem solved by a reference to the guiding principle or to reason, for we are still left with the paradox of being told to follow Nature or reason or the guiding principle and the fact that it is possible not to.

Epictetus is reported to have said (Discourses ii. 11) that we come into the world without any innate concepts of mathematics or music, but can learn them through training. But on the other

\(^{14}\) Haines translates “from the heart,” in Pascalian terms.
These we can apply to individual cases in which such concepts are relevant. But they can be wrongly applied because of the differences in individual opinions. The conflict here is the old Platonic one between opinion and knowledge. And we are asked to seek a standard which is higher and more authoritative than opinion. That standard is revealed by philosophy. “To philosophize is this: to look into and establish firmly the canons; but to use them once known, this is the work of a fine and good man” (ii. 11. 24 f.). The philosophic program is expanded a bit in the lesson to Naso (ii. 14). The philosopher there should make his will harmonious with the occurrences of things “so that nothing that happens occurs against our will nor cause anything which we wish not to occur to occur” (ii. 14. 7). But since Epictetus does not believe that a man can actually determine the course of events, it turns out that all that he is preaching is resignation or an imitation of God. Knowing the nature of God, we can be godlike. But do we not participate in the nature of God since we are all parts of God? If Epictetus had included a fall from grace in his philosophic anthropology, his exposition, though more mythological, would have been more plausible. He could then have explained why it was possible for men to be in error, to have opinions which were not true, to fail to apply their innate moral concepts. But he does not use the myth of the Golden Age or any other myth of man’s cognitive degeneration to explain man’s present position. In fact, he does not seem to see the problem. His one prayer is to submit to God, to become like God, to be led by God (ii. 16. 42). How intimately he fused his two Gods, the Creator and the Cosmic Pneuma, there is no way of telling now, but in all probability he did not appreciate their duality.

Our innate moral concepts may help us in questions of policy, but on what are we to rely in questions of fact? Epictetus has no hesitation in replying: Logic (i. 17). But the only hint he gives us

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15 Contrast the prayer of Socrates at the end of Plato’s Phaedrus.
of the procedures of logic is its power of making distinctions. The value of logic lies in the definitions which it enables us to make. It will establish the criterion of truth for us. Whether it does this by the method of dichotomy or otherwise, we do not know. He mentions (i. 7) the use of equivocal and hypothetical premises, the method of questioning, as, I suppose, in the Socratic dialogues, as aids to the moral life. The purpose of logic, he says (i. 7. 5), is to state the truth, to eliminate the false, and to suspend judgment when things are not evident. It will teach us the operations of causality and be a defense against sophistry. But he lays most emphasis upon the criticism of premises and their use in argument. For it is by the careless acceptance of premises that a man is led astray. All this has a moral purpose and Epictetus shows no interest in the theory of logic itself. He has accepted a logical technique, that of his school, and discusses it only in so far as its use may serve the good life. This is strikingly clear when he is discussing error. Error, he says (ii. 26), lies in self-contradiction, and when a man has come to perceive his inconsistencies, he will learn to avoid them. For a man who has been shown his logical errors will abandon those acts which flow from them. That acts flow from ideas is assumed by him as by practically all the ancients. The traditional psychology of action is intellectualistic. He granted (iii. 6) that in former times more progress had been made in the theory of logic than in more recent times. Much labor, he says, is being expended upon the solution of syllogisms, but in the old days as much was spent on keeping the guiding principle (τὸ ἴγνωστον) in accordance with nature. I take it that this is a criticism of the contemporary playing with formal arguments, such as that of The Liar, which figures in the Discourses at least four times, but which is supposed to go back to Chrysippus. With such examples of logic Epictetus has no patience and he seems to believe that an examination of their premises would solve them. They have awaited, however, the appearance of Russell's "theory

16 See Discourses ii. 17. 34. This sophism arises out of trying to answer the question of whether a man who says that he is lying is telling the truth.
of types” before even a reasonable number of logicians would admit that some progress toward their solution had been made.

