Psychological resilience: connecting contemporary psychology to ancient practical philosophy

Abstract: Over the last five decades, a substantial and increasing number of scholarly studies have appeared on the topic of resilience, but relatively little attention has been paid to the way in which it relates to a body of work in ancient Greek and Roman practical philosophy. In this article, I review contemporary research on psychological resilience alongside a discussion of ancient practical philosophy such as it was conceived of by philosophers such as Socrates, the Cynics, the Stoics and the Epicureans. I suggest that acknowledging and exploring the connections between these two fields has the potential to enrich the study both of psychological resilience and of ancient practical philosophy. Having drawn attention to a number of important points of connection, I discuss some of the theoretical implications for our current understanding of resilience, and finish by pointing towards several areas of potential interest for future exploration on this topic.

Keywords: resilience, eudaimonia, flourishing, ancient practical ethics

The study of psychological resilience has expanded significantly in recent years (Denckla et al., 2020), with a range of theoretical and empirical studies seeking to define the phenomenon and to understand how it develops (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). Whilst as yet, no universally accepted definition of resilience exists (Denckla et al., 2020), the subject has nonetheless been established as one of major theoretical and applied importance.

In the scholarly literature, it is common practice to describe the study of psychological resilience as originating with the pioneering work of figures such as Anthony, Garmezy and Rutter in the 1970s (e.g. Denckla et al., 2020; Masten, 2001; Reivich & Seligman, 2011; Richardson, 1990). Without contesting this point, I will argue in this article that many of the ideas that inform contemporary

thinking regarding psychological resilience can in fact be traced back over two-thousand years to the ideas of ancient Greek and Roman philosophers such as Socrates, Diogenes, the Stoics and the Epicureans. Whilst several important theorists and clinicians working in the fields of emotion regulation, resilience and psychopathology have made passing reference to the influence of ancient philosophical – particularly Stoic – thought on the development of their thinking (Beck et al., 1979; Lazarus, 1993; Oatley, 2004), to date, little attention has been paid to exploring these connections in full.

As such, in this article I develop an argument for the value of exploring the multiple connections between aspects of contemporary psychological work on resilience, and ancient practical philosophy. To begin, I provide a brief overview of contemporary psychological research on resilience. I then provide an overview of ancient practical philosophy, particularly as it was conceived of by philosophers such as Socrates, the Cynics, the Stoics and the Epicureans. I describe how these philosophers developed systems and techniques designed to help those who practised them insulate themselves from the ups-and-downs of life and become self-sufficient in their happiness. In this context I discuss what I have termed 'eudaimonic resilience' and suggest that it was towards this – the ability to flourish in all circumstances – that these ancient practical philosophers were striving.

In providing this overview of contemporary research on psychological resilience and ancient practical ethics, I begin to draw attention to the rich and varied connections between these fields. In addition to drawing attention to these connections, I intend here to stimulate further research on the ways in which these two fields interlink, and to point towards several specific areas I suggest may be fertile ground for future exploration. Finally, I intend through this article to contribute to the current debate regarding the nature and scope of resilience, by demonstrating how it can be framed in a well-established and much-developed philosophical tradition.

The study of resilience in contemporary psychology

Despite having become a widely researched topic in recent decades, defining resilience is notoriously difficult (Luthar et al., 2000; Windle, 2011) and a universally accepted definition continues to elude scholars (Denckla et al., 2020). Resilience emerged as a serious topic of psychological study in the last three decades of the twentieth century, as researchers sought to understand what enabled some people to achieve good outcomes despite significant adversity. In recent years, several scholars have argued that resilience is also demonstrated in the context of the quotidian challenges of everyday life (Davis, Luecken & Lemery-Chalfant, 2009), or circumstances typically considered positive, such as marriage, getting a promotion or competing in elite-level sport (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). However, the conviction that resilience relates to doing well in the context of significant adversity remains a central point of connection that runs throughout almost all definitions of the phenomenon (Denckla et al., 2020; Luthar et al., 2000; Ungar, 2021; Windle, 2011). As such, it has been suggested that resilience is perhaps best thought of as something demonstrated most clearly in the context of significant adversity, but also evidenced simply in the process of living and navigating one's way through the inevitable ups-and-downs of life (Denckla et al., 2020).

In seeking to understand what enables some people to succeed and even to thrive in the face of challenge, resilience has been described both in terms of an individual trait or characteristic (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Wagnild & Young, 1993) and a process or set of processes (Luthar et al., 2000; Masten, 2001). More recently, multi-systems perspectives on resilience have become prominent (Ungar, 2021; Masten, 2021), emphasising the way that resilience reflects the interrelations of multiple systems, co-acting and interacting to shape the extent to which a system or organism is able to cope with, bounce back from, or thrive in the face of challenge (Ungar, 2021). On this perspective, an individual's ability to continue or succeed in the face of difficulties depends not only on their individual attributes, but the interactions between the individual themselves and the many systems (family, social structure, employment setting, form of government etc.) of which they are a part.

The foundations of resilience

The study of resilience has grown in part from the universal observation that there is frequently significant variation in the ways that individuals respond to challenging circumstances (Rutter, 2006).

In what has been termed the 'first wave' of resilience research (Richardson, 2002), scholars focussed on identifying the individual and environmental factors associated with succeeding in the face of adversity. Summary lists of such factors are presented by many theorists and include (but are not limited to) factors such as good problem-solving skills, an ability to identify and regulate one's thoughts and emotions, having positive relationships with others in the community, being optimistic, benefitting from effective schools and socio-economic advantages, having a flexible and adaptive approach to new situations, and having secure attachments (e.g., Masten et al, 2009; Rutter, 2006; Werner & Smith, 1992).

In time, the emphasis turned away from simply identifying the factors associated with good or bad outcomes, and towards understanding the processes through which people develop and draw on such resources to attain positive outcomes despite adversity (Luthar et al., 2000; Rutter, 1993). Given that the extent to which someone demonstrates resilience typically varies over time and between contexts, this shift enables researchers to move away from thinking about whether specific factors are associated with good outcomes, and to consider instead how and under what circumstances they function in that way. As noted above, more recent work on resilience has also highlighted the fact that resilience is best conceptualised from a multi-systems perspective, drawing attention to the way that many co-acting systems influence the ability of an individual or organism to succeed in the face of adversity.

