

STUDIA PHILOSOPHICA

ROMAN PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT. *Roman Philosophy.* Although the Romans were a practical people throughout their history, the influence of the Greeks also made its presence felt in the field of philosophy. This has been increasingly configured since 168 BC, when the Romans conquered Macedonia. From this moment on, many philosophers and rhetoricians from Greece began to come to Rome. Stoicism was the most widespread and influential philosophical current in the Roman Empire, until Christianity became the state religion. Thus, Late Stoicism or New Roman Stoicism/Roman Neo-Stoicism had the most followers and admirers in Rome, both during the Republic and the Empire period. Among the representatives of this philosophical system, the most influential were Seneca (4 BC-64 AD), Musonius Rufus (c.30-c.101), Epictetus (55-135) and the emperor Marcus Aurelius (121-181). These philosophers left us an important literary heritage that partially compensates for the loss of the works of the ancient Stoics. Epicureanism was another current which was widely spread in the Roman world. In Rome, Epicureanism found its second homeland, thanks to the merits of the poet Lucretius (94-55 BC). Skepticism also managed to occupy a rather important place within Roman society. In Rome, one of the representatives of skepticism was Marcus Vispasianus Agrippa (62 BC-12 AD). Cicero (106-43 BC), through his vast erudition, but also through his immense work, was the one who

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managed to combine elements taken from different systems of thought. Through his writings, he succeeded in bringing and propagating Greek philosophical themes to the Latin world. At the same time, he managed to convince the Latins of the great educational and practical importance of philosophy. Cicero also has the great merit of having given Greek terminology Latin equivalents, which have been preserved to this day.

Keywords: philosophy, Romans, Stoicism, Epicureanism, Skepticism.

Cuvinte cheie: filosofie, romani, stoicism, epicureism, scepticism.

Introduction

The Romans were a practical people who, throughout their history, focused more on legal and administrative, political and military issues, and in the field of philosophy they had no original contributions. The influence of the Greeks also made its presence felt in the field of philosophy, and this was accentuated starting from 168 BC, when the Romans conquered Macedonia. From this moment on, many philosophers and rhetoricians from Greece began to come to Rome, but the senators hurried to expel them in 161 BC. It was only a momentary reaction, because the special prestige enjoyed by Greek culture and philosophy won over many aristocrats, so that many began to send their children to study in Greece. Towards the end of the 2nd century BC, we will meet in Rome some of the most famous Greek philosophers, who will come at the invitation of the politicians they befriended. Among them we note Panaetios of Rhodes¹ who was one of the most influential representatives of Stoicism²

Philosophical currents

Stoicism was the most widespread and influential philosophical current in the Roman Empire, until Christianity became the state religion. The founder of Stoicism was Zeno of Cittium/Kition, who lived between 336-264 BC. or 342-270

¹ Panaetios of Rhodes, lived approximately between 185-110 BC. and came to Rome, where he became a member of the cultural-political circle of the Scipionis

² Marius Telea, *Introducere în cultura și civilizația romană*, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2021, p. 119.

BC³, 333/332-262⁴. He founded, around 300 BC, a philosophical school in Athens. The name Stoicism comes from a portico with columns, *stoa poikile*, which in Greek means painted portico. It was decorated by the painter Polygnotos⁵ with scenes from the destruction of Troy, the battles of the Athenians with the Amazons, but also from the battle of Marathon⁶. In this portico, Zeno held his classes and the discussions he had with his disciples. The Stoic current (ἡ Στωά) as a philosophical synthesis and arrangement, is monistic. The world, man and God, form a unit and a unitary principle, the universe. Thus, in the Stoic view, all is physical, and the soul is nothing but a more delicate physical existence. In the universe there are two principles, or powers: the passive one and the active or dynamic one. The latter, which is somatic and more delicate, is seen as reason (logos), fire and breath (pneuma), which gives birth to and gives form to the passive principle (power), which is matter. Thus the universe spends, permeates and dominates an almighty power, which is life-giving, cautious and with organizational spirit. This power is called divine fire, although it forms an element of the universe, which is present everywhere in man, animals, plants, heavenly bodies, etc. In man, this soul is endowed with reason and intellect. This divine fire is the soul, which is rational, logical and divine. Because of this, Stoics consider the world to be animated, rational, logical, and divine. Fire, rising to the divine and universal reason or mind of the universe, defines everything in the world. Thus, it is fate and destiny, before which man must submit without being able to protest, due to the fact that he never has the possibility to change it.

