

Hellenism and the Orient

I. THE SELEUCID EMPIRE

AS we move from the mainland through the Aegean into the Greek settlements in Asia and Egypt we are surprised to find a fresh and flourishing life, and we perceive that the Hellenistic age saw not so much the decay as the dissemination of Greek civilization. From the end of the Peloponnesian War a stream of Greek soldiers and immigrants had entered Asia. Alexander's conquests widened this stream by offering new opportunities and avenues to Hellenic enterprise.

Seleucus, called "Nicator" (Victor), was distinguished among Alexander's generals as a man of courage, imagination, and unscrupulous generosity. It was characteristic of him that he gave his second wife, the beautiful Stratonice, to his son Demetrius when he learned that the boy was pining away for love of her. Antigonus I, challenging the allotment of Babylonia to Seleucus, set out to conquer for himself all the Near East; Seleucus and Ptolemy I defeated him at Gaza in 312. From that moment the house of Seleucus dated the Seleucid Empire, and a new era—a mode of reckoning that survived in western Asia till Mohammed. Seleucus united under his scepter the old kingdoms and cultures of Elam, Suméria, Persia, Babylonia, Assyria, Syria, Phoenicia, and, at times, Asia Minor and Palestine. At Seleucia and Antioch he built capitals richer and more populous than any ever known in mainland Greece. For Seleucia he chose a site near the aged Babylon and the future Baghdad, almost at the junction of the Euphrates and the Tigris; it was conveniently located to attract commerce between Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf and beyond; within half a century it had a population of 600,000 souls—a motley mass of Asiatics dominated by a minority of Greeks.* Antioch was similarly situated on the Orontes, not too far from its mouth to be reached by ocean shipping, yet sufficiently inland to be safe from naval attack, to tap the fertile fields of the river valley, and to draw the Mediterranean trade of northern Mesopotamia and Syria. Here the later Seleucid emperors established their residence, until under Antiochus IV it became the wealthiest city of Seleucid Asia, adorned with temples, porticoes, theaters, gym-

* On this site Professor Leroy Waterman in 1931 exhumed tablets indicating that one of the richest citizens of Seleucia had avoided the payment of taxes for twenty-five years.¹

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Seleucus I was assassinated by popular rule. From his geographical and racial differences arose invasions on every side. Gauls. Antiochus II T again to illustrate the chain of intrigue that Antiochus III the Great shows a Greco-Macedonian Greece. He recaptured had lost since Seleucus literary movement the second century. He p ing to the cities that should pay no attention ruined by ambition, in Ptolemy IV at Raphia self by a victorious exploits of Alexander. landed an army in E courted her honorab winter enjoying his drove him into Asia plunged into another of thirty-six years.

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nasiums, palaestras, flower gardens, landscaped boulevards, and parks so beautiful that the Garden of Daphne was known throughout Greece for its laurels and cypresses, its fountains and streams.

Seleucus I was assassinated in 281, after thirty-five years of beneficent and popular rule. From his death his empire began to disintegrate, torn with geographical and racial divisions, violent struggles for the throne, and barbarian invasions on every side. Antiochus I Soter (Savior) fought gallantly against the Gauls. Antiochus II Theos (the God) lived in a perpetual intoxication, as if again to illustrate the gamble of hereditary monarchy; his wife Laodice began that chain of intrigue which disrupted and finally ruined the royal house. Antiochus III the Great was a man of capacity and culture; his bust in the Louvre shows a Greco-Macedonian with the courage of Macedon and the intelligence of Greece. He recaptured by untiring war most of the territory which the empire had lost since Seleucus I. He established a library at Antioch, and promoted the literary movement that culminated in Meleager of Gaza at the close of the second century. He preserved the Greek custom of municipal autonomy, writing to the cities that "if he should order anything contrary to the laws they should pay no attention, but assume that he had acted in ignorance."² He was ruined by ambition, imagination, and a flair for love. In 217 he was defeated by Ptolemy IV at Raphia, and lost Phoenicia, Syria, and Palestine; he consoled himself by a victorious expedition into Bactria and India (208), duplicating the exploits of Alexander. Lured by Hannibal into helping him against Rome, he landed an army in Euboea, fell in love at fifty with a pretty maid of Chalcis, courted her honorably, married her elaborately, forgot the war, and spent the winter enjoying his happiness.³ The Romans defeated him at Thermopylae, drove him into Asia Minor, and overwhelmed him at Magnesia. Restless, he plunged into another eastern campaign, and died in its course (187), after a reign of thirty-six years.

His son Seleucus IV loved peace, administered the empire with economy and wisdom, and was assassinated in 175. At that time his younger brother was serving as archon at Athens, where he had gone to study philosophy. Hearing of Seleucus' death, he organized an army, marched to Antioch, deposed the assassin, and took the throne (175). **Antiochus IV** was both the most interesting and the most erratic of his line, a rare mixture of intellect, insanity, and charm. He governed his kingdom ably despite a thousand injustices and absurdities. He allowed his delegates to abuse their power, and gave his mistress authority over three cities. He was generous and cruel without judgment, often forgiving or condemning by whim, surprising simple folk with costly gifts, and tossing money with a child's ecstasy among the crowds in the street. He loved wine, women, and art; he drank to excess, and left his royal seat, at banquets, to dance naked with the entertainers, or to carouse with wastrels;⁴ he was a Bohemian

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whose dream of power had come true. He despised the solemnity and trappings of the court, played practical jokes upon his dignitaries, and disguised himself to know the luxury of anonymity; it delighted him to mingle with the people and overhear their comments on the King. He liked to wander among the shops of the artisans, watching and studying the work of engravers and jewelers, and discussing with them the technical details of their craft. He felt a sincere enthusiasm for Greek art, literature, and thought. He made Antioch for a century the art center of the Greek world; he paid artists handsomely to set up statuary and temples in other cities of Hellas; he redecorated the shrine of Apollo at Delos, built a theater for Tegea, and financed the completion of the Olympieum at Athens. Having lived fourteen impressionable years in Rome, he had imbibed a taste for republican institutions; and as if to foreshadow Augustus, it pleased his humor and policy to clothe his monarchical power in the forms of republican freedom. The chief effect of his passion for things Roman was the introduction of gladiatorial games in Antioch, his capital. The people resented the brutal sport, but Antiochus won them over by lavish and spectacular displays; when they became accustomed to the butchery he considered their degeneration a personal victory. It was characteristic of him that he began as an ardent follower of the Stoics, and ended as an easy convert to the Epicureans. He enjoyed his own qualities so keenly that he labeled his coins Antiochus Theos Epiphanes—the God Made Manifest. Overreaching himself in the manner of his imaginative kind, he attempted in 169 to conquer Egypt. He was succeeding when Rome, herself a candidate for the Egyptian plum, ordered him to retire from African soil. Antiochus asked time to consider; but the Roman envoy, Popilius, drew a circle in the sand around Antiochus, and bade him decide before stepping over its line. Antiochus yielded in fury, plundered the Temple at Jerusalem to restore his treasury, sought glory like his father in a campaign against the eastern tribes, and died in Persia on the way, of epilepsy, madness, or disease."

II. SELEUCID CIVILIZATION

A Bridge between
GREECE & ROME

The function of the Seleucid Empire in history was to give to the Near East that economic protection and order which Persia had provided before Alexander, and which Rome would restore after Caesar. Despite the wars, revolutions, spoliations, and corruption normal to human affairs, that function was performed. The Macedonian conquest broke down a thousand barriers of government and speech, and invited the East and the West to fuller economic exchange. The result was a brilliant resurrection of Greek Asia. While division and strife, the poverty of the soil, and the migrations of trade routes ruined the mainland, the comparative unity and peace preserved by the Seleucids encouraged agriculture, commerce, and industry. The Greek cities of Asia were no

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longer free to make revolutions or experiments; *homonoia*, Harmony, was enforced by the kings, and was literally worshiped by the people as a god.⁶ Old cities like Miletus, Ephesus, and Smyrna had a second blooming.