The process through which resilience is developed

As researchers have developed clearer understandings of the nature and benefits of resilience, interest has grown in understanding how resilience develops, and the ways in which it can be intentionally enhanced. According to many researchers, resilience develops through the way an individual copes with or responds to challenges or setbacks in life (e.g., Fredrickson & Tugade, 2007; Padesky & Monney, 2012). The concept of 'steeling' effects, discussed by Rutter and others, suggests that successful coping with stress or adversity can lead to an improved ability to deal with future threats and stressors (Rutter, 2006). Whilst it has been noted that the evidence for steeling effects in humans has been somewhat mixed (Rutter, 2012), there appears nonetheless to be widespread agreement that resilience develops more as a result of successfully meeting the challenges of life, than it does from avoiding them altogether (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013; Padesky & Mooney, 2012; Richardson, 1990; Rutter, 2006). In this regard, Richardson's widely cited Resiliency Model (Richardson et al., 1990; Richardson, 2002) conceptualises resilience as the process through which individuals develop new strengths, knowledge or resources as a result of successfully navigating through disruptive or challenging episodes in life. Central to Richardson's model is the notion that individuals adapt to the circumstances of their life and settle into what he refers to as a state of 'biopsychospiritual homeostasis'. According to the model, this state of biopsychospiritual homeostasis – a sort of 'comfort zone' in which we have adapted and become used to the circumstances of our life – is periodically destabilised by the inevitable ups-and-downs of life. A relationship breakdown, or a new promotion both disturb our functioning, forcing us to find ways to adapt to new circumstances and respond to new experiences, developing new sets of skills, resources and understanding in the process. On this perspective, the challenges, opportunities and threats that periodically force us out from our comfort zone provide us with potential opportunities for growth. As such, the process of resilience develops as we adapt and respond to events in ways that lead to new knowledge or skills, and which provide us with the resources on which we may draw in the future when faced with similar stressors.

Resilience building

Researchers in the field have long noted that understanding what enables people to thrive in the face of challenge has the potential to promote positive functioning in clinical and non-clinical populations alike. Large-scale resiliency programmes have demonstrated impressive efficacy at preventing depression (Reivich, Seligamn & McBride, 2011), and others have been developed to help promote success in high-stress fields such as elite sport (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2016). Similarly, a range of evidence-based self-help books designed to support readers in becoming more resilient have emerged (Reivich & Shatte, 2003; Robertson, 2012). Such programmes draw heavily on the key findings from resilience research introduced above; teaching people how to adopt more flexible thinking styles, to evaluate and regulate one's thinking and emotions, to be more optimistic, to build on one's existing strengths and to appraise difficulties as challenges rather than as threats (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2016; Reivich & Shatte, 2003; Reivich, Seligman & McBride, 2011; Robertson, 2012).

Resilience then has become firmly established as a topic of major theoretical and applied importance. Whilst many questions regarding its precise scope and nature remain unanswered, its malleability and its association with a range of positive outcomes make it a topic of significant interest to researchers, psychologists and the general population alike.

Practical ethics in Ancient Greek and Roman philosophy

When asked what he had gained from philosophy, the Cynic philosopher Diogenes of Sinope is alleged to have responded 'to be prepared for every fortune' (*Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 6.63). Indeed, the idea that philosophy taught one how to bear whatever came one's way and how to flourish happily as a human-being under any circumstances, is a central theme of many of the writings we have from the Classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods (Long, 1996). Seneca described Stoic philosophy as the 'teachings that bring health and conquer adversity' (*Letter 13*.1) and in the

Republic Plato's Socrates describes how the philosopher bears the challenges of life more easily than others (*Republic*, 603e). In Epicurus too, the promise of the philosophical life – open to all who take up the Epicurean system – is an untroubled happiness that could rival even that of the Gods (*Letter to Menoeceus*, 135).

One of the central, and most striking, ideas behind much Greek and Roman ethical philosophy then is the belief that our happiness depends entirely on us as individuals (Branham & Goulet-Cazé, 1996; Gill, 2014). The idea appears throughout many ancient writings and can be heard in the ideas of figures such as Socrates, (*Republic*, 2.360e - 362c), Diogenes (*Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 6.63) and Epictetus (*Handbook*, 1). For such thinkers, it was believed that the philosopher could train themself towards becoming totally self-sufficient with regards to happiness, completely impervious to the whimsical ups-and-downs of fortune.[i] Importantly, for these ancient philosophers, happiness – the word frequently used to translate the Greek term *eudaiamonia* – was not mere positive feeling. *Eudaimonia* describes a condition in which one lives fully, flourishes as a human being and enjoys an untroubled and content mindset (Long, 2002, p.193).[ii]

The path towards eudaimonia

For the likes of Socrates, the Cynics, the Stoics and the Epicureans, the primary obstacles to a happy and fulfilled life were faulty judgements (Long, 1996). Through incorrectly valuing things such as wealth or popularity, and through mistakenly fearing things such as poverty, exile or death, human beings were seen to bring much unnecessary suffering upon themselves (see for example Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* V.VI; or Socrates in Plato's *Apology* 36b-e). Philosophy – the art of reasoning and the pursuit of knowledge – was believed by these thinkers to be the subject through which we could overcome such errors, and enjoy an untroubled life of happiness as a result. Whilst these philosophers did not arrive at the same conclusions regarding the nature and form of the happy and

fulfilled life, an important point of agreement across the schools was the conviction that the individual was entirely in control of his or her own happiness (Gill, 2014; Long, 1996).

For these ancient thinkers, philosophy showed the way to happiness by using reason to help us see things as they truly are, and by changing our perspective on life through the process. Once we have learnt through philosophy that everything except moral goodness is 'indifferent' (as the Stoics insisted – see for e.g. Epictetus, *Discourses*, 2.6) or that pleasure is the ultimate goal of life (as the Epicureans maintained – see for e.g. *Letter To Menoeceus*, 129), we find that our happiness depends not on the external and ultimately uncontrollable features of life such as our material success, health or wealth. It depends rather on us; our character, the judgements we make and the things we value. Hardship, ill-health, or a frugal style of living will only stand in the way of our happiness if we judge those things to be bad. Through philosophy therefore, it was believed that one could flourish and thrive in any and all circumstances.

Despite differing opinions then regarding the manner through which this philosophical life of flourishing was achieved, the notion that the extent to which we thrive in life depends less on circumstances themselves, and more on the judgements we make about them, is an important point of agreement across many of the philosophical schools of Greece and Rome. According to these Ancient philosophers, an important consequence of this idea is the notion that happiness becomes possible in all (including even the most adverse) circumstances (see Long, 1996; Branham & Goulet-Cazé, 1996). Both the Stoics (Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, V.V) and the Epicureans (*Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 10.118) claim to be happy on the rack. Diogenes refuted the idea that being sold into slavery or driven into exile had harmed his attempts to live well (*Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 6.49), and Socrates is portrayed as facing even the impending death forced upon him by the Athenian state, with a resolute and philosophical calm (*Crito*, 43b-c).

