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## UNIT 3 HELLENISM

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### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this unit, we present the basic material required for an understanding of Hellenistic Philosophies. This includes the main features of the philosophical trends that came after the golden age in ancient Greek philosophy. The golden age is known also as the classic or Hellenic period. The main currents of thought during this period are stoicism, Epicureanism and Skepticism, with which some of the older currents of thought intermingle.

Note: Most dates are approximate. Dates are written backwards, w.g.99-55, refer to BC.

After completing this study, the student must be able to:

- outline the doctrines of the various trends followed by philosophers during Hellenistic period;
- illustrate the similarities and differences between Stoicism and Epicureanism;
- critically evaluate at least some of the theories and doctrines; and
- acquaint themselves with the most outstanding figures and trend-setters.

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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We are dealing here with what is known as Hellenistic Philosophy because it corresponds roughly to the Hellenistic period in Greek history. The Hellenistic period in Greek history is ushered in by the conquests of Alexander the Great, whom, for a while, Aristotle had been trying to tutor. Till then, Greece had been divided into many number of city states, each with its own autonomy in matters of civil and military. Some were democratic, others aristocratic or oligarchic. But they were all Hellenes, which was another name for Greeks. It was during the Hellenic period that the great Socrates, Plato and Aristotle flourished. Greek or Hellenic culture was more or less restricted to Greece and its colonies.

After Alexander the Great deprived these city states of their autonomy and independence, and welded them into his empire which extended to the Middle East far beyond the shores of Greece, Greek culture spread to Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and all around the Eastern Mediterranean.

This new phase of Greek history is known as the Hellenistic (or all Greek) period. Greek culture became widespread during this period in the Mediterranean world. Politically, the period begins with the death of Alexander in 323 BC and ends with the beginning of the reign of Augustus in 30 BC, around which time the Romans completed the process of their conquest of Greece.

Though the history of philosophy has to take general chronology into account, let us not forget that ideas and currents of thought are not born and do not die like kings and emperors nor do they change, or rise and fall with political regimes. Pre-Hellenistic philosophies will influence Hellenistic currents at some stage or other of their formation. For instance, the Cynics, the Cyrenaics, the Academy of Plato, the Peripatetics, the Pythagoreans, and others, are still alive and active during the Hellenistic.

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## 3.2 STOICISM

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Stoicism was one of the three principle systems of Hellenistic philosophy. Its beginnings were in Athens, during the life-time of Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum. It survived the conquest of Greece by the Romans in the second century, migrated to Rome and other regions, and influenced the thought of at least one Roman emperor in the second century of the Christian era.

### ZENO, THE FOUNDER (334-262)

Stoicism derives its name from "*Stoa poikile*" or painted colonnade, in the Athenian market-place where Zeno of Citium and his companions, the Zenonians, used to meet and discuss the meaning of life and human existence. Zeno, who had studied under Crates, the Cynic, had absorbed some of the ideas of Socrates, about whom he had read in the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon. Socrates became the hero of Zeno.

The Cynics in the previous century had been among the minor Socratics who made a distinction between "nature" and convention". "Nature" was the home of plants and minerals, animals in the forests, and birds in the air, and fish in the seas - under skies and stars. "Convention" was man-made laws and law-courts, and other products of human agreement - merely conventional matters.

Zeno, however, in the true spirit of philosophy, did not follow the Cynics nor Socrates blindly. Human beings must indeed follow nature, but not in the way that animals do. For human beings to act in accordance with nature, they must act in accordance with reason. To act in accord with reason brings virtue and happiness.

### LOGIC AND EPISTEMOLOGY

The English word "logic" comes from the Greek "Logos" which was so important and central in Stoic thought. Logos, translated in Latin as Ratio and in English, as Reason, was also their word for God.

Human reason was a spark of that Reason. Human reason undergoes a process of growth and development. Initially, the soul is a *tabula rasa* of blank board or slate,

on which through sensations, impressions are received of individual objects. It is the impressions that we know, rather than the objects themselves.

