

Summerhill

IIAS REVIEW

Vol. III, No. 1
February 1997

General Editor

Mrinal Miri

Editor

Udaya Kumar

Associate Editor

Pankaj K. Singh

Editorial Coordinator

S.A. Jabbar

Publisher

N.K. Maini

Indian Institute of
Advanced Study

Rashtrapati Nivas
Shimla-171005

All rights reserved. No part of the Review may be reproduced in any form without the permission of the publisher.

An Appeal

We have noted with extreme distress reports of a decision to relocate the Indian Institute of Advanced Study away from its home for the past thirty years - Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla. The decision to relocate the Institute has been made in extreme secrecy. Worse, to justify a flagrantly shabby decision, the name of the President is being invoked in oblique references to the 'pleasure of the President.'

The founding of the Institute, as also its location in the historic Rashtrapati Nivas, was the result of an inspired resolve of our Philosopher President S. Radhakrishnan to create a unique intellectual space. In the words of another distinguished scholar and President, Dr. Zakkir Hussain, the Institute signified Dr. Radhakrishnan's 'vision' to help 'extend our horizons of knowledge and wisdom.'

During the past three decades, in spite of nagging uncertainties about its location and future, the Institute has sought to fulfil its original mission. The seminars, publications, and the stimulating ambience of intellectual activity at the Institute bear ample testimony to this. Conceived along the lines of the Princeton Institute, it is the only institution in India which draws on a continual basis scholars and thinkers from all the varied parts of India transcending the entrenched demarcations of academic disciplines. The hills and quiet of Shimla provide a kind of meditative space for intellectual interaction which perhaps no other place in the country provides.

The Institute signifies, whatever its imperfections, the deepest intellectual aspirations of independent India. We wonder what the decision, in the fiftieth year of India's independence, to throw the Institute out of its present home signifies. Are we to believe that the days are gone when the head of the republic so passionately identified himself with the pursuit of knowledge and truth in its basic sense, and dedicated the Rashtrapati Nivas to a more fruitful pursuit than 'merely the pastime of the President', and that too for no more than 'ten days in a year?'

We earnestly appeal to the President of the Republic, known for his interest in intellectual matters, to put a decisive end to this shabby and perverse controversy. We would also like to call upon the entire intellectual community to express their solidarity in this hour of grave danger to the future of what we believe to be a unique institution.

Fellows of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla

What I am going to argue today is that the Ancient Greek Stoics were extremely rigorous in analytic philosophy. They offered an analysis of what the emotions are. I believe that analysis was far more rigorous than any modern Western analysis of emotion, much of which seems to me quite vague and sloppy. And yet their motive for giving an analysis of the emotion was that you should learn how to cope with your own emotions. Seneca, one of the ancient Stoics, says that it would be quite pointless to analyse exactly what anger is, unless the analysis helps you to cope with anger. I believe that a rigorous analysis of what the emotions are should indeed help you to cope with your own emotions.

Now the Stoics have a very striking view about what you would have to change if you are to cope with your emotions. They think that it is enough to change your intellectual opinions. Just change your intellectual beliefs and you will change your emotions. They disagree with another ancient Greek school, the school of Epicurus. The Epicureans recommend you to change your emotions by changing your attention: shift your attention to past pleasures, the pleasures of past philosophical conversations.

My story involves three great Stoic Philosophers from the period 300 B.C. to A.D. 100. Chrysippus invented the theory, another Stoic Posidonius attacked it, even though he was a fellow Stoic, because the Greeks were very argumentative people. Then, I believe, the Stoic Seneca repaired the theory. This is not generally accepted, but this is how I see Seneca's relation to the others. Chrysippus' theory of what emotions are is amazingly precise. He says that there are four basic emotions and all the other emotions are species of those four - distress and pleasure, appetite and fear. Now, each emotion consists of intellectual judgements and indeed of two judgements. When you have an emotion, you judge that there is something good or bad for you, some harm or benefit. Secondly, you judge that it is appropriate to react. Chrysippus goes further. There are two types of reactions which you judge to be appropriate. For distress and pleasure, I believe it has not in