In his *Meditations*, the Stoic Emperor Marcus Aurelius talks of retreating into himself and finding refuge in what scholars have called an 'inner citadel' (Hadot, 2001). This inner citadel is the mind of

the philosopher, fortified by the truths of philosophy and trained to judge things according to reason. From there, the philosopher was considered to be untouched by the material facts of their situation. As noted above, the Cynics too argued vehemently for the idea that nothing could disturb one who has risen above the mistaken judgements and opinions of the masses. It is in this light that modern scholars have suggested that one of the central aims of Cynic philosophy was to demonstrate "that we are so constituted by nature that happiness is possible under the most adverse conditions" (Branham & Goulet-Cazé, 1996, p.25).

Almost all the philosophers of the Hellenistic and Roman periods then shared this basic detachment from external things (Desmond, 2008, p.150). The language used to describe this idea varied between schools, but frequently returned to the same basic premise: we may have become accustomed to thinking of money as good or of ill-health as bad for example, but in fact it is only our beliefs about such things that make them appear the one or the other (e.g. Epictetus, *Handbook*, 5).

This self-sufficient conception of happiness began then with a focus on our inner worlds. Importantly however, this conception of the good life did not require the philosophers to turn away from the external world or their position in it. Though Marcus fortified his 'inner citadel', from there he worked tirelessly in his role as Emperor and leader in the battles on the Danube. Both Diogenes and Socrates took seriously their roles as social citizens (*Apology*, 31b), and Stoics spoke frequently about the importance of upholding the commitments associated with the roles they played in life as parents, citizens, wives or brothers (Epictetus, *Discourses*, 2.10.1-14). Happiness therefore required active engagement with the world and an ability to thrive in the face of life's challenges. It meant avoiding the error of thinking important things that truly aren't, as well as being able to fulfil one's duties even when doing so is at times a challenging or unpleasant thing to do (see for example Epictetus' argument for why a father must stay with and support his child through illness despite the difficulty it posed him *Discourses*, 1.11). In such a light then, the path towards eudaimonia was one

in which one worked hard on mastering one's inner realm, whilst also ensuring that such efforts supported a full and committed engagement with the world and one's place within it.

Eudaimonic resilience

In seeking to insulate *eudaimonia* from the external goods of life or the ups-and-downs of fortune, these philosophers sought ways to make happiness entirely dependent on the judgement and character of the individual. The Epicurean who understood that the greatest pleasure available was the simple pleasure of having one's basic needs and desires met, can be happy in almost any imaginable circumstance.[iii] Even in the face of relative poverty they believed, most people can be assured of having water to drink, basic food to consume, and some form of shelter from the elements.[iv] For the Cynics too, who advocated a simple and frugal life 'in accordance with nature' (Desmond, 2008), we can learn to be happy in all conceivable circumstances. Diogenes argued that the customs and beliefs of civilised society – that wealth is to be valued, that fine foods are required to satisfy our hunger, or that the satisfaction of our basic needs in public was shameful for example – have both weakened mankind and pushed happiness further out of reach. In fact, he maintained, human beings are constituted to be able to thrive in any and all circumstances, if only we can learn to shake off the corrupting beliefs of civilisation (*Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 6.38).

If happiness depends solely on the individual it was believed, then no circumstances – however adverse – can disrupt our flourishing. In this sense, I suggest that a primary goal of ancient practical ethics was what could be described as 'eudaimonic resilience'.[v] 'Eudaimonic resilience' here refers to the ability to flourish, to live fully as a human being, and to be happy in all (including the most adverse) circumstances. All of the philosophers discussed in this article were committed to the idea that the path to *eudaimonia* was through philosophy, and that those who were sufficiently committed to and competent in the practice of their ideas, could flourish in this way, regardless of the circumstances in which they found themselves.

Importantly, this resolution to make happiness independent of one's circumstances was not intended to lead to a life of passive acceptance. Whilst as we have seen, the philosophers cited in this article claimed to be happy in circumstances conventionally considered prohibitive of happiness, they were also wholly committed to proactive engagement with the world. These philosophers were committed to trying to bring about positive social change (consider Socrates in Plato's *Apology*, 30a-c), to pursuing personal interests and duties (see Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.2.11) and to acting in ways that enabled us to satisfy and enjoy our natural and necessary desires (Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*).

In making sense of this commitment towards action despite a conviction that one can live happily in any and all circumstances, the Stoics described what has come to be known as 'the reserve clause'.[vi] This idea suggests that although a fulfilled, happy and flourishing life will necessarily require purposeful action and a resolution both to successfully meet challenges and to improve circumstances, all actions should be undertaken in full recognition of the fact that we can never fully control outcomes. For the Stoic, what matters above all is the virtue of the character carrying an action out. Whilst one may seek to bring about particular outcomes therefore, one should recognise that their ability to flourish and to live fully as a human being depends more on the intentions with which they carry an action out and the way they respond to setbacks, than on whether the action brings about the intended outcome. The Stoic philosopher Antipater likened this to the task of an archer. The expert archer may practice, choose their target well, aim with precision, use the best available arrows and so on, but from the moment they release the bow, they must acknowledge that control has been relinquished (see Long & Sedley, 1987, *64F*). The wind may take the arrow off course, the target may move in an unexpected way. And so, these Stoics say, we should similarly approach tasks in life. We can (and indeed should) prepare ourselves, make our best attempts, and use the skills we have at our disposition. We should be concerned to affect positive change where we can, and do what is possible to positively influence the lives of ourselves and others. We must

always however accept that the final outcome of any action will also depend on at least some factors outside of our control.

As we have seen then, these philosophers drew on psychological observations and extended philosophical argumentation to develop systems they believed could help teach people the skills of how to flourish and thrive in all circumstances. Unlike contemporary psychologists studying resilience, these philosophers were working above all towards an *ethical* goal, one in which eudaimonia was assured through the development of one's character in accordance with the principles of a particular worldview. As such, it is clear that the goal of these philosophers was by no means identical to what psychologists today refer to as resilience. However, the emphasis on achieving positive outcomes (*eudaimonia*) in the context of all (and thus by necessity, adverse) circumstances, should make clear many of the important connections between ancient practical ethics and contemporary psychological understandings of resilience.

Philosophical training

Central to the ideas of figures like Diogenes and Epicurus was the notion that the happiness offered through philosophy was available to all. Man and woman, young and old, slave and free-man could all benefit from philosophy, if they were willing to take up the ideas of the relevant school. Despite this optimistic belief that all of humankind could learn through philosophy to live happily come what may, these philosophers recognised that the task of the philosophical way of life was a challenging one, requiring an almost ceaseless effort (see for e.g. *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 6.71; Epicurus, *Letter to Meneoceus*, 135; Epictetus, *Handbook*, 47). Culture and popular opinion have firmly embedded in our minds ideas about happiness and the good life which cannot be easily undone without repeated practise and a sort of rigorous training. The writings and sayings of the Stoic philosophers are littered with allusions to a form of philosophical training, often expressed in terms akin to the training of an athlete. 'You should learn from what the wrestling masters do'

Epictetus is reported to have said. 'The boy has taken a fall: 'Get up' he says, 'and resume the fight until you grow strong'' (*Discourses* 4.15). From such perspectives, the ups-and-downs of fortune are seen as opportunities to train oneself in the proper attitude of indifference, steeling oneself against the changing forces of fate and increasing the extent to which one is able to flourish in the context of future adversity.

