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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### STOIC, CYNIC, SCEPTIC AND EPICUREAN INSIGHTS IN CONTEMPORARY THEORIES OF EDUCATIVE LEADERSHIP

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#### ABSTRACT

This paper explores the moral insights from Stoicism, Cynicism, Scepticism and Epicureanism as they manifest in contemporary theories of educative leadership; transformational, instructional, distributed, ethical, adaptive and culturally responsive leadership theories. Stoicism, with its emphasis on virtue, emotional resilience, and rational self-mastery, aligns with transformational leadership's focus on personal development, ethical influence, and the cultivation of resilience in leaders and learners. However, its emphasis on individual moral fortitude contrasts with the collaborative, structured focus of instructional and distributed leadership. Cynicism, through its critique of societal norms and rejection of superficial values, challenges transformational leadership's idealistic vision. Yet, its call for authenticity and rejection of corruption resonates strongly with ethical leadership's commitment to integrity and principled action. Scepticism, with its emphasis on questioning knowledge claims, presents a challenge to instructional leadership's reliance on expertise and established pedagogical strategies. However, it complements ethical leadership by fostering critical thinking, transparency, and reflective decision-making. Epicureanism, advocating for the pursuit of pleasure and tranquillity, aligns with transformational leadership's focus on enhancing well-being and motivation. Yet, its emphasis on personal contentment may be at odds with the goal-driven nature of instructional and distributed leadership which prioritize achievement and team-based collaboration. This analysis concludes that educative leadership can be enriched by integrating Stoic resilience, Cynic authenticity, Sceptic critical inquiry, and Epicurean well-being while balancing these perspectives with the structural and collaborative emphases of instructional and distributed leadership.

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## INTRODUCTION

At least four major schools teaching moral philosophy emerged in addition to Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum in the post-Socratic period in Ancient Greece. Zeno of Citium established Stoicism around 300 BCE. Cynicism traces its roots to Antisthenes, a follower of Socrates who began teaching around 400 BCE. Scepticism was first taught by Pyrrho of Elis (c. 360–270 BCE) and Sextus Empiricus (c. 160–210 CE). Epicureanism was founded by Epicurus around 307 BCE in his school, "The Garden," in Athens. This paper clarifies the moral philosophy of each school before tracing their insights in six contemporary theories of educative leadership. Educative leadership was originally defined as leadership that is "educative in intent and outcome" (Duignan and Macpherson, 1992, p. 1). A recent review of theories of educational leadership (UNESCO, 2023), noted how the distinct advantages of transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985), instructional leadership (Bossert, *et al.*, 1982; Hallinger & Murphy 1985); distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000; Spillane, *et al.*, 2001), and ethical leadership (Starratt, 1991; Greenfield, 2004), trace to their use of different ethical frameworks. Similarly, another review, UNESCO's (2024) Global Education Monitoring

Report added adaptive and culturally responsive leadership theories to address the growing complexities and challenges in global education by examining leadership approaches that are responsive to diverse and evolving educational contexts. Adaptive leadership emphasizes pragmatism and resilience, equipping leaders to navigate uncertainty while prioritizing organizational and community well-being (Heifetz *et al.*, 2009). Culturally responsive leadership draws on relational ethics and egalitarian principles to respect diversity and promote inclusivity (Gay, 2018). The next four sections clarify insights from Stoicism, Cynicism, Scepticism and Epicureanism prior to relating each to these six forms of educative leadership. The aim is to help leaders in education with moral insights into the origins of their moral philosophy and to refine their commitments.

**The Ethics of Stoicism:** Stoicism, a school of ethics founded by Zeno of Citium was initially called Zenoism. It was renamed Stoicism to emphasize collective wisdom over the teachings of a single individual (Long, 2002; Sellars, 2006). At the core of Stoic ethics is the belief that virtue is the only true good and is sufficient for achieving happiness. The Stoics defined virtue as encompassing wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice—qualities that enable

individuals to live in harmony with nature and reason. This philosophy aligns with Socratic thought, which also emphasized the cultivation of virtues as the path to eudaimonia, or a flourishing life (Irwin, 1998; Brennan, 2005). Stoicism teaches indifference to external goods such as wealth, health, and reputation. They are considered 'indifferents' because they are beyond our control and do not contribute to true happiness. Instead, Stoics focus on internal goods—virtues that are within our control. This approach fosters tranquillity and resilience, helping individuals navigate life's challenges without being overly influenced by external circumstances (Long, 2002). Another key Stoic belief is that the world is governed by divine providence. The Stoics viewed the universe as a rational system controlled by divine logos (reason) and believed that human beings, as rational creatures, should live in accordance with this natural order. This belief underpins the Stoic practice of accepting one's fate, recognizing that events unfold according to reason, even if the reasons are not immediately apparent (Sellars, 2006). The Stoics identified four cardinal virtues as essential for achieving eudaimonia: wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. Wisdom involves making sound judgments and rational decisions, while courage entails remaining strong and focused despite adversity. Temperance refers to self-control and moderation, and justice involves acting fairly and upholding the dignity of others (Irwin, 1998; Brennan, 2005; Long, 2002; Sellars, 2006). By living according to these virtues, Stoics believed that one could achieve a well-lived life marked by inner tranquillity and resilience. This ideal state is reached by aligning one's actions with reason and virtue, regardless of external circumstances. However, Stoicism has faced criticism for its perceived rigidity. The Stoic emphasis on rationality and emotional detachment can be seen as overly strict and inhuman, undervaluing the complexity of human emotions and the importance of emotional engagement in a fulfilling life (Long, 2002).

