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Anotācija. 2024. gada 21. martā norisinājās Latvijas Universitātes 82. starptautiskā zinātniskās konferences filozofijas doktorantu organizētā sekcija “Prāts un miers” ar uzsaukumu “Par prātu (*die Vernunft*) un mūžīgo mieru (*der ewige Friede*)”. Konferences sekcijas tēma tika pieteikta par godu 1724. gadā dzimušā un Latvijā labi pazīstamā vācu filozofa Imanuela Kanta 300 gadu jubilejai. Lai arī sekcijas mērķis bija daudzīnāt Kanta sniegumu, sekcijas dalībnieki piedalījās ar referātiem, kas aplūko prāta un miera problemātiku arī citos filozofijas ietvaros, risinot jautājumus par miera un prāta savietojamību, mūžīgā miera un harmonijas pastāvēšanas iespējām, sabiedrības politiskajiem un sociālajiem aspektiem un prāta un likumu mijiedarbību.

Annotation. On March 21, 2024, within the 82nd International Scientific Conference of the University of Latvia a section “Mind and Peace organized by philosophy doctoral students took place. The motto of the section was “About the mind (*die Vernunft*) and perpetual peace (*der ewige Friede*)”. The section of the conference was organized in honor of the 300th anniversary of Immanuel Kant, the German philosopher born in 1724 and well-known in Latvia. Although the aim of the section was primarily to celebrate Kant's achievements, the participants also presented papers that deal with the problem of mind and peace in other philosophical frameworks, addressing questions such as the compatibility of peace and mind, the possibility of perpetual peace and harmony, the political and social aspects of peace, and the interaction between mind and laws.

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Contemporary Stoicism and Civic Values

Gita Leitlande, Ph.D.

Latvijas Nacionālā aizsardzības akadēmija
Latvijas Universitātes filozofijas doktorantūra

Summary¹

Annotation

The doctoral thesis's theme, "Contemporary Stoicism and Civic Values", highlights the potential of an interface between the philosophy of Stoicism and the functioning of the country by strengthening civic values. The aim of the thesis is to offer a vision of how the philosophy of Stoicism, in its contemporary interpretation, can be applied to address topical issues at the national level – strengthening civic values in Latvia. The research (1) identifies the current country's needs and challenges regarding strengthening civic values; (2) examines the formation and variations of Stoic philosophy and ethics over time, including the most significant criticism of Stoicism, from the origins of the teaching (ancient Stoicism) to the present day (contemporary Stoicism); (3) formulates the interpretation of Stoic philosophy and ethics used in the thesis: what is the ultimate goal of the teaching and the main components of the strategy to achieve it. Based on this understanding of contemporary Stoicism and the identified issues regarding civic values, the thesis (4) explores the potential and limitations of applying contemporary Stoicism to strengthening two core civic values – autonomy and solidarity – in Latvia. However, Stoicism as a philosophical teaching offers a more fundamental transformation and impact on the person than just the cultivation of these two civic values. Stoicism affects the whole personality (character), a person's worldview and way of thinking, as well as the understanding of the country's role in a person's beliefs and actions. These aspects reinforce the effectiveness of Stoicism and, thus, its usefulness to the country in the context of strengthening civic values. The final chapter of the thesis (5) analyzes three case studies that illustrate the applicability of Stoicism in specific areas: regarding care for nature, military service, and character education in schools.

Research Rationale

The thesis's theme, "Contemporary Stoicism and Civic Values", highlights the potential of an interface between the philosophy of Stoicism and the functioning of the country by strengthening civic values. The thesis assumes that Stoic ideas – inspired by them and

¹ The following is abbreviated and rearranged version of the summary of doctoral thesis "Contemporary Stoicism and Civic Values" by Gita Leitlande, defended at the University of Latvia, in Rīga, 2024. Full text of the thesis available (in Latvian): <http://dspace.lu.lv/dspace/handle/7/66766>. First published 23.03.2024.

interpreted in a contemporary context – can be used to form a theoretical basis for addressing current, ethics-related issues at the national level.

Stoic philosophy dates back to around 300 BCE; that is, Stoicism is 2300 years old. Its active period lasted about 500 years, of which it was the leading philosophy in the Mediterranean of the Hellenistic period for about the first three centuries of its existence. The last best-known ancient Stoic was the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (died 180 CE). However, the ideas of Stoic philosophy have proven to be valuable and relevant in all periods and have been applied to various individuals and contexts (the course of Stoicism through the centuries, from its inception to the 20th century, is discussed in sub-chapters 2.1.–2.2. of the thesis).

Around the middle of the 20th century, a process began in Western moral philosophy that led to a new wave of interest in Stoic philosophy from the last decades of the 20th century to the present day. First, there is the renewal of the importance of virtue ethics in the moral philosophy's debate. Secondly, it is (also a renewed) interest in philosophy as a way of life. These factors have contributed to a surge of interest in Stoicism in academia and outside it. It is not a unified movement, as there is currently no consolidation around one conceptual reading of Stoicism. In this thesis, “contemporary Stoicism” is understood precisely as this current, renewed interest in Stoicism (the contemporary approach to modernization of Stoicism is discussed in sub-chapter 2.3. of the thesis).