In their philosophical system, the Stoics speak of the "seminal reasons" of things and, in this sense, concrete objects have within the creative principle, corresponding reasons, which owe them their origin. The Stoic philosophical system promoted a moral integrity that could be achieved through self-control, but also through severe asceticism. Stoicism taught people that the purpose of life is to obtain

³ Stylianos G. Papadoupoulos, *Patrologie*, vol. I, Traducere de Lector dr. Adrian Marinescu, Editura Bizantină, București, 2006, p. 146.

⁴ Giovanni Reale, *Istoria filosofiei antice. Vol. 5: Cinismul, epicureismul și stoicismul*, Traducere din limba italiană Cristian Șoimușan, Editura Galaxia Gutenberg, Târgu-Lăpuș, 2016, p. 325.

⁵ Polygnotos of Thasos, was a painter and lived in the first half of the 5th century BC. He worked as a painter in Athens between 470-440 BC, and many of his compositions were inspired by Homeric literature.

⁶ The Battle of Marathon took place in 490 BC. between the Persians, who invaded Greece, and an alliance of Greek city-states. As a result of this battle, the Persians were defeated, being forced to withdraw from Asia.

happiness, and this was obtained by following the path of nature⁷. For man to live "according to reason" means to free oneself from passions and instincts, which are immoral. When man reaches dispassion, they will be like the reason of the universe and thus, they will have the possibility to live together with God.

The Stoics had an impressive moral system, which broadly included self-denial, because it is practically inapplicable and unattainable. Therefore, only a few chosen spirits could reach this dispassion, such as Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, Cleante of Assos (331-232 BC), Zeno's disciple, Heracles⁸ and Socrates (469-399 BC. Hr.). We can observe here that there is a perfect limitation of the circle of the chosen ones, which is greater compared to the one we will meet in Gnosticism and which constantly suffered from elitism, eclecticism, because it was provided only for the chosen groups⁹.

By promoting materialism and pantheism, Stoicism sought to discover to man the ultimate good, but also the means by which they could acquire it. So the originality of Stoicism was embodied in the identification of God with nature, which, in its essence, is an unfolding of the divine, providence and destiny. The Stoics also believed that the world is governed by necessity and thus evil cannot be absent. In this regard they recommended apathy, justifying vices and suicides. The Stoics believed that virtue is the only good in man, who must eliminate all passions, lusts and desires from the soul in order to be able to remain impassive in the face of life's trials and thus become totally independent. In the view of the Stoics, every man should be regarded as your neighbor, and in this sense the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, and slaves and free people were considered equal. This originality of Stoic thought found a wide echo within Greco-Roman society, thus facilitating the adoption of Christianity¹⁰.

In Stoic perspective, the soul is physical without being material; it is corporeal, because everything is body, not material, because it is a fragment of the

⁷ *Istoria bisericească universală*, Vol. I De la întemeierea Bisericii până în anul 1054. Manual pentru Facultățile de Teologie din Patriarhia Română, Ediția a II-a, revizuită. Coordonator: Pr. Prof. Dr. Viorel Ioniță, Pr. Prof. Dr. Daniel Benga, Pr. Prof. Dr. Nicolae Chifăr, Pr. Prof. Dr. Adrian Gabor, Pr. Prof. Dr. Ioan-Vasile Leb, Pr. Prof. Dr. Constantin Pătuleanu, Editura Basilica. București, 2021, p. 57.

⁸ Heracles/Heraclitus of Ephesus lived approximately between 535-475 BC. and was a presocratic philosopher.

⁹ Stylianos G. Papadoupoulos, op. cit., pp. 146-148.

¹⁰ Nicolae Chifăr, *Istoria creștinismului I*, Editura Universității „Lucian Blaga”, Sibiu, 2007, pp. 23-24.

active principle that informs matter. In Zeno's conception, the soul would be a "sensitive nature (*aisthētikēn physin*), the breath that is co-natural with us (*sympheis*)" or a warm breath (thanks to which) we remain alive and (by which) we are moved. We can recognize here the breath that animates the universe; warm because it is fire, co-natural because it is the form that nature takes in various animate beings: a "sensitive nature". After death, this breath, which is the soul, subsists for a moment close to the body, after which it dissipates corporeally, the soul is also mortal¹¹.