Another criticism is that Stoic indifference toward external goods may foster passivity and complacency. While Stoics advocate for accepting what is beyond our control, this stance might discourage proactive efforts to improve one's external situation or address social injustices. Critics argue that such indifference could undermine the motivation for positive change and social activism (Sellars, 2006). Stoicism's focus on individual virtue and moral self-sufficiency has also been criticized for neglecting communal and relational aspects of life. The Stoic ideal of self-reliance may promote isolation and a lack of empathy, downplaying the significance of relationships, community, and social bonds in achieving a fulfilling life (Brennan, 2005). Additionally, Stoicism's idealization of rationality as the primary guide for ethical behaviour may undervalue other important aspects of human experience, such as emotions, which modern psychology suggests play a crucial role in moral judgment and decision-making. The Stoic dismissal of emotions as irrational can be seen as an incomplete understanding of human nature and moral psychology (Irwin, 1998). Applying Stoic principles in everyday life can also be challenging. The ideal of remaining rational and detached in the face of adversity requires significant mental discipline, and critics argue that the Stoic emphasis on self-control and rationality may set unrealistic standards for human behaviour, leading to frustration when individuals fail to meet these ideals (Sellars, 2006). Furthermore, some Stoic ideas may not fully resonate with contemporary values, such as individualism, personal freedom, and social progress. For example, the Stoic view of accepting one's fate may conflict with modern ideals of autonomy and social justice, and the Stoic acceptance of social hierarchies might limit its applicability in promoting equality and justice (Long, 2002).

Despite these criticisms, Stoicism remains a valuable and influential school of thought, inspiring individuals to live virtuous and meaningful lives in harmony with nature and reason. Its focus on virtue, resilience, and rationality provides a framework for personal and moral development that can be adapted to various contexts (Brennan, 2005). In summary, Stoic ethics offers educative leaders a framework to cultivate virtuous character, resilience, and ethical leadership while challenging them to integrate these principles with contemporary educational values and practices. This rich

philosophical tradition provides a solid foundation for promoting personal and communal well-being in educational settings.

**The Ethics of Cynicism:** Cynicism today is often viewed as a negative outlook on human nature, emphasizing distrust about people's motives. However, in Ancient Greece, Cynicism was a respected philosophical school with significant contributions to moral philosophy. The term "Cynicism" comes from kynikos (dog-like) which reflects the extreme behaviour of Diogenes of Sinope (c. 404-320 BCE) and the philosophy of the broader Cynic School. Cynics offered a radical interpretation of living in accordance with nature (physis) and rejected societal norms (nomos), though their philosophy also had notable limitations (Navia, 1996). The Cynic School was founded by Antisthenes, a disciple of Socrates. Cynics believed that living in harmony with nature was essential to achieving eudaimonia, or the good life. While this idea aligned with Stoic beliefs, the Cynics pushed it to an extreme. They argued that human-made customs and conventions were artificial constructs that obstructed true happiness and freedom. To challenge these societal norms, Cynics often engaged in provocative and shocking behaviours (Dudley, 1937). These behaviours embodied the Cynic virtues of shamelessness (anaideia) and self-sufficiency (autarkeia), which they regarded as essential (Branham & Goulet-Cazé, 1996). They aimed to demonstrate that human happiness did not depend on wealth, power, or social status but rather on inner virtue and resilience (Ashcroft, 2022).

Cynic philosophy made significant contributions to moral philosophy by encouraging individuals to question the basis of their values and the authenticity of their desires. By rejecting societal norms and conventions, the Cynics inspired a critical examination of what it means to live a good life. Their emphasis on virtue as the only true good influenced later philosophical traditions, including Stoicism and early Christian asceticism (Desmond, 2008). However, the Cynic approach had its limitations. Their extreme practices and radical rejection of societal norms often led to isolation and antagonism toward society. While their critiques of social conventions were meant to provoke thought and reflection, they could also alienate others and create hostility. The Cynic lifestyle, characterized by asceticism and self-imposed poverty, was not practical or appealing to most people, limiting its broader applicability (Navia, 1996). Additionally, the Cynics' rejection of societal norms sometimes overlooked the positive aspects of human conventions and institutions. While many societal norms can be restrictive and arbitrary, some play a crucial role in maintaining social order and cohesion. The Cynic disdain for all conventions risked undermining the structures that enable communal living and mutual support. Their emphasis on individual self-sufficiency also neglected the inherently social nature of human beings and the value of relationships and community (Dudley, 1937).

Despite these limitations, Cynicism's legacy in moral philosophy endures. Their radical commitment to living authentically and their critique of societal norms continue to inspire and provoke thought. The Cynics remind us of the importance of questioning the values and conventions that shape our lives and the potential for living a life rooted in inner virtue rather than external validation. Their radical interpretation of living in accordance with nature, their commitment to self-sufficiency and shamelessness, and their critique of societal norms challenged conventional views of happiness and virtue. Understanding the roots of Cynicism in Ancient Greece allows for a deeper appreciation of this philosophical tradition and its relevance to contemporary discussions on morality and happiness (Branham & Goulet-Cazé, 1996).

**The Ethics of Scepticism:** Scepticism emphasised doubting the possibility of certain knowledge. Sceptics argued that suspending judgment, or epoché, is essential for achieving peace and avoiding the disturbances caused by dogmatic beliefs. Pyrrho of Elis (c. 360-270 BCE), often regarded as the founder of Scepticism, travelled with Alexander the Great to India, where he was influenced by Eastern philosophical traditions. Upon returning to Greece, he proposed that

humans cannot attain certain knowledge and that suspending judgment on all matters leads to a tranquil life. His philosophy is based on the idea that reality is inherently indeterminate, and that human perceptions and beliefs are unreliable. He advocated for living according to appearances, without committing to any belief about the underlying nature of those appearances (Thorsrud, 2009). Sextus Empiricus, who lived in the second and third centuries CE, wrote comprehensive accounts of Sceptical philosophy. He argued that by withholding assent from non-evident propositions, one can achieve a state of mental peace, free from the anxiety of dogmatic disputes. He elaborated on the principles of epoché and ataraxia and provided detailed arguments against various dogmatic schools of thought, including Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Academic Scepticism (Thorsrud, 2009; Bett, 2010).

The central concept in Scepticism is the suspension of judgment. Sceptics maintain that for any given proposition, equally convincing arguments can be made for and against it. This leads to a state of intellectual humility, where the sceptic refrains from making definitive assertions about the nature of reality. This suspension of judgment is believed to lead to ataraxia, or inner serenity, as it prevents the distress caused by the attachment to potentially erroneous beliefs (Annas & Barnes, 2000). Scepticism possesses several notable strengths that contribute to its enduring appeal as a philosophical approach. Central to Scepticism is its commitment to promoting mental tranquility, or ataraxia. By suspending judgment and eschewing dogmatic beliefs, Sceptics contend that individuals can cultivate a life characterized by greater emotional stability and inner peace (Annas & Barnes, 2000). This focus on tranquility underscores the practical dimension of Scepticism, offering a pathway to personal well-being.

