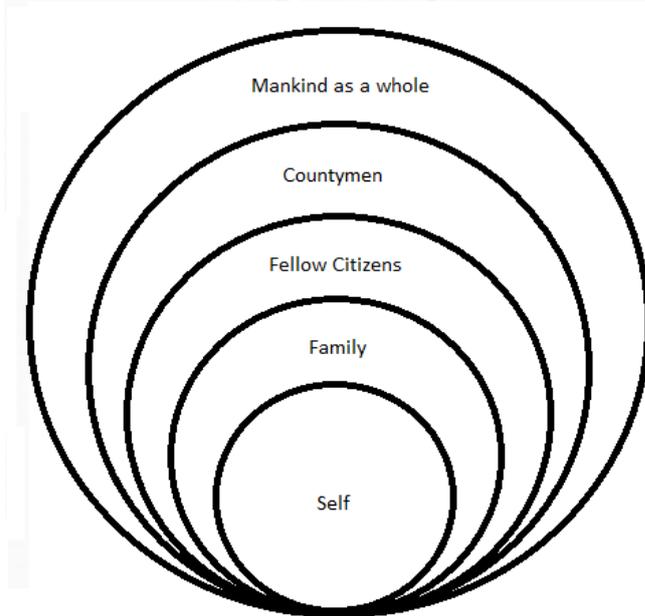


Hierocles Concentric Circles and Caring for Mother Earth by

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Hierocles, a Stoic believed to be from the 2nd century, presented this diagram to suggest that while the animal nature of any animal is to look to their own perceived self-interest



especially in matters that relate to survival, as rational and social animals we also have a need to include in our purview the interests of all the other 'circles' of society that we are a part of.

While this diagram in various forms appears in many modern books about Stoicism, as it is presented here it is incomplete unless one sees the space outside of the circle encompassing 'mankind as a whole' as being representative of all else within the Cosmos as well as the Cosmos itself.

The ancients were very interested in the issue of citizenship and our responsibility to not only be of good character, but also to be good citizens who put the interest of society at all of its levels on a par with our individual interests. Effectively Hierocles was guiding the Stoic to gradually mentally draw the outer circles inwards until they all coalesce as the inner circle whereby we will see no difference between our interests and the interests of any of the other circles.

However, in accord with many of the Stoic ideas, today we need to add another circle that will represent all of the life forms around us and an even larger circle that represents our living planet, Mother Earth, in that we now know that our accumulated individual actions can have an influence on the well-being of our fellow flora and fauna, as well as the well-being of Mother Earth as a whole – while also adding in the largest of all circles to represent the Cosmos as a whole.

And despite such not yet having truly entered into the human psyche, intellectually we know that if we carry on as we are that eventually the imbalances we are creating will destroy the biosphere that supports us. That is, unless Mother Earth chooses to reduce our numbers through increased 'natural disasters' in order to attempt to rebalance matters whereby she and the life on her surface may have a chance of survival.

Deep down Stoicism has always had a leaning to such ecological matters and as such the Stoic ought to try to reduce their impact by way of including the interests of Mother Earth and her dependents as a whole as being of equal or even of greater importance than their own or human society's selfish self-interest.

From Seneca we have:

'A thatched roof once covered free men; under marble and gold dwells slavery.'

And

'Nature has laid on us no stern and difficult law when she tells us that we can live without the marble-cutter and the engineer, that we can clothe ourselves without traffic in silk fabrics, that we can have everything that is indispensable to our use, provided only that we are content with what the earth has placed upon its surface.'

[XC. On the Part Played by Philosophy in the Progress of Man, 'Seneca Moral Essays' translated by John W Basore.]

And

'God, who is the Father of all, has placed ready to our hands those things which he intended for our own good... But that which would be injurious, he buried deep in the earth. We can complain of nothing but ourselves: for we have brought to light the materials for our destruction, against the will of Nature, who hid them from us.' [CX.

On True and False Riches, 'Seneca Moral Essays' translated by John W Basore.]

Stoicism is predisposed to addressing modern environmental issues. But it is also predisposed to addressing such 'in accord with Nature' – and that means that there is a need to ensure our numbers are controlled, even reduced. I do not remember who, but it is reported that a Stoic of old saw a benefit of war as being that it helped control the size of the population. At the same time the Stoic rationale would discourage wars, especially in that such nearly always elicit the perturbation that is anger. And so the Stoic would have need to come down firmly on the side of population control subject to careful consideration as to how such is to be implemented.