The valleys of the Tigris, the Euphrates, the Jordan, the Orontes, the Maeander, the Halys, and the Oxus were fertile then beyond the conception of present imagination, obsessed with the vision of the deserts and rocky wastes that cover so much of the Near East after two thousand years of erosion, deforestation, and neglectful tenant tillage.⁷ The soil was irrigated by a system of canals maintained under the supervision of the state. The land was owned by the king, or his nobles, or the cities, or the temples, or private individuals; in all cases the labor was performed by serfs transmitted with the soil in bequest or sale. The government considered as national property all the riches contained in the earth,⁸ but did little to exploit them. Trades, and even cities, were now highly specialized. Miletus was a busy textile center; Antioch imported raw materials and turned them into finished goods. Some large factories, manned with slaves, achieved a modest degree of mass production for the general market.⁹ But domestic consumption lagged behind production; the people were so poor that no adequate home market encouraged large-scale industry.

Commerce was the life of Hellenistic economy. It made the great fortunes, built the great cities, and employed a growing proportion of the expanding population. Money transactions now almost completely replaced the barter that had survived for four centuries the coinage of Croesus. Egypt, Rhodes, Seleucia, Pergamum, and other governments issued currencies sufficiently stable and similar to facilitate international trade. Bankers provided public and private credit. Ships were larger, made four to six knots per hour, and shortened voyages by crossing the open sea. On land the Seleucids developed and extended the great highways left as part of Persia's legacy to the East. Caravan routes converged from inner Asia upon Seleucia, and opened out thence to Damascus, Berytus (Beirut), and Antioch. Enriched by trade, and enriching it in turn, populous centers rose there and at Babylon, Tyre, Tarsus, Xanthus, Rhodes, Halicarnassus, Miletus, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Byzantium, Cyzicus, Apamea, Heracleia, Amisus, Sinope, Panticapaeum, Olbia, Lysimacheia, Abydos, Thessalonica (Salonika), Chalcis, Delos, Corinth, Ambracia, Epidamnus (Durazzo), Taras, Neapolis (Naples), Rome, Massalia, Emporium, Panormus (Palermo), Syracuse, Utica, Carthage, Cyrene, and Alexandria. One busy web of trade bound together Spain under Carthage and Rome, Carthage under Hamilcar, Syracuse under Hieron II, Rome under the Scipios, Macedonia under the Antigonids, Greece under the Leagues, Egypt under the Ptolemies, the Near East under the Seleucids, India under the Mauryas, and China under the Hans. The routes from China passed through Turkestan, Bactria, and Persia, or over the Aral, Caspian, and Black Seas. The routes from India passed through Af-

ghanistan and Persia to Seleucia, or through Arabia and Petra to Jerusalem and Damascus, or across the Indian Ocean to Adana (Aden), then through the Red Sea to Arsinoë (Suez), and thence to Alexandria. It was for control of the last two routes that the Seleucid and Ptolemaic dynasties fought those "Syrian Wars" that finally weakened them both to the point of falling vassal to Rome.

The Seleucid monarchy, inheriting the Asiatic tradition, was absolute; no assembly limited its power. The court was planned on the Oriental style, with chamberlains and lace, eunuchs and uniforms, incense and music; only the speech and the inner dress remained Greek. The nobles were not half-independent chieftains as in Macedonia or medieval Europe, but administrative or military appointees of the king. It was this structure of monarchy that passed down from Persia through the Seleucids and Sassanids to the Rome of Diocletian and the Byzantium of Constantine. Knowing that their power, in an alien scene, rested upon the loyalty of the Greek population, the Seleucid kings labored to restore the old Greek cities and to establish new ones. Seleucus I founded nine Seleucias, six Antiochs, five Laodiceas, three Apameas, one Stratonice; and his successors imitated him to the best of their lesser ability. Cities grew and multiplied as in nineteenth-century America.

Through them the Hellenization of western Asia proceeded, on the surface, at a rapid pace. The process, of course, was old; it had begun with the Great Migration, and the Hellenistic Dispersion was in part the Renaissance of Ionia, a return of Greek civilization to its early Asiatic homes. Even before Alexander Greeks had held high offices in the Persian Empire, and Greek merchants had dominated the trade routes of the nearer East. Now the opening of political, commercial, and artistic opportunities drew from old Greece, Magna Graecia, and Sicily an emigrant flow of adventurers, settlers, scribes, soldiers, traders, doctors, scholars, and courtesans. Greek sculptors and engravers made statues and coins for Phoenician, Lycian, Carian, Cilician, Bactrian kings. Greek dancing girls became the rage of Asiatic ports.³⁰ Sexual immorality took on a Greek grace, and Greek palaestras and gymnasiums aroused in some Orientals an unwonted devotion to athletics and baths. Cities secured new water supplies and drainage systems; avenues were paved and cleaned. Schools, libraries, and theaters stimulated reading and literature; collegians (*epheboi*) and university students roamed the streets and played their ancient pranks upon one another and the populace. No one was counted cultured unless he understood Greek and could enjoy the plays of Menander and Euripides. This imposition of Greek civilization upon the Near East is one of the startling phenomena of ancient history; no change so swift and far-reaching had ever

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tradition, was absolute; no more on the Oriental style, with its sense and music; only the nobles were not half-independent, but administrative or representatives of monarchy that passed on to the Rome of Diocletian. Greek power, in an alien scene, the Seleucid kings labored to maintain. Seleucus I founded nine cities, one Stratonice; and his policy. Cities grew and multi-

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been seen in Asia. We know too little of its details and its results. We are poorly informed about the literature, philosophy, and science of Seleucid Asia; if we find in it few figures of prime magnitude—Zeno the Stoic, Seleucus the astronomer, and, in the Roman period, Meleager the poet and Poseidippus the polymath—we cannot be sure that there were not many more. It was a flourishing culture, full of variety, refinement, and verve, and as fertile in art as any preceding age. Never before, so far as our knowledge goes, had a civilization achieved so wide a spread and such complexity amid so many diverse environments. For a century western Asia belonged to Europe. The way was prepared for the Pax Romana, and the embracing synthesis of Christendom.

But the East was not conquered. It was too deeply and anciently itself to yield its soul. The masses of the people continued to speak their native tongues, to pursue their long-accustomed ways, and to worship their ancestral gods. Beyond the Mediterranean coasts the Greek veneer grew thin, and such Hellenic centers as Seleucia on the Tigris were Greek islands in an Oriental sea. There was no such fusion of races and cultures as Alexander had dreamed of; there were Greeks and Greek civilization on the top, and a medley of Asiatic peoples and cultures underneath. The qualities of the Greek intellect made no entry into the Oriental mind; the energy and love of novelty, the zest for worldliness and the passion for perfection, the expressiveness and individualism of the Greek effected no change in the Oriental character. On the contrary, as time moved on, Eastern ways of thought and feeling surged up from below into the ruling Greeks, and through them flowed westward to transform the "pagan" world. In Babylon the patient Semitic merchant and the temple banker regained ascendancy over the volatile Hellene, preserved the cuneiform writing, and forced back the Greek language into second place in the business world. Astrology and alchemy corrupted Greek astronomy and physics; Oriental monarchy proved more powerful than Greek democracy, and finally impressed its form upon the West; Greek kings and Roman emperors became gods in the manner of the East, and the Asiatic theory of the divine right of kings passed down through Rome and Constantinople into modern Europe. Through Zeno the East insinuated its quietism and fatalism into Greek philosophy; through a hundred channels it poured its mysticism and its piety into the vacuum left by the decay of the orthodox Greek faith. The Greek readily accepted the gods of the Orient as essentially identical with his own; but as the Greek did not really believe, and the Asiatic did, the Oriental god survived while the Greek god died. Artemis of the Ephe-

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sians became again an Eastern maternity goddess, with a dozen breasts. Babylonian, Phoenician, and Syrian cults captured great numbers of the invading Hellenes. The Greeks offered the East philosophy, the East offered Greece religion; religion won because philosophy was a luxury for the few, religion was a consolation for the many. In the rhythmic historic alternation of belief and unbelief, mysticism and naturalism, religion and science, religion returned to power because it recognized the secret helplessness and loneliness of man, and gave him inspiration and poetry; a disillusioned, exploited, war-wearied world was glad to believe and hope again. The least expected and most profound effect of Alexander's conquest was the Orientalization of the European soul.

