

# REGISTRY REPORT

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*Stoicus communitas : Stoikos koinonia*



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## New Members

**Alicia Allgood** (1980- ) is a Behavioral Therapist in Brooklyn, New York. “I have studied and practiced various metaphysical and esoteric traditions for the past ten years. Stoicism has called to me from the start of my search for a world view that fit, but my engagement with this philosophy has yet to blossom beyond that of reading Aurelius' *Meditations* during moments of strife in my life. I am particularly interested in finding a group of people that practice Stoicism in it's ancient form (with all necessary contemporary modifications of course) with the many components (e.g. daily meditation, etc).”

**Silviu Ciocan** (1985- ) is a Doctor in Iasi, Romania, who wrote, “I want to be a good man, and I think that Stoicism is a viable method.”

**Joel Diaz** (1988- ) is a Student in Melbourne, Australia. “I am currently reading *Letters from a Stoic* and *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. Both of these books have had a profound impact on me. I want to read and learn more about Stoic philosophy.”

**Etienne Dube** (1987- ) is an Equity Analyst in St-Jérôme, Canada. “I have mislived for far too long. The pain & suffering that it has brought me has made me seclude myself & introspect... resulting in studies of philosophy and mysticism. Existential phenomenology, Existentialism and Stoicism transformed me. I am now an eclectic Stoic.”

**D.g. Geis** (1951- ) writes from Medina, Texas: “M.A. was in Humanities [Philosophy]. I have lifelong interest in Ancient philosophy and history, which has morphed --not unsurprisingly--into a passion for Stoicism and a commitment to Stoic practice. Retired from investment management business. At advanced age of 58 working on doctoral thesis. Side interests in Platonism, pre-Socratics, and Irish Whiskey--all in moderation, of course.”

**Jimmy Harstad** (1991- ) is from Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA. “I am currently a college student traveling and writing about the USA and the individuals I have met through my travels. I have had a profoundly beneficial experience in studying and interpreting the Stoic philosophies many wisdoms and am glad to see that other individuals appreciate the practicalities of Stoicism.”

**Ahmed Hassan** (1980- ) is an Engineer in Egypt. “I am Very Interested.”

**Maria Hatzopoulou** (1960- ) is a Philosophical Counselor in Athens, Greece. She wrote, "Hello, I am Hellene. I hold a BA in Classical studies and an MA in Philosophical Anthropology. My area of interest in Philosophy is Stoicism, Cynicism as well as the postmodern philosophy, including Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard and Wittgenstein whose reflection I find very close to that of the Hellenistic philosophy."

**Jay Hicks** (1965- ) is a Business Seminar and English Instructor in Eltville-Erbach, Germany. "I am a STUDENT of Stoic philosophy, ever striving to live in the accordance of my nature. I have dedicated the last five years of my life reading and practicing the wisdom of Epictetus, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius and the like. I desire to interact and correspond with others who share like beliefs and practices."

**Andrew Hogan** (1986- ) writes from Wichita, Kansas, USA, that he is a "Life-seeker."

**Matthew Jackson** (1975- ) is in the field of Finance in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA. "It's amazing to me that after years of activity in Christianity, followed by a number of years as an atheist, I've finally found a philosophy that fits. God, or lack thereof, really isn't the issue for me...it turns out that I'm a Stoic. My true convictions really don't center around the concept of god, they center around this philosophy. Thank you for providing a home. I look forward to learning."

**Marlene Jones** (1959- ) is a Computer Systems Engineer. "I am a Unitarian Universalist and a member of a UU congregation in Charlottesville, Virginia. Lately I have identified myself as a 'romantic humanist'. I love being a member of my religious community but find that there are times it does not fill my need for intellectual engagement. I found this site through a link on some blog. I am intrigued and look forward to learning more."

**Joseph Longcor** (1978- ) is a Freelance Artist in Sussex Wantage, New Jersey, USA. "For most of my life I have been a Stoic and really never noticed it. I have fallen into the whole depressed emotional spiral just as everyone has at one point. But what always drew me back out was a simple quote I heard a long time ago, 'Wherever you are and whatever you're doing or what you are going through YOU are exactly where you need to be.' I have always believed there is a reason for everything. Little did I know I was on a path to Stoicism without ever really knowing it."

**B.t. Mahoney** (1968- ) is a First Responder in Seattle, Washington, USA. "I discovered long ago in my life certain principles, or observations that were then confirmed in my readings of philosophy, i.e 'That life is more akin to wrestling than a dance', 'that there is no virtue opposed to justice', and that to seek 'justice is [to often be at] war' with those who are 'akin to us' etc. Stoicism, I believe, not only provides us with temporary armor against the hardships and suffering of life, but the tools to understand and transform those experiences for ourselves and others, 'for we are made for each other'."