Cleante of Assos, who lived between 331-232 BC, was Zeno's successor at the head of the Stoa school. He will not be content to affirm the corporeality of the soul, but will demonstrate it with syllogistic reasoning, starting from the similarity that exists between the souls of children and parents, because only what is corporeal can be similar or dissimilar. Thus, for Cleante, the soul is an exaltation or vaporization, but his thinking will differ from that of Zeno regarding the becoming of the soul after death. Where Zeno understood only an ephemeral survival, Cleante will see souls subsisting until the universal conflagration that will end a cosmic cycle.

Chrisippus/Chrisippos, who lived between 279-206 BC, became, after Cleante's death in 232 BC, the third head of the Stoa Poikile school in Athens. Chrisipp will succeed in introducing other nuances, due to the fact that he was more of a dialectician than a physicist, and thus he will demonstrate the corporeality of the soul. His definition will be close to that of Zeno: a breath that feeds on blood. From this definition we may conclude that he sees in this breath or vaporization of the blood, an innate and coherent breath which is spread throughout the body as long as the breath of life is present here.

Chrisipp explained the connection between the human soul and cosmology, thus the breath, which animates man, is the same which ensures the cohesion of the cosmos, penetrating all things. This breath, which is a substance composed of air and fire, makes a reciprocating movement between the surrounding universe and the interior of man. In this conception of his, Chrisipp meets the physicians, who distinguish an innate warm movement that comes from within man (from the heart) and a cold breath, which is the breathed air. Chrisipp developed an original conception of the survival of the soul, saying that only the souls of the wise survive until the cosmic conflagration, and the others decompose immediately after leaving their bodies. Thus the souls of the wise will become spherical and revolve around the

¹¹ Giovanni Reale, *op. cit.*, pp. 326-331.

earth like the stars. He does not consider it impossible that after death, and even after long periods of time, we should be restored again to the form we have now. We have here apocatastasis¹², which will also be embraced by some Christian writers.

We can notice that the main development of Stoicism regarding the soul relates to its destiny after death. This will not be surprising in this judgment, which is nevertheless situated in the movement of a soul, which is inseparable from the body. The soul is born at the same time as the body (being transmitted by sperm, and then by blood) and it does not die with the body, as the Epicureans taught. We can observe that from this thinking of the Stoics, we are not far from the Christian conception of the immortality of the soul, which would not be linked to a preexistence. This was the Stoic philosophical system from the ancient period, between 300-200 BC¹³.

Stoicism from the middle period 200-50 BC. will be influenced by Platonism and Pythagoreanism at the beginning of the 1st century BC. Thus, Panaetios/Panaitios of Rhodes (185-110 BC)¹⁴, together with his disciple Posidonius of Apamea (140/130-51 BC), who was Cicero's teacher between 78/77 BC¹⁵, but also Julius Caesar's, will elaborate a new form of stoicism. It will also be embraced by the Romans, because it was much more ethical, less speculative, but also more syncretistic.

Posidonius preserved from Stoicism the universal sympathy, but also the cosmic ages, which will be punctuated by conflagrations. The soul is also a warm breath for him, being present everywhere in the body, down to the bones. Posidonius will keep from Chrisipp the survival of souls, which reach astral places, where they will await the next conflagration. In this view, he could have remained faithful to the stoicism of the ancient period, which saw the immaterial existence of the soul in the future, but because he was influenced by Pythagoreanism, he would extend the immaterial existence of the soul into the past. Posidonius may have seen that every soul begins its existence as a demon-animus, which is not a soul until it animates a body. This will take place at the beginning of a cosmic era, when the air is full of *animi immortales*, and which, after entering the bodies, animate them.

¹² Apocatastasis, comes from the Greek word apocatastasis and means restoration to the original state. It was promoted by the Stoics, but also by some mystics. Along with them, the apocatastasis was also promoted by the Christian writer Origen (185-254). According to this speculation, by the grace of Christ all men will be saved, including the devils.

¹³ Călin Ioan Dușe, *Imperiul Roman și creștinismul în timpul Părinților Apostolici*, Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2019, pp. 231-236.

¹⁴ Giovanni Reale, op. cit., pp. 461-471.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 476.

After the death of the body, the soul will become animus again and will go to live in places close to the moon, where it will wait for a new conflagration, so that it can be reborn completely. We can observe in Posidonius' thinking the achievement of philosophical syncretism, in which ideas from Stoicism, Platonism, and Pythagoreanism are mixed with regard to the soul. He travelled extensively in the East and West, being considered by some to be the greatest explorer of Antiquity. Posidonius thus traveled to Asia Minor, Palestine, Egypt, Italy, Gaul and Spain. Also, he was a tireless and unusual researcher in the field of empirical sciences, being concerned with geography, ethnology, mathematics, astronomy, meteorology and history¹⁶. Among the philosophers, only Epicurus and Lucretius will stand out as true followers, unconditional, of the inseparable soul, because they refused any notion of a survival of the soul¹⁷.

