



PERSONAL STOIC MONK MANIFESTO

The purpose of this manifesto is to have a reliable reference that helps me stay consistent in my actions as I fulfill my roles and duties. Before presenting the essence of the manifesto, it's fundamental to define who and what I am:

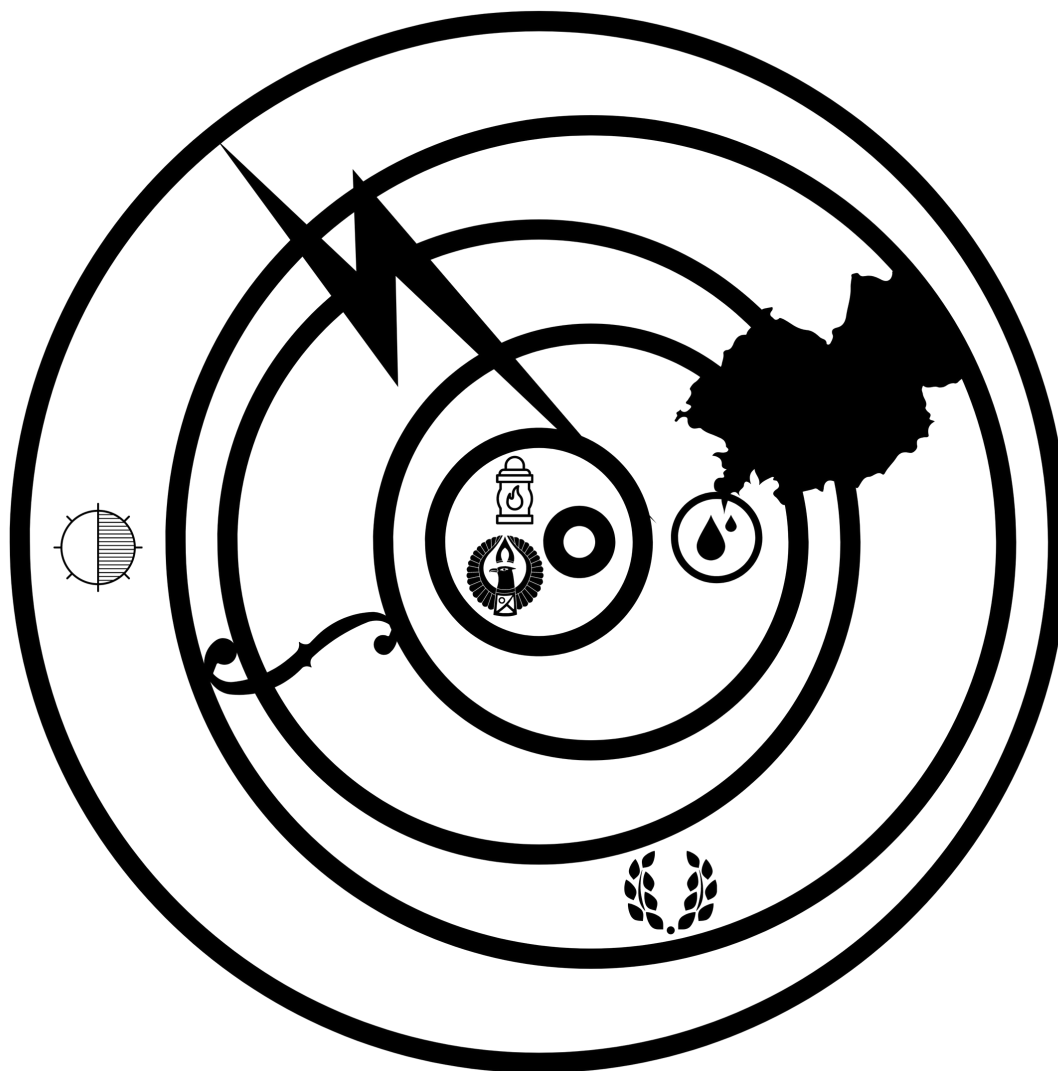
"What does the title 'citizen' mean? In this role, a person never acts in his own interest or thinks of himself alone, but, like a hand or foot that had sense and realized its place in the natural order, all its actions and desires aim at nothing except contributing to the common good." Discourses 2.4.