It is fair to say that in the works of these two men the reliance upon authority had become an integral part of their method of thinking. It was Cicero after all who first reported the *ipse dixit* of the Pythagoreans and gave credence to the idea that the ancient philosophers had both a secret and an exoteric doctrine,\(^\text{17}\) the former of which was imparted exclusively to members of their schools. The first two centuries of the Christian period were also the time in which lives of the philosophers were being elaborated, based largely on gossip, and one would imagine that their thoughts were some sort of expression of their personal behavior in abstract language. It was the period of apocryphal letters and sayings and anecdotes, for it seems to have appealed to the men of this time to attach any abstract idea to a historical incident. The technique continued throughout the Middle Ages, to be sure, and it may have had an earlier beginning than I think, though it does not go back much before the first century B.C. A philosophy seems to have been appraised by the kind of life which its supposed founder lived and it is interesting to observe that the synoptic gospels, for instance, tell us more of the deeds of Jesus than of His actual thoughts. But this was not peculiar to Christian literature. The author of the life of Apollonius of Tyana even used the performance of miracles to prove the divinity of his hero. Thus for one cause or another men had begun to think that in the biography of a man lay a philosophy and a philosophy which was in some sense of the word truer than his recorded ideas. This reinforced what tendencies may have existed to turn to authority as proof, to substitute reverence for a great man for argument. And though both Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius believed that any man can become divine by leading the rational life, they both turned to exemplars of the rational life rather than to arguing their case from general principles. Diogenes of Sinope, Socrates, even the mythical Her-

acres, became concrete specimens of the good life and by pointing to them, one avoided the labor of argument.

It cannot be denied that an example is often more persuasive than an argument. And if one believes that a way of living is in itself a philosophy, then surely one may be excused from using a specific life story as if it actually were a philosophy. The ideas of your exemplar then become authoritative and his ideas are extracted from the pattern of his behavior. But it may also be true that men turned to biographies, as if they were arguments, because of their predominant ethical interest. Perhaps the best way to teach others ethics is precisely by example, thus vivifying the lessons which one hopes to inculcate in one's pupils. For it is by no means obvious that ethical problems can be translated into general terms, that a situation in which a man has to make a choice between two courses of action is typical of anything beyond itself. We have learned the difficulty of situating crimes, for instance, under the traditional rubrics of the law, and the names which we have for the virtues and vices are never of much help when we come to judge our own acts or proposed acts. But if one can point to an incident in the life of a saint and recognize in it one's own problem, then it is somewhat easier to say, "I shall act as he acted." This is surely understandable. But it is far from being rational. The rationalist requires a set of categories under which he can subsume his entire subject matter. If he cannot find them, he is forced to capitulate to experience, authority, revelation, or simple feeling.

III

1. There are certain desiderata in life upon which Epictetus lays greatest emphasis. These are freedom of choice, freedom from the fear of death, freedom from the demands of the body. These freedoms are lodged in the human will which has control over some things, though not over all. The things which are under
our control (Encheiridion 1) are psychological, ideas and choices on the whole. The others are things which are either bodily states or things which are entirely external to the individual, in his words, “whatsoever are not our deeds.” By means of his extreme psychophysical dualism, Epictetus is able to argue that we need never submit to the demands of externals, that our psychical states are ours to govern, that nothing and nobody can force us to assent to a false proposition, to make the wrong moral choice, to fear anything or to hope for anything if we do not wish to. He argues (Encheiridion 1) that “if that which is slavish by nature you should think to be free, and alien things to belong to you, you will be impeded, grieved, in turmoil, and you will blame gods and men, but if only what belongs to you be yours, and alien things you believe to be alien, no one ever will constrain you, no one will impede you, nor will you blame anyone, you will not reprove anyone, nor will you do a single thing involuntarily, you will have no enemy, no one will harm you, for there will be nothing harmful to prevail over you.” The ethical problem then is solved first of all in recognizing what is one’s own and what is not, and then by freeing oneself from any involvements with the latter. This will entail sacrifices, such as the sacrifice of eminence in society and of wealth, but if one looks at these things calmly and replies to their call, “You are mine,” then one will be free.