Another significant strength of Scepticism is its encouragement of intellectual humility. Recognizing the inherent limitations of human cognition, Sceptics advocate for a modest approach to knowledge. This humility fosters open-mindedness and a readiness to engage with diverse perspectives, traits that are indispensable both in philosophical discourse and in navigating complex social interactions (Hankinson, 1995). Such an orientation not only enriches intellectual inquiry but also supports constructive dialogue. Moreover, Scepticism emphasizes critical thinking, urging individuals to question assumptions and rigorously examine beliefs. This critical stance helps to cultivate a more reflective understanding of the world, enabling individuals to avoid the errors and biases that often arise from unexamined presuppositions (Annas & Barnes, 2000). The prioritization of critical examination thus serves as a safeguard against intellectual complacency. Finally, Scepticism offers a unique resilience to dogmatic conflict. By refraining from rigid beliefs, Sceptics can navigate divergent opinions and contentious debates with equanimity. This resilience not only protects personal well-being but also contributes to social harmony by mitigating the tensions that frequently accompany ideological clashes (Bett, 2010). In these ways, Scepticism demonstrates its enduring relevance and utility in both philosophical and practical contexts.

Scepticism, while offering valuable insights, is not without its limitations, some of which raise significant concerns about its practical and philosophical viability. A primary critique of Scepticism lies in its potential impracticality. By suspending judgment on all matters, Sceptics may find it challenging to make decisions or act in everyday life. This hesitation, rooted in the fear of committing to potentially erroneous judgments, can result in a form of paralysis that obstructs practical engagement with the world (Hankinson, 1995). Such an approach may render Scepticism difficult to sustain in contexts that demand decisive action. Another limitation of Scepticism is its tendency toward moral relativism. By avoiding definitive moral judgments, Sceptics risk promoting a view in which all ethical positions are deemed equally valid. This relativistic stance poses challenges in addressing critical moral issues, such as those concerning justice and human rights, which often require clear, principled action and commitment (Annas & Barnes, 2000). Reluctance to act or commit to principles can undermine efforts to

resolve ethical dilemmas effectively. Additionally, Scepticism's persistent questioning of the possibility of certain knowledge may inadvertently undermine confidence in scientific and empirical methods of inquiry. By casting doubt on the reliability of knowledge acquisition, Scepticism can be seen as counterproductive to the progress of understanding and addressing real-world problems (Thorsrud, 2009). This epistemic caution, while philosophically rigorous, may conflict with the practical needs of advancing collective knowledge and improving societal conditions. Finally, the Sceptical emphasis on achieving tranquility through epoché—the suspension of judgment—can result in emotional detachment. In striving for indifference toward various beliefs and outcomes, Sceptics may risk disengagement from the passionate pursuits and meaningful commitments that often define a fulfilling life. This detachment, while consistent with the Sceptical ideal of tranquility, may inadvertently diminish the richness of human experience (Bett, 2010). These limitations highlight the challenges of reconciling Scepticism's theoretical principles with the demands of practical living and moral engagement. Scepticism, as a moral philosophy, offers valuable insights into the nature of knowledge and belief. By promoting intellectual humility, critical thinking, and mental tranquility, it provides a robust framework for navigating the complexities of life without falling prey to dogmatism. However, its practical limitations, potential for moral relativism, and tendency towards emotional detachment highlight the challenges of applying Sceptical principles consistently. Despite these challenges, the legacy of Scepticism remains influential in encouraging a thoughtful and reflective approach to ethics and knowledge.

**The Ethics of Epicureanism:** Epicurus (341-270 BCE) was born on the island of Samos, a Greek colony (Gordon, 2012). After mandatory military service in Athens, he studied philosophy under several teachers, including Pamphilus, a Platonist, and Nausiphanes, who followed the atomistic teachings of Democritus (Jones, 1997). However, he also absorbed ideas from other schools of thought, which he synthesized into his own unique philosophical system (O'Keefe, 2010). Epicurus began teaching in Mytilene and then in Lampsacus in 311 BCE. In 306 BCE, he returned to Athens and established his school in what became known as "The Garden" (Erler & Schofield, 1999). This school was unique for its inclusivity, welcoming women, slaves, and anyone interested in philosophical discourse. The Garden became a symbol of Epicureanism, promoting a communal and egalitarian approach to philosophy (Konstan, 2008).

Central to Epicurus's philosophy is the pursuit of pleasure (hedone) and the avoidance of pain (aponia). He posited that pleasure is the highest good and the aim of life. However, his notion of pleasure was not hedonistic in the modern sense; it was about achieving a state of inner peace and freedom from physical pain (Warren, 2009). Epicurus distinguished between different types of pleasures and advocated for a life of moderate, sustainable pleasures, emphasizing mental pleasures over physical ones (Everson, 1994).

The Epicurean approach to ethics offers significant strengths that continue to resonate in contemporary discussions of well-being and moral philosophy. One of its primary strengths is its simplicity and practicality. Epicurus's emphasis on the satisfaction of natural and necessary desires, such as those for food and shelter, provides a clear and accessible pathway to contentment. By advocating for the elimination of unnecessary desires, his philosophy underscores a lifestyle rooted in simplicity, which aligns with practical considerations for achieving happiness (Annas, 1993).