Stoic philosophy continues to attract interest and followers today, mainly because of its practical applicability in life. Contemporary Stoicism offers a modernized version of Stoicism suitable for the 21st century, recognizing certain tenets and practices of Stoic ethics as effective, which have retained their usefulness over two thousand years. Including applying them to a variety of practical areas, also interdisciplinary. For instance, in psychotherapy, education, sustainable environmental policy, the armed forces, and the like. In these areas, useful Stoic tenets and practices have been sought and found to help understand and improve certain solutions in the field. The theme of the doctoral thesis invites us to look at another area within this trend – the functioning of the country – by addressing current issues related to civic values.

Why has Stoicism been chosen for this purpose? Because Stoic philosophy has successfully stood the test of time, both historically and empirically, as an effective, well-thought-out, and well-founded system of ideas, oriented towards a person's self-growth to explain that (and how) it is within the power of every person to work on and improve one's character and personality. Thus, contributing to a more purposeful and meaningful life. For instance, a contemporary Stoic Donald Robertson believes that Stoics have discovered several powerful concepts and strategies to help people manage their emotions, which are perennial

(Robertson 2020, 2). The wider community with which the person interacts also benefits from this process.

Stoicism offers a complete philosophy for life, providing a structure (worldview) and an understanding of priorities for each person's life. A full-fledged philosophy for life often implies a fundamental change in one's understanding of life and lifestyle. The ancient Stoic teacher Epictetus sees philosophy as a cure for the soul: after a conversation with a philosopher, a person should not feel that she had a great time in exciting conversations but rather really shaken inside that she should no longer live as before (Epictetus 2014, 197 [3.23.37]). The teaching of Stoicism can be seen both as a preventive method, providing an appropriate conceptual orientation for life, a readiness to deal with whatever one may encounter in life, and as a therapy for dealing with specific problems and situations that have already arisen. A worldview and way of thinking provide prevention (cosmology, theory of values, and the like, discussed in sub-chapters 3.1.–3.3., 4.2. of the thesis), while specific practices provide therapy (based on reflection, discussed in sub-chapter 3.4. of the thesis). One of the strengths of Stoicism is its universality. Stoicism can be applied by anyone, in any occupation, in any profession, in any circumstance, regardless of geographical, social, gender, or ethnic origin features. This is possible because we can achieve a happy life on our own; moreover, it is the only way to achieve it: our happy life does not depend on someone else – the government, our spouse, or our therapist. Stoicism teaches that we are responsible for our own lives (both our happiness and unhappiness) and that only when we take responsibility for our lives do we have a reasonable chance of a happy life.

A happy life is achieved through self-improvement and constant work on oneself, which can be learned, and one has to be prepared for it. Stoicism does not put ready-made answers or specific guidelines in front of a person on how to act; it is up to the individual to make choices and take responsibility. What should a person be prepared for? Above all, a person must be prepared not to follow conformism and what most people consider important but to make her own choices in favor of a particular philosophy of life, “to the transformation of ourselves, and to a complete revision of our attitude with regard to human beings and to the world” (Hadot 1998, 309). For Stoics, it is crucial to understand both these dimensions: the nature of the world around us, its laws, and one's place in it, as well as the nature of a human being in general and of the individual in particular (including the tendency to make mistakes). So, a person must be prepared to make conscious choices and follow them. Contemporary Stoics see this as another strength of Stoicism for why it is relevant today: the teaching provides a person with the cognitive tools to reflect and direct thoughts so that, on an individual level, they serve and help each of us, rather than hinder us, and, on a collective level, to improve

society together. It is the prioritization of long-term self-improvement or character-building over other short-term gains.

What is the result – what kind of person is a Stoic? The ancient author Lucius Annaeus Seneca characterizes a Stoic as: “kind to his friends and restrained towards his enemies, who carries on his political and his personal business with scrupulous devotion; [...] order, propriety, steadfastness, absolute harmony of action” (Seneca 2013, 491 [120.10–11]). Marcus Aurelius, about a century later, characterizes the Stoic as follows: in his attitude towards people – no desire to please or flatter, on the contrary – in all things clear thought, stability and never rudeness (Aurelius [I.16]). The contemporary Stoic William Irvine, on the other hand, tries to get his readers to approach Stoicism from the perspective of how such a person feels: it is a person who likes the life she lives, and, by practicing Stoicism, she gains confidence in her abilities to deal with whatever life throws at her (primarily because the person is able to manage herself), ultimately allowing to feel the joy of life (Irvine 2009, 206, 242). These and similar descriptions of the Stoic, of course, speak of the ideal Stoic, that is, the person who, over a prolonged period, lives purposefully according to the tenets of Stoic philosophy as her philosophy for life. The ideal Stoic is a person who consistently demonstrates decent character traits in a decent way in dealing with fellow human beings and with various situations in life (the character traits that are decent according to Stoic philosophy and the decent way of demonstrating them are discussed in chapter 3 of the thesis). The ideal Stoic may be a goal to strive for, but pragmatically speaking, considering the positive features of such a person, even partially and imperfectly aspiring to such character traits and pursuing such a lifestyle, would already make both the person and society better.