This puts a man into a position of solitude (Discourses iii. 13). But, says Epictetus, Zeus too will be alone at the ekpyrosis, but he is self-sufficient and so ought a man to be. This can be brought about by thinking of the divine order of the world and of our relation to it. And, lest anyone say that we are dependent on the good will and protection of Caesar, Epictetus replies by pointing out that, though Caesar has done away with wars, brigandage, and other evils which are under his control, he still cannot free man from natural disasters, such as earthquakes and lightning. Nor can he give us freedom from the torments of love, of sorrow, of envy. This freedom can be obtained only by exercising the reason, which is the spokesman for God (iii. 13. 12)—when a man can say to
himself, "Now no evil can touch me: for me there is no thief, for me no earthquake; all is full of peace, all is full of tranquillity (ataraxia); every road, every city, every companion on the road, neighbor, fellow man, is harmless. Another supplies food, Another whose care it is, Another gives us clothing, Another has given us perceptions, Another has given us concepts. And when He does not furnish necessities, He will signal your retreat, will throw open the door and will say to you, 'Go forth.' Where? Into nothing fearful, but to that from which you were born, to friendly and kindred things, to the elements. Whatever was fire in you, into fire will it pass, and whatever was earth, into earth, whatever was spirit into spirit, whatever water into water.\(^1\)\(^8\) No Hades or Acheron or Cocytus, no Pyriphegethon, but all will be full of gods and daimones." A man who thinks thus is neither alone nor without help. But, says someone, "What if I should be attacked and murdered?" "Fool," replies Epictetus (iii. 13, 17), "not you, but your little body."

Nothing could be a clearer affirmation of the independence of a man's soul of his body than that. For here as elsewhere Epictetus is thinking of a man's slavery to his body. As in Lucretius, one of the dominating fears of man is seen to be his fear of death. No doubt everyone fears death and recoils from danger to life. The death penalty has always been the most serious of penalties for the most serious of crimes and one can see how even Socrates, as given us in the Apology, felt the need of pointing out how death was nothing to be feared. Yet the ethical treatises written after the triumph of Christianity never put so much emphasis upon freedom from fear of death as the pagans did; they put it rather on freedom from sin. For the acceptance of death by martyrs, as well as the promise of immortality, must have had some effect in changing men's minds on this point. Vice among the pagans is not so much disobedience to the commands of the Creator as betrayal of one's nature as man. And the fear of death, if it was

universal, was assuaged not by promise of reward in heaven, but by the promise of a peaceful mind on earth. "Of what sort do you imagine the good to be?" asks Epictetus (iii. 22. 39). And the answer comes immediately and without hesitation, "Serenity, happiness, freedom from restraint." But these can be obtained by a man alone and only by a man's own efforts. God has provided us with an example of such a man. "Look at me; I am homeless, stateless, poor, without a slave; I sleep on the earth; I have no wife, no child, no paltry residence, but earth alone and heaven and one poor wrap. And what do I miss? Am I not free from pain; am I not without fear; am I not free? When has any man among you seen me failing to satisfy my desires; when have I deviated from my course? When have I reproached god or man; when have I blamed anyone? Has any one of you seen me with downcast face? And how do I stand before those whom you fear and admire? Is it not as if they were slaves? What man seeing me does not think that he is seeing his own king and master?"

This clearly is a picture of the typical Cynic, rather than the Stoic. But to Epictetus the life of Diogenes is an ideal. In fact Arrian devotes a whole chapter to Cynicism as the proper way of life (iii. 22). Chrysippus in one place is treated simply as a writer whom men like to boast of having read (iii. 2. 13), whom they quote to great effect (iii. 21. 7), but whose teachings they do not apply (Encheiridion 49). The early Stoics are usually treated with respect, but there is little use made of their writings. It is anecdotes of exemplary lives of which Epictetus is in search, anecdotes of Socrates, of Diogenes, and of course of Heracles, whose labors and whose choice at the crossroads had become standards of good behavior. All such anecdotes illustrate the personal freedom of the men and the god concerned, and in the case of Heracles, his power of endurance. Their freedom lies in their fearlessness in the face of death and of rulers, their willingness to do without those pleasures ordinarily thought to be precious, their acceptance