Equally notable is the psychological insight embedded in Epicurean ethics. Epicurus's focus on mental tranquility and the reduction of fear and anxiety—particularly the fears of gods and death—addresses profound psychological concerns that affect human well-being. His teachings promote mental health and emotional resilience by offering rational strategies to overcome existential fears, contributing to a more peaceful and balanced life (Nussbaum, 1994). Furthermore, Epicurus links ethical living with personal happiness in a coherent and pragmatic manner. He presents virtues such as prudence, justice,

and temperance not as intrinsic ends but as instrumental means to achieve a pleasurable and tranquil existence. This connection between ethics and the practical goal of happiness enhances the consistency and applicability of his moral philosophy (Sanders, 1988). Despite these strengths, the Epicurean approach is not without its limitations. Critics argue that Epicurus's definition of pleasure is overly narrow. While he prioritizes mental and long-term pleasures, he tends to downplay the importance of physical pleasures, potentially overlooking their role in a well-rounded and fulfilling life (Mitsis, 1988). Additionally, his strong emphasis on personal tranquillity often translates into a recommendation to avoid political and social engagement. This focus on individual peace can be seen as excessively individualistic, potentially neglecting important social responsibilities and ethical obligations that contribute to the collective good (Hutchinson, 1994). Central to Epicurean ethics is the Fourfold Remedy (Tetrapharmakos), a practical guide designed to help individuals achieve a happy life. The remedy encapsulates four core principles: do not fear the gods, as they are indifferent to human affairs and uninvolved in worldly matters (Clay, 1983); do not fear death, as it signifies the cessation of sensation and therefore cannot be a source of suffering (Furley, 1999); recognize that what is good is easy to obtain, emphasizing the simplicity and accessibility of fulfilling basic needs (Gosling & Taylor, 1982); and understand that what is terrible is easy to endure, with physical pain either being short-lived or manageable through mental resilience (Rist, 1972).

The Fourfold Remedy offers distinct advantages. It provides a rational framework for reducing fear and anxiety, significantly contributing to mental peace and emotional stability (Stephens, 2005). Moreover, by stressing that what is good is easy to obtain, it promotes a minimalist approach to life that prioritizes essential needs over material excess. This perspective not only supports individual well-being but also encourages sustainable living and reduces the stress associated with excessive desires (Asmis, 1984). However, the Fourfold Remedy is not without its criticisms. Its simplicity, while appealing, can lead to oversimplification and misinterpretation, with some mistaking Epicureanism for hedonism and overlooking its deeper philosophical principles (Glad, 1996). Additionally, its focus on individual well-being limits its scope, making it less applicable to complex social and ethical issues that require attention to collective well-being and justice. In such contexts, the remedy's utility may appear constrained (O'Connor, 1985). Taken together, Epicurean ethics and the Fourfold Remedy offer profound insights into achieving personal happiness and tranquillity, but their limitations highlight the challenges of addressing broader social and ethical dimensions within this philosophical framework. Epicurus's influence persisted long after his death in 270 BCE. His school, The Garden, continued to attract followers, and his ideas were preserved through the writings of later philosophers and poets. The rediscovery of Epicurean texts during the Renaissance significantly influenced the development of modern scientific and humanistic thought (Greenblatt, 2011). They emphasized the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of distress through rational living but faces criticism for its narrow definition of pleasure and potential disengagement from broader social responsibilities. Despite these limitations, Epicureanism remains a compelling and influential philosophical system that continues to resonate with those seeking a balanced and peaceful life (Wilson, 2015).

**Analysis: Stoicism and Educative Leadership:** Stoic moral philosophy and transformational leadership share a common emphasis on the cultivation of virtues and moral character. Both frameworks prioritize the development of qualities such as wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice, which are central to Stoic ethics (Long, 2002) and resonate with the moral imperatives of transformational leadership. Transformational leaders are characterized by their ability to inspire followers to transcend their self-interests for the collective good, fostering moral and ethical development within the organization (Bass & Riggio, 2006). A key similarity lies in the emphasis on ethical behaviour and personal integrity. Just as Stoic philosophy advocates for living in accordance with reason and virtue, transformational leadership emphasizes

ethical leadership and the importance of leaders serving as moral exemplars (Northouse, 2019). Both frameworks suggest that true leadership and a well-lived life are grounded in virtue and moral integrity. However, a significant difference between the two lies in their approach to external circumstances and outcomes. Stoicism teaches indifference to external goods and events, encouraging individuals to focus on internal virtues rather than external successes (Sellars, 2006). In contrast, transformational leadership involves actively engaging with and transforming external realities to achieve organizational goals (Bass & Riggio, 2006). While Stoicism emphasizes acceptance of fate and the natural order, transformational leaders are change agents who strive to alter and improve external circumstances. Furthermore, Stoicism's emphasis on emotional detachment contrasts with transformational leadership's focus on emotional engagement. Transformational leaders use emotional appeal and inspiration to motivate followers (Northouse, 2019), whereas Stoics advocate for *apatheia*, or freedom from emotional disturbance (Brennan, 2005).

In summary, while Stoic moral philosophy and transformational leadership theory both emphasize virtue and ethical behaviour, they differ in their approaches to external circumstances and the role of emotions in leadership. Instructional leadership theory and Stoic moral philosophy share similarities in their emphasis on guiding individuals towards excellence and ethical conduct, though they differ in their approach and focus. Both Stoicism and instructional leadership prioritize the cultivation of virtue or excellence. Stoic ethics centres on developing the cardinal virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice, which are essential for achieving *eudaimonia* or a flourishing life (Brennan, 2005). Similarly, instructional leadership emphasizes the development of teacher quality and student achievement through practices that promote high standards, continuous improvement, and ethical leadership (Hallinger, 2005). In both frameworks, the leader or philosopher serves as a role model, demonstrating the virtues or practices they seek to instil in others. However, the focus of each philosophy diverges. Stoicism is inward-looking, emphasizing the importance of personal virtue and inner tranquillity, achieved by aligning one's actions with reason and nature, and maintaining indifference to external goods and outcomes (Long, 2002). Instructional leadership, on the other hand, is more outward-looking and context-driven, focusing on improving educational outcomes through the strategic management of teaching and learning processes (Boyce & Bowers, 2018). While Stoicism advocates for a degree of detachment from external circumstances, instructional leadership requires active engagement with external factors, such as curriculum standards, teacher performance, and student needs.

