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THE STOIC MORAL VALUES AND EPICETUS' PHILOSOPHY OF FREE WILL.  
THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MAN'S ACTIONS

INTRODUCTION:

Stoicism is the philosophical tradition founded by Zeno of Citium, in Cyprus (334-262 BC), developed by Cleanthes and Crysippus, and named from the Stoa Poikilē or "Painted Porch" in Athens where they taught. The influence of the Stoic School's ideas lived on, and 'stoical' has become a common expression to indicate acceptance of misfortune without complaint.

In fact, 'Stoicism' placed ethics in the context of an understanding of the world as a whole, with reason being paramount both in human behaviour and in the divinely ordered cosmos. It is important to say here that the Stoic view of divinity and its relation to the whole universe has been historically influential, contributing to the context in which both Neoplatonic and Christian thought developed, especially to "theodicy", i.e. a justifying explanation of why God permits 'evil', responding to the problem of 'evil'. The theodocist puts forward what he or she takes to be the actual purposes, rationales etc. that explain, and to a certain extent, justify the divine actions, and inactions with respect to evil. It contrasts with a defence, which has a more modest project, that of refusing atheistic arguments from evil without committing to a positive claim about the divine reasons. The question about the human free will still stands open and requires well justified answer.

Stoic ethics indicated that if a perfectly wise man, i.e. virtuous man saw his child in danger of drowning (say) he would try to save it; but if he failed he probably would accept this without feeling distress or pity, and without his happiness being diminished. Since everything that happens is governed by divine providence, his failure must have been for the best, even if he could not understand why. It is clear so far that moral virtue is the only desirable and effective effort of human beings. Obviously, since moral virtue is the only good, the virtuous man has nothing to regret of his doings.

It is true that Ancient Greek society placed considerable emphasis on material achievement, in opposition of Socrates' insistence on the importance