**Rand Martin** (1946- ) is an Associate Professor of Finance in Lehighton, Pennsylvania, USA. "I would like to discuss Stoicism to gain a better understanding of how to use Stoic techniques for dealing with the challenges that life presents."

**William Mcdaniel** (1974- ), a Production Manager in Mertzon, Texas, said, "My father gave me my first introduction to Stoicism when I was 15, and I have been fascinated ever since. Looking for the divine spark in everything."

**Max Miller** (1980- ) is an Artist in Mt. Holly, New Jersey, USA. "It's funny, I'm new to Stoicism in name, but I've always been a part of this philosophy naturally."

**Carlos Molina** (1970- ) is an Economist in El Salvador. "I am in a quest for happiness, and I believe that happiness is a personal choice, but a choice that needs to be guided."

**Patrick Mulligan** (1969- ) writes from Clearwater, Florida: "I have always had a desire to "be in control" of things. Over the years I realized that the only things we can truly control is our individual choices and our responses to externalities. My life journey is to be more responsible or as I like to look at it, 'response able'."

**Austin Pace** (1990- ) writes from Midland, Texas: "I have been interested in philosophy for sometime, especially considering my age. I think I started living stoically before I even discovered what Stoicism really was. I have recently read much about it and Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*. I'm a mechanical engineering

student at Texas Tech, and I want to learn more about Stoicism."

**Charles Sedan** (1961- ) is a Restaurant Manager in San Antonio, Texas. "I have studied various philosophies and religions, none of them seem to be workable. I had studied a little of Stoicism, but now study Cynicism, which led me right back to the Stoa. It all has to do with reason."

**Michael Shaw** (1993- ) writes from Chicago, Illinois. "Failure only comes when the mind tells itself that it has failed. The word is objective; it has no meaning. I could care less if I become a multi-millionaire or a dishwasher. As long as I can think and have some materials which lend a hand to thought processes (i.e., books), I don't really care to have anything else."

**Darren Simpson** (1990- ) is a Musician in Scotland. "I've recently found out about Seneca. I have searched for enlightenment, and I have found it."

**Katie Simpson** (1991- ) is a Student in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. "I first saw the word stoicism while reading the the short story 'Flowering Judas' by Katherine Porter. I researched the philosophy and found that it articulated my own personal beliefs. I believe that 'The universe itself is god and the universal outpouring of its soul,' and I am interested in others who share my beliefs."

**Benjamin Slack** (1986- ) is a Student in Newcastle, Australia. "I am currently studying Archaeology and Palaeoanthropology at the University of New England in New South Wales. I am very interested in taking my Stoic learning much further, it has reflected my own thought for many years."

**Justin Stoicovy** (1978- ) is a Systems Engineer in Redmond, Washington, USA. "How much time he saves who does not look to see what his neighbor says or does or thinks."

**Kenneth Terry** (1989- ) Indianapolis, USA. "What can I say? Hard work is fine, but first take care of head."

**William Thorpe** (1993- ) USA. "I am a teenager, struggling with the constant face of failure."

**Jaakko Wallenius** (1958- ) writes from Lohja, Finland: I am the admin for the fan-page for Marcus Aurelius in Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Marcus-Aurelius/123395559393>  
I also maintain the blog The Little Book of Humanity that contains many references to Marcus Aurelius at <http://thelittlebook.blogs.fi>

## Spotlight

on

## Paul Jahshan, Beirut



Paul Jahshan, Ph.D.

I was born in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1966.

My family name, "Jahshan," is an Arabic name made up of two words: "al-jaah" which means "renown," and "al-sha'n," which means "worth," the origin of which is the following historical event:

According to genealogical sources, the Jahshans were a family belonging to the "Uzaizat" tribe named as such by the Prophet Muhammad when the tribe leaders, who were Christians living in Jordan, helped the Prophet during one of his last battles, the Battle of Mu'tah, in 629 A.D., east of the Jordan River. The Prophet's army was led by his adopted son, Zayd ibn Haritha (who was killed during the battle), against the Byzantines. The tribe was subsequently named "al-'Uzaizat," a word coming from "Ta'zeezat," meaning "military reinforcements," to describe how it came to the help of the Prophet's army in that particular battle.

The tribe remained Christian and fought next to their Moslem brethren against the Crusaders at the fall of Jerusalem in 1099. They also fought the Ottoman Turks between 1916 and 1918 and again stood with their own during the 1948, 1967, and 1968 wars with Israel.

The bulk of the Jahshans live in Jordan, with the rest in Palestine/Israel, Egypt, and here in Lebanon. All Jahshans, as far as I know, are Christians, with the majority being Orthodox (my grandfather changed from Orthodox to Catholic in order to be able to marry his relative, so our family became Catholic).