III. PERGAMUM

The gradual absorption of the Greeks by Asia weakened the Seleucid power, and generated independent kingdoms on the edge of the Hellenistic world. As early as 280 Armenia, Cappadocia, Pontus, and Bithynia set up their own monarchies; and soon the Greek cities of the Black Sea fell subject to Asiatic rule. Bactria and Sogdiana broke away about 250. In 247 Arsaces, chief of the Parni—an Iranian nomad tribe—killed the Seleucid governor of Persia and set up the kingdom of Parthia, destined to plague Rome for centuries. In 282 Philataerus, entrusted by Lysimachus with the care of nine thousand talents and the fortified hill of Pergamum in Asia Minor, appropriated the money and declared his independence. His nephew Eumenes I absorbed Pitane and Atarneus, and made Pergamum a sovereign monarchy (262). Attalus I earned the gratitude of Greek Asia by driving back the Gauls who had penetrated to his city walls (230); his eldest son, Eumenes II, continued his competent rule, but shocked Greece by calling in the aid of Rome against Antiochus III. After their defeat of Antiochus at Magnesia the Romans gave Eumenes nearly all of Asia Minor. His brother and successor, Attalus II, distrusted the power of his sons to keep Pergamum free, and at his death (139) bequeathed his kingdom to Rome.

The little state did what it could to redeem the treachery of its birth and growth by making itself the rival of Alexandria as a center of art and learning. The wealth that came from the mines, vines, and cornfields, from the manufacture of woolens, parchments, and perfumes, from the making of bricks and tiles, and the mastery of north Aegean trade went not only to maintain a strong army and navy, but to encourage literature and art. The Pergamene kings believed that government and private business could

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fruitfully compete, supplying a mutual check on inefficiency and greed. The king cultivated large tracts of land with slaves, and operated, though not as monopolies, many factories, quarries, and mines. Under this unique system wealth increased and multiplied. Pergamum became an ornate capital, famous for its altar to Zeus, its luxurious palaces, its library and theater, its palaestras and baths; even its public lavatories upheld the municipal pride.²⁴ The library was second only to Alexandria's in the number of its volumes and the repute of its scholars; and the *pinakotheka* housed, for the public enjoyment, a great collection of paintings. For half a century Pergamum was the finest flower of Hellenic civilization.

Meanwhile the House of Seleucus had fallen into decay. The rise of independent kingdoms almost confined its power to Mesopotamia and Syria. Parthia, Pergamum, Egypt, and Rome patiently labored to weaken the dynasty by supporting pretenders at every succession, and fomenting faction and civil war. In 153, just as Demetrius I was restoring vigor to the Seleucid government, Rome collected mercenaries from every quarter to bolster up the false claims of a Smyranean adventurer to the throne. Pergamum and Egypt joined in the attack; Demetrius fought and died heroically, and the Seleucid power fell into the hands of the worthless Alexander Balas, the puppet of his mistresses and of Rome.

IV. HELLENISM AND THE JEWS

The history of Judea in the Hellenistic age turns on two conflicts: the external struggle between Seleucid Asia and Ptolemaic Egypt for Palestine, and the internal struggle between the Hellenic and the Hebraic ways of life. The first conflict is dead history, and may be briefly dismissed; Matthew Arnold believed the second conflict to be one of the lasting cleavages of human feeling and thought. In the original division of Alexander's empire Judea (i.e., Palestine south of Samaria) had been awarded to Ptolemy. The Seleucids never accepted this decision; they saw themselves separated from the Mediterranean, and coveted the wealth that might come from the trade that passed through Damascus and Jerusalem. In the resultant wars Ptolemy I won, and Judea remained subject to the Ptolemies for more than a century (312-198). It paid an annual tribute of eight thousand talents, but despite this burden the land prospered. Judea was left a large measure of self-government under the hereditary high priest of Jerusalem and the Great Assembly. This *gerousia*, or Council of *Elders*, which Ezra

and Nehemiah had formed two centuries back, became both a senate and a supreme court. Its seventy or more members were chosen from the heads of the leading families, and from the most learned scholars (*Soferim*) of the land. Its regulations—the *Dibre Soferim*—set the pattern of orthodox Judaism from the Hellenistic age to our own.

The basis of Judaism was religion: the idea of a surveillant and upholding deity entered into every phase and moment of Jewish life. Morals and manners were ordained by the *gerousia* in strictness and detail. Entertainments and games were few and restrained. Intermarriage with non-Jews was forbidden; so were celibacy and infanticide. Hence the Jews bred abundantly, and reared all their children; despite war and famine their numbers grew throughout antiquity, until in the time of Caesar there were some seven million Jews in the Roman Empire. The bulk of the population, before the Maccabean era, was agricultural. The Jews were not yet a nation of traders; even as late as the first century A.D. Josephus wrote: "We are not a commercial people";¹³ the great trading peoples of the age were the Phoenicians, the Arabs, and the Greeks. Slavery existed in Judea as elsewhere, but the class war was relatively mild. Art was undeveloped; only music flourished. The flute, the drum, the cymbal, the "ram's horn" or trumpet, the lyre, and the harp were used to accompany the single voice, the folk song, or the solemn religious antiphons. Jewish religion scorned the concessions of Greek ritual to popular imagination; it would have nothing to do with images, oracles, or birds' entrails; it was less anthropomorphic and superstitious, less colorful and joyful, than the religion of the Greeks. Face to face with the naïve polytheism of Hellenic cults, the rabbis chanted the sonorous refrain still heard in every Jewish synagogue: *Shammai Israel, Adonai eleënu, Adonai echod*—"Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord is one."

Into this simple and puritan life the invading Greeks brought all the distractions and temptations of a refined and epicurean civilization. Around Judea was a ring of Greek settlements and cities: Samaria, Neapolis (*Shechem*), Gaza, Ascalon, Azotus (*Ashdod*), Joppa (*Jaffa*), Apollonia, Doris, Sycamina, Polis (*Haifa*), and Acco (*Acre*). Just across the Jordan was a leagued decapolis of Greek cities: Damascus, Gadara, Gerasa, Dium, Philadelphia, Pella, Raphia, Hippos, Scythopolis, and Canatha. Each of these had Greek institutions and establishments—temples to Greek gods and goddesses, schools and academies, gymnasiums and palaestras, and nude games. From such cities, and from Alexandria, Antioch, Delos, and Rhodes, Greeks and Jews came to Jerusalem, bringing the infection of

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a Hellenism devoted to science and philosophy, art and literature, beauty and pleasure, song and dance, drinking and feasting, athletics and courtesans and handsome boys, along with a gay sophistication that questioned all morals, and an urbane skepticism that undermined all supernatural belief. How could Jewish youth resist these invitations to delight, this easy liberation from a thousand irksome restraints? Young wits among the Jews began to laugh at the priests as moneygrubbers, and at their pious followers as fools who allowed old age to come upon them without having ever known the pleasures, luxuries, and subtleties of life. Rich Jews were also won over, for they could afford to yield to temptation. Jews who sought appointment from Greek officials felt it the part of policy to speak the Greek language, to live in the Greek way, even to say a few kind words to the Greek gods.

Against this powerful assault upon both the intellect and the senses (three forces defended the Jews: the persecution under Antiochus IV, the protection of Rome, and the power and prestige of a Law believed to be divinely revealed. Like antibodies gathering to attack an infection, the more religious among the Jews formed themselves into a sect called Chasidim - the Pious. They began (about 300 B.C.) with a simple pledge to avoid wine for a given period; later, by the inevitable psychology of war, they went to the extremes of Puritanism, and frowned upon all physical pleasure as a surrender to Satan and the Greeks. The Greeks marveled at them, and classified them with the strange "gymnosophists," or nude ascetic philosophers, whom Alexander's army had come upon in India. Even the common Jew deprecated the severe religiosity of the Chasidim, and sought for some middle way. Perhaps a compromise would have been reached had it not been for the attempt of Antiochus Epiphanes to force Hellenism upon Judea by persuasion of the sword.