Additionally, Stoicism's emphasis on emotional detachment contrasts with the emotional intelligence needed in instructional leadership. Effective instructional leaders are expected to be empathetic and emotionally engaged, fostering a positive and supportive learning environment, which is critical for student and teacher success (Hallinger, 2005). This distinction highlights the different applications of Stoic virtues in the context of leadership, where the balance between rationality and emotional engagement is crucial for effective instructional leadership. Distributed leadership theory and Stoic moral philosophy share common ground in their decentralized, system-oriented approaches, but they diverge significantly in focus and application. Both Stoicism and distributed leadership emphasize the importance of individual responsibility and the collective good. Stoic philosophy underscores the importance of personal virtue—wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice—as the foundation for a well-lived life (Brennan, 2005). Similarly, distributed leadership theory, which emerged as a response to traditional hierarchical leadership models, advocates for the distribution of leadership roles across various stakeholders within an organization, emphasizing collective responsibility and the contribution of everyone to the overall success (Spillane, 2006). In both frameworks, there is a clear recognition that excellence and moral behaviour are not the purview of a single leader but are distributed among all participants. However, the key difference lies in the scope and application of these

principles. Stoicism is fundamentally an individualistic philosophy, focusing on personal virtue and moral self-sufficiency (Long, 2002). It is concerned with how an individual can live a virtuous life in harmony with nature and reason, often independent of external circumstances. Distributed leadership, on the other hand, is inherently social and collaborative, focusing on how leadership functions can be shared within an organization to enhance overall effectiveness and adaptability (Harris, 2008). While Stoicism might advocate for emotional detachment from external outcomes, distributed leadership requires active engagement with others, fostering a culture of collaboration and shared decision-making. Moreover, distributed leadership places a stronger emphasis on the relational dynamics within a group or organization, valuing the interdependence of its members, whereas Stoicism emphasizes individual autonomy and rationality, often advocating for a level of detachment from others' actions or societal structures (Irwin, 1998). This distinction highlights the different contexts in which these philosophies operate—Stoicism within the moral development of the individual and distributed leadership within the operational dynamics of organizations.

Ethical leadership theory and Stoic moral philosophy share a strong focus on virtue, but they differ in their approach to leadership and the role of emotions. Both frameworks emphasize the importance of moral character, with Stoicism advocating for virtues like wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice as the foundation of a good life (Brennan, 2005). Similarly, ethical leadership theory stresses the need for leaders to demonstrate integrity, fairness, and concern for others, guiding their organizations based on ethical principles (Brown & Treviño, 2006). A key similarity between the two lies in their emphasis on leading by example. Stoic leaders are expected to embody virtue in their actions, maintaining consistency between their values and behaviours, regardless of external circumstances (Irwin, 1998). Ethical leadership theory similarly posits that leaders should act as moral role models, inspiring trust and ethical behaviour among followers through their actions and decisions (Brown & Treviño, 2006). However, there are notable differences between the two approaches. Stoicism's focus on emotional detachment and rationality can be seen as rigid, advocating for an indifference to external goods and circumstances (Long, 2002). This contrasts with ethical leadership theory, which recognizes the importance of emotional intelligence, empathy, and the relational aspects of leadership (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Ethical leaders are expected to balance rational decision-making with emotional awareness, understanding the impact of their actions on others and fostering a supportive organizational culture (Yukl, 2013).

Furthermore, while Stoicism emphasizes individual moral development as the path to eudaimonia, an enduring state of being that encompasses moral integrity, intellectual achievement, and a sense of fulfillment, ethical leadership theory places greater emphasis on the social responsibilities of leaders, including the promotion of ethical practices within their organizations and communities (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Stoicism offers key insights for both adaptive and culturally responsive leadership, particularly through its emphasis on resilience, rationality, and ethical self-discipline. Adaptive leadership, which focuses on navigating complex and uncertain environments, aligns with the Stoic principle of maintaining inner stability in the face of external challenges (Heifetz *et al.*, 2009). Leaders practicing adaptive leadership, like Stoics, cultivate emotional resilience and self-control, enabling them to guide organizations through change without being overwhelmed by setbacks. Additionally, Stoicism's commitment to virtue and ethical reasoning resonates with adaptive leadership's focus on diagnosing systemic issues and fostering long-term sustainability rather than short-term solutions (Northouse, 2021). The Stoic emphasis on accepting reality as it is, rather than as one wishes it to be, reinforces the adaptive leader's ability to work pragmatically within constraints while fostering growth and learning among followers. However, Stoicism diverges from culturally responsive leadership in significant ways. Culturally responsive leadership prioritizes relational engagement, collective identity, and the validation of diverse worldviews (Gay, 2018), whereas Stoic philosophy traditionally emphasizes individual rationality and

detachment from external influences (Long, 2002). While Stoicism encourages universal moral reasoning, it does not explicitly account for the importance of cultural context in shaping ethical perspectives and leadership practices. In contrast, culturally responsive leadership centers on the lived experiences of marginalized communities and seeks to affirm cultural identities within educational and organizational settings (Khalifa *et al.*, 2016). While Stoic resilience can support culturally responsive leaders in remaining steadfast against systemic inequities, its more individualistic and internally focused approach may need to be balanced with an outwardly engaged, relational stance that values cultural context and collective empowerment.

**Analysis: Cynicism and Educative Leadership:** Cynic moral philosophy and transformational leadership theory both advocate for profound changes in how individuals live and lead, but they differ fundamentally in their approach to societal norms and human relationships. Cynicism emphasizes living in accordance with nature and rejecting societal conventions (nomos) as artificial constraints that impede true happiness and freedom (Branham & Goulet-Cazé, 1996). Cynics believed in self-sufficiency (autarkeia) and shamelessness (anaideia) as essential virtues, often expressed through provocative actions that challenged societal norms (Navia, 1996). This radical individualism and rejection of social conventions positioned Cynicism as a critique of the status quo, focusing on personal virtue over societal approval. Transformational leadership theory, on the other hand, emphasizes inspiring and motivating followers to achieve higher levels of moral and ethical standards, fostering significant changes within organizations and society (Bass, 1985). Transformational leaders seek to engage followers in a shared vision, promoting values like integrity, justice, and collective well-being. Unlike Cynic philosophy, transformational leadership does not reject societal norms but rather seeks to reform them, aligning them with higher moral ideals. Transformational leaders work within the system to inspire change, focusing on the collective rather than individual rebellion against societal constraints.