Thus, Stoicism is a teaching of personal growth that places the responsibility for a happy life on the individual through self-transformation and a reordering of priorities of values. The result is a person with respectable character traits that are useful for interacting within society. Regarding the possible usefulness of Stoicism for the country, attention should be drawn to those aspects of Stoicism which are not only about a person’s self-growth but also about involvement in society. It should be noted that the Stoic worldview and the strengths of character to be cultivated cannot be separated from the way a given person sees herself in relation to the world, the country, and other people since character-building is primarily possible only in interaction with others. It is no coincidence that the Stoics are considered to be the source of modern human rights concept, referring to the Stoic principle that all people are equal by nature, or as Seneca so nobly puts it: “Man, an object of reverence in the eyes of man” (Seneca 2013, 378 [95.33]) (the person’s involvement in society is discussed in sub-chapter 4.4. of the thesis). From the point of view of the country, it is vital to support its citizens in the

process of self-growth, to give them the tools (for instance, as a philosophy for life and specific practices) and also – values. Given Latvia's specifics, including its limited natural resources, human capital is the key. Therefore, strengthening and improving human resources as the principal resource is a constant, critical task of the country. In this context, the thesis explores what values, worldviews, tenets, and practices Stoicism can offer the country, and what the country could learn from Stoicism in order to strengthen human capital as a key resource in Latvia. At the same time, the thesis does not aim to propose Stoicism as the country's official ideology.

The Aim and Tasks of the Research

The aim of the thesis is to conduct research and offer a vision of how the philosophy of Stoicism, in its contemporary interpretation, can be applied to address a topical issue at the national level – strengthening civic values in Latvia.

The tasks of the thesis are as follows:

- 1) to analyze the theoretical sources on civic values, as well as contemporary Latvian sources on the current country's needs and challenges regarding strengthening civic values to identify the issues to be addressed in the thesis;
- 2) to examine the formation and variations of Stoic philosophy and ethics from the origins of the teaching (ancient Stoicism) to the present day (contemporary Stoicism), identifying the tenets and practices of Stoic ethics that have stood the test of time and are still valuable and useful, as well as the most significant criticism of Stoicism; to characterize what is meant by contemporary Stoicism and what is the approach to modernizing Stoicism at the early 21st century;
- 3) to study the theoretical sources of ancient and contemporary Stoicism to formulate the interpretation of Stoic philosophy and ethics used in the thesis: what is the ultimate goal of the teaching and the main components of the strategy to achieve it;
- 4) to explore and offer a vision of the areas, aspects, and manifestations in which Stoic tenets and practices could be applied to address the issues identified in the first task, to identify the potential and limitations of applying contemporary Stoicism to the strengthening of civic values;
- 5) to study and characterize three case studies that illustrate the applicability of Stoicism in the national context – regarding care for nature, military service, and character education in schools.

The research carried out in the thesis is organized by gradually narrowing down the

researched topic and is developed as a whole: the conclusions drawn in the more detailed chapters and sub-chapters follow from the previously analyzed considerations and should, therefore, be seen in their totality.

The Structure of the Thesis

Introduction

1. The Relevance of Civic Values
 - 1.1. What are Civic Values?
 - 1.2. The Situation in Latvia Today
2. Ancient Stoicism and Contemporary Stoicism
 - 2.1. Stoic Philosophy as a System
 - 2.2. Stoicism through the Centuries
 - 2.3. Approaches to Modernising Stoicism in the 20th and 21st Centuries
3. Tenets of Stoic Philosophy and Ethics
 - 3.1. The Ultimate Goal (Meaning in Life)
 - 3.2. The Strengths of Character
 - 3.3. The Theory of Values
 - 3.4. Emotions and Practices
4. How Can Civic Values be Strengthened Through Stoicism?
 - 4.1. The Role of the Country in a Person's Worldview and Actions
 - 4.2. Worldview and Way of Thinking
 - 4.3. Working on the Self: Personal Growth
 - 4.4. Involvement in Society: Being an Active and Responsible Citizen
5. Case Studies of Applying Stoic Philosophy
 - 5.1. Care for Nature
 - 5.2. Military Service
 - 5.3. Character Education in Schools

Conclusions

Bibliography

Relevance and Novelty of the Research

It is best to begin characterizing the relevance and novelty of the research, by considering current developments in the studies and application of Stoicism worldwide. Those interested in Stoicism today can be divided into three categories: the first are those who study and interpret ancient Stoicism; the second are those who modernize ancient Stoicism and make it more accessible to those interested outside academia; and the third are those who practice specific ideas and insights of Stoicism, most likely incorporating them into their own, non-Stoic worldview (Sadler 2017). The first group could be characterized as a classical approach of the history of philosophy. The second – the tenets of ancient Stoicism are put into a context and application appropriate to the 21st century. This group includes academics who dismantle the notion that philosophy is only a subject of study at universities, and believe that Stoic philosophy can and should be presented in a way accessible to a wider audience as a practically applicable system of knowledge. In the third group, however, a distinction is drawn between theoretical and practical philosophy and ethics. This group has recognized certain Stoic tenets and practices of applied ethics as effective, while at the same time removing them from the rest of the teaching. An example of this is the use of Stoic insights in psychotherapy.

The approach of this thesis is to build on the work of the aforementioned first and second group of Stoic scholars as well as valuable aspects of the work of the third group's representatives and to apply the knowledge of Stoicism within the framework of the method of operation of the second group; including drawing on relevant elements of the Stoic worldview and way of thinking, supplemented by specific tenets and practices, without claiming to fully adopt the ancient Stoics' worldview.