In 198 Antiochus III defeated Ptolemy V, and made Judea a part of the Seleucid Empire. Tired of the Egyptian yoke, the Jews supported Antiochus, and welcomed his capture of Jerusalem as a liberation. But his successor, Antiochus IV, thought of Judea as a source of revenue; he was planning great campaigns, and needed funds. He ordered the Jews to pay in taxes one third of their grain crops and one half of the fruit of their trees." Ignoring the usual inheritance of the office, he appointed as high priest the sycophantic Jason, who represented the Hellenizing party in Jerusalem and sought permission to establish Greek institutions in Judea. Antiochus heard him gladly, for he was disturbed by the diversity and persistence of Oriental cults in Greek Asia, and dreamed of unifying his

polyglot empire through one law and one faith. When Jason went about these matters with insufficient haste Antiochus replaced him with Menelaus, who gave him larger promises and a fatter bribe.¹⁸ Under Menelaus Yahweh was identified with Zeus, Temple vessels were sold to raise funds, and in some Jewish communities sacrifices were offered to Hellenic deities. A gymnasium was opened in Jerusalem, and Jewish youths, even priests, took part, naked, in athletic games; some young Jews, in the ardor of their Hellenism, underwent operations to remedy the physiological shortcomings that might reveal their race.¹⁹

Shocked by these developments, and feeling their religion challenged in its very existence, the majority of the Jewish people went over to the side and view of the Chasidim. When Antiochus IV was expelled from Egypt by Popilius (168), the news reached Jerusalem in the form of a report that he had been killed. The rejoicing Jews deposed his appointees, massacred the leaders of the Hellenizing party, and cleansed the Temple of what they felt to be pagan abominations. Antiochus, not dead but humiliated, moneyless, and convinced that the Jews had obstructed his campaign against Egypt and were conspiring to return Judea to the Ptolemies,²⁰ marched up to Jerusalem, slaughtered Jews of either sex by the thousand, desecrated and looted the Temple, appropriated for the royal coffers its golden altar, its vessels, and its treasures, restored Menelaus to supreme power, and gave orders for the compulsory Hellenization of all Jews (167). He commanded that the Temple be rededicated as a shrine to Zeus, that a Greek altar be built over the old one, and that the usual sacrifices be replaced with a sacrifice of swine. He forbade the keeping of the Sabbath or the Jewish festivals, and made circumcision a capital crime. Throughout Judea the old religion and its rites were interdicted, and the Greek ritual was made compulsory on pain of death. Every Jew who refused to eat pork, or who was found possessing the Book of the Law, was to be jailed or killed, and the Book wherever found was to be burned.²¹ Jerusalem itself was put to the flames, its walls were destroyed, and its Jewish population was sold into slavery. Foreign peoples were brought in to resettle the site, a new fortress was built upon Mt. Zion, and a garrison of troops was left in it to rule the city in the name of the King.²² At times, it seems, Antiochus thought of establishing and requiring the worship of himself as a god.²³

The orgy of persecution became intensified as it proceeded. There is always, in any society, a minority whose instincts rejoice in the permission to persecute; it is a release from civilization. The agents of Antiochus, having put an end to all visible expression of Judaism in Jerusalem, passed like a searching fire into the towns and villages. Everywhere they gave

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the people a choice between death and participation in Hellenic worship, which included the eating of sacrificial swine." All synagogues and Jew- ish schools were closed. Those who refused to work on the Sabbath were outlawed as rebels. On the day of the Bacchanalia the Jews were com- pelled to deck themselves with ivy like the Greeks, to take part in the processions, and to sing wild songs in honor of Dionysus. Many Jews conformed to the demands, waiting for the storm to pass. Many others fled into caves or mountain retreats, lived on clandestine gleanings from the fields, and resolutely carried on the ordinances of Jewish life. The Chasidim circulated among them, preaching courage and resistance. A detachment of royal troops, coming upon some caves in which thousands of Jews—men, women, and children—were hiding, ordered them to come forth. The Jews refused; and because it was the Sabbath, they would not move the stones that might have blocked the entrance to the caves. The soldiers attacked with fire and sword, killing many of the refugees and asphyxiating the remainder with smoke." Women who had circumcized their newborn sons were cast with their infants over the city walls to death." The Greeks were surprised to find the strength of the old faith; not for centuries had they seen such loyalty to an idea. The stories of martyrdom went from mouth to mouth, filled books like the First and Second Maccabees, and gave to Christianity the prototypes of its martyrs and its martyrology. Judaism, which had been near assimilation, became intensified in religious and national consciousness, and withdrew into a protective isolation.

Among the Jews who in those days fled from Jerusalem were Mattathias—of the family of Hasmonai, of the tribe of Aaron—and his five sons—Johannan Caddis, Simon, Judas, Eleazar, and Jonathan. When Apelles, an agent of Antiochus, came to Modin, where these six had sought refuge, he summoned the inhabitants to repudiate the Law and sacrifice to Zeus. The aged Mattathias came forward with his sons and said: "Even should all the people in the kingdom obey the order to depart from the faith of their fathers, I and my sons will abide by the Covenant of our ancestors." As one of the Jews approached the altar to make the required sacrifice Mattathias slew him, and slew also the King's commissioner. Then he said to the people: "Whoever is zealous for the Law, and wishes to support the Covenant, let him follow me." Many of the villagers retired with him and his sons to the mountains of Ephraim; and there they were joined by a small band of young rebels, and by such of the Chasidim as were still alive.

Soon afterward Mattathias died, having designated as captain of his band

her friends that she had found a statue instead of a man.⁹ Xenocrates would have no mistress but philosophy.

With his death the metaphysical strain in Greek thought neared exhaustion in the very grove that had been its shrine. The successors of Plato were mathematicians and moralists, and spent little time on the abstract questions that had once agitated the Academy. The skeptical challenges of Zeno the Eleatic, the subjectivism of Heracleitus, the methodical doubt of Gorgias and Protagoras, the metaphysical agnosticism of Socrates, Aristippus, and Eucleides of Megara resumed control of Greek philosophy; the Age of Reason was over. Every hypothesis had been conceived, aired, and forgotten; the universe had preserved its secret, and men had grown weary of a search in which even the most brilliant minds had failed. Aristotle had agreed with Plato on only one point—the possibility of acquiring ultimate truth.⁷ Pyrrho voiced the suspicions of his time in suggesting that it was above all on this point that they had both been mistaken.

Pyrrho was born at Elis about 360. He followed Alexander's army to India, studied under the "Gymnosophists" there, and perhaps learned from them something of the skepticism for which his name became a synonym. Returning to Elis he lived in serene poverty as a teacher of philosophy. He was too modest to write books, but his pupil Timon of Phlius, in a series of *Silloi* or Satires, sent Pyrrho's opinions abroad into the world. These opinions were basically three: that certainty is unattainable, that the wise man will suspend judgment and will seek tranquillity rather than truth, and that, since all theories are probably false, one might as well accept the myths and conventions of his time and place. Neither the senses nor reason can give us sure knowledge: the senses distort the object in perceiving it, and reason is merely the sophist servant of desire. Every syllogism begs the question, for its major premise assumes its conclusion. "Every reason has a corresponding reason opposed to it";⁸ the same experience may be delightful or unpleasant according to circumstance and mood; the same object may seem small or large, ugly or beautiful; the same practice may be moral or immoral according to where and when we live; the same gods are or are not, according to the different nations of mankind; everything is opinion, nothing is quite true. It is foolish, then, to take sides in disputes, or to seek some other place or mode of living, or to envy the future or the past; all desire is delusion. Even life is an uncertain good, death not a certain evil; one should have no prejudices against either of them. Best of all is a calm acceptance: not to reform the world, but to bear with it patiently; not to fever ourselves with progress, but to content ourselves with peace. Pyrrho tried

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sincerely to live this half-Hindu philosophy. He conformed humbly with the customs and worship of Elis, made no effort to avoid dangers or prolong his life," and died at the age of ninety. His fellow citizens so approved of him that in his honor they exempted philosophers from taxation.