My father worked with ARAMCO in Saudi Arabia for a few years. Then, when I was two and a half years old and my sister a few months old, we moved to France after my father placed first at a regional translation competition held by UNESCO. He became an employee at the organization's translation bureau in Paris until his death in 1980. After almost twelve years in France, we had to go back home.

Back in Lebanon, we continued school (fortunately, my parents had been wise enough to appoint a teacher of Arabic while we were in France, so the transition was less painful than expected) and I received a BA and then an MA in English literature from the Lebanese University. In 1997, I started a Ph.D. in American Studies at Nottingham University, UK, graduating in 2000. Since then, I have been teaching English and American literature and culture, critical theory, and rhetoric at Notre Dame University in Lebanon, where I am now an associate professor of American Studies. Another course I give is "Human Thought," a history of civilizations and philosophy from antiquity to the 16th century, and I make it a point to include, along with the many wonderful Greek schools of thought, Stoicism, always a favorite with the students. My research interests are in contemporary American fiction, the detective genre, postmodernism, critical theory, cybertheory and, recently, Arab-American studies.

My spouse and I and our twin boys, aged seven, live in a quiet town called Mazra'at Yashou', about 10 kms north of Beirut.

**ERIK: Thank you, Paul. What a great family history. I have a question about your work in American Studies. Does it include North, South, and Central America, or is there some region of specialization?**

**PAUL:** The definition of "American Studies" is a minefield! Some prefer the term "Area Studies" in order to evade the problem, but it mainly covers the North American continent, including Canada. In fact, the department I got my Ph.D. from is aptly called the "School of American and Canadian Studies." Central and South America would rather fall into another field called "Hispanic Studies" (which would also open the related question "does Hispanic Studies also include Spain?" which would be answered affirmatively). But, by and large, American Studies is overwhelmingly about the USA with, recently, a good proportion devoted to Chicanos/Chicanas, to the "Reconquista" of California by Hispanics, and other related ethnic studies.

**Have you spent much time in any part of the Americas?**

I've been to the US a few times already, mainly for conferences and once as part of a team to establish contacts between our university and a university in Michigan. A week to a couple of weeks each time, so no lengthy stays. My main port of call, maybe because of my childhood exposure, has been Europe, and mainly the UK. I love traveling, though: I've been to China twice (I speak, among other languages, Chinese!), to Spain many times (I also speak good Spanish), to Russia a couple of times (some Russian too...), to Nepal, to Cyprus, Austria, Germany, Morocco, not counting the other trips throughout Europe in the pre-back-to-Lebanon era (before 1980) when my father used to take us on car-tours from one country to another with France as the hub.

**Why did you choose to focus on American Studies instead of, say, French Studies—which would certainly be a natural because of your many years growing up there?**

Why American Studies (or, for that matter, English Lit.) and not French? I'm a little bit of a contrarian person, really, so when everybody around me was saying that I should go for French, my inclination automatically switched to English! I'm still an avid reader of French, of course, and the intersection between critical theory, French/European writers, and American Studies is very rich.

**I'd like to know a little about your relationship to Stoicism. Can you give us some sense of how and when you first discovered Stoic thought?**

I first discovered Stoicism at school in France, where students received, back then, a thoroughly "classical" education with Latin and Greek as mandatory classical languages. The fading memory was revived, though, in 1994 when, on an academic four-month stay in Glasgow, Scotland, I bought a used, leather-bound copy of Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* (George Long translation). This marked, I think, a life-long journey with the great Stoics, and the leather-bound book has accompanied me on many a solitary trip abroad and provided me with great solace in times of need. A few years later, I started reading the other Stoics, mainly Seneca's *Letters*, which strengthened my desire to face life's potential crises with steadfastness and resolve. Last year (2009), I read William B. Irvine's *The Good Life, The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy* which, I think, did a great job keeping Stoicism's essentials by doing away with what may be obsolete for the contemporary 21st-century reader, and I can say that Irvine's book boosted what had become, after many years, a somewhat complacent Stoicism and refreshed it wonderfully. More recently, I discovered Erik Wiegardt's online cybercity, the *New Stoa*, and avidly read his masterfully-written guides to the Stoics and Stoicism.

**Thank you for your generous comment. Would you say you are a practicing Stoic?**

Am I a Stoic? In truth, I'd love to be one indeed! As much as I admire Stoicism, it is rather difficult to exactly measure how successful one has been in living a "good life" based on reason, wisdom, courage, justice, and propriety. Only time will tell, for life has many surprises in store. As far as I can, however, I try to remain optimistic, and this has been achieved in large part with the help of, among other philosophies (notably Daoism and Buddhism), Stoicism. Living the day fully, fulfilling our duties as best as possible, staying ready for the worst (not emotionally but intellectually), and remaining aware that death is the end of all our individual endeavors, are some of the fruits of Stoic training. These are probably the most important contributions of Stoicism to my life, as they have put the daily concerns into a much broader perspective where they appear, without losing their value, much smaller (and much less threatening) than normally thought. Keeping the prospect of our physical demise is not at all a pessimistic outlook: on the contrary, our life becomes more meaningful, richer, and very much worth living until the end. Death is but a return to the glorious workings of the universe in which, in the grand words of Carl Sagan, we are ultimately "star stuff."