The applicability of Stoicism to the cultivation of civic values and Stoicism as a tool to address pressing issues at a national level is a topic that could have a wider interest in the world, as it has been little studied so far. Existing research only touches on some aspects of this topic. The ancient Stoic Marcus Aurelius (1991), for instance, discusses the relationship between Stoicism and the country only from the perspective of the individual. Some contemporary sources discuss the applicability of Stoicism to military service, which is one of the segments of cultivating civic values in society. In his monograph, Jules Evans (2012) examines as one of the questions of his interest whether ancient philosophies (including Stoicism) could be used as a basis for community or society as a whole (Evans 2012, 32). It is the question of whether a society composed solely of Stoics is desirable, viable, and thriving. Evans's study engages in a discussion on the validity of the underlying assumption of the thesis, because the thesis is, at its core, based on the assumption that the answer to this question is affirmative. From the range

of studies to date on the aspects of political philosophy in Stoicism, two articles that focus on the application of Stoicism to civic values and national interests are worth highlighting in the context of the thesis: Anthony Long (2007) analyzes the ideas of normative citizenship in Stoicism, and Lisa Hill (2000) explores whether Stoic cosmopolitanism is compatible with patriotism. Both of these are theoretical aspects that help characterize the importance of country and civic values in Stoicism but do not address the practical applicability of the teaching. Thus, it could be claimed that my idea to examine in the thesis the applicability of Stoicism from the perspective of national interests, is a novelty both in Latvia and the world. In this case, the example of Latvia is a model, not an exclusive case.

Stoicism is currently applied to a rather wide spectrum of different fields and needs around the world, but mainly only at the level of the individual. Looking at the application of Stoic philosophy from the point of view of national interests means expanding its applicability not only individually but also in an organized and institutionalized way.

The thesis addresses a topical issue in today's Latvia: strengthening human resources through citizens' values and (eventually) actions. In Latvia, possible solutions to the issues regarding strengthening civic values have not yet been considered using the principles of Stoic philosophy.

In Latvia, interest in Stoic philosophy has been relatively small so far, especially in contemporary Stoicism. The only monograph on Stoicism is Gustavs Jurevičs's "The Greek Sage Epictetus: His Life and Stoic Teaching", published in 1936. Over the last century, chapters on Stoicism by various authors have also been included in teaching aids and reference materials published in Latvia. Also noteworthy are the studies on philosophy as an art of life by Igors Šuvajevs. Translators have made an important contribution to popularizing Stoicism in Latvia in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. All the most famous representatives of later Stoicism have been translated into Latvian, as well as the contemporary Stoic Jules Evans's book "Philosophy for Life and Other Dangerous Situations" (2015). Among students, Stoicism has continued to attract interest, albeit not quite active, but this interest is interdisciplinary in nature. The doctoral thesis calls attention to the heritage of this ancient philosophical school, arguing that it can be interesting, relevant, and applicable even today, both at the level of individuals and society. Thus, the thesis highlights the potential and usefulness of applying Stoicism to the Latvian audience.

The thesis is also relevant to the wider philosophical debate in the context of a renewed interest in virtue ethics and a look back at ancient philosophical teachings that underpin the tradition of virtue ethics. Interest in the theoretical foundations of virtue ethics and its practical application has been growing since the middle of the 20th century (for instance, virtue ethics,

based on Aristotle's ideas, is relevant for character education in schools). This interest also applies to Stoic philosophy as a representative of virtue ethics. As Andris Rubenis writes, virtue ethics is set to play an increasingly important role: "despite all the problems of a theoretical and practical nature, virtue ethics has quite good prospects for the future – certainly greater than normative ethics, which seems to have lost its position forever" (Rubenis 2005, 19).

The thesis also fits well into the "science for society" approach because (1) it uses ideas that are more than two thousand years old to improve society today; (2) it is looking at the applicability of Stoicism in an interdisciplinary mode; and (3) it goes beyond the framework of academic philosophy by seeing interested people outside the academic environment as a potential audience, too.

Key Findings

The philosophy of Stoicism is set up as a philosophy for life that can be useful at all possible junctures of life, and the Stoic ideal is a person who can deal with the ups and downs of life while maintaining her "dignity, and wisdom, and courage" (Cicero 1888, 167 [V.V]). Taking into account that Stoicism is not only a philosophy that encompasses a person's self-growth but also a broader understanding of the place and role of the person in society and in the universe, from which responsibilities and tasks are also derived, the thesis is based on the assumption that the ideas of Stoicism (inspired by them and interpreted in a contemporary context) can be used to form a theoretical basis for addressing current, ethics-related issues at the national level. The conducted research confirms this assumption as valid, demonstrating that Stoic philosophy can provide a conceptual offer that is useful for addressing national-level issues as well.

In the thesis, civic values are characterized as such features of beliefs, character, and actions of the people (citizens) that contribute to the country's sustainability. By analyzing the theory of civic values and the specific situation in Latvia with civic values, the following values and tenets are identified as essential for the functioning and thriving of the country. These include an orientation towards:

- 1.1) a shift from (formally) "being a citizen" to "acting as a citizen", assuming (co)responsibility for one's surroundings, or active and responsible participation in societal processes for the sake of the common good; the solidarity within the society, placing the common good above the private good of the citizen, and the common goal of the society – the long-term stability of a well-organized country;

1.2) the values, character, and behavior of a citizen, such as acting decently, the ability to manage one's life, autonomy, courage, respect for the rule of law and human rights, self-understanding as a citizen, tolerance of different opinions and beliefs, justice, the cultivation of civic heritage, higher – one might say spiritual – values, and the ability to reflect.

Citizenship as a concept combines the person's work on the self (autonomy) with an outward orientation (concern for the whole). It envisages educated, active (participatory principle), autonomous, responsible, respectful, and critically thinking members of society who have a strong sense of belonging or identity and an understanding of context (culture, common good, historical heritage) and who take into account the common good of the community in pursuing their personal interests. These precepts should be applied to every member of society so that all members of society reach an imaginary minimum threshold, raising the average level within society. Societal values and identities change and can be purposefully changed; however, this is a time-consuming and gradual process that requires consistent and systematic implementation.