The Cynics too were well known in antiquity for engaging in rigorous bodily and mental training (Desmond, 2008). Stories of Diogenes walking barefoot in the snow, rolling naked in hot sand or sleeping outdoors in a wine tub to inure his body to extreme circumstances were commonplace (e.g. *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 6.34). Similarly, stories describing the Cynic philosopher begging from statues or carrying embarrassing objects through busy marketplaces to harden himself psychologically to mockery and public disdain (*Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 6.49) demonstrated the Cynic's commitment to a sort of mental fortitude they believed would enable them to thrive and live happily in any situation. Even the Epicureans, those for whom pleasure was the goal of life, recommended practising living with little, to learn how to live happily with little when circumstance required it, and how to better enjoy luxury when one had it (*Letter to Menoeceus*, 131).

All the schools discussed here recognised that living in accordance with their philosophical principles was an often-difficult task. To the extent that 'eudaimonic resilience' could be achieved, it was done so through a sustained effort, combining philosophical and academic study, and the committed, practical application of philosophical ideas to daily life. The practising philosopher was encouraged to read and study the philosophical texts that provided the foundations for their philosophical way of life, but they were also frequently reminded that benefitting from philosophy required more than simply knowing by heart what the philosophers have said on a given topic (Epictetus, *Discourses*, 3.21.4-6). Benefitting from these ideas required actually changing one's behaviour, beliefs and way of life as a result. Importantly, figures such as Epicurus and Epictetus provided brief and memorable

expressions of their ideas, so that followers could keep such ideas ready to hand in moments when one needed them. Followers of these schools were encouraged to reflect on key ideas and meditate on central tenets of the philosophical system, to more firmly embed them into their way of thinking and behaving (e.g., Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*, 135).

All such activity was seen as an essential accompaniment to the continuous study of philosophy (Epictetus, *Discourses*, 2.9.13). The practising Stoic or Epicurean for example would read and learn the major texts of their philosophical schools and would spend many hours reciting or meditating on key principles (Sharpe & Ure, 2021). They were encouraged to discuss these ideas with others (Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*, 135), to experiment by putting ideas into practice (Seneca, *Letter 18*), and to reflect on the extent to which one had succeeded or fallen short in one's attempts to live in keeping with one's philosophical ideals (Seneca, *On Anger*, 3.36). Living well therefore required a continual and ongoing effort, fortified by the writings and ideas of the philosophers, and sustained through practical application, discussion with others, and frequent self-reflection.

Connecting contemporary psychological research on resilience and ancient practical philosophy

As can be seen from the brief sketches given above, there are a number of points of contact between contemporary research on psychological resilience, and the ideas of several important ancient Greek and Roman philosophers. These connections are significant, with common features both in terms of the goals and the means employed to reach them. As will already be apparent however, these two connected trajectories of thought are by no means identical, and any study that seeks to explore the points of connection between two bodies of work, must also carefully observe their divergences.

Firstly, the goal of ancient practical ethics relates to the achievement of eudaimonia through the ethical development of one's character. Typically, the goal of contemporary work on resilience is

more contained, seeking to promote good outcomes in a specified set of circumstances, and without necessarily being related to questions regarding the character of the individual concerned. Further, notwithstanding the controversies outlined above, resilience is today described predominantly as something which has to do not only with the attributes of an individual, but also the processes through which they make use of the resources both inside and around them, and the interaction between the systems of which they are a part (Masten, 2021). The goal of ancient practical philosophy however was more uniquely concerned with the development of the individual themselves. An important difference then can be found here in the ways in which these two bodies of work seek to enhance our ability to thrive. Whilst contemporary research on resilience emphasises not only personal strengths, thinking styles and dispositions, but social connections and the interactions between multiple systems and supports around us, the ancient philosophers focussed more exclusively on matters internal to the individual. In this way, the efforts of the ancient philosophers to develop what I have here termed 'eudaimonic resilience' align most closely with 'trait' conceptions of resilience, in which resilience has primarily to do with the attributes of an individual (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Wagnild & Young, 1993). Interestingly, this internal focus and the desire to work so centrally on one's inner world, has been singled out for criticism by some who see in the attempts of these philosophers an unhelpful and egoistic turn towards the individual, something which at its worst runs the risk of falling prey to a form of egoism concerned only with one's own inner dispositions.[vii] I consider below what impact if any such ideas may have for our contemporary thinking about resilience.

Additionally, describing positive functioning in *all* circumstances, 'eudaimonic resilience' as I have described it here does not necessarily imply significant adversity in the way that most contemporary descriptions of resilience do. In this light, one might draw parallels between the notion of 'eudaimonic resilience' and what Block and Block refer to as ego-resiliency (Block & Block, 1980). Relatedly, and as noted above, the criteria by which resilience is judged in contemporary research vary more broadly, with positive outcomes such as age-appropriate developmental milestones,

educational outcomes, the absence of psychological pathology, or success in maintaining interpersonal relationships all considered as examples of positive outcomes potentially indicative of resilience (Luthar et al., 2001).

More significant than this is the fact that this quest for an untroubled life of contentment found in the writings of the ancient philosophers was above all an *ethical* endeavour. As noted above, in the ideas of the philosophers discussed here, the goal of life is frequently expressed as a sort of self-sufficient happiness (Long, 1996, p.42-43). This happiness depends entirely on one's virtuous character and beliefs. It is untroubled by the changing and unpredictable world around it, and it is protected by the conviction to live in accordance with one's ethical principles. Such resolute and self-controlled happiness is attained through a sort of self-mastery and moral progress that places it in a significantly different sphere to that of resilience as understood by contemporary psychologists. As such, it is clear that despite notable points of theoretical overlap and the frequent cross-over of techniques and ideas, the contemporary psychologist teaching resilience, and the ancient philosopher of practical ethics, were nonetheless working in fundamentally different arenas.[viii]

Despite these important differences however, it is also clear that a great many points of contact exist between the aspirations and ideas of contemporary researchers of resilience, and those of the ancient philosophers of Greece and Rome. In keeping with the conviction of these ancient philosophers that individuals can take control of their own happiness through the sustained practice of specific cognitive[ix] and behavioural[x] practises, contemporary psychological approaches to resilience-building also begin from the position that people can learn to become more resilient through adopting changes to their habitual ways of thinking or patterns of behaving (e.g., Reivich, Seligman & McBride, 2011).