19 See Discourses i. 24. 6; ii. 3. 24; iii. 2. 11, 19, 22. 57, 80; and esp. iii. 24. 64.
of a life without physical comforts. Such comforts were thought of as chains from which a man must liberate himself, yet nowhere is there any clear indication of how the reason proceeds to show that they are chains. The *amor habendi* may indeed result in a man's devoting his life to its satisfaction, but so may the *amor scientiae* or even Saint Augustine's *amor amandi*. But to Epictetus, as we may have seen, the man himself is something different not only from his body, but also from his emotions, and, whatever the power of choice or the reason or the will may be—and nowhere are they sharply defined—they can presumably act in isolation from every other faculty which was normally considered to be part and parcel of the human psyche. To detach the reason as a separate thing and to liberate it from all perceptions and concepts seem to leave it nothing to do. For it is all very well to give it logic as its province, but logic requires premises to work from. There can be as much logic in selling goods, in attracting women, in getting food, as in doing mathematics, if one wishes to be logical. Hence the use of the word "reason" and of "the rational life" is not informative, unless one is also told what one is to reason about. The distinction between those things which are in our control and those which are not is a rational distinction, to be sure, and it can be made without any reference to existent beings. But the moment one cites examples of each type of being, one has filled in the blanks by observation, tradition, or simply fiat. Similarly the distinction between the natural and the unnatural is logical, in the sense that, if one knows that the two antithetical classes exhaust the universe, then one can make the distinction without appealing to experience. But is the exemplification of each class equally rational? Not in Epictetus. For him such identifications are purely a matter of tradition. When, for instance, he is discussing the education of our desires (*Discourses* i. 12. 15), the best that he can do is to say that we should learn to desire "each thing as it comes about." But this is simply resignation to the course of events, whatever that may turn out to be, much as a Christian would resign himself to the will of God. "How do they come
about? As He who organizes them has ordered. And He has or­
dered summer and winter and abundance and want and virtue and
vice and all such opposites for the harmony of the whole” (i. 12.
15). And again, the poor man who is asking for a precise state­
ment of the nature of such distinctions can only look into his own
experience, for what it is worth, and to common opinion. There­
upon he might just as well resign himself to being whatever he is
without remorse.

2. Marcus Aurelius also accepts the tradition of what things are
good and what bad or indifferent. The destiny of man is to live
the life of a citizen of the Cosmopolis, the City of Zeus, and to
that extent he may have followed the reasoning of his Stoic fore­
bears to their conclusion of a universe in which all parts were
interrelated to form a whole. Good and evil are terms to be ap­
plied only to such things as are under our control (vi. 41) but
there is little if any mention of the freedom which this usage will
bring us. To Marcus Aurelius it is not freedom which is the goal
of man’s striving; it is rather apathy. His emphasis is upon co­
operation. His first commandment to himself (xi. 18) runs, “What
is my position in relation to men? We have come into being for the
sake of others. . . . The worse are for the sake of the better and
these for the sake of one another.” This is far from Epictetus’ com­
mand to seek isolation from all, even from one’s wife and children.
But the slave had had to live for the sake of others and knew the
price. The Emperor could do so freely. The ninth commandment
reads, “Kindliness is unconquerable, if it be genuine and not offered
with a smirk or with hypocrisy. For what can the most insolent of
men do to you, if you pursue the road of kindness to him and, if
possible, address him gently and teach him mildly at the very
moment when he is undertaking to do you harm, saying, ‘No, my
child, we have been made for other things. I shall not be harmed
myself, but you are being harmed, my child.’ . . . But this must
be done not ironically nor reproachfully, but tenderly and with­
out carping in your soul. And not as in school, nor that a by­
stander may admire you. But as if you were alone with him, even
if some others are present.” No comment is needed to prove that in such a passage Marcus Aurelius is taking his citizenship in the City of Zeus seriously. If the Emperor paid more attention to his fellow men than to his freedom, it may have been because he was already free.