The research concludes that regarding autonomy, society in Latvia is already individualistic. Nevertheless, there is a need to strengthen, among other things, the aspects of citizens' self-growth, responsibility, and the rule of law. Latvian society, however, needs to focus particularly strongly on improving the dimension of the individual's role in society and the country, which is related to solidarity or the disposition to act for the benefit of the whole and the understanding of the common good.

After examining the tenets of contemporary Stoicism and their offered interpretation within the thesis, it can be concluded that Stoic philosophy is relevant and applicable in cultivating autonomy and solidarity as civic values in a democratic country, as well as being useful in strengthening the current weaknesses of civic values in Latvia. The research concludes that Stoic philosophy and ethics can help make the world a better place and society more tolerant, just, and harmonious. In the thesis, I put forward the following ultimate goal of Stoicism: to live according to the best in humans as rational and social beings, which includes continuous self-improvement and improvement of society and the world around us. This formulation covers both above mentioned aspects of citizenship: autonomy, since Stoic ethics is a person-forming method, directed towards work on the self, conscious and responsible action, as well as solidarity and concern for the whole, where useful are Stoic views of a person as a social being, part of the whole, involvement in society, rule of law, cosmopolitanism, human equality, and just action, among others.

The thesis identifies the following distinctive nature of the application of Stoicism to the needs of the country: that is, its strengths (aspects where it is particularly relevant and vigorous in supporting the strengthening of civic values in the country), its peculiar characteristics (for instance, it is demanding and has its own worldview), and its limitations (or what Stoicism does not promote in the context of civic values):

2.1) Stoic philosophy fully covers the concept of autonomy as a civic value if it is understood as a person's ability to manage her own life and awareness of her potential of choice. The Stoic understanding of autonomy is dominated by the Roman Stoics' emphasis on personal growth, which is to be accomplished by the person's own efforts. As Marcus Aurelius says, "while you live, while it is in your power, be good" (Aurelius [IV.17]). A characteristic feature of Stoic autonomy is that it is precisely the person's inner "I", or its own 'ethical compass', which is the source and guide for human decency, self-growth, and happy life. For Stoics, formulating what a person's values are, what a person's goals and priorities are, and how a person wants to improve her character is a path to be pursued individually, with individual solutions for each person. The principle that there are individual solutions coincides well with the freedom of thought, conscience, and religious belief of everyone stipulated in Article 99 of the Satversme (Constitution of the Republic of Latvia) (*Latvijas Republikas Satversme* 1922). The Stoics' understanding of autonomy also presupposes taking personal responsibility for one's own beliefs and actions, which fits well with the concept of civic values. Stoic philosophy not only fully covers the concept of autonomy as a civic value, but also adds to it elements that are not directly emphasized in the concept of civic values (thus – above the minimum requirements) but which are useful – such as taking responsibility for who we are, which manifests as the consistency of actions with beliefs and values, and integrity of the person. Because for Stoics, a meaningful life requires an integrated approach to everything one does. In Stoicism, the person must engage in society while preserving her values, inner freedom, and reflection;

2.2) the philosophy of Stoicism also covers well the requirements of solidarity as a civic value, as it helps to take responsibility not only for one's own life, but also for the person's surroundings, to play one's role as well as possible, to be just and tolerant towards any other person, as well as to treat the whole with respect and responsibility, actively contributing to making the surrounding world and people better and putting the public good above the private good of the citizen. It follows that a Stoic is an active and responsible citizen. This component is important, taking into account the identified weakness of solidarity and cooperation in Latvian society. The Stoic concern for

community and involvement in society, or solidarity, is not just a declarative slogan that can be abandoned when it is not convenient for the person to do so. Stoic's involvement in society is embedded in the person's interests: Stoics offer a conceptual solution for integrating these two interests – both care for the self (autonomy) and care for the circumstances around the self (solidarity) – within person's views so that they are inseparable, rather than two different goals. Stoics achieve this by looking at involvement in society and, more broadly, care for the world around us – our loved ones, our community, the sustainability and well-being of our country, and the planet – as a consequential and integral part of caring for ourselves. Thus, the Stoic's concern for the common good is manifested both by deliberately promoting it (participation), because this is in the person's interest, and by cultivating and acting as a decent person: for a person cannot achieve decency of character, exercise courage, moderation, prudence, and justice, without also contributing to the common good;

2.3) Stoic philosophy does not include aspects of political theory such as ideas about the structure of the country, institutions, the principle of justice in the country, and the like. However, this does not mean that Stoicism has no impact at all on the functioning of the country, civic values, and the formation of a good citizen. The influence of Stoic philosophy on citizens and the country starts with each person – one has to start with herself. This approach stems from the Stoic theory of values, in which a decent personality is considered the only good. One has to start with herself, advancing towards the Stoic normative ideal of a decent personality, and in the process, along with the decent person – almost as a by-product – a good citizen is also formed. That is why Stoic philosophy primarily supports strengthening the concept of the country and civic values indirectly: through excellent individuals (and eventually good citizens), where everyone does their job well. This contribution is neither minor nor insignificant because, according to Stoicism, only a decent person can genuinely benefit her country. Moreover, Stoic philosophy presupposes that whatever a person does in life, from every position, she can be useful to the country, that the duties of a citizen apply equally binding to every citizen, whatever the field the person operates in;