Notably, in both contemporary resilience approaches and the work of ancient practical philosophers, a central role is given to what today may be termed 'cognitive change' (Gross, 1998). Cognitive theories of emotion (Lazarus, 1993) emphasise the importance of cognitive appraisal and the idea

that emotional responses follow from the meaning an individual gives to something and the way that events or information are appraised (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Cognitive change interventions (Gross, 1998; Quoidbach, Mikolajczak & Gross, 2015) build on this by emphasising the potential to regulate or change emotional experience by changing the way that information is appraised or made sense of (Beck et al., 1979; Gross, 1998; Lazarus, 1993; Quoidbach, Mikolajczak & Gross, 2015). This idea is central both for ancient practical philosophers, and for contemporary psychologists working on the topic of resilience. Epicurus advised his followers that the path to a secure happiness was to learn to no longer judge unnatural or unnecessary desires as important to one's life (*Letter to Meneoceus*, 127), and Epictetus famously reminded his students that it is not events themselves that upset people, but the judgements they make about them (*Handbook*, 5). Psychologists studying resilience frequently set forth the same basic principle, describing how the skills of reappraisal can help people to manage stressors and thrive in challenging circumstances (e.g., Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012; Reivich, Seligman & McBride, 2011).

Resilience researchers have also frequently emphasised the value of viewing difficulties as a challenge rather than a threat (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2016; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004), an idea commonly espoused by ancient philosophers of practical ethics (e.g., Epictetus, *Discourses*, 3.10). As such, much like the students attending the lectures of Epictetus in the first and second centuries, students of contemporary resilience-building programmes such as those described by Fletcher and Sarkar (2016) or Reivich, Seligman and McBride (2011) are trained in how to reappraise events in ways more conducive to positive functioning. It is interesting here to consider whether the potential short-comings of the philosophers' internal focus, and their concentration on appraisal and judgement, should have implications for contemporary resilience-building efforts. Whilst much evidence exists for the value of cognitively-focussed interventions (Beck et al., 1979; Quoidbach, Mikolajczak & Gross, 2015), the now comprehensively undermined notion held by the philosophers that one can control one's happiness through will of thought alone, perhaps lends important weight to the idea that efforts to enhance resilience should always at a

minimum also include more practically-focussed techniques, designed to support people to interact with the systems around them in ways supportive of positive outcomes in specific, challenging circumstances.

Another major point of contact, alluded to already above, can be found in the notion of 'steeling effects', or the suggestion that resilience develops over time as a result of facing and growing from one's experiences. This idea, developed most fully in recent years in the resiliency model of Glen Richardson (Richardson et al., 1990; Richardson, 2002) suggests that in order to become resilient, one must pass through challenges and stresses, become disorganised and then learn from the experience such that one resurfaces stronger and with more skill than one had before. Such a perspective on the development of resilience aligns closely with Seneca's suggestion that enduring hardship leaves us better placed to face such troubles again in the future (*On Providence*, 4) or Epictetus' analogy of the wrestler, who after being thrown to the ground, gets up stronger than he was before (*Discourses* 4.10.15-17). For such philosophers, all hardship, difficulty or challenge provides an opportunity for growth and increased resilience. In keeping with their emphasis on appraisal, the philosophers argued that what matters above all in determining the outcome of an encounter with hardship, is less a matter of what actually happens, and more a question of the way one approaches it (Seneca, *On Providence,* 2). Whilst Richardson's resiliency model also draws attention to the potential for growth that accompanies challenge (Richardson, 1990), psychologists exploring the notion of 'steeling effects' have raised important questions regarding the circumstances under which exposure to stressors lead either to sensitization or steeling effects. Understanding these questions in more detail may be essential in order to more fully realise the resilience-building effects of the advice of the philosophers discussed here.

It is striking then to observe how many of the observations made by these philosophers have subsequently been supported by the empirical work of psychologists in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Further to the role given to cognitive appraisal discussed above, a range of ideas found in the contemporary resilience literature can be detected in the writings of the ancient philosophers. The importance of positive role-models as a way of enhancing resilience identified in the work of Emmy Werner and others (Werner & Smith, 1992) for example is reflected in Marcus Aurelius' attempts to encourage himself to learn from the attributes of others around him (*Meditations*, Book 1). The significance of the emotional and social support of friendship emerges as an important factor in enabling people to thrive in the face of difficulties in both the Epicurean philosophical system (*Principal Doctrines*, 27) and the work of contemporary researchers of resilience (Masten et al., 2009). The value of pro-social behaviour, often remarked upon in the resilience literature (Masten et al., 2009), can also be detected in the frequent Stoic allusions to the 'common good' (e.g., Marcus Aurelius *Meditations*, 11.4) or the Cynics' assertion that they were 'citizens of the world' (*Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 6.63). Similarly, the now well-acknowledged value of mindfulness in resilience and emotion regulation (Joyce et al., 2018) can also be detected in the ideas of these ancient philosophers (Hadot, 1995). Much as it is described in contemporary mindfulness-based approaches (e.g. Kabat-Zinn, 2013), attention to the present moment in ancient philosophy was considered important for the way it connected us with the here-and-now, removing us from the often-felt feelings of desire or passion that are founded in thoughts about the past or future.

In keeping with the argument I have developed in this article therefore, one can see that a number of ideas and techniques that have emerged as important, empirically-supported themes of contemporary research on resilience, can be found in the ideas and writings of ancient practical philosophers. Importantly, such points should not however obscure the fact that many other ideas advanced by these philosophers sit entirely at odds with what is today known about resilience. Indeed, the central notion that one can become *entirely* self-sufficient in one's happiness – resilient through will alone – has been fatally undermined by resilience research (Masten, 2001). With the exception of the Epicureans – for whom friendship was described as the primary means through which one protects one's happiness (*Principal Doctrines*, 27) – all the philosophical schools discussed

here maintained that one could learn through philosophy to be entirely dependent on oneself for a well-lived life of happiness. As noted above however, a large body of psychological research has demonstrated convincingly that the emotional and social support of friends or family act as significant buffers against hardship (Masten et al., 2009; Werner & Smith, 1992) and that the interplay between multiple systems effects the resilience of an individual (Ungar, 2021). Such research similarly discredits the Cynics claims that the effects of civilisation have reduced our capacity to withstand adverse circumstances, through the demonstration of the significance of effective schools, employment and strong community on resilience over the lifespan (Werner & Smith, 1992). Unlike these ancients therefore, contemporary psychologists in the field speak increasingly about the dynamic nature of resilience, and the way that the multiple systems with which an individual interacts influences the extent to which one fares well in the face of challenge.