**What do you see as the future of our philosophy?**

The future of Stoicism? Well, I hate to be pessimistic, but I'm afraid our society's full-fledged embracing of late capitalism's ethos, in the shape of unbridled consumerism, willful abandonment to a worldwide system of surveillance, discipline, and punishment, and the consequent shortening of our attention span where knowledge has become more horizontal than vertical, all aided and developed by the virtual worlds of the Internet, don't bode well for the meditative distancing needed, first, to understand Stoicism and, second, to try to practice it. As Herbert Marcuse put it a few decades ago, we are living in a deceptively more comfortable world where the illusions of freedom are kept alive by an increasingly subtle system; only a fool would leave that illusory coziness and delve into a philosophy where uncertainty, the necessity of pain and unpleasantness, and the preparation for death are so prominent features, even if the rewards of Stoicism far outweigh, in the final analysis, the superficial pleasures of owning, and then immediately discarding, one gadget or fad after the other. But then life has almost always run in cycles, and it is not too far-fetched to imagine a time, hopefully not too distant, when humans realize that reasoned fortitude is the best antidote against the challenges of their increasingly sophisticated lives. This is where Stoicism can pro-actively help.

**Perhaps you could elaborate on your comment about capitalism. When you said, "I'm afraid our society's full-fledged embracing of late capitalism's ethos, in the shape of unbridled consumerism . . ." are you referring to Lebanon society specifically or to the world in general? Recently, the value of capitalism has been brought into question by the G20 Summit protesters in Toronto, and if you would like to add anything I would certainly be interested, and I'm sure our readers would be, too.**

Lebanon is a strange country; one has to visit it in order to understand how it is a bastion of capitalism, hedonism, and generally luxurious living (at least for the middle and above classes). Almost every Lebanese person has (or is about to have, or is pro-actively dreaming of having) a car and "at least" one mobile phone. The dream of most Lebanese, indeed, is to acquire the above plus owned property (few are the people who are happy with rent), and our country is being increasingly dominated by a "society of spectacle." The

Lebanese have always been at the crossroad between "East" and "West," with some good points (tri-lingualism, openness, a good economy) and some bad points (superficiality, blind consumerism, shady/shaky allegiances to either the "East" or the "West," etc.). So, yes, one can see the workings of capitalism (or what is called "late-capitalism, see below) fully in the mini-lab called Lebanon.

The other part of your question touches on the definition of "late-capitalism" as opposed to simple "capitalism." As defined by Fredric Jameson, "Late Capitalism (...) has very different overtones" from the classical ideas of pre-postmodern capitalism. I quote:

"No one particularly notices the expansion of the state sector and bureaucratization any longer: it seems a simple, 'natural' fact of life. What marks the development of the new concept over the old one (...) is not merely an emphasis on the emergence of new forms of business organization (multinationals, transnationals) beyond the monopoly stage but, above all, the vision of a world capitalism system fundamentally distinct from the older imperialism, which was little more than a rivalry between the various colonial powers (...)" (*Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Introduction, xviii-xix).

So, when I wrote "late capitalism," I meant the postmodern sense of it, replete with the political, social, economic, and mainly cultural currents. As such, it loses its polemic "edge" as a simple confrontation between ideological positions, as the "late capitalism" of the 21st century is too encompassing a feature of most of life on earth (with the help of globalization) to be questioned as such (i.e., whether it exists or not). Of course, there have been, there are, and there will be resistance to all kinds of oppression, visible or not, and this is where critical theory, starting with the Frankfurt School in the first decades of the 20th century (Adorno, Horkheimer, Benjamin, etc.) and continuing with Marcuse, Habermas, then with Foucault, Derrida, Virilio et al., stands. Actually, most of postmodern theory "is" a kind of resistance to "late capitalism" (as defined above).

This is clearly a field that requires more study and depth than we can go in to here, but thank you for this overview. (For a moment, I felt like a student again :)

Thank you, Dr. Jahshan. It is indeed an honor to have you with us in the Stoic community.

## Help Wanted

**THE FOURTH ESTATE:** Writers Wanted! The *Registry Report*, the eMagazine you just read, is more than three years old and needs new blood. If you are a writer, or at least capable of writing a simple declarative sentence, then you too can write Spotlight interviews, New Stoa News, and New Member information. This is a volunteer position of considerable influence. Please submit your name, email address, and any background information you believe is relevant to your qualifications to [ewiegardt@aol.com](mailto:ewiegardt@aol.com). All applications will be considered. Thank you.

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Aretē,

Erik