A significant difference between the two is their view on human relationships. While Cynicism often led to isolation and antagonism towards society due to its radical rejection of social conventions (Dudley, 1937), transformational leadership is inherently relational, emphasizing the importance of building trust, collaboration, and shared goals within a group (Avolio & Bass, 1995). Transformational leadership's focus on collective change contrasts with the Cynic's emphasis on personal virtue and individual self-sufficiency. In summary, while both Cynicism and transformational leadership advocate for living and leading according to ethical principles, they differ in their approach to societal norms, the role of human relationships, and the methods by which they seek to achieve their goals. Cynic moral philosophy and instructional leadership theory offer contrasting views on leadership, particularly in how they approach societal norms, human behaviour, and the role of education. The Cynic School was characterized by a radical commitment to living in harmony with nature (physis) and a profound rejection of societal conventions (nomos) (Branham & Goulet-Cazé, 1996). Cynics believed that true happiness and virtue could only be achieved by discarding the artificial constraints of society, often engaging in provocative and shocking behaviours to challenge these norms (Dudley, 1937).

Instructional leadership theory, however, focuses on the role of leaders in shaping the educational environment, ensuring that teaching and learning processes are effective and aligned with institutional goals (Hallinger, 2005). Unlike Cynicism, which often disregarded societal norms, instructional leadership works within these structures to enhance educational outcomes. Instructional leaders emphasize collaboration, instructional improvement, and the development of teachers to foster a positive learning environment (Hallinger, 2005). A key difference between Cynic philosophy and instructional leadership is their approach to societal norms and human behaviour. Cynics saw societal norms as impediments to true freedom and virtue, advocating for a life of simplicity and self-sufficiency,

often at the expense of social cohesion (Navia, 1996). In contrast, instructional leaders operate within societal norms, aiming to improve them through education. They focus on creating structured, supportive environments that promote learning and development rather than rejecting societal structures outright. Moreover, instructional leadership emphasizes the importance of relationships, collaboration, and community in achieving educational goals (Leithwood *et al.*, 2004). This contrasts with the Cynics' focus on individual virtue and self-sufficiency, which often led to isolation and antagonism towards broader society. Instructional leaders value the social nature of education, fostering relationships that support both teachers and students in their educational pursuits. In conclusion, while Cynic moral philosophy and instructional leadership both address the importance of virtue and personal development, they differ significantly in their approaches to societal norms, human relationships, and the role of leadership in education. Distributed leadership theory and Cynic moral philosophy both emphasize decentralization and the importance of individual agency, but they diverge significantly in their approaches to societal norms and communal interactions. The Cynic School advocated for living in harmony with nature and rejected societal conventions as artificial constructs that hinder true freedom and happiness (Branham & Goulet-Cazé, 1996). Cynics believed in shamelessness (*anaideia*) and self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*), often engaging in provocative behaviours to challenge societal norms (Dudley, 1937). Distributed leadership theory, on the other hand, emphasizes the distribution of leadership roles across various individuals within an organization, recognizing the collective and collaborative nature of effective leadership (Spillane, 2006). Unlike the Cynic rejection of societal norms, distributed leadership works within these structures to enhance organizational effectiveness. It encourages shared responsibility, teamwork, and the involvement of multiple stakeholders in decision-making processes (Harris, 2008).

A key similarity between Cynic philosophy and distributed leadership is the emphasis on individual agency. Cynics promoted personal virtue and autonomy, encouraging individuals to live authentically, free from societal constraints (Navia, 1996). Similarly, distributed leadership empowers individuals at all levels of an organization, recognizing their contributions to leadership and decision-making (Spillane, 2006). However, a significant difference lies in their treatment of societal norms and community. While Cynics often disregarded societal conventions and prioritized individual virtue, sometimes at the expense of social cohesion, distributed leadership seeks to balance individual contributions with the collective goals of the organization (Harris, 2008). Distributed leadership fosters a collaborative environment, where relationships and community are essential to achieving common goals, contrasting with the Cynics' tendency toward isolation and antagonism toward broader society (Dudley, 1937). Hence, while both Cynic philosophy and distributed leadership theory value individual agency, they differ in their approach to societal norms and community. Distributed leadership focuses on collaboration and shared responsibility within societal structures, while Cynicism often challenges and rejects these norms in pursuit of individual virtue. Cynic moral philosophy and ethical leadership theory share a common emphasis on virtue and authenticity, but they differ in their approaches to societal norms and the role of the leader in fostering ethical behaviour. Cynic philosophy promotes living in harmony with nature and rejects societal conventions as impediments to true happiness and freedom (Branham & Goulet-Cazé, 1996). Cynics believed that virtue was demonstrated through actions, not words, and they often engaged in provocative behaviours to challenge societal norms and encourage others to reflect on the authenticity of their values (Dudley, 1937). Their focus on self-sufficiency and shamelessness reflects a commitment to living a virtuous life independent of societal approval. Ethical leadership theory, by contrast, emphasizes the importance of leaders who act as moral role models within the context of societal norms and organizational structures. Ethical leaders demonstrate fairness, integrity, and concern for others, fostering an environment where ethical behaviour is encouraged and supported (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Unlike the Cynics, who often isolated themselves from

society, ethical leaders work within societal frameworks to promote ethical practices and create a culture of ethical behaviour in their organizations (Northouse, 2021). A key similarity between the two is the emphasis on authenticity and the demonstration of virtue through action. Both Cynic philosophy and ethical leadership theory value leaders who are true to their principles and who lead by example. However, while the Cynics often took extreme measures to challenge societal norms, ethical leadership theory focuses on working within those norms to guide others toward ethical behaviour. While Cynic philosophy and ethical leadership theory both stress the importance of virtue and authenticity, they differ significantly in their relationship with societal norms. Ethical leadership seeks to foster ethical behaviour within existing structures, while Cynic philosophy challenges and often rejects those structures altogether. Cynicism offers insights for both adaptive and culturally responsive leadership, particularly through its emphasis on authenticity, rejection of societal conventions, and commitment to truth-telling. Adaptive leadership, which requires challenging entrenched norms and fostering systemic change, aligns with the Cynic ideal of questioning authority and exposing hypocrisy (Heifetz *et al.*, 2009). Cynic leaders, like adaptive leaders, reject superficial or status-driven leadership in favor of direct, often uncomfortable engagement with reality (Long, 2014). This approach mirrors adaptive leadership's focus on diagnosing underlying organizational dysfunctions and pushing for necessary, albeit difficult, transformations. Furthermore, Cynicism's emphasis on self-sufficiency and moral integrity resonates with the adaptive leader's ability to remain steadfast in the face of opposition while challenging followers to rethink their assumptions and develop new capacities for change (Northouse, 2021).