By the irony of time it was the followers of Plato who carried forward this attack upon metaphysics. Arcesilaus, who became head of the "Middle Academy" in 269, transformed Plato's rejection of sense knowledge into a skepticism as complete as Pyrrho's, and probably under Pyrrho's influence "Nothing is certain," said Arcesilaus, "not even that."¹¹ When he was told that such a doctrine made life impossible he answered that life had long since learned to manage with probabilities. A century later a still more vigorous skeptic took charge of the "New Academy," and pressed the doctrine of universal doubt to the point of intellectual and moral nihilism. Carneades of Cyrene, coming to Athens like a Greek Abelard about 193, made life bitter for Chrysippus and his other teachers by arguing with galling subtlety against every doctrine that they taught. As they had undertaken to make him a logician he used to say to them (turning the tables on Protagoras): "If my reasoning is right, well and good; if it is wrong, give me back my tuition fee."¹² When he set up shop for himself he lectured one morning for an opinion, the next morning against it, proving each so well as to destroy both; while his pupils, and even his biographer, sought in vain to discover his real views. He undertook to refute the materialistic realism of the Stoics by a Platonic-Kantian critique of sensation and reason. He attacked all conclusions as intellectually indefensible, and bade his students be satisfied with probability and the customs of their time. Sent to Rome by Athens as one of an embassy (155), he shocked the Senate by speaking one day in defense of justice, and on the morrow deriding it as an impracticable dream: if Rome wished to practice justice it would have to restore to the nations of the Mediterranean all that it had taken from them by superior force." On the third day Cato had the embassy sent home as a danger to public morals. Perhaps Polybius, who was then a hostage with Scipio, heard these addresses or of them, for he speaks with the anger of a practical man against those philosophers

who in the discussions of the Academy have trained themselves in extreme readiness of speech. For some of them, in their efforts to puzzle the minds of their hearers, resort to such paradoxes, and are so fertile in inventing plausibilities, that they wonder whether or not it is possible for those in Athens to smell eggs roasted in Ephesus, and are in doubt whether all the time they are discussing the matter in

the Academy they are not lying in their beds at home and composing this discourse in a dream. . . . From this excessive love of paradox they have brought all philosophy into disrepute. . . . They have implanted such a passion in the minds of our young men that they never give even a thought to the ethical and political questions that really benefit students of philosophy, but spend their lives in the vain attempt to invent useless absurdities.²⁴

II. THE EPICUREAN ESCAPE

Though he described for many ages the theorist who loses his life in the cobwebs of speculation, Polybius was wrong in supposing that moral problems had lost their lure for the Greek mind. It was precisely the ethical strain that in this period replaced the physical and the metaphysical as the dominant note in philosophy. Political problems were indeed in abeyance, for freedom of speech was harassed by the presence or memory of royal garrisons, and national liberty was implicitly understood to depend upon quiescence. The glory of the Athenian state had departed, and philosophy had to face what to Greece was an unprecedented divorce between politics and ethics. It had to find a way of life at once forgivable to philosophy and compatible with political impotence. Therefore it conceived its problem no longer as one of building a just state, but as that of forming the self-contained and contented individual.

The ethical development now took two opposite directions. One followed the lead of Heracleitus, Socrates, Antisthenes, and Diogenes, and expanded the Cynic into the Stoic philosophy; the other stemmed from Democritus, leaned heavily on Aristippus, and drew out the Cyrenaic into the Epicurean creed. Both of these philosophical compensations for religious and political decay came from Asia: Stoicism from Semitic pantheism, fatalism, and resignation; Epicureanism from the pleasure-loving Greeks of the Asiatic coast.

Epicurus was born at Samos in 341. At twelve he fell in love with philosophy; at nineteen he went to Athens and spent a year at the Academy. Like Francis Bacon he preferred Democritus to Plato and Aristotle, and took from him many bricks for his own construction. From Aristippus he learned the wisdom of pleasure, and from Socrates the pleasure of wisdom; from Pyrrho he took the doctrine of tranquillity, and a ringing word for it—*ataraxia*. He must have watched with interest the career of his contemporary Theodorus

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of Cyrene, who preached an unmoralistic atheism so openly in Athens that the Assembly indicted him for impiety³⁶—a lesson that Epicurus did not forget. Then he returned to Asia and lectured on philosophy at Colophon, Mytilene, and Lampsacus. The Lampsacenes were so impressed with his ideas and his character that they felt qualms of selfishness in keeping him in so remote a city; they raised a fund of eighty minas (\$4000), bought a house and garden on the outskirts of Athens, and presented it to Epicurus as his school and his home. In 306, aged thirty-five, Epicurus took up his residence there, and taught to the Athenians a philosophy that was Epicurean in name only. It was a sign of the growing freedom of women that he welcomed them to his lectures, even into the little community that lived about him. He made no distinctions of station or race; he accepted courtesans as well as matrons, slaves as well as freemen; his favorite pupil was his own slave, Mysis. The courtesan Leontium became his mistress as well as his pupil, and found him as jealous a mate as if he had secured her by due process of law. Under his influence she had one child and wrote several books, whose purity of style did not interfere with her morals.³⁷

For the rest Epicurus lived in Stoic simplicity and prudent privacy. His motto was *lathe biosas*—"live unobtrusively." He took part dutifully in the religious ritual of the city, but kept his hands clear of politics, and his spirit free from the affairs of the world. He was content with water and a little wine, bread and a little cheese. His rivals and enemies charged that he gorged himself when he could, and became abstemious only when over-eating had ruined his digestion. "But those who speak thus are all wrong," Diogenes Laertius assures us; and he adds: "There are many witnesses of the unsurpassable kindness of the man to everybody—both his own country, which honored him with statues, and his friends, who were so numerous that they could not be contained in whole cities."³⁸ He was devoted to his parents, generous to his brothers, and gentle to his servants, who joined with him in philosophical studies.³⁹ His pupils looked upon him, says Seneca, as a god among men; and after his death their motto was: "Live as though the eye of Epicurus were upon thee."

Between his lessons and his loves he wrote three hundred books. The ashes of Herculaneum preserved for us some fragments of his central work, *On Nature*; Diogenes Laertius, the Plutarch of philosophy, handed down three of his letters, and late discoveries have added a few more. Above all, Lucretius enshrined the thought of Epicurus in the greatest of philosophical poems.

Perhaps already conscious that Alexander's conquest was letting loose upon Greece a hundred mystic cults from the East, Epicurus begins with the arresting proposition that the aim of philosophy is to free men from fear—more than anything else, from the fear of gods. He dislikes religion because, he thinks, it thrives on ignorance, promotes it, and darkens life with the terror of celestial spies, relentless furies, and endless punishments. The gods exist, says Epicurus, and enjoy, in some far-off space among the stars, a serene and deathless life; but they are too sensible to bother with the affairs of so infinitesimal a species as mankind. The world is not designed, nor is it guided, by them; how could such divine Epicureans have created so middling a universe, so confused a scene of order and disorder, of beauty and suffering?" If this disappoints you, Epicurus adds, console yourself with the thought that the gods are too remote to do you any more harm than good. They cannot watch you, they cannot judge you, they cannot plunge you into hell. As for evil gods, or demons, they are the unhappy fantasies of our dreams.

Having rejected religion, Epicurus goes on to reject metaphysics. We can know nothing of the suprasensual world; reason must confine itself to the experience of the senses, and must accept these as the final test of truth. All the problems that Locke and Leibnitz were to debate two thousand years later are here settled with one sentence: if knowledge does not come from the senses, where else can it come from? And if the senses are not the ultimate arbiter of fact, how can we find such a criterion in reason, whose data must be taken from the senses?