2.4) the first and most important strength of character to be cultivated in Stoicism is prudence, which is in line with the need identified in the research to strengthen the ability of people in Latvia to reflect on their own beliefs, desires and circumstances. Prudence means that a person thinks for herself, thinks along with what is happening, makes conscious choices, does not unquestioningly accept something imposed from the outside, or follows the beaten path out of inertia. Stoicism calls for not losing one's universal

human qualities (a person's decency), including while exercising one's duties and responsibilities for one's country. The aim of civic values in the Stoic interpretation is not to generate obedient people, that is, unreflective obedience to the law, religion, or prevailing beliefs. Obedient people are less creative and easier to lead. On the other hand, people who think for themselves are harder to lead, but their potential of human capital is higher. In Stoicism, the prudence and rational autonomy of individuals is an important element and not only useful but desirable for a democratic country that wants to thrive in the long term, but it also means that the country accepts and promotes the rational autonomy of its citizens, which includes, among other things, both thinking for themselves and an element of civil disobedience;

2.5) Stoicism not only contains ethical tenets (that is, knowledge on what a person should do) but also offers its own worldview and cosmology. The thesis defends a view that argues against detaching the practically applicable aspects of the teaching from the overall context and the other parts of the teaching, arguing that philosophical explanation still has a place in a modern worldview. For one thing, it is important for the effectiveness of Stoic philosophy that it consists not only of an ethics part (working on oneself and involvement in society) but also of a Stoic-inspired worldview (which is an integral part of the teaching). Secondly, as a result of the research, specific tenets of cosmology have been identified that can be useful in strengthening civic values, especially concerning the weakness of higher values and the need for solidarity. The reconstructed Stoic cosmology proposed in the thesis has the potential to contribute to the formation of a person who is aware of herself as part of the whole, of her role, of her opportunities, of the need to cooperate and take into consideration others, is tolerant of others and understands and accepts the rule of law. What is primarily useful for Latvia, and which derives from Stoic cosmology, is a view of the world that has a vertical structure, that is, that a person is an integral part of a larger whole, including that there is something greater, more significant than a human being (this applies to humans as a species and as individuals). These views also seek to break the dominance of egoistic values and could help to address the activism of civic participation, as they demonstrate that each person has her own inevitable impact on the whole;

2.6) citizens' thinking in a long-term perspective is another element of Stoicism that can be useful for the country. Stoicism is a teaching that focuses on a person's integrity (that is, a consistently decent expression of personality) characterized by conscious and responsible action in the long term. For a Stoic, the long-term goal of a happy life takes precedence over short-term gains. When making conscious choices, a person should

primarily focus on the ultimate goal and long-term vision. This approach resonates well with the identified need in Latvia to look consistently and persistently to the long-term interests of the country;

2.7) taking into account the need to extend the identified understanding of citizenship and civic values to everyone in the country so that all members of society reach an imaginary minimum threshold, raising the average level of presence of civic values for Latvia's main resource, Stoicism applies well here, too. The usefulness of Stoicism is provided by the universality embedded in the teaching and the emphasis on the potential of each person to manage themselves and grow, as well as that the goal can be approached (that is, Stoicism can be practised) in any occupation, in any profession, in any society, under any circumstances;

2.8) those who try to live by Stoic principles today sometimes admit that it is not easy, that in its essence, it is a very demanding way of life. However, it has been known since the inception of the teaching that Stoics were not looking for the easiest way but the right one. Therefore, there should be no illusions. Even with all the modernization, clarification, and softening of certain aspects of the teaching, Stoicism will still be a persistent work on oneself, on one's character. Already Seneca spoke about this: "I know, you will confront me with that common complaint against the Stoics: "Your promises are too great, and your counsels too hard. We are mere manikins, unable to deny ourselves everything. [..]" And do you know why we have not the power to attain this Stoic ideal? [..] [I]t is because we are in love with our vices; we uphold them and prefer to make excuses for them rather than shake them off. We mortals have been endowed with sufficient strength by nature, if only we use this strength, if only we concentrate our powers and rouse them all to help us or at least not to hinder us. The reason is unwillingness, the excuse, inability" (Seneca 2013, 473 [116.7–8]). It is easy to agree that always, in all situations, to try to do the best that a person can, is within the person's capacity, is in fact a very high demand. However, looking at it from the other side, what are the alternatives? Could the answer to the question "What should I do?" or "How should I live?" or even more "How should everyone live?" really be a way of life that requires following one's every impulse as soon as it arises? Even achieving unworthy goals requires effort, and is it really easier to make mistakes unthinkingly and then try to correct them than to live consciously and purposefully? Or is an "easy" way of life just a self-delusion? For the Stoics, following their way of life is worth it, because the goal is a happy life and a life that has meaning. For this purpose, it is worth working on one's character, emotions, and the like so that they promote, rather than hinder, the living of a

meaningful and happy life. It can be concluded that Stoicism cannot be expected to suit everyone equally well or to be equally easy or difficult for everyone, but it would be useful for everyone, especially, as contemporary scholars point out, because Stoic philosophy aims at the psychological holism of the person, at being in harmony with oneself;