Late Stoicism or New Roman Stoicism/Roman Neo-Stoicism. It had the most followers and admirers in Rome, both during the period of the Republic, but also during the Empire. The disappearance of the Republic, which was accompanied by the loss of the freedom of the citizen and the abolition of all public duties closely connected with civic activities, strengthened in the most sensitive minds the interest in study in general, but also in Stoic philosophy in particular. Among the representatives of this philosophical system we can mention Seneca (4 BC-64 AD), Musonius Rufus (c.30-c.101)¹⁸, Epictetus (55-135) and the emperor Marcus Aurelius (121-181). From these philosophers we have an important literary heritage that partially compensates for the loss of the works of the ancient Stoics. Thus, several letters, moral treatises, scientific works, but also a series of tragedies remained from Seneca. From Marcus Aurelius we have the writing *Thoughts to himself*, from Epictetus one has been preserved a remarkable number of lessons transposed into writing by Arrianus, and from Musonius Rufus we have some discourses, which were preserved by a certain Lucius. In the writings of the Neo-Stoics we find many

¹⁶ Ibidem, pp. 476-487.

¹⁷ Marie Hélène Congourdeau, *Embrionul și sufletul lui la sfinții Părinți și în izvoarele filozofice și medicale grecești (secolele VI î.Hr.-V d.Hr.)*, Traducere de Maria-Cornelia Ică jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2014, pp. 178-184.

¹⁸ Giovanni Reale, *Istoria filosofiei antice. Vol. 6: Scepticismul, ecletismul, neoaristotelismul și neostoicismul*, Traducere din limba italiană Cristian Șoimușan, Târgu-Lăpuș, Editura Galaxia Gutenberg, Târgu-Lăpuș, 2018, pp. 223-231.

precepts, which remind us of the evangelical precepts: the kinship of all people with the Divinity, the brotherhood of all, the necessity of forgiveness, love for our neighbor, but also for those who harm us (Reale, 2018: 195-200).

Seneca was the counselor of the emperor Nero (54-68), but because he was accused of conspiring against him, he forced him to cut his veins¹⁹. Seneca was not a thinker who created a philosophical system, because he dealt very little with logic or metaphysics. He managed to bring Stoicism as close as possible to the possibilities of practical reception of the Romans, wanting to explain the evils and at the same time proposing a remedy for them. The remedy proposed by Seneca was the acquisition of virtue, the acquisition of a certain inner independence, the disdain of wealth, but also of other illusory satisfactions. He promoted the ideals of humanity and equality, which brought him great popularity, saying that we are all members of one great body, and nature has born us brothers and given us all the same purpose. Seneca particularly emphasizes the need for a permanent self-education of man. Philosophy, understood as a norm of life, comes to the aid of this ideal of moral self-education and aims to form a personality endowed with a deep sense of justice, love and equality of all people, including slaves²⁰. In his philosophical work, Seneca pursued, with priority, the perfection of moral life and therefore it had a particularly important influence on early Christianity²¹.

The most illustrious representative of Roman Stoicism was Epictetus. He was born at Hierapolis in Phrygia²² and was the slave of Epaphroditus, who was a soldier in Nero's guard. Epaphroditus will release him and thus Epictetus will be secretary to Nero (54-68) and Domitian (81-96). Epictetus became a disciple of Musonius Rufus²³ and taught moral philosophy in Rome until 94, when the emperor Domitian expelled the philosophers from Rome. Exiled to Nicopolis²⁴, Epictetus founded a

¹⁹ *Istoria bisericească universală*, op. cit., p. 57.

²⁰ Giovanni Reale, op. cit., pp. 195-200.

²¹ Marius Telea, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

²² Phrygia/Phrygia is an ancient historical region in the west-central part of Asia Minor in Asiatic Turkey. In Phrygia there was also the Gordian Knot, which in 333 BC it will be cut by Alexander the Macedon (356-323 BC).

²³ Gaius Musonius Rufus was a Roman Stoic philosopher and taught philosophy in Rome. He gave moral lectures in Greek and Latin.