Nevertheless the senses give us no certain knowledge of the external world; they catch not the objective thing itself, but only the tiny atoms thrown off by every part of its surface, and leaving upon our senses little replicas of its nature and form. If, therefore, we must have a theory of the world (and really it is not altogether necessary), we had better accept Democritus' view that nothing exists, or can be known to us, or can even be imagined by us, except bodies and space; and that all bodies are composed of indivisible and unchangeable atoms. These atoms have no color, temperature, sound, taste, or smell; such qualities are created by the corpuscular radiations of objects upon our sense organs. But the atoms do differ in size, weight, and form; for only by this supposition can we account for the infinite variety of things. Epicurus would like to explain the operation of the atoms on purely mechanical principles; but as he is interested in ethics far more than in cosmology, and is anxious to preserve free will as the source of moral responsibility and the prop of personality, he abandons

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Democritus in mid-air, and supposes a kind of spontaneity in the atoms: they swerve a bit from the perpendicular as they fall through space, and so enter into the combinations that make the four elements, and through them the diversity of the objective scene.²⁰ There are innumerable worlds, but it is unwise to interest ourselves in them. We may assume that the sun and the moon are about as large as they appear to be, and then we can give our time to the study of man.

Man is a completely natural product. Life probably began by spontaneous generation, and progressed without design through the natural selection of the fittest forms.²¹ Mind is only another kind of matter. The soul is a delicate material substance diffused throughout the body.²² It can feel or act only by means of the body, and dies with the body's death. Despite all this we must accept the testimony of our immediate consciousness that the will is free; else we should be meaningless puppets on the stage of life. It is better to be a slave to the gods of the people than to the Fate of the philosophers.²³

The real function of philosophy, however, is not to explain the world, since the part can never explain the whole, but to guide us in our quest of happiness. "That which we have in view is not a set of systems and vain opinions, but much rather a life exempt from every kind of disquietude."²⁴ Over the entrance to the garden of Epicurus was the inviting legend: "Guest, thou shalt be happy here, for here happiness is esteemed the highest good." Virtue, in this philosophy, is not an end in itself, it is only an indispensable means to a happy life.²⁵ "It is not possible to live pleasantly without living prudently, honorably, and justly; nor to live prudently, honorably, and justly without living pleasantly."²⁶ The only certain propositions in philosophy are that pleasure is good, and that pain is bad. Sensual pleasures are in themselves legitimate, and wisdom will find some room for them; since, however, they may have evil effects, they need such discriminating pursuit as only intelligence can give.

When, therefore, we say that pleasure is the chief good we are not speaking of the pleasures of the debauched man, or those that lie in sensual enjoyment . . . but we mean the freedom of the body from pain, and of the soul from disturbance. For it is not continued drinkings and revels, or the enjoyment of female society, or feasts of fish or other expensive foods, that make life pleasant, but such sober contemplation as examines the reasons for choice and avoidance, and puts to flight the vain opinions from which arises most of the confusion that troubles the soul.²⁷

In the end, then, understanding is not only the highest virtue, it is also the highest happiness, for it avails more than any other faculty in us to avoid pain and grief. Wisdom is the only liberator: it frees us from bondage to the passions, from fear of the gods, and from dread of death; it teaches us how to bear misfortune, and how to derive a deep and lasting pleasure from the simple goods of life and the quiet pleasures of the mind. Death is not so frightful when we view it intelligently; the suffering it involves may be briefer and slighter than that which we have borne time and again during our lives; it is our foolish fancies of what death may bring that lend to it so much of its terror. And consider how little is needed to a wise content—fresh air, the cheapest foods, a modest shelter, a bed, a few books, and a friend. "Everything natural is easily procured, and only the useless is costly."⁷²⁰ We should not fret our lives out in realizing every desire that comes into our heads: "Desires may be ignored when our failure to accomplish them will not really cause us pain."⁷²⁰ Even love, marriage, and parentage are unnecessary; they bring us fitful pleasures, but perennial grief.⁷²⁰ To accustom ourselves to plain living and simple ways is an almost certain road to health.⁷²⁰ The wise man does not burn with ambition or lust for fame; he does not envy the good fortune of his enemies, nor even of his friends; he avoids the fevered competition of the city and the turmoil of political strife; he seeks the calm of the countryside, and finds the surest and deepest happiness in tranquillity of body and mind. Because he controls his appetites, lives without pretense, and puts aside all fears, the natural "sweetness of life" (*hedone*) rewards him with the greatest of all goods, which is peace.

This is a likably honest creed. It is encouraging to find a philosopher who is not afraid of pleasure, and a logician who has a good word to say for the senses. There is no subtlety here, and no warm passion for understanding; on the contrary Epicureanism, despite its transmission of the atomic theory, marks a reaction from the brave curiosity that had created Greek science and philosophy. The profoundest defect of the system is its negativity: it thinks of pleasure as freedom from pain, and of wisdom as an escape from the hazards and fullness of life; it provides an excellent design for bachelorhood, but hardly for a society. Epicurus respected the state as a necessary evil, under whose protection he might live unmolested in his garden, but he appears to have cared little about national independence; indeed, his school seems to have preferred monarchy to democracy, as less inclined to perse-

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cute heresy³¹—an arresting inversion of modern beliefs. Epicurus was ready to accept any government that offered no hindrance to the unobtrusive pursuit of wisdom and companionship. He dedicated to friendship the devotion that earlier generations had given to the state. "Of all the things that wisdom provides for the happiness of the whole life, by far the most important is friendship."³² The friendships of the Epicureans were proverbial for their permanence; and the letters of the master abound in expressions of ardent affection.³⁴ His disciples returned this feeling with Greek intensity. Young Colotes, on first hearing Epicurus speak, fell on his knees, wept, and hailed him as a god.³⁵

For thirty-six years Epicurus taught in his garden, preferring a school to a family. In the year 270 he was brought down with the stone. He bore the pains stoically, and on his deathbed found time to think of his friends. "I write to you on this happy day which is the last of my life. The obstruction of my bladder, and the internal pains, have reached the extreme point, but there is marshaled against them the delight of my mind in thinking over our talks together. Take care of Metrodorus' children in a way worthy of your lifelong devotion to me and to philosophy."³⁶ He willed his property to the school, hoping "that all those who study philosophy may never be in want . . . so far as our power to prevent it may extend."³⁷

He left behind him a long succession of disciples, so loyal to his memory that for centuries they refused to change a word of his teaching. His most famous pupil, Metrodorus of Lampsacus, had already shocked or amused Greece by reducing Epicureanism to the proposition that "all good things have reference to the belly"³⁸—meaning, perhaps, that all pleasure is physiological, and ultimately visceral. Chrysippus countered by calling the *Gastrolology* of Arcestratus "the metropolis of the Epicurean philosophy."³⁹ Popularly misunderstood, Epicureanism was publicly denounced and privately accepted in wide circles throughout Hellas. So many Hellenizing Jews adopted it that *Apiköros* was used by the rabbis as a synonym for apostate.⁴⁰ In 173 or 155 two Epicurean philosophers were expelled from Rome on the ground that they were corrupting youth.⁴¹ A century later Cicero asked, "Why are there so many followers of Epicurus?"⁴² and Lucretius composed the fullest and finest extant exposition of the Epicurean system. The school had professed adherents until the reign of Constantine, some of them, by their lives, degrading the name of the master to mean "epicure," others faithfully teaching the simple maxims into which he had once condensed his philosophy: "The gods are not to be feared; death cannot be felt; the good can be won; all that we dread can be conquered."

III. THE STOIC COMPROMISE

Since an increasing number of Epicurus' followers interpreted him as counseling the pursuit of personal pleasure, the essential problem of ethics—what is the good life?—had reached not a solution but only a new formulation: how can the natural epicureanism of the individual be reconciled with the stoicism necessary to the group and the race?—how can the members of a society be inspired to, or frightened into, the self-control and self-sacrifice indispensable to collective survival? The old religion could no longer fulfill this function; the old city-state no longer lifted men up to self-forgetfulness. Educated Greeks turned from religion to philosophy for an answer; they called in philosophers to advise or console them in the crises of life; they asked from philosophy some world view that would give to human existence a permanent meaning and value in the scheme of things, and that would enable them to look without terror upon the certainty of death. Stoicism is the last effort of classical antiquity to find a natural ethic. Zeno tried once more to accomplish the task in which Plato had failed.