However, Cynicism diverges significantly from culturally responsive leadership. While Cynic philosophy encourages the rejection of social conventions and material attachments, culturally responsive leadership seeks to honor and sustain cultural traditions, particularly those of historically marginalized groups (Gay, 2018). The Cynic tendency toward radical individualism and public provocation contrasts with the relational and community-centered ethos of culturally responsive leadership, which prioritizes collective identity and cultural affirmation (Khalifa *et al.*, 2016). Although the Cynic commitment to truth-telling and social critique may support culturally responsive leaders in confronting systemic inequities, its often abrasive and confrontational nature may need to be tempered with culturally responsive leadership's emphasis on empathy, collaboration, and respect for diverse worldviews.

**Analysis: Scepticism and Educative Leadership:** Scepticism, as a moral philosophy, and transformational leadership theory both emphasize critical thinking and the avoidance of dogmatism, but they diverge in their approach to action and certainty in leadership. Scepticism advocates for the suspension of judgment (*epoché*) as a means to achieving tranquillity. Sceptics argue that by refraining from making definitive assertions about knowledge or reality, individuals can avoid the disturbances caused by dogmatic beliefs and conflicting opinions (Annas & Barnes, 2000). This philosophy fosters intellectual humility and critical thinking, encouraging individuals to question assumptions and remain open to multiple perspectives. However, it also poses challenges, such as potential paralysis in decision-making and the risk of moral relativism, where all viewpoints are seen as equally valid (Hankinson, 1995).

In contrast, transformational leadership theory focuses on inspiring and motivating followers to achieve higher levels of performance and personal development. Transformational leaders are characterized by their ability to articulate a clear vision, foster a sense of purpose, and encourage followers to transcend their self-interests for the greater good (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Unlike Scepticism, which promotes a cautious and non-committal stance towards knowledge, transformational leadership is action-oriented and requires leaders to make decisive judgments to guide and influence their followers. A key similarity between Scepticism and transformational leadership is the emphasis on critical thinking. Both philosophies encourage individuals to challenge existing beliefs and assumptions. However,

while Scepticism leads to a suspension of judgment, transformational leadership seeks to channel critical thinking into constructive action that drives change and improvement (Northouse, 2021). The primary difference lies in the approach to certainty and action. Scepticism avoids committing to any belief or action, whereas transformational leadership requires leaders to commit to a vision and take decisive actions to achieve it. While Scepticism values inner peace through intellectual detachment, transformational leadership is concerned with engaging and empowering followers to realize their full potential. Instructional leadership theory and Scepticism as a moral philosophy both emphasize critical thinking with careful consideration of beliefs and practices, but they differ fundamentally in their approaches to knowledge, decision-making, and the role of the leader. Sceptics argue that certainty is unattainable and that suspending belief in non-evident propositions avoids the disturbances caused by dogmatic disputes. This approach fosters intellectual humility and critical thinking, encouraging the examination of multiple perspectives without committing to any one view (Annas & Barnes, 2000). However, Scepticism can lead to challenges in practical decision-making, as the suspension of judgment may result in indecisiveness and moral relativism, where all viewpoints are considered equally valid (Hankinson, 1995). Instructional leadership, on the other hand, is focused on guiding and improving the teaching and learning processes within educational institutions. Instructional leaders are expected to set clear goals, develop curricula, evaluate teaching effectiveness, and make evidence-based decisions to enhance student outcomes (Hallinger, 2003). Unlike Scepticism, which often refrains from definitive action, instructional leadership requires decisive action based on empirical evidence and best practices. Instructional leaders must make judgments about what constitutes effective teaching and learning, often relying on established knowledge and research to inform their decisions (Leithwood & Louis, 2012).

A key similarity between instructional leadership and Scepticism is their shared emphasis on critical thinking. Both perspectives value questioning assumptions and encouraging a reflective approach to knowledge and practice. However, the difference lies in their application: while Scepticism promotes intellectual caution and the suspension of judgment, instructional leadership theory compels action-oriented decisions based on the evaluation of evidence. In summary, while both Scepticism and instructional leadership prioritize critical thinking, they differ significantly in their treatment of knowledge and decision-making. Scepticism emphasizes the avoidance of dogmatic beliefs and suspends judgment, leading to tranquillity but potentially hindering action. In contrast, instructional leadership requires making informed, evidence-based decisions to guide educational practices, promoting effective teaching and learning outcomes. Distributed leadership theory and Scepticism both emphasize the importance of flexibility and the questioning of established norms, but they diverge significantly in their application and implications for leadership. Sceptics argue that since certain knowledge is unattainable, individuals should refrain from making definitive assertions and remain open to multiple perspectives. This approach fosters intellectual humility and critical thinking by avoiding dogmatic beliefs (Annas & Barnes, 2000; Thorsrud, 2009). Scepticism's strength lies in its ability to mitigate conflict and promote mental peace, but it can also lead to decision-making paralysis and moral relativism, as it resists firm commitments and clear judgments (Hankinson, 1995). Distributed leadership theory, on the other hand, is grounded in the idea that leadership should be shared among various members of an organization rather than being concentrated on a single individual. This approach emphasizes collaboration, shared decision-making, and the collective responsibility of leaders (Spillane, 2006). In distributed leadership, leaders are seen as facilitators who empower others to take on leadership roles and contribute to the overall vision of the organization. This theory supports a dynamic and flexible approach to leadership, where power and responsibilities are distributed to harness the diverse skills and perspectives of the team (Gronn, 2008).