What such findings demonstrate is that these ancient philosophers did not arrive at perfect conclusions regarding how to live well and happily in all circumstances. Indeed, there is much within these philosophies that we may object to on both empirical and ethical grounds. The very notion of an untroubled and individualised happiness that withstands even circumstances as devastating as the loss of a loved-one, is a goal towards which we may be hesitant of aspiring, and criticism of such positions have frequently been made (see for e.g., Williams, 1997).[xi] Prioritising one's inner virtue over and above all else may, if not carefully attended to, promote notions of passive acceptance, turning people away from the outside world and reducing motivation to make positive changes in it (though cf. Sharpe & Ure, 2021 pp.326-331 for a defence against this claim in regards to the ancients). Similarly, the insistence of many of these philosophers that we can render ourselves untouchable by fortune may at its worst be an actively disruptive idea; something which diverts attention away from the now well-acknowledged and essential features of resilience and happiness detailed elsewhere in this article.

These findings do not however detract from the point being built in this article. Though a number of these philosophical positions have subsequently been undermined by contemporary empirical research, an impressive array of ideas from Greek and Roman philosophy have gone on to gather substantial empirical support, and indeed to heavily influence the development of ideas that have become central to contemporary theories of emotion regulation, psychopathology and resilience. More interesting perhaps, are the range of ideas to be found within the philosophical literature that are yet to be empirically explored.

The nature of resilience

As understanding regarding resilience has developed in recent years, researchers have increasingly emphasised its *dynamic* nature (Luthar et al., 2000). Few – if any – people demonstrate resilience at all times and in all aspects of life. Instead, people demonstrate resilience in varying degrees across different times and domains. Such observations have led contemporary researchers to highlight the importance of establishing specificity in resilience outcomes (Luthar et al., 2000). Researchers today are encouraged to describe 'educational' or 'emotional' resilience for example, and to acknowledge that "success in these domains by no means implies positive adaptation across all important areas" (Luthar et al., 2000, p.548).

Despite this move in the contemporary literature towards specificity in defining resilience however, it is interesting to note that many well-established and evidence-informed contemporary resilience-building approaches appear geared towards developing some more encompassing version of the phenomenon, in which resilience is seen to help people to flourish and thrive across a range of domains and in life more generally. Indeed, the goals of many such programmes seem to align closely with 'eudaimonic resilience' as I have described it here. Reivich and Shatté's well-known book *The Resilience Factor* for example describes resilience as "the basic ingredient to happiness and success" (Reivich & Shatté, 2002, p.1) and Donald Robertson describes resilience as being that which

enables people to “thrive in any situation” (Robertson, 2012, p.1). Fletcher and Sarkar describe their resilience-building programme as being designed to support people to “withstand pressure” and achieve “sustained success” (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2016, p.135) whilst the Penn Resilience Programme is described as teaching skills that can be applied in everyday life to “navigate adversity and thrive in challenging environments” (Positive Psychology Centre, 2021, para.1). Examples such as these indicate a continued interest in a more global form of resilience, something intended to help people thrive and flourish in all circumstances, and to live fully and happily in all aspects of their lives. My suggestion is that framing these contemporary efforts in the context of work on ‘eudaimonic resilience’ as I have described it here, helps to further define the goal of this contemporary stream of resilience work, and to see it in the context of its philosophical and historical tradition.

The value of exploring these connections

So far then we have established that contemporary psychologists interested in the subject of resilience, and Ancient philosophers interested in the question of how one ought to live, have shared a number of important theoretical and practical positions. As mentioned above, this point has been alluded to in passing by several scholars in recent decades (e.g., Beck et al., 1979; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2016; Lazarus, 1993; Oatley, 2004). Additionally, a related question regarding the extent to which ancient practical philosophy was intended as a form of therapy has received much interest, with several interesting and contrasting perspectives having been advanced on the matter (cf. Sellars, 2017; Sorabji, 1997). Despite this, the specific relationship between ancient practical philosophy and resilience has rarely been acknowledged in depth (see Donaldson (2012) as a notable exception). Further, it is also notable that where this connection has been alluded to previously, it has been remarked upon almost uniquely in relation to Stoic thought. What I hope to have demonstrated in this article is that the connections between ancient practical ethics and contemporary psychological

approaches to the study of resilience are in fact more far reaching than that. Additionally, I hope to have persuaded that such connections warrant further exploration and consideration.

My contention has been that considering current knowledge on resilience in the context of this philosophical background helps to deepen its theoretical and historical interest, demonstrating links back through centuries of thought. Further, considering these two trajectories of thought together raises a number of potentially interesting and significant avenues for future research. Could it be that across the large body of philosophical writings from this time, there remain further – as yet untested – ideas and techniques that could prove valuable in the study of developing resilience? Whilst further research is clearly needed, early findings from the annual Stoic Week project (LeBon, 2018), and anecdotal evidence reported elsewhere (Owen, 2020), suggest there may be good reason to believe so.

Might contemporary resilience researchers have something to learn from the form in which these ancient philosophical ideas were presented for example? And how significant was the fact that these ideas were developed within the context of an encompassing world-view? These philosophers placed significant value on the way that their ideas were conveyed, and their techniques formed part of an overall philosophy that gave meaning and structure to human life. Short, memorable phrases were used to help students internalise ideas, and emotive imagery was frequently drawn upon to help persuade the practising philosopher to commit to the ideas in question. Future research could explore whether such features could help the uptake and benefits of practising contemporary ideas associated with resilience-building.

Conclusion

In this article, I have developed an argument for acknowledging and exploring the many and varied connections between contemporary psychological research on resilience, and ancient practical

ethics. I have suggested that much of what informs contemporary thinking on resilience can in fact be traced back and detected in the thought and ideas of philosophers such as Socrates, Diogenes, the Stoics and the Epicureans. In offering an account of ancient practical ethics as it was conceived of by such philosophers, I have introduced the term 'eudaimonic resilience' to describe what these ancient philosophers aspired towards. Whilst acknowledging the caution sounded by philosophers and psychologists alike regarding the attainability of such a goal, I have nonetheless drawn attention to a continued interest in contemporary work on resilience in achieving a similar outcome.

In drawing attention to the points of connection between ancient practical philosophy and contemporary work on resilience, I hope to stimulate future research on the ways in which these two areas overlap, as well as the ways in which the study of both topics are enriched by considering the one in relation to the other.

Declaration of conflicting interest: The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

References

Aurelius, M. (2006). *Meditations* (M. Hammond, trans.). Penguin Books.

Bauer, J. J. & Park, S. W. (2010). Growth is not just for the young: growth narratives, eudaimonic resilience and the aging self. In P. S. Fry & C. L. M. Keyes (Eds.), *New Frontiers in Resilient Aging* (pp.60-89). Cambridge University Press.

Beck, A. T., Rush, A. J., Shaw, B. F. & Emery, G. (1979). *Cognitive therapy of Depression*. Guilford Press.