2.9) the most significant change, compared to the situation in Latvia today, which the Stoic theory of values can offer, is to put forward a decent personality as a value. An important contribution of Stoicism could also be thinking in terms of values – the ability to distinguish what is important and to arrange values in a system, a hierarchy. The transformation of values in this direction at the national level could be considered desirable, as it would emphasize the self-growth of individuals towards decent persons and eventually good citizens, as well as indirectly contribute to the actualization of other related and useful concepts of Stoicism for the country, linked to person's autonomy and solidarity. At the same time, it should be recognized that Stoic values are radically different from the dominant narratives in contemporary society, which mainly emphasize external things, material goods, and profitability. Therefore, adopting Stoic philosophy also means a serious transformation of values, or at least a serious divergence of values from the currently dominant narratives, which cannot be implemented otherwise than in a gradual, time-consuming, and consistent process. In Stoicism, understanding what "I" is, is one of the most fundamental tasks, because along with understanding what it means to be a human (a rational and social being) and, in turn, what does not constitute part of the "I" – a person's body, social and financial status, and the like – already does a lot of transformative work for self-understanding, values and attitudes towards oneself, the world and other people;

2.10) the following three major limitations to the application of Stoicism to the strengthening of civic values in the country have been identified in the thesis: (1) Stoicism is not about national uniqueness and cannot promote values and aspects related to the particularities of a nation-state, such as language and culture. Stoicism can be useful, however, in cultivating universal human values and character traits. These universal civic aspects and values are necessary for a country and a good citizen, irrespective of national particularities. (2) Stoicism has a limited impact on the ability of society to organize itself to perform certain tasks or the ability to act collectively. The view of the world offered by Stoicism is through the individual and her potential to act. Collective self-organization is certainly not the primary way a Stoicism-inspired person would act to improve the world. Stoicism does not exclude collective action, but neither does it encourage it. At the same

time, citizens' mutual responsibility, or each citizen's role in promoting the common good, is part of Stoic philosophy. Thus, Stoicism promotes active and responsible, but above all – individual civic action. (3) Stoicism does not contribute to the consolidation of the nation-state as the strongest identity; in this area, Stoicism can be, at best, only partially useful to the country. For, on the one hand, in Stoicism, the dimension of the country is seemingly irrelevant: our first identity is human, and the identity of the country is, in a sense, secondary and incidental, so being a decent person is of higher value than being a good citizen, and of all possible communities the Stoics do not single out the country as the most important of identities. On the other hand, in Stoicism, one can find tenets that can provide support to the country, reinforcing its value and identity in the worldview of the citizen: Stoics have to comply with the laws, and these are the laws of the particular country; tenets of putting the public good above one's private good and the human being as part of the whole are also helpful; one of the communities to which the Stoic belongs is the entire society within the country, and in order to foster thriving surroundings around us, we must also foster the thriving of the country;

2.11) the conceptual approach of the thesis does not assume that the Stoic cosmology, worldview, vision of the meaning of life, values, and ethical development are the only possible ways of looking at the world. Like any other worldview narrative, this Stoic story can only be one of the alternatives offered to the public in a democracy. Governments can teach various practices, including from a range of Stoic teachings, like managing emotions, critical thinking, and the like, which can be empirically proven effective. However, governments should not try to impose on their citizens one "correct" understanding of a happy life and values (they can only try to impose it because everyone will not think the same anyway), which leaves no room for autonomy, arguments, and choice. At the same time, it is argued in the thesis that (1) if a person has made a choice in favor of a philosophy of life, then this increases the chances of living a meaningful and happy life. As well as – (2) the universal human qualities of Stoic philosophy resonate well with other worldviews, including both religious and secular ones.

These are the main conclusions in relation to the aim of the doctoral thesis, which is to research, what tenets of Stoicism can be applied and how Stoicism can be useful to strengthen civic values in Latvia. Overall, the conducted research establishes that Stoicism can be instrumental in implementing the goal defined in the "Latvia's Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030": "In 2030 Latvia will be a thriving country of active and responsible citizens" (*Latvijas ilgtspējīgas attīstības stratēģija līdz 2030. gadam* 2010, 10 [25]), as Stoic philosophy contains notions both of a thriving country as a goal to be promoted, and

involvement in society and taking responsibility for one's beliefs and actions as principles of operation. Stoicism can provide particularly robust support for a person's self-growth, cultivating universal human traits and focusing on inner values. Perhaps Stoicism does not go far enough to support national interests in strengthening national identity and cooperative involvement of individuals in public processes; however, the essential notion that these are not two different goals (caring for oneself and caring for one's surroundings), but one single goal, is embedded in Stoic philosophy. Stoicism as a philosophical teaching offers a more fundamental transformation and impact on the person than just the cultivation of these two civic values: autonomy and solidarity. Stoicism affects the whole personality (character), a person's worldview and way of thinking, as well as the understanding of the country's role in a person's beliefs and actions. Therefore, I argue in the thesis that this broader context and the impact of the teaching on the person reinforce the effectiveness of Stoicism and, thus, its usefulness to the country in the context of strengthening civic values. The research also illustrates, through the case studies, how Stoicism (aspects of worldview, values, and practices) can be applied in a quite direct way in various fields: introducing character education in schools, supporting the preparation of the soldier as a full-fledged professional and moral agent, as well as individually – taking care of nature.