I am a part of the Cosmopolis, endowed with duties that benefit the Whole. Our belief that the Cosmos is benevolent drives us to cultivate beneficial interactions between members of the Cosmopolis. That is cosmopolitanism, arguably the core of social *oikeiôsis* and one of two subject matters I prioritize in this manifesto. I chose social *oikeiôsis* because I want to understand it as Zeno describes understanding or knowledge (Sellars, Stoicism 2006 p.71).

Simplicity is the other leading principle I want to embrace. The monastic principle is arguably simplicity. As I aspire to discover the ultimate purpose of my life, renouncing all that is unnecessary will give me a chance to direct my energy toward those duties allotted to me. However, living a simpler life is a challenging task because our world is overcome by multiplicity. Outliers necessarily struggle to conquer a different kind of lifestyle, especially if they have embraced abundance in the past.

To flesh out my plan, I build upon Panaetius' 'four roles we play' as rendered in Cicero's "On Duties" (these are the universal; the individual (traits); the accidental or situational; and the self-chosen). I then fuse these roles with Hierocles' concentric circles to create a personalized set of (present) duties. The following emblem enacts my aims.





"The first and closest circle is that which each person draws around his own mind, as the center: in this circle is enclosed the body and whatever is employed for the sake of the body. For this circle is the shortest and all but touches its own center. The second after this one, standing further away from the center and enclosing the first, is that within which our parents, siblings, wife, and children are ranged. Third, after these, is that in which there are uncles and aunts, grandfathers and grandmothers, the children of one's siblings, and also cousins. After this comes the one that embraces all other relatives. Next upon this is the circle of the members of one's deme, then that of the members of one's tribe, next that of one's fellow citizens, and so, finally, that of those who border one's city and that of people of like ethnicity. The furthest out and largest one, which surrounds all the circles, is that of the entire race of human beings. Once these have been thought through, accordingly, it is possible, starting with the most stretched-out one, to draw the circles—concerning the behavior that is due to each group—together in a way, as though toward the center, and with an effort to keep transferring items out of the containing circles into the contained."

(Hierocles et al., Elements of Ethics, fragments and excerpts 2009 p. 91)



First circle

The smallest circle in the middle of the emblem represents the self, my self. Next to it stand Epictetus's lamp and the Black Eagle Monastery logo. These icons delineate what Panaetius calls "the self-chosen role." Epictetus' lamp represents my decision to walk the Path of the *Prokopton* as a Stoic student. The lamp also reminds me of my decision to live a simple life; to stay vigilant and aware of the actual price I pay when acquiring new material possessions:

"He bought a lamp for a very high price; for a lamp he became a thief, for a lamp he became faithless, for a lamp he became beast-like. This seemed to him to be profitable!" Discourses 1.29.21

"It is hard to fight with one's heart's desire. Whatever it wishes to get it purchases at the cost of soul" -Heraclitus

The last icon in this circle is the Black Eagle Monastery logo, representing my decision (and urge) to explore the unknown. As I seek my unification, I aim to develop a healthy state of the soul, *arête*, in part by nurturing my soul with two different kinds of silent practices. The first is a concentrative meditation or Pneuma Will Power Meditation to become aware. The second is a receptive meditation to correspond with my Daimon and gain insight concerning my purposes.

Second Circle

The second circle contains my offsprings, and I illustrate them at the same level of the self because they are equal to the self (I follow Hierocles here, see: [Hierocles et al., Elements of Ethics, fragments and excerpts 2009 xxxii]). Two drops, one for each of my kids, represent my responsibility toward their education and growth. Here is where the outward expansion of self-*oikeiôsis* begins. The two drops also propel me to think about the Stoic doctrine of seminal reasons. We are detached portions (*apospasma*) of the World Soul; outgrowths of the Cosmos. And as descendants of the World Soul, the linkage between all of us is analogous to the linkage between siblings. All the more reason to engage in the practice of social *oikeiôsis*.