Block, J. H. & Block, J. (1980). The role of ego-control and ego-resiliency in the organisation of behaviour. In W. A. Collins. (Eds.), *Development of Cognition, Affect, and Social Relations* (pp.39-101). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Branham, R. & Goulet-Cazé, M.O. (1996). Introduction. In R. Branham & M. O. Goulet-Cazé (Eds.), *The Cynics: The Cynic movement in antiquity and its legacy* (pp.1-27). University of California Press.

Cicero. (1927). *Tusculan Disputations* (J. E. King, Trans.). Loeb Classical Library. Harvard University Press.

Connor, K., M., & Davidson, J. R. T. (2003). Development of a new Resilience Scale: Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale CD-RISC. *Depression & Anxiety, 18,* 76-82. DOI: 10.1002/da.10113

Davis, M. C., Luecken, L., & Lemery-Chalfant, K. (2009). Resilience in common life: Introduction to the special issue. *Journal of Personality, 77*(6), 1637-1644. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2009.00595.x

Denckla, C. A., Cicchetti, D., Kubzansky, L. D., Seedat, S., Teicher, M. H., Williams, D. R., & Koenen, K. C. (2020). Psychological resilience: an update on definitions, a critical appraisal, and research recommendations. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, *11*(1), 1822064, 1-18. doi:10.1080/20008198.2020.1822064

Desmond, W. (2008). *Cynics (Ancient Philosophies).* Routledge.

Diener, E. & Biswas-Diener, R. (2009). Will money increase subjective wellbeing?: A literature review and guide to needed research. In E. Diener (Eds.), *The Science of Wellbeing. Social Indicators Research Series. Vol. 37* (pp.119-154). Springer.

Fletcher, D., & Sarkar, M. (2012). A Grounded Theory of psychological resilience in Olympic champions. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise 13*, 669-678. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2012.04.007

Fletcher, D., & Sarkar, M. (2013). Psychological resilience: A review and critique of definitions, concepts and theory. *European Psychologist, 18*(1), 12-23. https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000124

Fletcher, D., & Sarkar, M. (2016). Mental Fortitude Training: An evidence-based approach to developing psychological resilience for sustained success. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action, 7*(3), 135-157. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/21520704.2016.1255496

Gill, C. (2014). Introduction. In *Epictetus: Discourses, Fragments, Handbook* (R. Hard. Trans.) (pp.vii-xxvii). Oxford University Press.

Gross, J. (1998). The emerging field of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Review of general Psychology, 2*(3), 271-299. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.2.3.271

Hadot, P. (1995). *Philosophy as a way of life: Spiritual Exercises form Socrates to Foucault* (M. Chase, Trans.). Blackwell Publishing.

Hadot, P. (2001). *The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius* (M. Chase, Trans.). Harvard University Press.

Hadot, P. (2020). *The Selected Writings of Pierre Hadot: Philosophy as Practice* (M. Sharpe & F. Testa, Trans.). Bloomsbury Academic.

Huta, V. & Waterman, A. S. (2013). Eudaimonia and its distinction from hedonia: Developing a classification and terminology for understanding conceptual and operational definitions. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 15*, 1435-1456. DOI: 10.1007/s10902-013-9485-0

Joyce, S., Shand, F., Tighe, J., Laurent, S., Bryant, R., & Harvey, S. (2018). Road to resilience: a systematic-review and meta-analysis of resilience training programmes and interventions. *BMJ Open, 8*,:e017858. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2017-017858

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013). *Full Catastrophe Living*. Piatkus.

Laertius, D. (1925). *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers (Volumes 1 & 2)* (R. D. Hicks, Trans.). Loeb Classical Library. Harvard University Press.

Lazarus, R. & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, Appraisal and Coping*. Springer Publishing.

Lazarus, R. (1993). From psychological stress to the emotions: A history of changing outlooks. *Annual Review of Psychology, 44*, 1-21. DOI: 10.1146/annurev.ps.44.020193.000245.

LeBon, T. (2018). *Stoic Week 2018 Report Part 3: Impact on Wellbeing.* available at: https://modernstoicism.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Stoic-Week- Report-Part-3-2018-.pdf.

Long, A. A. (2002). *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life*. Oxford University Press.

Long, A. A. (1996). The Socratic Tradition: Diogenes, Crates and Hellenistic Ethics. In R. Branham & M. O. Goulet-Cazé (Eds,). *The Cynics: The Cynic movement in antiquity and its legacy* (pp.28-46). University of California Press.

Long, A. A. & Sedley, D. N. (1987). *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Volume 1*. Cambridge University Press.

Luthar, S., Cicchetti, D., & Becker, B. (2000). The construct of resilience: A critical evaluation and guidelines for future work. *Child development, 71*(3), 543-562. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00164

Masten, A. S., (2001). Ordinary Magic. *American Psychologist 56*(3), 227-238. doi:10.1037//0003-066X.56.3.227

Masten, A. S., Cutuli, J. J., Herbers, J. E., & Reed, M-G. J. (2009). Resilience in Development. In S. J. Lopez & C. R. Snyder (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology* (2nd edition) (pp.117-132). Oxford University Press.

Masten, A., Lucke, C., Nelson, K., & Stallworthy, I. (2021). Resilience in Development and Psychopathology: Multisystem perspectives. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, *17*, 521-549. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-clinpsy-081219-120307

Nussbaum, M. (2001). *Upheavals of Thought: The intelligence of emotions*. Cambridge University Press.

Oatley, K. (2004). *Emotions: A Brief history*. Blackwell Publishing.

Owen, J. (2020). Teaching Ancient Practical ethics and philosophy as a way of life. *Teaching Philosophy*, *43*(4), 431-453. https://doi.org/10.5840/teachphil20201016129

Padesky, C. & Mooney, K. A. (2012). Strengths-Based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy: A four-step model to build resilience. *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy, 19*(4), 283-290. https://doi.org/10.1002/cpp.1795

Plato. (2003). *Republic* (D. Lee, Trans.). Penguin Books.

Plato. (2003). *The Last Days of Socrates* (H. Tarrant & H. Tredennick, Trans.). Penguin Books.

Positive Psychology Centre (2021). *Penn Resilience Programme and PERMA workshops*. https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/services/penn-resilience-training

Quoidbach, J., Mikolajczak, M., & Gross, J. J. (2015). Positive Interventions: An Emotion Regulation Perspective. *Psychological Bulletin*, *141*(3), 655-693. DOI: 10.1037/a0038648

Reivich, K., Seligman, M., & McBride, S. (2011). Master resilience training in the US Army. *American Psychologist, 66*(1), 25-34. doi:10.1037/a0021897

Reivich, K. & Shatte, A. (2003). *The resilience factor: 7 Keys to Finding your inner strength and overcoming life's hurdles*. Broadway Books.