In addition, the research carried out in the thesis also leads to several conclusions that are relevant to Stoic philosophy itself, namely by clarifying what interpretation of Stoicism we are talking about, which can be useful and applicable to the needs of the country in today's Latvia:

3.1) the research concludes that Stoic philosophy has changed and continues to change. Since Stoicism's inception, the teaching has evolved, adapted ideas, and adapted to the times. In this sense, Stoicism has never been a "closed" teaching that does not allow for innovation but is modifiable and transformable. This adaptation continues in the 21st century, fitting into today's contexts and situations. It is clear from the analysis carried out in the research that it is difficult to talk about a correct reconstruction of ancient Stoicism, which is why it can be concluded that there is no such thing as a defined Stoicism, only each author's interpretation, both ancient and modern. Assuming there is no "correct" interpretation of Stoic philosophy, I recommend using a modernized reading of Stoicism in the thesis, as it is adapted for today's use while preserving the valuable essence from antiquity. My interpretation of Stoic philosophy is offered as part of the research;

3.2) various prejudices and myths about Stoic philosophy remain strong. Contrary to the thesis's guiding principle, there is a strong impression that the Stoic thinks only of herself and is an inward-looking person who is passive and apathetic towards everything that is

going on around her, including public processes. Likewise, often misunderstood is the Stoic teaching of emotions: that the Stoic has no emotions because they are successfully suppressed (in comparison, the ancient Stoics are usually praised as the remarkably good psychologists of their time, and for the Stoics emotions and feelings are part of a healthy and fulfilled life, to be reconciled with person's values, forming a whole personality). That is why Stoic philosophy, in order to be understood in its essence and to be useful and effective rather than categorical and misleading, cannot be approached superficially but must be read carefully, without taking certain tenets out of context, without giving in to simplistic, prejudiced interpretations. This conclusion also means the need to continue to explain Stoicism, and perhaps the term "contemporary Stoicism", which acknowledges that the essence is close to that of ancient Stoicism but modernized as necessary, can take some of the pressure off;

3.3) in the introduction of the thesis, it was suggested that the research might lead to the identification of specific tenets and practices of the Stoic worldview and ethics that could be derived from Stoicism for the needs of the country, but after conducting the research, it could be concluded that there could not be distinguished specific tenets and practices that are the most useful, or that only they are useful. Moreover, one should not even try to find and distinguish them if the idea is to abandon the rest because it is important to take into account the whole teaching. This is because (1) the analysis of the ancient sources points to a close connection of all parts of Stoicism (the teaching as a system whose parts are not intended to be used separately either in theory or in practice). Furthermore, according to the analysis of contemporary authors, an integrated view of all the parts of the teaching is vital, for cosmology provides not only a context and understanding of hierarchy but also the teaching as a whole appeals "in a deeper and more transformative way" (Annas 2007, 72), and in Stoicism ethical insights and actions are inferred from an integrated worldview. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the reception of Stoicism is dominated by ethics, whose insights, despite the passage of time, have been and still are relevant (unlike physics or biology, for instance), of course with some modifications (such as the image of the sage and its description). (2) Over the centuries, various authors have been interested in, attracted to, and exploited in their philosophical thought various Stoic tenets from all three parts of the Stoic teaching – ethics, logic, and physics. Historically, there is no distinction between the Stoic tenets, which are the only ones that have been used, and the others that have not. Even today, everyone who gets to know Stoicism takes from it different insights and practices to their own liking and suitability. This does not, of course, exclude the fact that some tenets are

more effective or more popular than others: for instance, the principle of “what is in our power and what is not in our power” is definitely the most recognizable tenet of Stoic philosophy today (which, on its own, without the context of the Stoic teaching, is just one trick pulled out of a bag). These findings clarify why the “special” tenets and practices of Stoicism should not be sought out and taken out of context (as has been done in cognitive-behavioral therapy, for instance), and learning Stoicism should be preserved in its entirety, for that is the magic and strength of Stoic philosophy – an ambitious ultimate goal, an explanation of how the world is organized and what a decent person does and should do in it.

How could these conclusions be further employed? The thesis has been based on the view that the country not only has an interest in the presence of strong civic values within society but that the country should also proactively articulate, promote, and strengthen them. In this respect, the country needs to deliberately lead the process, just like a Stoic manages her own life: to set the goals it wants to achieve, to arrange priorities, to coordinate and structure views and preferences, and, by making conscious choices, to work consistently towards achieving these goals. Taking into account the identified shortcomings, it is clear that Latvia cannot ignore the dimension of values; what kind of citizens and civic values are promoted in society are crucial for the country’s future thriving. Stoic philosophy can be applied to any approach, be it liberalism, republicanism, or something in between, because all “good citizens” in a democracy can benefit from a Stoic-inspired ethics and worldview context and tenets. Among other things, the research provides an opportunity to reflect on how a person’s and societal worldviews influence their values and actions. What is it that our society lacks? Not just in terms of actions (such as being encouraged to vote in elections) but in terms of people’s more profound beliefs. Perhaps not all the tenets of Stoicism are of interest to the country, but (1) Stoicism can serve as a basis for further discussion about what principles of these deeper beliefs would be essential for the country, and (2) what Stoicism offers is a mutually agreed set of tenets and principles that derive from each other and are structured into a comprehensible worldview, demonstrating the close connection between actions and their underlying values and worldview.

Of course, the reading of contemporary Stoicism elaborated in the thesis and the analysis and conclusions made in the research can be applied widely: individually, purposefully organized, and institutionalized. However, it is from the point of view of the national interest that I recommend that the findings of the research be included as one of the components of the substantive content in the development of a well-thought-out and purposeful public policy

aimed at strengthening civic values with the common goal of long-term stability of a well-organized country. How to specifically promote these recommendations at the national level would be a further task. Undoubtedly, the education system (effectively designed and implemented character education in schools), potentially also the military service, is a good starting point that can be complemented by other ways of strengthening civic values – through institutions and individuals that reinforce and inspire civic values, and by instilling values not only through education and culture but also through public myth, media, and the like, as well as opportunities to practice citizenship, because civic values are strengthened through action, theory alone is not enough.

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