Evil, he says (ii. 11), is inevitable and so are evil men. But it comes about through the same laws which bring the good into existence and it is our duty to submit to the will of God. Evil will not continue to exist forever (ix. 35), for so long as the world is in a state of change, both good and evil must exist. The thought here goes back historically, whether Marcus Aurelius was aware of it or not, to Aristotle’s theory that change is always between opposites, so that if good is to be changed, only evil can take its place, and if evil is changed, it will be replaced by good. If that is a universal law, and therefore inevitable, one can only bow to it and be resigned. One is neither angry nor resentful; one is calm. This is apathy (xi. 10). Apathy then applies to one’s reaction to other men’s deeds. One is not asked to be apathetic to them as men, to feel neither love nor friendship toward them. The very opening of the Meditations is an acknowledgment of benefits received and of gratitude and affection of the benefactors. He was not a man who was trying to make disciples; he was teaching himself alone. When one reads his testimony to his family and friends for their benefactions, one sees a modesty and a self-effacement which he may not always have manifested as Emperor, but which he cherishes as moralist. Yet here too he looks back to exemplars of good behavior in individuals which he wishes to copy, not to a chain of reasoning which might justify such behavior. It is possible that this custom of taking a historical personage as exemplar derives from the Platonic dialogues and the role which Socrates played in them. The Nichomachean Ethics makes nothing of this but is an argument from beginning to end. But even in the dialogues Plato does not simply relate anecdotes of Socrates; Socrates is there to analyze and criticize men’s arguments and definitions.
So that it is rather the Xenophontic Socrates who is the source of this tradition.

To justify it one might say, as we have intimated above, that an ethical theory which is not incorporated in a human being is abstract and empty. Do not tell us what we should do, but show us someone doing it, might seem to be the plea. It would then be the task of the philosopher to draw off from such lives the general principles which they exemplified. The impatience with theory which comes out in Marcus Aurelius in such ejaculations as (ii. 2), “Throw away the books. Be no longer distracted by them. It is not allowed.”

It is this type of thinking which two thousand years later we find in Emerson when he says, “An institution is but the lengthened shadow of a man.” It is understandable that a Stoic with his idea of an organic universe should believe that every man has an individual part to play in the cosmic drama and that these parts should “stand for” something. Just what they stand for is none too clear, but one may guess that they symbolize a philosophy of life. This philosophy need not be expressed in words, for just as the characters of Theophrastus did not first lay down a program consciously and overtly and then proceed to carry it out, so the Sages could live as if they had a clear-cut program, so thoroughly incorporated in their lives that one had only to know them at first hand in order to understand what their program was. It would then be the philosopher’s enterprise to express in rational language as far as possible just what these lives or characters stood for. We shall have, it is hoped, a clearer idea of this when we discuss Philo’s interpretation of the lives of the Patriarchs.

That a man’s position in civil society may influence his character is suggested in the lines (vi. 30), “Watch out lest you be Caesarified, lest you take that dye, for it can happen. Hence take care that you remain simple, good, pure, dignified, unadorned, a friend of the just, god-fearing, kindly, vigorous in good works. Fight to remain such as Philosophy has wished to make you. Fear

20 Cf. iii. 14, viii. 8.
the gods; save men. Life is short. There is but one fruit of life on earth: a righteous disposition and social practices." And he adds immediately, "All this as a disciple of Antoninus," followed by a character sketch of his father. This sketch shows us Antoninus as a man who above all fulfills his duty as the guardian of his people, obeying his guiding principle which tells him that his lot in life has been assigned by a power higher than himself and that he must accept it willingly. The difference between this conception of ethics and that of Epictetus is once more striking. It is true that both thinkers would have said that all men should follow Nature, listen to their guiding principle, obey the commands of God. But to Epictetus an emperor was no different from a slave and, just as a slave could attain the good life by cutting himself off from all commitments to other men, so should the emperor. He does not, to be sure, discuss the problem in these words, probably because he saw no occasion to counsel his rulers. He was talking to the lower ranks of society and Caesar to him was simply another of the many obstacles to the acquisition of goodness. Yet he gives no thought to the possibility that a man might have duties here on earth analogous to those which might befall him in the City of God. To Marcus Aurelius one's earthly lot could not be disregarded. If the gods had placed you on a throne, you were to think out your duties as a ruler and fulfill them. But again, it should not be forgotten that he was talking to himself and not to a group of pupils. Nevertheless there must have been a temptation to murmur against a fortune which made his leading the philosophic life more difficult than it would have been for a commoner. If there was such a temptation, it does not show itself in the words of his Meditations as we have them. Other sovereigns have abdicated: Tiberius, Charles V, Diocletian, Christina of Sweden, and these have done it for the sake of a life which they found more rewarding than that of a ruler. It might have occurred to Marcus Aurelius too that the life of an Emperor was incompatible with that of a Sage, that men were not made to be ruled by other men, and that he was usurping the power of God. But if such thoughts
occurred to him, he said nothing about them, and seems to have
believed that the dangers of maleficence could be alleviated by
practicing the virtues of hard work, kindliness, keeping an even
temper, and so on.