²⁴ Nicopolis is the city of Actia Nicopolis in Epirus in Greece. It was founded by Octavian Augustus in 31 BC. in commemoration of his victory over Mark Antony and Cleopatra.

famous school of philosophy, where he had outstanding disciples. Flavius Arrianus²⁵ (92-175) stood out among them, and thanks to him the teachings of Epictetus reached us. Arrian collected the lectures of Epictetus and published them in eight books under the title *Manual* and some *Conversations*. Of these, only four have survived to this day.

Epictetus was a philosopher who did not launch into theoretical speculations and therefore his philosophical doctrine is of practical morality. So he emphasizes the idea that philosophy has only one goal, to make man better. Epictetus believes that all human passions are a disease of the soul, and our freedom means accepting events as a necessity. Freedom consists in the exercise of what lies within man's power, but also of his inner attitudes such as opinion, feeling, desire and aversion. He gives priority only to things that pertain to human intelligence and will, because the others, like disease, wealth, and good reputation, should leave man indifferent. In this regard, every man should acquire self-control, but also perfect self-control in the face of all daily difficulties. Epictetus places great emphasis on self-control: "Endure and refrain", because it is the only one that brings happiness²⁶. He condemns yielding to lust and passions, but also the ambiguous attitude, which is dictated by instincts and does not lead a life in accordance with human reason. The only criterion of truth and good is sensation²⁷.

The goal that Epictetus proposed in his teachings was aimed at stimulating the moral personality of man through a perfect domination of his physical condition, but above all perfection and closeness to God, to whom we are permanently linked by our rational essence. In this respect, we can affirm with certainty that Epictetus is the most illustrious representative of Roman Stoicism²⁸.

The writings of Epictetus exerted a major influence on the emperor Marcus Aurelius (161-180), who managed to fuse in his work the rigor of Stoic morality with the severity of ancient Roman morals. In his work entitled *To Myself*, written in the form of musings in Greek, he talks about universal order and a rational providence, but also about the need for man's self-improvement. It emphasizes the strength of

²⁵ Flavius Arrianus Xenophon lived approximately between 86-160. He was born in Nicomedia (today the city of Izmit in Turkey), the capital of the province of Bithynia. Xenophon was a Greek historian, military commander and philosopher. He died in Athens.

²⁶ Marius Telea, op. cit., pp. 120.

²⁷ *Istoria bisericească universală*, op. cit., p. 58.

²⁸ Giovanni Reale, op. cit., pp. 233-257.

soul that man must have in order to be able to overcome the difficulties of life, about the contempt of vain goods, the duty that people have to love each other, as well as about the obligation to fulfill the tasks fixed by providence²⁹. Marcus Aurelius believes that the human intellect is a part of the divine intelligence. That's why death is as natural as birth and that's why we shouldn't be afraid of it³⁰. Seneca, Epictetus, but also the emperor Marcus Aurelius were the most important philosophers of Roman Stoicism³¹. Through Marcus Aurelius, Stoicism experienced its greatest triumph, and after his death experienced its own decline, disappearing in the 3rd century³².

Epicureanism was another philosophical current, which was widely spread in the Roman world. The founder of this philosophical movement was Epicurus, who was born around 341 BC. in the island of Samos and lived until 270 BC, when he dies in Athens³³.

Epicurus was considered a disciple of the philosopher Democritus³⁴, but within his philosophical system, he diverges from him in several points. It retains the essential part of Democritus' philosophical system. Thus, the soul is a body that has subtle atoms in its composition. They are dissipated through the matter that makes up the body. Epicurus wants to specify what the internal composition consists of, which makes up this subtle body. He says that the soul is not indistinctly composed of spherical atoms, for it is made up of several elements such as: breath, heat, but also a "nameless element" which is more intimately mixed than the rest with dense body. Epicurus will introduce a distinction between the two parts of the soul, the rational part (logikon) and the irrational part (alogon), which are united but at the same time distinct. Therefore, the soul, like the other elements in the conglomerate, is not eternal, but mortal. This consequence necessarily follows from the system's materialistic

²⁹ Marius Telea, op. cit., p. 120.

³⁰ Ovidiu Drimba, *Istoria culturii și civilizației* II, Editura SAECULUM I.O., București, 2013, pp. 325-327.

³¹ Călin Ioan Dușe, op. cit., pp. 236-240.

³² Giovanni Reale, op. cit., pp. 259-284.

³³ Giovanni Reale, *Istoria filosofiei antice. Vol. 5: Cinismul, epicureismul și stoicismul*, op. cit., p. 173.