These particular impressions are progressively generalized as the person's reason reaches maturity when she or he is about fourteen. Progressive generalization leads to scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge needs some criterion of truth. Clarity of impression itself generating indubitable conviction can be the criterion of truth. Some Stoics tried to design arguments, which, irrespective of their contents would lead to true conclusions.

To the conceptual or term-centered logic of Aristotle, they preferred conditional propositional syllogisms of the type:

If p, then q     - If he is human, he is mortal.

But: P             - He is human

Therefore: q.     - So: He is mortal.

This type of Stoic logic was a forerunner of today's symbolic logic.

## **PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE**

For their understanding of "nature", the Stoics turned chiefly to the pre-Socratic, Heraclitus of Ephesus, for whom Fire was the principal element, and all natural reality through all its changes was governed by the Logos.

The Stoics, of course, did not adopt Heraclitean views without adapting them. They observed how wonderfully nature organizes the elements, and arranges them, and how well she plans her products, so that they can be useful and beneficial to human beings. This evidence led them to conclude that there is a Logos or Reason or Law immanent in Nature - and that is God, Who the active principle constantly is working on matter, which is the passive principle. This is the law of Nature, which all must obey. Zeno, however, could not think of God as spiritual but seems to have considered Him as subtly material. God or "Logos" or Reason is considered the Soul of the universe, which is governed by His infinitely good Providence. Hence, Stoicism has fostered an optimistic approach to human existence. However, the theory of recurrence of worlds and conflagrations, with each individual repeating his/her previous performance in each existence suggests that some Stoics believe in Fate rather than Providence.

Humans while being microcosms, are considered parts of the material universe which is characterized by cyclic recurrence and ends in a universal conflagration. Human souls also seem to perish in the universal conflagration, since souls also are thought to be made of some warm, breathy, material stuff.

The Stoics maintain that the Logos imposes laws on nature, and these laws impose necessity on nature. They don't see incompatibility between this determinism in nature, on one hand, and ethical freedom and responsibility, on the other. Humans are free to assent to, or to refuse the route planned by nature.

## **IDEA OF GOD**

As already explained above, the Stoics thought of God as the inner, immanent, benevolent principle designing and governing Nature's products and performances for the benefit of mankind.

Cleanthes (c. 331-229) the successor of Zeno and second head of the school, is famous for his Hymn to Zeus which begins with the lines:

O God most glorious called by many a name

Nature's great King, through endless years the same ...

This God was an ethereal fiery vapour, called Logos in which the forms of all individuals to be were contained. They were called rational or logical seeds. From that fire came the air, followed by water, part of which turned into earth, and another part, into the elemental earthly fire. In human beings they were sparks of the divine. The Stoics took for granted the God and the soul should be corporeal because they had material, physical, corporeal effects. Moreover, the Stoics believed that only bodies can "exist".

Chrysippus (c. 279-209), third head of the school, took up the challenge of solving the problem of evil. He argued that imperfections of particulars would contribute to the perfection of the whole. Another reason he gave was that if one of two contraries is removed, both are lost. It is natural that where there is possibility for pleasure, there should be possibility for pain. A toothache may be painful, but isn't it good to be warned before the tooth is decayed?

## STOIC ETHICS

Ethics is the most important focus of Stoic philosophy which aims at bringing into the individual human soul, the peace and harmony, order and beauty, regularity and constancy that is apparent in the cosmos. This perfect state is achieved through apatheia or apathy which is perfect passionless-ness.

Zeno had earlier been influenced by the Cynics, whose principle was live according to nature. Life according to nature, became also the aim of Stoicism. However, the meaning given to these words was entirely different. For the Cynics, like Diogenes of Sinope, life according to nature, was life according to senses and instincts. For the Stoics, living according to nature meant life according to reason. So, whereas the Cynics seem to have thought of animal "nature", the Stoics referred to human nature. Whereas the Cynics thought of natural as opposed to artificial and conventional, the Stoics thought of natural as rational. Moreover, by being rational, human beings are obedient to Cosmic Reason or Logos.