Zeno was a native of Citium in Cyprus. The city was partly Phoenician, chiefly Greek; Zeno is frequently called a Phoenician, sometimes an Egyptian; he was almost certainly of mixed Hellenic and Semitic parentage.⁴ Apollonius of Tyre describes him as thin, tall, and dark; his head was bent to one side, and his legs were weak; Aphrodite, though Hephaestus was no better, would have surrendered him to Athena. Having no distractions, he rapidly amassed wealth as a merchant; when he first came to Athens, we are told, he had over a thousand talents. According to Diogenes Laertius he was shipwrecked on the Attic coast, lost his fortune, and arrived in Athens, about 314, almost destitute.⁴ Sitting down by a bookseller's stall he began to read Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, and was soon fascinated by the character of Socrates. "Where are such men to be found today?" he asked. At that moment Crates, a Cynic philosopher, passed by. "Follow that man," the bookseller advised him. Zeno, aged thirty, enrolled in Crates' school, and rejoiced in having discovered philosophy: "I made a prosperous voyage," he said, "when I was wrecked."⁴ Crates was a Theban who had turned over his fortune of three hundred talents to his fellow citizens and had taken up the ascetic life of a Cynic mendicant. He denounced the sexual looseness of his time, and counseled hunger as a cure for love. His pupil Hipparchia, having plenty to eat, fell in love with him, and threatened to kill herself unless her parents gave her to him. They begged Crates to dissuade her, which he tried to do by laying his beggar's wallet at her feet,

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saying: "This is all my fortune; think now what you are doing." Undiscouraged, she left her rich home, donned the beggar's garb, and went to live with Crates in free love. Their nuptials, we are informed, were consummated in public, but their lives were models of affection and fidelity."

Zeno was impressed by the stern simplicity of the Cynic life. The followers of Antisthenes had now become the Franciscan monks of antiquity, vowed to poverty and abstinence, sleeping in any natural shelter that they came upon, and living upon the alms of people too industrious to be saints. Zeno took from the Cynics the outlines of his ethic, and did not conceal his debt. In his first book, *The Republic*, he was so far under their influence that he espoused an anarchist communism in which there should be no money, no property, no marriage, no religion, and no laws.⁸⁹ Recognizing that this utopia and the Cynic regimen offered no practicable program of life, he left Crates and studied for a time with Xenocrates at the Academy, and with Stilpo of Megara. He must have read Heracleitus receptively, for he incorporated into his own thought several Heracleitean ideas—the Divine Fire as the soul of man and of the cosmos, the eternity of law, and the repeated creation and conflagration of the world. But it was his custom to say that he owed most of all to Socrates, as the fountainhead and ideal of the Stoic philosophy.

After many years of humble tutelage Zeno at last, in 301, set up his own school by discoursing informally as he walked up and down under the colonnades of the Stoa Poecile, or Pointed Porch. He welcomed poor and rich alike, but discouraged the attendance of young men, feeling that only mature manhood could understand philosophy. When a youth talked too much Zeno informed him that "the reason why we have two ears and only one mouth is that we may hear more and talk less."⁹⁰ Antigonius II, when in Athens, attended Zeno's classes, became his admiring friend, sought his advice, seduced him into momentary luxury, and invited him to come and live as his guest in Pella. Zeno excused himself and sent his pupil Persaeus instead. For forty years* he taught in the Stoa, and lived a life so consistent with his teachings that "more temperate than Zeno" became a proverb in Greece. Despite his intimacy with Antigonius the Athenian Assembly gave him the "keys to the walls," and voted him a statue and a crown. The decree read:

Whereas Zeno of Citium has passed many years in our city in the study of philosophy, being in all other respects a good man (*sic*),

* All dates for Zeno are disputed; the sources are contradictory. Zeller concludes to 350 for his birth and 260 for his death.⁹⁰

and also exhorting all the young men who have sought his company to the practice of temperance; making his own life a model of the greatest excellence . . . it has been resolved by the people to honor Zeno . . . to present him with a golden crown . . . and to build him a tomb in the Ceramicus at the public expense.¹²

"He died," says Laertius, "in the following manner," reputedly in his ninetyeth year. "When he was going out of his school he tripped and broke a toe. Striking the ground with his hand, he repeated a line from the *Niobe*: 'I come; why call me so?' And immediately he strangled himself."¹³

His work at the Stoa was carried on by two Asiatic Greeks—by Cleanthes of Assus and then by Chrysippus of Soli. Cleanthes was a pugilist who came to Athens with four drachmas, worked as a common laborer, refused public relief, studied for nineteen years under Zeno, and lived a life of industry and ascetic poverty. Chrysippus was the most learned and prolific of the school; he gave the Stoic doctrine its historic form by expounding it in 750 books, which Dionysius of Halicarnassus held up as models of learned dullness. After him Stoicism spread throughout Hellas, and found its greatest exponents in Asia: in Panaetius of Rhodes, Zeno of Tarsus, Boethus of Sidon, and Diogenes of Seleucia. Out of the casual fragments that survive from a once voluminous literature we must piece together a composite picture of the most widespread and influential philosophy in the ancient world.

It was probably Chrysippus who divided the Stoic system into logic, natural science, and ethics. Zeno and his successors prided themselves on their contributions to logical theory, but the streams of ink that flowed from them on this subject have left no appreciable residue of enlightenment or use.* The Stoics agreed with the Epicureans that knowledge arises only out of the senses, and placed the final test of truth in such perceptions as compel the assent of the mind by their vividness or their persistence. Experience, however, need not lead to knowledge; for between sensation and reason lies emotion or passion, which may distort experience into error even as it distorts desire into vice. Reason is the supreme achievement of man, a seed from the *Logos Spermatikos*, or Seminal Reason, that made and rules the world.

The world itself, like man, is at once completely material and inherently divine. Everything that the senses report to us is material, and only ma-

* Except in certain additions to terminology, like the word *logic* itself. Zeno's pupil Aristo likened logicians to people eating lobsters, who take a great deal of trouble for a little morsel of meat concealed in much shell.¹⁴

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terial things can cause or receive action. Qualities as well as quantities, vir-
tues as well as passions, soul as well as body, God as well as the stars, are
material forms or processes, differing in degrees of fineness, but essentially
one.⁵⁴ On the other hand all matter is dynamic, full of tensions and powers,
perpetually engaged in diffusion or concentration, and animated by an in-
ternal and eternal energy, heat, or fire. The universe lives through innumer-
able cycles of expansion and contraction, development and dissolution;
periodically it is consumed in a grand conflagration, and slowly it takes
form again; then it passes through all its previous history, even in minutest
detail;* for the chain of causes and effects is an unbreakable circle, an end-
less repetition. All events and all acts of will are determined; it is as im-
possible for anything to happen otherwise than it does as it is for some-
thing to come out of nothing; any break in the chain would disrupt the
world.

God, in this system, is the beginning, the middle, and the end. The Stoics
recognized the necessity of religion as a basis for morality; they looked with
a genial tolerance upon the popular faith, even upon its demons and its
divination, and found allegorical interpretations to bridge the chasm be-
tween superstition and philosophy. They accepted Chaldean astrology as
essentially correct, and thought of earthly affairs as in some mystic and
continuous correspondence with the movements of the stars⁵⁵—one phase of
that universal *sympatheia* by which whatever happened to any part affected
all the rest. As if preparing not only an ethic but a theology for Christian-
ity, they conceived the world, law, life, the soul, and destiny in terms of
God, and defined morality as a willing surrender to the divine will. God,
like man, is living matter; the world is his body, the order and law of the
world are his mind and will; the universe is a gigantic organism of which
God is the soul, the animating breath, the fertilizing reason, the activating
fire.⁵⁶ Sometimes the Stoics conceive God in impersonal terms; more often
they picture him as a Providence designing and guiding the cosmos with
supreme intelligence, adjusting all its parts to rational purposes, and making
everything redound to the use of virtuous men. Cleanthes identifies him
with Zeus in a monotheistic hymn worthy of Ikhnaton or Isaiah:

Thou, O Zeus, art praised above all gods: many are thy names and
thine is all power for ever.

The beginning of the world was from thee: and with law thou rul-
est over all things.

* We are relieved to learn that some of the Stoics were not quite certain on this point.

Unto thee may all flesh speak: for we are thy offspring.

Therefore will I raise a hymn unto thee: and will ever sing of thy power.

