

Origins

For many years after I read Maxwell Staniforth's introduction to the *Meditations of Marcus Aurelius* the only thing I remembered from it was his claim that the Stoics of antiquity had monasteries.

To me, the idea that "...the Stoic professor was accustomed to withdraw from society and meditate in solitude...and the place of their retreat was a 'monasterium'" was deeply meaningful.

It's one thing to analyze our relationship to Nature with library research and logical arguments, it's quite another to turn inward and focus on our personal relationship to the divine using ancient practices that seeking direct contact.

Yes, some of our study is intellectual, even academic, but the focus is on personal enlightenment experiences and methods. We seek union with our daimon just as Socrates did with his. In our monastery, there are no required methods or restrictions, only offers of guidance and sharing experiences. There are no limits to what the individual can do to explore the hidden reality of one's inner world.

Long before I was aware that Stoics had monasteries, I too had been seeking a monastic experience apart from my Stoic studies, writings, teaching, and normal home life. I sought mystical insight by various means in what I created as my own monastery of one.

As Scholarch of the College of Stoic Philosophers (CoSP) I was finally able to create what I called the Fourth School. This was the Black Eagle *monasterium stoicorum*. We opened the monastery in April of 2019 and have been gradually adding monachi, teachings, and traditions. All of what we do is built on the foundation of the Stoa. Whereas the Marcus Aurelius School of the CoSP focused on the external world, the the monastery is focused on the internal world, your internal world and mine. Whereas the Marcus Aurelius School was designed to be mostly analytical and left brain oriented, the monastery explored the right brain reality.

In April of 2021, I left the CoSP, and the new administrators were no longer interested in the Fourth School. So, we went out on our own to

forge a new way to be a monastery in cyberspace. It took about a year for the new monastery to be secure and settled, and it was then turned over to the First Monk César to be our new abbot. I stayed on as Old Abbot, because the monastery is really my home, and I'm happy to be here as one of the Brothers.

Erik Wiegardt, Old Abbot

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