"Zeno adds that the individual semen has 'the same reasons' as the World Soul. This, as Epictetus puts it, means that you are a portion of God; you have inside you a part of him. If we are detached portions of the World Soul, this is because, as living beings, we are the result of the successive transformations of the semen of our father, detached from his soul and body and mixed with the seed of our mother in her womb. This mixture of seeds develops into a foetus, growing inside the mother's womb, nourishing itself like a plant. Later, it is born and transformed into a new individual living being. Ultimately, this offspring comes from the initial transformation of matter, which was produced in the universe from the semen of the universe; and this semen of the universe is itself a part of the World Soul." (Helmig & Marongiu, World Soul - Anima Mundi 2020 p. 185)

The black patch covering circles 2, 3, and 4 illustrates Germany's silhouette, where Fate (and I) decided I would continue my life.



Third Circle

Hierocles reserves the third circle for extended family. Having no extended family in Germany, I dedicate this circle to Panaetius's individual traits (and accompanying duties). In this case, my extended family is my students, those I impact with the gift of music. I illustrate this with the f-holes of a violin, my primary instrument. In this circle, I locate Germany's icon at the correct latitude where I perform these duties. The map is high along with the thunderbolt, the Logos, representing Fate and the Stoic God, respectively.

"Men exist for each other. Then either improve them, or put up with them." (Meditations 8.59)
"It is the thunderbolt that steers the course of all things" -Heraclitus

Fourth Circle

The fourth circle speaks of my situational role. After a very successful decade in my twenties, I suddenly lost all my "glory." One day I stopped performing with the best classical musicians and found myself teaching music. I struggled to get my "performing success" back until I couldn't fight Fate anymore. About a year ago, I decided to stop the madness and willingly follow Chrysippus' cart to see where it led. But it was not until my ethics project at the Marcus Aurelius School that I deliberately tried to accept the new roles offered to me. As a reminder, I placed Caesar's leaf crown at the bottom of the circle. This icon speaks of my namesake emperor and my turbulent past confusing honor for glory:

"Where honor and glory are concerned there is an additional level of confusion to be sorted out. Humans are by nature inclined to pursue praise and honor, for honor, says Calcidius, is "the testimony to virtue": it has a reliable connection to virtuous action and for that reason constitutes a legitimate object of choice. But humans frequently make the mistake of cultivating another form of praise which is here called "glory" or "popular esteem," deceived apparently by the resemblance between justified and unjustified praise. Thus popular esteem stands at two removes from the real source of value: honor is derived from virtue, and popular esteem is then confused with honor." (Graver, Stoicism & Emotion 2009 p. 157)

"For what thought or wisdom have they? They follow the poets and take the crowd as their teacher.... For even the best of them choose one thing above all others, immortal glory among mortals..." -Heraclitus



Fifth Circle

The last circle in the emblem lays out Panaetius' universal role. Here, the sun and the moon represent our interrelated world of polar opposites. The icon is fixed at the center of the horizontal plane as a symbol of perfect distribution. Our universal role, I believe, is related to the Stoic virtue of justice. We are to learn how things are to be distributed.

"The sun will not overstep his measures; if he does, the Erinyes, the handmaids of Justice will find him out." -Heraclitus

As a self-propelling agent who willfully accepts the universal role and can promote justice, I must discern where justice originates. A.A. Long wrote, *"Prohairesis or volition is the locus of all that truly matters to humans who have understood cosmic order and their own natures and capacities."* (Long, Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life 2013 p. 49). Thus, just actions (and right action in general) begin with prohairesis, namely, decision. But a decision to do good, or act right, cannot live idle as an idea; it has to be performed—the Stoic "good" lives outside of the self, in our actions. Once a completely correct action is performed, it generates a grain of virtue, which, over a lifetime, gives me an identity with moral good. In this way, I hope to aid the evolution of my soul and fulfill my life's purpose.