By nature human beings are duty-bound to love themselves; and since they are social, self-love extends itself to their families and friends; and finally to slaves, to enemies and to all mankind. Stoic ethics favours cosmopolitanism. Stoics claim to be citizens of the world.

It is behaviour in accordance with human nature that is important for human happiness, and this behaviour is to be interwoven with the routine of daily duties: respect for parents, faithfulness to friends, healthy patriotism, constancy, consistency, fortitude.

Zeno had laid the foundations of Stoic ethics according to which the four basic virtues are: prudence, which includes sound judgment; justice, which respects the rights of others; temperance or self-control, which fosters self-control and fortitude which is the ability to endure.

These virtues stand or fall together: the possession of all. Likewise, a person who has one vice is likely to have all the vices.

The question might arise: how can a human being really practice virtue, if he is merely a part of nature, a mere cog in the cosmic machine? Notwithstanding the determinism in nature, Stoics maintain that freedom of choice is possible. Indeed Zeno emphasizes that a man is master of his destiny and can do whatever he chooses with his life. True, like everything else in nature, choice too is caused. But the act of choosing is its own cause.

### **OUTSTANDING REPRESENTATIVES**

Historically, the Stoic movement is divided into the (i) early (ii) middle, and (iii) later Stoa. The chief representatives of the early Stoa are Zeno, Cleanthes and Chrysippus whose basic views have been set forth above. They were centered in Athens and emphasized the importance of apatheia or passionlessness.

The Middle Stoa does not take that apatheia so seriously. The chief representatives of this period are Panaetius of Rhodes (c.185-110) and his disciple, Poseidonius of Apamea (c. 135-51). The former was the last head of the school at Athens; the latter taught at Rhodes. Both favoured the importing of pre-Stoic ideas into Stoicism. Both had great admiration for Plato, and absorbed some of his ideas into their own system.

Middle Stoicism- the Stoicism of especially the second and first centuries BC - became a bridge between early Greek Stoicism and the later Roman Stoicism that followed. Panaetius and Poseidonius tended, as we have seen to eclecticism, the tendency to choose from other schools or systems, what appeals to one's own common sense. Cicero, who had heard the lectures of Poseidonius, was an eclectic.

Later Stoicism - which is part of Roman philosophy — is represented chiefly by Romans rather than by Greeks. Seneca of Cordoba (d.65 A.D) was a wealthy and influential courtier who was for a time, the tutor of the Roman emperor, Nero.

For Seneca, philosophy was the science and art of living according to nature. This is the same as virtuous living. Virtue is good; vice is evil; everything else is indifferent. He noted the struggle between reason and the passions; he noted also the freedom of the will. He believed God would help those who help themselves. He believed also, unlike the early stoics, that God transcended matter.

Epictetus of Hierapolis (c.50-138) had once been the slave of one of the bodyguard of Nero, who, after being set free, founded a school in Nicopolis and lectured there. He taught that regular examination of conscience would help people to bring their passions under the government of reason. People should also get a correct view about the nature of the gods; and then obey them willingly.

Marcus Aurelius, Roman emperor from 161 to 180, was also a Stoic philosopher, who insisted on the forgiveness of enemies. Just as eyes and ears are find contentment in seeing and hearing, human beings should find contentment in being kind to others, since that is what they were made for.

### **CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

The Stoic philosophy of nature, with God as part of nature, and man as part of nature, can be criticized on many counts, as the subsequent history of philosophy will testify.

Some of the contemporary skeptics raised objections against them which students of philosophy must consider and evaluate. One general label applied to them categorized them as dogmatists.

However, Stoic ethics has been influential and also some of its terminology. The Influence of Stoicism was quite remarkable. Since Stoic ideas were scattered abroad all around the Mediterranean, it is not surprising to find their terms adopted by followers of other systems, and believers in other doctrines.

Note: similarity, however, does not necessarily show dependence. Even before the Stoics, the term was central to the thought of Heraclitus.

Philo of Alexandria I (20 BC=40 AD), a Jewish, Hellenistic philosopher, was the first known scholar to attempt a harmonization of Greek philosophy with the Bible. He considered the Logos an intermediary between God and the world.