The whole order of the heavens obeyeth thy word: as it moveth around the earth:

With little and great lights mixed together: how great art thou, King above all for ever!

Nor is anything done upon the earth apart from thee: nor in the firmament, nor in the seas:

Save that which the wicked do: by their own folly.

But thine is the skill to set even the crooked straight: what is without fashion is fashioned and the alien akin before thee.

Thus hast thou fitted together all things in one: the good with the evil:

That thy word should be one in all things: abiding for ever.

Let folly be dispersed from our souls: that we may repay thee the honor wherewith thou hast honored us:

Singing praise of thy works for ever: as becometh the sons of men.⁸⁷

Man is to the universe as microcosm to macrocosm; he too is an organism with a material body and a material soul. For whatever moves or influences the body, or is moved or influenced by the body, must be corporeal. The soul is a fiery breath or *pneuma* diffused through the body, just as the world soul is diffused through the world. At death the soul survives the body, but only as an impersonal energy. At the final conflagration the soul will be reabsorbed, like Atman into Brahman, into that ocean of energy which is God.

Since man is a part of God or Nature, the problem of ethics can be easily solved: goodness is co-operation with God, or Nature, or the Law of the World. It is not the pursuit or enjoyment of pleasure, for such pursuit subordinates reason to passion, often injures the body or the mind, and seldom satisfies us in the end. Happiness can be found only through a rational adjustment of our aims and conduct to the purposes and laws of the universe. There is no contradiction between the good of the individual and the good of the cosmos, for the law of well-being in the individual is identical with the law of Nature. If evil comes to the good man it is only temporary, and is not really evil; if we could understand the whole we should see the good

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behind whatever evil appears in the parts.* The wise man will study science only sufficiently to find the law of Nature, and will then adapt his life to that Law. *Zen kata physin*, to live according to Nature—this is the purpose and sole excuse of science and philosophy. Almost in Newman's words Cleanthes surrenders his will to God's:

Lead me, O God, and thou my Destiny,
To that one place which you will have me fill.
I follow gladly. Should I strive with thee,
A recreant, I needs must follow still.⁹⁹

The Stoic, therefore, will shun luxury and complexity, economic or political strife; he will content himself with little, and will accept without complaint the difficulties and disappointments of life. He will be indifferent to everything but virtue and vice—to sickness and pain, good or ill repute, freedom or slavery, life or death. He will suppress all feelings that may obstruct the course or question the wisdom of Nature: if his son dies he will not grieve, but will accept Fate's decree as in some hidden way the best. He will seek so complete an *apatheia*, or absence of feeling, that his peace of mind will be secure against all the attacks and vicissitudes of fortune, pity, or love.† He will be a hard teacher and a stern administrator. Determinism does not imply indulgence; we must hold ourselves, and others, morally responsible for every action. When Zeno beat his slave for stealing, and the slave, having a little learning, said, "But it was fated that I should steal," Zeno answered, "And that I should beat you."¹⁰⁰ The Stoic looks upon virtue as its own reward, and as an absolute duty or categorical imperative, derived from his participation in divinity; and he will console himself, in misfortune, by remembering that in following the divine law he becomes an incarnate god.¹⁰¹ When he is tired of life, and can leave it without injuring others, he will have no scruples against suicide. Cleanthes, having reached his seventieth year, entered upon a long fast; and then, saying that he would not go back after coming halfway, continued it until he died.¹⁰²

The Stoic, however, is not unsocial, neither so proud of poverty as the Cynic, nor so enamored of solitude as the Epicurean. He accepts marriage and the family as necessary, though he has no praise for romantic love; he

* Wars, said Chrysippus, are a useful corrective of overpopulation, and bedbugs do us the service of preventing us from oversleeping.⁹⁹

† Chrysippus proposed to limit the care of dead relatives to the simplest and quietest burial; it would be still better, he thought, to use their flesh as food.¹⁰⁰

dreams of a utopia in which all women will be in common.⁶⁴ He accepts the state, even monarchy; he has no fond memories of the city-state, and considers the average man a dangerous simpleton; he prefers the Antigonids to King Mob. In truth he cares little for any government; he wishes that all men might be philosophers, so that laws would be unnecessary; he thinks of perfection not, as Plato and Aristotle did, in terms of the good society, but in terms of the good man. He may take part in political affairs, and will support every move, however modest, toward human freedom and dignity; but he will not fetter his happiness to place or power. He may give his life for his country, but he will reject any patriotism that hinders his loyalty to all mankind; he is a citizen of the world. Zeno, in whose veins, as we have seen, there probably flowed both Greek and Semitic blood, longed like Alexander for a breaking down of racial and national barriers, and his internationalism reflects Alexander's passing unification of the eastern Mediterranean world. Ultimately, Zeno and Chrysippus hoped, all those warring states and classes would be replaced by one vast society in which there would be no nations, no classes, no rich or poor, no masters or slaves; in which philosophers would rule without oppression, and all men would be brothers as the children of one God.⁶⁵

Stoicism was a noble philosophy, and proved more practicable than a modern cynic would expect. It brought together all the elements of Greek thought in a final effort of the pagan mind to create a system of morals acceptable to the classes that had abandoned the ancient creed; and though it naturally won only a small minority to its standard, those few were everywhere the best. Like its Christian counterparts, Calvinism and Puritanism, it produced the strongest characters of its time. Theoretically it was a monstrous doctrine of an isolated and pitiless perfection. Actually it created men of courage, saintliness, and good will like Cato the Younger, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius; it influenced Roman jurisprudence in building a law of nations for non-Romans; and it helped to hold ancient society together until a new faith came. The Stoics lent countenance to superstition, and had an injurious effect upon science; but they saw clearly the basic problem of their age—the collapse of the theological basis of morals—and they made an honest attempt to bridge the gap between religion and philosophy. Epicurus won the Greeks, Zeno won the aristocracy of Rome; and to the end of pagan history the Stoics ruled the Epicureans, as they always will. When a new religion took form out of the intellectual and moral chaos of the dying Hellenistic world, the way had been prepared for it by a philoso-

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IV. THE RETURN TO RELIGION

The conflict between religion and philosophy had now seen three stages: the attack on religion, as in the pre-Socratics; the endeavor to replace religion with a natural ethic, as in Aristotle and Epicurus; and the return to religion in the Skeptics and the Stoics—a movement that culminated in Neo-Platonism and Christianity. A like sequence has occurred more than once in history, and may be taking place today. Thales corresponds to Galileo, Democritus to Hobbes, the Sophists to the Encyclopedists, Protagoras to Voltaire; Aristotle to Spencer, Epicurus to Anatole France; Pyrrho to Pascal, Arcesilaus to Hume, Carneades to Kant, Zeno to Schopenhauer, Plotinus to Bergson. The chronology resists the analogy, but the basic line of development is the same.

The age of the great systems gave way to doubt in the ability of reason either to understand the world or to control the impulses of men into order and civilization. The skeptics were such not in the Humian but in the Kantian sense: they doubted philosophy as well as dogma, sapped the foundations of materialism, and advised a quiet acceptance of the ancient cult; in Pyrrho, as in Pascal, skepticism led not from but to religion, and Pyrrho himself ended as the venerated high priest of his city. The Epicurean abandonment of politics for ethics, the flight from the state to the soul, could only represent a moment in the return of the pendulum; and the concentration on individual salvation paved the way for a religion that would appeal to the individual rather than to the state. There were many who could not find in life the consolations that had satisfied Epicurus; poverty, misfortune, disease, bereavement, revolution, or war overtook them, and all the counsels of the sage left them empty-souled. Hegesias of Cyrene, though he started like Epicurus from the standpoint of the Cyrenaics, concluded that life has in it more pain than pleasure, more grief than joy, and that the only logical outcome of a naturalistic philosophy is suicide.* Philosophy, like a prodigal daughter, after bright adventures and dark disillusionments, gave up the pursuit of truth and the quest of happiness, returned repentant to her mother, religion, and sought again in faith the foundations of hope and the sanctions of charity.

* He argued the point so eloquently that a wave of suicides rose in Alexandria, and Ptolemy II had to banish him from Egypt.⁶⁵