³⁴ Democritus lived approximately between 460-360 BC. and was the representative of the atomistic philosophical system. According to this philosophical system, at the base of the world, there are atoms. These are solid, invisible, imperceptible, uncreated and eternal particles that are in continuous motion. From the combination of atoms are born all the things that make up the universe, both material bodies and the human soul.

premises³⁵. Epicureanism was based on the pursuit of happiness and wisdom, with the ultimate goal of ataraxia, which was a state of absolute stillness of mind. One of the aims pursued by this philosophical system was the avoidance of suffering. This could be achieved by removing the sources of pleasures, which are neither natural nor necessary³⁶.

In Rome, Epicureanism found its second homeland, thanks to the merits of the poet Lucretius (94-55 BC). He knew how to translate the teachings of Epicurus into verses of a high and moving poetic thrill. So, the philosophy of Epicurus was taken up and transmitted to the Roman world by the poet Lucretius in his poem *De rerum natura* (On the nature of things). It was written in Latin and is the greatest philosophical poem of all time. Because the fear of death was considered the source of all evil, this poem is an exhortation, through which Lucretius wants to banish the fear of death. For this he describes the true nature of the soul in the third book of his poem. Lucretius will resume the distinction that Epicurus made between the part rational (logikon) and irrational (alogon) part of the soul, but he will insist on their unity. Thus, in the Lucretian conception, the two form a single substance, *unam naturam*, the *animus* being in the center of the chest, and the *anima* being present in the whole body. The two are corporeal in nature, being made up of tiny atoms that are smooth and mobile. They have a common substance, which is not simple, being composed of breath, heat, and air, but also a fourth substance. It is "nameless" being hidden within us and constituting "the soul of our soul". The Animus is mortal, having the role of keeping the "gates of life closed" and preventing the soul from spilling out. The soul together with the spirit is born at once with the body and dissipates at the same time with it. So Lucretius says that if the soul disappears at the same time as the body, like smoke, or like the contents of a broken vessel, it follows that all fear after death is useless. This, because nothing follows after death³⁷. Thus, he who has known how to live well, when the hour of death comes he is not gripped by remorse, because he gets up and leaves like a guest fed up from a feast. But whoever did not know how to live well, there is no point in continuing to live, because if he does, he will continue to harm himself by living in this way. In both cases, death is not an evil.

³⁵ Giovanni Reale, op. cit., pp. 173-284.

³⁶ *Istoria bisericească universală*, op. cit., pp. 57-58.

³⁷ Marie Hélène Congourdeau, op. cit., pp. 166-167.

Although it was considered a philosophy of pleasure, Epicureanism did not emphasize fleeting pleasures, but only those that lasted a lifetime, being the result of an inner peace. The only lasting pleasures were physical health and peace of mind. The gods did not concern themselves with the well-being of the world and the happiness of man, because they were as if non-existent and thus denied the divine providence, promoting religious indifference, which was extended to atheism³⁸. Epicureanism did not talk about sin, universal judgment, or life after death³⁹. In Epicurus, but also in Lucretius, evil is hidden and death is denied. Hence the great dilemma: as long as you exist, death does not exist, and when death exists, you no longer exist⁴⁰.

The success enjoyed by Stoicism and Epicureanism in the Roman world is mainly due to the affinities these doctrines had with the character and life conception of the Romans, but also with their preference for eclecticism (the lack of original ideas and the ability to choose from several systems of thought what is best)⁴¹, a way that corresponded to their eminently practical spirit⁴².

Skepticism was another philosophical current, which managed to occupy a rather important place in Roman society. This philosophical trend comes from the Greek term *skepsis*, which means research, doubt, doubt. The father of this philosophical system was Pyrrhon of Elea/Elis/Ilia, who lived between 365/360-275/270 BC. He began to spread a new teaching after 323 BC, thus giving birth to a movement of thought, which saw an important development within the ancient world. So Pyrrhon will give a new way of thinking and a new spiritual attitude, which in the history of ideas in the Western world will remain as fixed points of reference. Three important factors influenced the development of this philosophical system: 1 Pyrrhon's participation alongside Alexander Macedon/the Great (356-323 BC) in the great expedition to conquer the East and revolutionizing the ancient way of conceiving political and ideological life; 2 the meeting with the East, but especially with the gymnosophists. These were a kind of sages from India who led a monastic

³⁸ Călin Ioan Dușe, op. cit., pp. 240-242.