There is finally much less on the subject of the fear of death in
Marcus Aurelius than in Epictetus. Death to the Emperor is sim­
ply an inevitable occurrence and neither to be encouraged nor
resented. A man, he says (iv. 41) quoting Epictetus, is but a little
soul carrying a corpse, and when the time comes to lay down the
burden, he does so. One does not hasten the end (v. 33), but
neither does one regret it. The time of death is fixed by nature
(xii. 23) and, regardless of what comes after death, its arrival is
to be accepted calmly. It is absurd to think that a man should con­
tinue to live forever, since it is a universal law that all things
change (ii. 17). Since we are as much a part of the universe as
everything else, we must accept the same fate as everything else.
“It is in accordance with nature, and nothing evil is natural” (ii.
17). Now it may be that as a soldier Marcus Aurelius was himself
willing to meet death as inevitable and that he was not so aware
as a civilian might be of the common dread of it. In any event he
does not harp upon it as one of the evils against which he must
fortify himself. He mentions death frequently enough to show
that it was one of his preoccupations. But unlike both Epictetus
and Lucretius, it is not one of his major problems.

He has no set views on what will happen to the soul after the
Releaser sets us free (xii. 36). It may be another life; it may be
extinction (iii. 3). If it is another life, it may be one with a dif­
ferent kind of perception and indeed a different way of living.
The soul may be released into the air and become diffused into the
cosmic *Pneuma* (iv. 21). It might be agreeable to survive, but, if
we do not, that is because Nature has willed it otherwise (xii. 5).
Now a man who has such vague and tentative views on what
happens after death is not one who has spent much time worry­
ing about it. For a person to whom death was a daily fear would
sooner or later make up his mind about what was to be feared
or hoped for. Here too, it is reasonable to believe, his profession and his civil position made the fear of death less poignant than it would have been for one who was not constantly on the field of battle and not supreme ruler over an empire. But aside from all this, it is worth noting that we have here a man who believes firmly that goodness can be achieved here on earth with little thought of an afterlife. I emphasize this because in the ethical tradition of the Christian period it was frequently maintained that only a belief in an afterlife could justify doing good and avoiding evil. Such a belief was a postulate of the practical reason in Kant and since his time philosophers have used all their ingenuity to show that, in some sense of the word, we survive our terrestrial life. Usually, it is true, that sense is a strange one which, if taken literally, would prove of little compensation for the miseries of earthly living. To survive in the memory of our fellows, for instance, is not quite what a Christian wanted who had read the Book of Revelations and had found sustenance in it. To share in the fulfillment of the communal purposes of mankind may again be called immortality, but it is not the personal survival which frees one from the burdens of the flesh. Philosophy is full of curious reinterpretations of traditional vulgar beliefs and those concerning immortality are among the most curious. To read Marcus Aurelius and see how little he busied himself with such speculations is to see, one thinks, that the matter was not of primary importance to him. Nor need it be to anyone.