But Christians gave to the word Logos a radically new meaning. St. Paul himself met Stoics and Epicureans in the Areopagus (Acts, 17). He sometimes seems to use terms used by the Stoics, and name virtues recommended by the Stoics.

St. John's Gospel in its very first lines says: In the beginning was the Logos; and the Logos was with God; and the Logos was God." This statement, using a term that is central to Stoicism, has quite another meaning in Christianity. St. Justin, Martyr who had studied something of Stoicism before his conversion to Christ, claimed without hesitation, basing himself on John 1, 9 that the true Logos illumined also the minds of philosophers.

Early Church Fathers, who seem to have borrowed some ideas from the Stoics, are Clement of Alexandria, Athenagoras, Irenaeus, and others, among whom was Tertullian. To whom is attributed the saying: Anima humana naturaliter Christiana or The human soul is naturally Christian.

When the Discourses of Epictetus were re-discovered and translated in the fifteenth century, Stoicism won more admirers during the Renaissance and later.

### Check Your Progress I

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Discuss the Logic and Epistemology of Zeno.

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2) What is Stoics' law of nature?

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3) Explain Stoic's ethical principles.

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### 3.3 EPICUREANISM

The goal of the Epicureans, like that of the Stoics, was peace of mind. They, too, made a tripartite division of philosophy: epistemology or logic, philosophy of nature, ethics. The means, however, appear different.

#### EPICURUS, THE FOUNDER

Epicurus, born at Samos in 342, having heard Platonist and Democritean lectures, came to Athens, first for military service, and then settled there, and opened a school there in his garden in 306. In his life-time, his school was known as the School of the Garden; later it was called Epicureanism.

Epicurus was a prolific writer and is said to have written 300 books, but practically nothing is extant, apart from two letters and a few fragments. It is from these and from other surviving works that historians manage to get an idea of the philosophies of this period.

Epicurus was highly honoured in his life-time, and considered almost divine; hence, few of his disciples dared to question him, or to depart from orthodoxy. He continued as head of his school, till his death in 270.

#### THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

What is called the canon or canonic deals with the theory of knowledge, or doctrine of truth. The first principle of Epicurean epistemology is that all and their representations sensations are true. Errors begin to be committed at the levels further from sensations, i.e. at the levels of propositions and judgments.

Repeated experiences engender "anticipation". Repeated anticipations are equivalent to general concepts. In this way, Epicurus invents a theory of universals distinct from those of Plato and Aristotle. This theory will later be known as nominalism.

Similarly, feelings are the criteria for conduct. Pleasure is good; pain is bad. Sensations therefore, and feelings are the criteria of truth.

#### PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE

People should study nature and the universe with a view to acquire peace of soul. In Democritean atomism, Epicurus found a natural philosophy that - with a few modifications - would fit in well with his ethical views. Physical reality consists ultimately of atoms and the void. Showers of atoms coming down through space sometimes collide with one another, or get hooked on to one another and form bodies and objects, and also souls — since nothing is spiritual at least on earth. The atoms are characterized by weight, shape or form, size and they are moved by blind mechanistic forces which bring about effects without any intended purpose. Epicureans speak

of the possibility of a “swerve” because they wish to avoid complete determinism and make room for free choice and also for change and evolution in nature, since there are no governing principles.

The death of living things is explained by the dissolution of bodies and their return of the compounds into their constituent atoms. That’s why human beings should not fear death. “When death is there, you are not there; when death is there, you are not there.”

## **IDEA OF GOD**

Epicurus seems to have treated belief in polytheism rather casually, as superstition. He did not deny explicitly their existence, but used the popular anthropomorphic beliefs to get across his own ideas. Gods are supposed to have all they want. Hence, they have happiness. Mortals should therefore imitate them.