³⁹ Nicolae Chifăr, op. cit., p. 23.

⁴⁰ Giovanni Reale, pp. 285-320.

⁴¹ Marius Telea, op. cit., p. 121.

⁴² Ovidiu Drimba, op. cit., p. 328.

life, oriented towards overcoming every human need, being devoted to renunciation of the things of this world and focused on attaining the state of impassivity; 3 the birth in Pyrrhon's mind of a new vision of life *at the level of emotional intuition*. Thus, Pyrrhon borrowed the conceptual tools used for its formulation from the Greek Philosophical Schools, especially from the Atomists and the Megarics. Therefore, Pyrrhon was able to borrow from atomism and megarism a series of concepts and ideas, which put at the service of that new intuition about the meaning of life and things, acquired and consolidated during the expedition of Alexander the Macedon/the Great, was the basis the emergence of his skepticism⁴³.

Pyrrhon also had other followers, among whom we mention: Arkesilas/Arcesilas of Pitane (315-240 BC) and Aenesidemus of Knossos (ca. 80-10 BC). They affirmed that all doctrines and efforts to know are false, devoting themselves to a self-limiting and practical epistemology. In this regard, it is not what is true that determines human actions, but what is probable, since no judgment about truth is final⁴⁴.

According to this philosophical system, we cannot obtain certain knowledge of how things actually are. Pyrrhon will recommend the suspension of judgment, but without abandoning the investigation of the objects of sensible or intellectual knowledge of beliefs and practice. Thus, according to their doctrine, man is incapable of having any certainty. In order for the human being to free himself from these delusive certainties upon which his state of happiness or unhappiness depended, he will have to maintain this suspension of judgment. Also, the man will have to be dispossessed of every opinion, because in this way, he will be able to distance himself from every cause that brings him anxiety.

Within his philosophical system, the skeptics believed that the nature of things could not remain hidden. Therefore, the only criterion at our disposal is the phenomenon that corresponds to the way we think we feel and imagine the object. Thus, one might think that skepticism is a sleep of reason, but it is not so, because it is an examination of all knowledge by reason, which is animated by an ideal of equalization and a lack of differentiation of our representations. From a moral point of view, skepticism unfortunately promoted vice and immorality, which were carried

⁴³ Giovanni Reale, *Istoria filosofiei antice. Vol. 6: Scepticismul, ecletismul, neoaristotelismul și neostoicismul*, op. cit., p. 328.

⁴⁴ *Istoria bisericească universală*, op. cit., p. 58.

to excess⁴⁵. Skepticism, which would be promoted by the New Academy of Carneades (215-129 BC) believed that things were unknowable. Thus, happiness would consist in serenity (*ataraxia*) and impassiveness (*apathy*), which could be obtained by refraining from any kind of affirmations⁴⁶. Carneade's method mainly followed two major paths. Thus, according to the dialectical procedure, which was adopted by Arcesilas, he sought to reduce his opponents to absurdity. For this, Carneade used elements taken from their thinking, in a very skillful game of counterposing them from the inside. On the other hand, he used the sophistic procedure in use at the time, that of counterbalancing opposing theses and reasons, or even taken from opposing systems.

Carneade criticized all the elements that articulated the system of thought of Chrysippus/Chrysippos and Stoicism, starting with logic, physics and ethics. In logic, he criticized the doctrine of cataleptic representation, the method of demonstration in the Stoics, and their dialectic. In physics, he particularly criticized the part related to the existence of the Divinity, its nature, polytheism, the doctrine of Providence, the belief in mantics and the doctrine of destiny. From ethics, Chrysippus criticized its foundation, but also the doctrine of the supreme good and justice⁴⁷.

In Rome, one of the representatives of skepticism was Marcus Vispasianus Agrippa (62 BC-12 AD). He was a politician and general who played a decisive role in the Battle of Actium in 31 BC. between Mark Antony, Cleopatra VII and Octavian Augustus. Agrippa was also one of the best friends and collaborators of the emperor Octavian Augustus.

Cicero (106-43 BC) through his vast erudition, but also through his immense work, was the one who managed to combine elements taken from different systems of thought. As a young man he listened to the lectures of the Epicurean Phaedrus, and later to those of Zeno, another Epicurean. He followed the lessons of the stoic Diodotos and knew Panitios' teachings very well. Cicero also had a close friendship with Posidonius and was decisively influenced by Philo of Larissa. For a certain period, he listened to the lectures of Antiochus of Ascalon, read Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, but also a series of philosophers from the old Academy and the Peripatetic

⁴⁵ Nicolae Chifăr, op. cit., p. 23.