Richardson, G. E., Neiger, B. L., Jensen, S. & Kumpfer, K. L. (1990). The Resiliency Model. *Health Education, 21*(6), 33-39. DOI:10.1080/00970050.1990.10614589

Richardson, G. (2002). The Metatheory of Resilience and Resiliency. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 58*(3), 307-321. https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.10020

Robertson, D. (2012). *Build your resilience: CBT, mindfulness and stress management to survive and thrive in any situation*. Teach Yourself.

Rutter, M. (1993). Resilience: Some conceptual considerations. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 14*, 626-631. https://doi.org/10.1016/1054-139X(93)90196-V

Rutter, M. (2006). The Promotion of Resilience in the Face of Adversity. In A. Clarke-Stewart & J. Dunn (Eds.), *The Jacobs Foundation series on adolescence. Families count: Effects on child and adolescent development* (p. 26–52). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511616259.003

Rutter, M. (2012). Resilience as a dynamic concept. *Development and Psychopathology, 24,* 335-344. DOI: 10.1017/S0954579412000028

Seneca. (2008). *Dialogues and Essays* (J. Davie, Trans.). Oxford University Press.

Seneca. (2017). *Letters on Ethics* (M. Graver & A. A. Long, Trans.). Harvard University Press.

Sellars, J. (2017). What is philosophy as a way of life?. *Parrhesia, 28*, 40–56. https://www.parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia28/parrhesia28_sellars.pdf

Sharpe, M. & Ure, M. (2021). *Philosophy as a way of life: History, dimensions, directions*. Bloomsbury.

Sorabji, R. (1997). Is Stoic Philosophy Helpful as Psychotherapy?. *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies Supplement, 68*, 197–209. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2041-5370.1997.tb02271.x

Tugade, M., & Fredrickson, B. (2004). Resilient individuals use positive emotions to bounce back from negative emotional experiences. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 86*(2), 320-333. DOI: 10.1037/0022-3514.86.2.320

Ungar, M. (2021). Modelling Multisystemic Resilience: connecting biological, psychological, social and ecological adaptation in contexts of adversity. In M. Ungar (Eds.), *Multi-systemic Resilience: Adaptation and transformation in contexts of change* (p.6-31). Oxford University Press.

Wagnild, G. & Young, H. M. (1993). Development and psychometric evaluation of the resilience scale. *Journal of Nursing Measurement, 1*(2), 165-178. PMID: 7850498

Werner, E. & Smith, R. (1992). *Overcoming the Odds: High risk children from birth to adulthood*. Cornell University Press.

Williams, B. (1997). Stoic Philosophy and the emotions. *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies Supplement: Aristotle and after, 68*, 211-213. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43768020

Windle, G. (2011). What is resilience? A review and concept analysis. *Reviews in Clinical Gerontology, 21*(2), 152-169. doi:10.1017/S0959259810000420

[i] It should be noted however, that almost all the philosophers of this time recognised that such a state was not something most people could expect to consistently maintain. For discussion, see *The Figure of the Sage in Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Hadot, 2020).

[ii] Notably, whilst I have followed a well-established tradition in using the term 'happiness' for the Greek word 'eudaimonia' (e.g. Long & Sedley, 1987), scholars also frequently draw attention to the shortcomings of the word 'happiness' as a fully adequate translation (see for e.g. Long, 2002). Importantly, eudaimonia as conceived by the ancients extends far beyond the idea of happiness understood as a state of feeling happy, being excited or comfortable. For this reason, a translation of 'flourishing', with its connotations towards activity, living well, and thriving, has sometimes been preferred. Readers may benefit from keeping in mind that all references to 'happiness' throughout the essay are renderings of the Greek term 'eudaimonia' – with its full connotations not only of subjective satisfaction, but also with flourishing, and actively living a good human life.

[iii] Epicurus divided desires into natural and necessary, natural but not necessary, and unnatural, and argued that pleasure derived ultimately from satisfying the first kind, and avoiding the others. (*Letter to Menoeceus*, 127)

[iv] Though most in modern society are not attempting to live in keeping with the Epicurean philosophical system, it is important to note against Epicurus' claim that we can be happy with even the most minimal resources that modern psychological research has convincingly demonstrated an association between poverty and reduced wellbeing. (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2009).

[v] Notably, the term 'eudaimonic resilience' has been used elsewhere (Bauer & Park, 2010) with a meaning that differs to that I am giving to it here. In Bauer and Park's important work, 'eudaimonic resilience' is used to describe a process in which there is a quick rebound or maintenance of meaning as well as affect, following a potential trauma or loss. As described above, I use the term here instead simply to describe the efforts made by these ancient philosophers to make one's happiness – one's *eudaimonia* – dependent solely on the individual, and to insulate one's ability to flourish from the ups-and-downs of external circumstances or material goods. Whilst introducing a term with a meaning that differs from the way it has been used previously in published literature is not unproblematic, it is worth noting that 'eudaimonia' itself has been described in a multitude of different ways across the published literature (Huta & Waterman, 2013). Given this variation, it is appropriate that there also be more than one way in which the term 'eudaimonic resilience' be employed.

[vi] See for e.g. Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 6.50

[vii] E.g. Nussbaum, 2001, pp.373-374. The concluding chapter of Sharpe & Ure (2020) includes detailed discussion of the critiques in the literature made on these grounds. For an important response to such criticism, see Hadot (2020, esp. pp.271-274). Here, Hadot draws attention to the 'missionary' nature of these ancient philosophies, the philosophers' desire to support, enlighten and empower their followers, and their conviction both that philosophy should be a social practice, and that the happiness assured by the philosophical way of life should be open to all, for the betterment of society.

[viii] As an interesting example of this, consider the six core skills taught in the Penn Resiliency Programme (see Reivich, Seligman and McBride, 2011). These skills of self-awareness, self-regulation, optimism, mental agility, character strengths and connection would all (relatively loosely understood), be endorsed by Stoics such as Epictetus. Whilst the skills taught, and the goal of protecting oneself from the stresses of life, may be held in common, the practising of such skills in a purely psychological sphere (detached from consideration of the virtuous character of the individual) would have seemed entirely alien to the Roman philosopher, who would have seen all such work as fundamentally ethical and character forming in nature.

[ix] E.g. Seneca's nightly self-reflection (*On Anger*, 3.36) or Marcus Aurelius' morning ritual of mentally preparing himself for what he would face each day (*Meditations*, 2.1)

[x] E.g. Epictetus *Handbook*, 47 in which he describes the practice of taking water into your mouth when thirsty, only to spit it out again, as a way of training the body and developing self-control.

[xi] For a defence however, compare Sharpe & Ure (2021) pp.331-334.