## **ETHICS**

What is the meaning of human life and the goal of existence? Good is to be done and evil avoided. The greatest good is pleasure; the greatest evil is pain. All beings seek pleasure: animals seek pleasure, and so do children. Before Epicurus, the Cyrenaics, under the leadership of Antisthenes had maintained that pleasure was the goal of human life; but they had been too sensual. Epicurus adds a bit of intellectualism to the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. He invites his disciples to look at things more holistically, not just at the here and now. A long-range view is to be taken. There’s no fun in enjoying for a day and suffering for a life-time. There is no fun in giving pleasure to the body, if that causes pain or shame to one’s mind. Pleasure therefore is our natural innate goal to which all other values are subordinate, including virtue. Hence, Epicureanism is hedonistic.

Absence of pain, freedom from anxiety, tranquility of soul and friendship are – for Epicurus – the greatest joys in life. Friendship is the greatest of the joys available to human beings. Epicurus appreciates the virtues recommended by Plato and Aristotle, but those virtues are only means to the pleasures just mentioned. Health and wealth, too, are worthless if they are not used as a means to pleasure and friendship. Indeed, the Epicureans highly esteemed independence from external goods.

Mortals must imitate the immortal gods, who are not concerned at all about mortals, because such concern would disturb their happiness. Mortals should not worry about life after death, because there is no life after death. The soul does not survive the body.

## **OUTSTANDING REPRESENTATIVES**

Metrodorus of Lampsacus, a member of the original group, was elevated to special honours by the founder, who conferred on him the title of “Wise” with the authority of making authentic statements of doctrine.

Colotes of Lampsacus another immediate disciple, authored a book to explain that the teachings of other philosophers, simply “...make life impossible.”

Hermaphorus of Mytilene (d. 250 BC), successor of Epicurus as head of the school, wrote 22 “books” on Empedocles; he challenged Plato and Aristotle.

Philonides, a later member of the school, which flourished till the first century BC. could boast of being among the friends of Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria (175-164.)



Lucretius (99-55) was a Roman admirer of Epicurus and his philosophy. His poem, *De Rerum Natura* (On the Nature of Things) is considered one of the most coherent presentations of Epicurean materialism. In 7,400 lines Lucretius unfolds the chief Epicurean doctrines: the nature of reality as constituted of atoms; the theory of knowledge, as resulting from images emanating from objects, through atoms which cause sensations on meeting the atoms of the mind; and also the ethical teaching of Epicurus.

### CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The Epicureans were apparently sincere searchers for the meaning of human existence and the goal of human life. As rationalists and seekers of truth, they had established for themselves a canon to guide them as a criterion of truth. They felt compelled to resist the superstitions, and unreasonable recourse to divination and other such practices of which the Greek world was full. They rejected the fatalism to be found in some of the Stoics.

Is their emphasis on pleasure right or wrong? That depends on their meaning and intention. It appears their intention was good because by “pleasure” they clearly don’t mean sensual pleasure, as did the Cyrenaics in the preceding Hellenic period. They meant absence of pain”. Logically they would say: “Avoid those bodily pleasures that cause pain to the mind.”

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## 3.4 SKEPTICISM

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Skepticism is the third major philosophical trend prevailing during the Hellenistic period. Whereas the two previously described philosophies may be called dogmatic systems or schools, skepticism cannot afford to be dogmatic, nor can it be called one school at this period, though some leaders of Plato’s Academy did turn skeptics, as we shall see.

The skeptics, while having few teachings of their own, criticized others, especially the Stoics dogmatists who do not know that they do not know.

Historically, the Hellenistic skeptics are distinguished into two classes because of their different sources: one being Pyrrho; the other, Plato’s Academy during the Hellenistic period. The two currents will merge in the course of time.

### PYRRHONISM

Pyrrho of Elis (c. 360-270) who is said to have accompanied Alexander the Great on his campaign to India is regarded as the founder of this movement, though he may have written nothing. His disciple Timon of Phlius is the one who did the writing, some of which consists of ridiculing Homer, Hesiod and great philosophers – except, of course, his master, Pyrrho.

Influenced apparently by the Democritean theory of primary and secondary qualities, by sophist relativism, and by the Cyrenaic theory of knowledge, the Pyrrhonians denied the possibility of certainty in knowledge. Common experience tells us that people look at the same things in different ways. Contradictory opinions can be upheld with equally good arguments.