IV

1. Both Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius were saved from such fancies by their low opinion of the life which surrounded them and its trivialities. If Epictetus thought of the soul as bearing up a little corpse, that was because he despised the claims of the body which his fellow men submitted to too eagerly. He had nothing but contempt for the man who was nostalgic for Athens and the
Acropolis (Discourses ii. 16. 32), for had he not the sun, moon, and stars to contemplate? "If you understand the Governor of all things and carry Him within you, would you still long for stones and an elegant rock?" (ii. 16. 33). He ridicules the man who seeks position in Rome (i. 10). He sees the life of most people as nothing more than a waste of time. "How else do they spend the whole day but in counting, disputing, consulting about a little bread, a bit of land, and such questions of prosperity?" (i. 10. 9). They follow their sensory impressions rather than the reason (i. 28. 28) in the most important questions and employ their reason only in small matters. They are in a state of panic in matters of basic importance (ii. 1). They live in dread of Caesar (ii. 6. 20). They rush to diviners from cowardice (ii. 7. 9). They descend to the level of the beasts because of the domination of their bellies or from lust (ii. 9. 4). They fear death and exile when all that they have to fear is fear itself (ii. 16. 19). They love to display their learning (ii. 17. 34); they go to school for the wrong purposes, not to cure their souls, but to boast of their education (ii. 31. 15). Epictetus is far from being opposed to studies, such as rhetoric and logic (ii. 23. 46), but is opposed to thinking that they unaided can improve a man. He finds too much insincerity about him, too much "counterfeit baptism" (ii. 9. 21).

Most of us, he says, relating the parable of the market, come to market to buy and sell, whereas only a few come to see it, to study its purposes, its constitution, and its promoters (ii. 14. 23). Those who contemplate are the wise.

Unlike Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus sees the spectacle of the world through black glasses. Whatever he may think about calm and apathy, of fulfilling one's role without protest or resentment, he himself in at least one striking passage reveals his fundamental discontent. Speaking of Socrates' ability to put an end to strife and to educate others through questions and answers, he adds that

21 Is a reference to F. D. Roosevelt's Chicago speech superfluous?
22 I take over the translation of Oldfather in the Loeb Classical Library. A Parabaptist is a man who is baptized and is yet unregenerate. See Oldfather's note on this passage.
this gift is a dangerous one to be exercised in Rome (ii. 12. 17). He relates what would happen there if one should try the Socratic method. One would reach the point of inducing one's interlocutor to admit that his soul was his most precious possession. One would then ask whether it is being properly cared for by the man himself or by someone else. "Thereupon emerges the danger that first he will say, 'What business is that of yours, my fine friend? Are you my lord and master?' And then, should you continue to question him, he will double up his fists to punch you. Of this sort of things I was once myself a zealot, until it sent me into my present condition." At least Epictetus was willing once in a while to give voice to his sense of humor.

But the futility of teaching others was not merely exemplified in his own life. "Did Socrates persuade all his associates to have a care for their souls? Not even a thousandth part of them" (iii. 1. 19). Yet he continued to pursue his mission. But since men are weaklings (iii. 5), drunk with a sense of their own importance and their love of power (iii. 7. 29), swollen with pride (iii. 14. 11), desirous of praise (iii. 23. 24), false philosophers (iii. 24. 38), "Epicureans and perverts," what hope has a real philosopher of curing them? "What else do these men want but to sleep without interference or constraint and to arise at their ease to yawn and wash their faces, then to write and read what they wish, then to play the fool somehow or other, applauded by their friends, regardless of what they may say, then to start off for a stroll and, after walking a bit, to bathe, then to eat, then to lie down for a nap, to stretch out on such a bed as is fitting for such men—how should I put it? But one can judge for oneself."23 The picture, harsh as it is, is not harsher than that painted by Juvenal.

2. Marcus Aurelius, though much less acid in tone, also gives us no pleasant appraisal of life. Physicians, astrologers, philosophers, generals, tyrants, whole cities, like Helike, Pompeii, and Herculaneum, have perished after their cures, predictions, disquisitions, slaughters, and rules, and now lie buried in the dust,