⁴⁶ Pr. Prof. Dr. Vasile Muntean, *Istoria Creștină generală Volumul I (ab initio-1054)*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2008, p. 48.

⁴⁷ Giovanni Reale, op. cit., pp. 61-71.

School. However, Cicero always had as a unit of measure the philosophy of the time. From all these philosophers, he took over and sought confirmation regarding certain issues, except perhaps Epicureanism, against which he conducted fierce polemics⁴⁸.

Through his writings, he succeeded in bringing and propagating Greek philosophical themes to the Latin world. At the same time, he managed to convince the Latins of the great educational and practical importance of philosophy. Cicero also has the great merit of having given Greek terminology Latin equivalents, which have been preserved to this day⁴⁹. In addition to his numerous works in various fields, Cicero wrote in a clear and refined style important works of moral philosophy, among which stand out: *On duties*, *On friendship*, *On old age*, *On the supreme good and the supreme evil*. In this treatise, written in the form of a dialogue, the interlocutors present and discuss the conceptions of the Epicurean, Stoic, Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies about the ultimate good, which can bring people happiness. The same method is used in *On the Nature of the Gods*, where Cicero is a follower of Stoic philosophy. This work will exert a great influence on ancient writers, but also on Christian writers. In the writing *On Consolation*, one feels the Stoic influence in his thinking, when he talks about the benefits that philosophy can bring, when it is based on the belief in the immortality of the soul.

Cicero tries to make a synthesis between the Greek speculative spirit and the practical way of thinking of the Romans, in the moral philosophy treatise *On Duties*. Cicero will also try in *Tusculaneum* to prove that the real evil that injures man and stirs his anxiety is the fear of death and not death itself. This because reason can overcome or at least alleviate any pain. Philosophy can be that tool which calms and tempers the passions, but at the same time it is also a medicine for the human soul. Therefore, man will have to remain sober and modest, because virtue is that which is sufficient to ensure his happiness.

From Cicero's work we will be able to see that his entire thinking was permeated by a strong civic feeling, wanting to transmit his readers a serenity and moral energy of a stoic nature⁵⁰. It will find a wide echo in the Roman world, but also later over the centuries (Drimba, 2013: 328-330). So Cicero's major contribution lies in the spread and popularization of ancient culture, playing an essential role in the

⁴⁸ Giovanni Reale, op. cit., pp. 97-99.

⁴⁹ Marius Telea, op. cit., p. 121.

⁵⁰ Călin Ioan Dușe, op. cit., pp. 242-244.

spiritual history of the West. No Greek would have been able to spread Greek thought in the world, as Cicero did⁵¹.

Conclusions

From what was presented above we could see that the Romans, even if they were a practical people throughout their history, accepted the influence of the Greeks in the field of philosophy.

Of the philosophical currents, Stoicism was the most widespread and influential in the Roman Empire, until Christianity became the state religion. Thus, late Stoicism or the new Roman Stoicism/ Roman neo-Stoicism had the most followers and admirers in Rome, both in the period of the Republic, but also in that of the Empire. This was embraced by the Romans, because it was much more ethical, less speculative, but also more syncretistic. Emperor Marcus Aurelius managed to fuse in his work the rigor of Stoic morality with the severity of ancient Roman morals. The originality of Stoic thought found a wide echo within Greco-Roman society, thus facilitating the adoption of Christianity. Through Marcus Aurelius, Stoicism experienced its greatest triumph, and after his death it experienced its own decline, disappearing in the 3rd century.

Epicureanism was also widely spread in the Roman world. Thus, in Rome, it found its second homeland, thanks to the merits of the poet Lucretius, who knew how to transpose the teachings of Epicurus into verses of a high and moving poetic thrill. It was written in Latin and is the greatest philosophical poem of all time.

Skepticism was another philosophical current, which managed to occupy a rather important place in Roman society. Cicero through his vast erudition, but also through his immense work, managed to combine elements taken from different systems of thought. Thus, through his writings, he succeeded in bringing and propagating Greek philosophical themes to the Latin world. At the same time, he managed to convince the Latins of the great educational and practical importance of philosophy. Cicero also has the great merit of having given Greek terminology Latin equivalents, which have been preserved to this day.

⁵¹ Giovanni Reale, op. cit., pp. 99-112.