Aenesidemus of Knossos, the greatest Pyrrhonian dialectician, had, in the first century BC, drawn up a list of ten types of such contradictory or antithetical arguments.

The theoretical conclusion is that the wise man must try to withhold or suspend judgment. What about practical affairs? In practical affairs, customs and laws are to be followed.

Sextus Empiricus (c.150-210) was a medical doctor and the head of a Pyrrhonian school, who has left us the most comprehensive extant account of Greek skepticism. In his view, endless battles between dogmatists and their opponents had been disturbing people for centuries, and there was no sure criterion for deciding who was right. Reason is such a trickster. Even the syllogism cannot be trusted! Sextus thinks the syllogism is a vicious circle.

Aristotle may argue: All men are mortal

Socrates is a man;

Therefore he is mortal.

This argument is circular, says Sextus, because it presupposes what it should prove.

(i) Arguments are used to prove that one is right; (ii) other “dogmatists” become opponents and refuse to agree, insisting that the first party is wrong; Sextus calls this “antithesis”; (iii) Suspension of judgment. This is the Pyrrhonian solution. It balances the two arms of the antithesis. (iv) Peace of soul - ataraxia.

## ACADEMIC SKEPTICISM

Arcesilaus of Pitane (314-240) became head of Plato’s Academy in 265 BC. Historians, dividing the history of the Academy into three periods – Old, Middle, New – consider Arcesilaus founder of the Middle Academy.

Arcesilaus was influenced by Socrates who had sometimes posed as a skeptic, maintaining he knew nothing with certainty. Arcesilaus, going a step further said that he was not even certain about whether he knew nothing with certainty. He was also influenced by the Pyrrhonians, and joined them in criticizing the Stoics for making subjective certainty the criterion of truth. Agreeing with Plato that sense-knowledge is only opinion, Arcesilaus used dialectic to uphold suspension of judgment.

Carneades (213-128) was another leader of the Academy who opted for skepticism. His skepticism went beyond that of Arcesilaus. It is said he never accepted an invitation to dinner, because that would impede his work. Around 156 BC, he is said to have accompanied an Athenian delegation to Rome in order to appeal for the remission of some penalty. An expert in rhetoric, he made two speeches: one, praising the qualities of justice as a duty imposed by natural law; the other, proving that justice was nothing but utility.

He criticized the Stoics for making kataleptic representations criteria for truth. (These representations –according to the Stoics –were so convincing, that they could be regarded as self-authenticating.) Being subjective, how can such representations be criteria for truth?

The Stoics accused the skeptics of harming society by teaching people to suspend judgment, since some knowledge is necessary for action. Carneades replies that the skeptics are not impeding action, good works or virtue, because for practical or moral action, certainty is not necessary, probability is sufficient.

### 3.5 LET US SUM UP

Hellenistic philosophy is not one but many. It is more correct to speak of Hellenistic philosophies. The principal philosophies characteristic of the Hellenistic period are Stoicism, Epicureanism, Skepticism and Jewish Hellenistic thought. Hence, these will be the main concern of the following pages. The Stoics, Epicureans and Academic Skeptics, all had their schools in Athens till 87 BC, when the Romans attacked Athens. After this date, Hellenistic philosophers migrated to other centres, especially to Alexandria. In Alexandria, too, which had been named for Alexander the Great, there was a Jewish community that could not escape the influence of Greek culture.

Philosophers, especially in Athens, were public figures and often engaged in public debates and lively inter-school discussions. The Academic skeptics were constantly criticizing the other schools especially the Stoics. The Epicureans were a relatively private philosophic community. One common aim of these philosophies – underlying all these differences – was the attainment of “ataraxia” i.e. tranquility, happiness and peace of mind.

The skeptics did a great service to philosophy by pointing out the limits of human certainty. The word “skeptic” comes from a Greek word which means “doubt” but a doubt that spurs on to further investigation.