23 Discourses iii. 24. 38; cf. iii. 22. 26.
though all were concerned with warding off this fate (iv. 48). All is in flux: “All that you see will rapidly pass away, and those who shall see its passing will in their turn also rapidly perish” (ix. 33). If one has been a citizen of the Great City for five years, it is as good as a hundred (xii. 36). For most of our cares are vain and whether life be short or long is no measure of its goodness. Why not then, one wonders, relax and, practicing the art of resignation, accept the futility of human effort and look upon the spectacle without abusing it? But this is not the way of the Roman Stoic. Things are so mysterious that they are hard to understand “even for the Stoics” (v. 10), and the things which men value highly are such trash that one finds it difficult to tolerate the most accomplished men or even to live with oneself.24 “Hence in such gloom and filth and in such a flux, both of substance and of time, of change and of things which are changed, what there is to be praised, or to what we can give serious thought, I do not know. On the contrary, one should console oneself by waiting for one’s natural dissolution and not be vexed by loss of time, but comfort oneself quietly in these considerations: first, that nothing will happen to me which is not in harmony with the whole, and second, that I can do nothing in opposition to my god and daimon. For no man can force me to stray from them” (v. 10).

But death as a release into the cosmos is not the only justification for welcoming death. Aside from its being a natural law and therefore unavoidable, it also releases one from the people who surround one (ix. 3). You will be freed not merely from your similars, but also from men who are in opposition to you. Then you will see “what weariness there is in your discord with your associates, so that you may say, ‘Come quickly, Death, lest some-

24 The Emperor was probably unusually depressed when he jotted this down, for in another place (vi. 48) he says that when one is low in spirit one should think about one’s fellows, their activity, their modesty, their generosity, and the like, and this will cheer one up. The Meditations were of course written on different occasions and in different moods, and it would be unfair to look for consistency of detail in them.
how I too lose control of myself." Civic occupations are vain (ix. 29) and one must be satisfied if only a little betterment is achieved. The best advice is to "live as if on a mountain top" (x. 15), and, if men cannot bear you, let them kill you (x. 15). For this would be better than to live the kind of life that they live. One might, remembering Zarathustra, conclude that a man is a solitary figure at best and that no hope is to be placed in the support of others. For "what sort of creatures are they, eating, sleeping, fornicating, evacuating, and so on?" (x. 15). But the most pessimistic note is struck when he writes (x. 36), "There is no one so fortunate that at his death there will not be someone to welcome the evil which is coming. He was an honest and wise man. At the last moment of his life someone will say to himself, 'We shall at last be able to breathe in peace in the absence of this teacher. He was not troublesome to any of us, but I perceived that secretly he condemned us.' " This, he says, will be true of us all, but in his own case even his associates, for whom he had toiled so hard and over whose welfare he had watched, long for his death, "hoping thereby for some chance relief from him." But since all this is in accordance with natural law, there is no point in resenting it.

There may indeed be no point in resenting the sharp tooth of benefits forgot, but to accept it as the general law of human nature is not to paint a rosy picture of human life. Yet if one has decided that the life of reason is the correct life, one is bound to find oneself in isolation from one's fellows, whether on a moun­tain­top or in the agora. Few if any philosophers have been in harmony with society, nor would they have much to do, so far as ethics is concerned, if they were. But we have already seen that from the days of Hesiod down, poets have agreed with philosophers in condemning the life of their fellows. This pessimistic streak was not peculiar to the pagans. Ecclesiastes, as we have intimated, is concordant with many of the views of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, in spite of the refrain that there is nothing new
under the sun. What is stranger than the unhappiness of philosophers is their insistence upon living "in accordance with Nature," and thereupon excluding human nature from nature. When, like Diogenes, they turn to the animals as exemplars, they see in their instinctive routines something to be admired and copied. But the usual life of men, that which in Aristotle's phrase is that which happens on the whole and is therefore natural, is condemned as unnatural. The Roman Stoic is willing to accept universal law, the will of God, death, pain, and suffering, but he is not willing to accept men as they are and as they are by his own admission. This is one of the basic conflicts in the philosophic temper. Everything from the heavens to the depths of the earth is normal, natural, as it should be, with the outstanding exception of humanity. Man turns out to be essentially an unnatural animal, a glaring exception to the rule of law, a mixture of the bestial and the divine, a battleground between the forces of good and evil. In his case alone whatever is, is never right. What wonder then that the early Christians found this a mystery and gave up the search for a rational explanation of it as hopeless?