How Philosophy Makes the Stoic Sage Tranquil

EXTRACTS FROM THE RADHAKRISHNAN MEMORIAL LECTURE 1996

Richard Sorabji

the past been clear what the approved reactions are meant to be. But there is a text which settles the matter. The reactions which you judge appropriate in distress and pleasure are inner reactions. You have sinking feelings when you are distressed in your chest. It is actually your growing soul which is sinking according to the Stoics, because they were materialists and they thought the soul was something material or physical. What you are actually feeling, in their view, is your soul sinking. We would not believe that part, but I do believe that you often have sinking feelings in your chest, or expansive feelings. So the second judgement in the case of distress and pleasure is that it is appropriate

The Stoics offered an analysis of what the emotions are. I believe that analysis was far more rigorous than any modern Western analysis of emotion, much of which seems to me quite vague and sloppy. And yet their motive for giving an analysis of the emotion was that you should learn how to cope with your own emotions.

to have these sinkings or expansions. But in the other two emotions, fear and appetite, what you judge appropriate is behaviour. It is appropriate to reach for something, if you have an appetite for it; it is appropriate to avoid it, if you fear it. So, to rehearse it once again, every emotion simply is two judgements: the judgement that there is good or bad for you and the judgement that it is appropriate to react - to react either with inner sinking and expansion or with avoidance and reaching for.

There was a brilliant Stoic who came later, Posidonius, who said, 'This is wrong. We Stoics have forgotten what Plato told us.' The very intellectual Stoic account of what the emotions are, namely, two intellectual judgements, forgets the irrational forces about which Plato spoke. Plato told us that there are three parts of our souls: not just reason or intellect, but also two

irrational forces which he compared with horses that are drawing the charioteer of reason. We Stoics are forgetting the irrational horses. Of course, there is a direct comparison with Freud, who read Plato and who distinguished the ego, the super-ego and the id as parts of our personality. Freud actually draws the comparison with a rider and a horse. 'So' Posidonius says, 'you do not understand emotions nor can you cope with them, if you forget the horses'. He gives five counter examples to show that judgements are not sufficient, nor necessary for emotions.

Nearly all of the objections are partially correct. So where does this leave the intellectual analysis of emotions? Not in total ruins; there is still a lot to be learnt from it. Admittedly we have seen many cases of emotion without judgement, but even in most of these cases there is at least a *feeling as if* there was good or bad, or a *feeling as if* it would be appropriate to react. So even if there is no judgement, there is usually *feeling as if* - not always, but usually. Similarly, if you take the other objections where you get the two judgements without the emotions, it is very easy to see what is missing. In many of the cases what is missing is either attention or imagination and we can see how to repair the analysis by adding reference to these. The account of emotion is not right as it stands. Posidonius' objections have real force. But, nonetheless, the revised analysis taking these things into account will cover at least many of the cases.

Now let me come to my original

question. Can the analysis, at least when it is revised, help us to cope with emotions. It obviously can. For one thing, it immediately shows you which two propositions you need to attack if you want to get rid of emotions: the proposition that some good or bad has happened to you (have I really suffered harm?) and the proposition that it is appropriate to react (would it really be right to retaliate?)

The Stoic analysis ... talks to you whoever you are, and whatever your point of view on religion. Its occasional appeal to metaphysical ideas is an optional extra. I think this point was made in antiquity by the great Latin-speaking philosopher Boethius, who was executed around A.D. 524 in a rather horrible way on the charge of treason, leaving incomplete his life's work of translating Greek philosophy into Latin. That is why Latin went through the dark ages in philosophy, because it was another 600 years before they could have access to the Greek philosophical texts. Boethius wrote in prison, awaiting execution, a wonderful work, the *Consolation of Philosophy*, paraphrased by King Alfred and translated by Queen Elizabeth I. In the first two books of this work, Boethius gives you what is basically Stoic and other Greek consolations, advice on calming your emotions. But then he says, 'now I am going to move to a much harder view and he starts to tell you about the nature of God. He realized, and he was right, that consolations which depend on a certain view of God are much harder for people to take in. They are much more complicated. Maybe they are truer; I am not expressing any view about that. But they are harder, whereas the Stoics speak to you directly, without the apparatus of metaphysical or of theological beliefs.

RICHARD SORABJI, Fellow of Wolfson College, Oxford, is the author of *Animal Minds and Human Morals* (1993), *Matter, Space and Motion* (1988), *Time, Creation and Continuum* (1983) and *Aristotle on Memory* (1972). This year's Radhakrishnan Memorial Lecture was delivered at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla on 10 September 1996. The complete text of the lecture is a forthcoming publication of the Institute.