Some of their criticisms of the Stoics in particular and of philosophers inclined to dogmatism are quite valid. Those of their works that were re-discovered and translated in the Renaissance period, exercised enormous influence on European thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Pure skepticism, of course, which denies the possibility of all certainty, will land its followers into many self-contradictions.

#### Check Your Progress II

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What is theory of knowledge according to Epicureanism?

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2) Explain Epicureans' Philosophy of nature.

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3) Write a short note on the Ethics of Epicureans.

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### 3.6 KEY WORDS

- Impression** : Impression is the overall effect of something.
- Life** : Life is a characteristic of organisms that exhibit certain biological processes such as chemical reactions or other events that results in a transformation. Living organisms are capable of growth and reproduction, some can communicate and many can adapt to their environment through changes originating internally.
- Reason** : Reason refers to mental faculties that consciously create explanations. Such narratives are a peculiar characteristic of the way humans think about things and events - judging, predicting, concluding, generalizing, and comparing for example. A reason is an explanatory or justificatory factor. In the context of explanation, the word 'reason' can be a synonym for 'cause.' The concept 'reason' is closely related to the concepts of language and logic, as reflected in the multiple meanings of the Greek word "logos", the root of logic, which translated into Latin became "ratio" and then in French "raison," from which the English word "reason" was derived.

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### 3.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

#### Check Your Progress I

- 1) The English word "logic" comes from the Greek "Logos" which means Reason. Human reason is a spark of that Reason. Human reason undergoes a process

of development. Initially, the soul is a *tabula rasa*, on which through sensations, impressions are received of individual objects. It is the impressions that we know, rather than the objects themselves.

These particular impressions are progressively generalized as the person's reason reaches maturity. Progressive generalization leads to scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge needs some criterion of truth. Clarity of impression itself generating indubitable conviction can be the criterion of truth.

- 2) The Stoics observed how wonderfully nature organizes the elements, and arranges them, and how well she plans her products, so that they can be useful and beneficial to human beings. This evidence led them to conclude that there is a Logos or Reason or Law immanent in Nature - and that is God, Who the active principle constantly is working on matter, which is the passive principle. This is the law of Nature, which all must obey. Zeno, however, could not think of God as spiritual but seems to have considered Him as subtly material. God or "Logos" or Reason is considered the Soul of the universe, which is governed by His infinitely good Providence.
- 3) Stoic ethics aims at bringing into the individual human soul, the peace and harmony, order and beauty, regularity and constancy that is apparent in the cosmos. This perfect state is achieved through *apatheia* or apathy which is perfect passionless-ness.

Life according to nature became also the aim of Stoicism. For the Stoics, living according to nature meant life according to reason. By being rational, human beings are obedient to Cosmic Reason or Logos.

### Check Your Progress II

- 1) The first principle of Epicurean epistemology is that all and their representations sensations are true. Errors begin to be committed at the levels further from sensations, i.e. at the levels of propositions and judgments. Repeated experiences engender "anticipation". Repeated anticipations are equivalent to general concepts. This theory will later be known as nominalism.
- 2) According to Epicurus, physical reality consists ultimately of atoms and the void. Showers of atoms coming down through space sometimes collide with one another, or get hooked on to one another and form bodies and objects, and also souls. The atoms are characterized by weight, shape or form, size and they are moved by blind mechanistic forces which bring about effects without any intended purpose. Epicureans speak of the possibility of a "swerve" because they wish to avoid complete determinism and make room for free choice and also for change and evolution in nature, since there are no governing principles. The death of living things is explained by the dissolution of bodies and their return of the compounds into their constituent atoms.
- 3) The meaning of human life and the goal of existence is pleasure. The greatest good is pleasure; the greatest evil is pain. All beings seek pleasure. Epicurus adds a bit of intellectualism to the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. He says, a long-range view is to be taken. There's no fun in enjoying for a day and suffering for a life-time. There is no fun in giving pleasure to the body, if that causes pain or shame to one's mind. Pleasure therefore is out natural innate goal to which all other values are subordinate, including virtue. Hence, Epicureanism is hedonistic.