The key similarity between distributed leadership theory and Scepticism is their emphasis on openness to multiple perspectives and flexibility. Both approaches advocate for a reconsideration of traditional authority and encourage a more reflective and inclusive process. However, their differences are significant: Scepticism often leads to inaction and ambiguity due to its avoidance of definitive beliefs, whereas distributed leadership promotes active collaboration and decision-making by leveraging the strengths of various team members (Spillane, 2006). In summary, while Scepticism and distributed leadership share a common value in questioning established norms, their practical applications are distinct. Scepticism's focus on intellectual humility and avoidance of firm commitments contrasts with distributed leadership's emphasis on collective decision-making and empowerment. Ethical leadership theory and Scepticism both emphasize the importance of questioning established norms and maintaining a reflective stance. However, they diverge significantly in their approaches and practical implications. Sceptics argue that because certain knowledge is unattainable, one should refrain from making definitive assertions and remain open to multiple perspectives. This approach fosters intellectual humility and critical thinking by avoiding dogmatic beliefs (Annas & Barnes, 2000; Thorsrud, 2009). However, Scepticism can lead to decision-making paralysis and moral relativism due to its avoidance of firm commitments and clear judgments (Hankinson, 1995). Ethical leadership theory, on the other hand, focuses on leaders who demonstrate ethical behaviour and decision-making, aiming to inspire and guide others by upholding moral principles. Ethical leaders prioritize values such as integrity, fairness, and accountability in their leadership practices. This theory underscores the importance of ethical role modelling, transparency, and the alignment of organizational practices with moral values (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Ethical leadership involves making principled decisions that reflect a commitment to the well-being of others and the organization, emphasizing consistency and clear moral guidelines (Northouse, 2018).

The key similarity between ethical leadership theory and Scepticism is their shared emphasis on questioning established norms and promoting reflective practices. Both approaches encourage leaders and individuals to consider multiple perspectives and avoid dogmatism. However, their differences are marked: Scepticism's focus on suspension of judgment can result in inaction and ambiguity, whereas ethical leadership promotes proactive moral behaviour and decision-making. Scepticism can lead to a lack of clear direction, while ethical leadership seeks to provide clarity through ethical principles and role modelling (Brown & Treviño, 2006). In summary to this point, while Scepticism and ethical leadership both value critical reflection and openness to diverse perspectives, they differ in their practical application and focus. Scepticism's reluctance to commit to definite beliefs contrasts with ethical leadership's emphasis on principled and action-oriented decision-making. Scepticism offers valuable insights into both adaptive and culturally responsive leadership, particularly in its emphasis on critical inquiry, intellectual humility, and the suspension of judgment. Adaptive leadership, which requires leaders to question assumptions and embrace uncertainty, aligns with the Skeptic principle of challenging dogmatic beliefs and remaining open to new perspectives (Heifetz *et al.*, 2009). Sceptics, like adaptive leaders, resist rigid ideologies and instead promote a process of continuous learning and adaptation, allowing for flexible responses to complex challenges (Long, 2014). This intellectual flexibility is particularly useful in adaptive leadership, where leaders must diagnose problems, test potential solutions, and adjust strategies based on evolving circumstances (Northouse, 2021). Furthermore, the Skeptic commitment to examining multiple viewpoints aligns with the adaptive leader's role in fostering dialogue and guiding organizations through ambiguity without resorting to simplistic or absolute solutions. However, Scepticism diverges from culturally responsive leadership in important ways. While Skeptic philosophy promotes the suspension of belief to avoid error, culturally responsive leadership emphasizes the active affirmation and validation of diverse cultural identities (Gay, 2018). The Skeptic tendency to question all claims, including

moral and cultural assertions, contrasts with culturally responsive leadership's goal of centering and legitimizing the lived experiences of marginalized communities (Khalifa *et al.*, 2016). Whereas culturally responsive leadership seeks to empower individuals by affirming their cultural heritage, Skepticism's reluctance to endorse any worldview could lead to disengagement or a failure to take decisive action in addressing systemic inequities. While Skepticism's critical thinking skills can strengthen culturally responsive leadership by fostering reflective practice and guarding against ethnocentrism, it must be balanced with a commitment to justice and advocacy to ensure meaningful social change.

**Analysis: Epicureanism and Educative Leadership:** Epicurean moral philosophy and transformational leadership theory offer distinct yet intersecting perspectives on well-being and effectiveness. Epicureanism emphasizes the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain as the highest good, aiming for a state of calmness and freedom from physical pain (Warren, 2009). It advocates for simple, moderate pleasures and a focus on mental well-being over physical indulgence, aiming to reduce anxiety and fear (Everson, 1994). Transformational leadership theory focuses on inspiring and motivating followers to exceed their self-interests for the greater good. Transformational leaders work to elevate the morale, motivation, and performance of their followers through a shared vision and commitment to personal and organizational growth (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Both Epicureanism and transformational leadership emphasize the well-being of individuals. Epicureanism aims for pain-free peace of mind, while transformational leadership seeks to enhance followers' satisfaction and personal growth. Additionally, both approaches prioritize long-term fulfillment over immediate gratification. Epicureanism values sustainable, moderate pleasures, and transformational leadership seeks to inspire lasting change and development in followers. However, there are notable differences between the two. Epicureanism advocates for a withdrawal from public and political life to maintain personal peace, which can lead to disengagement from societal responsibilities (Hutchinson, 1994). In contrast, transformational leadership actively engages followers in collective goals and societal contributions, emphasizing proactive involvement and change (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Furthermore, while Epicureanism focuses on personal well-being and avoiding unnecessary desires (Warren, 2009), transformational leadership is concerned with influencing and elevating others' performance and values to achieve organizational and societal objectives (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In summary, while both Epicurean philosophy and transformational leadership value well-being and sustainable satisfaction, they diverge in their approaches to societal engagement and influence. Epicureanism emphasizes personal peace of mind and moderate pleasures, while transformational leadership focuses on inspiring and developing others to achieve shared goals.

Instructional leadership theory and Epicurean moral philosophy present both convergent and divergent views on human flourishing and guidance. Central to Epicureanism is the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain, with a focus on achieving tranquillity and freedom from physical discomfort (Warren, 2009). Epicurus advocates for a life of moderate pleasures, prioritizing mental over physical satisfaction and promoting psychological well-being (Everson, 1994). In contrast, instructional leadership theory emphasizes the role of leaders in guiding and improving teaching and learning within educational settings. Instructional leaders focus on developing effective teaching practices, setting clear educational goals, and fostering an environment conducive to student learning (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger, 2003). Both instructional leadership and Epicureanism underscore the importance of well-being, though they approach it differently. Epicureanism is concerned with individual contentment through balanced living and mental peace, while instructional leadership aims to enhance educational outcomes and teacher effectiveness. Epicureanism promotes a life free from unnecessary desires and anxieties, emphasizing inner peace, comfort and satisfaction (Annas, 1993; Nussbaum, 1994). Instructional leadership, on the other hand, seeks to create a supportive environment that enhances the instructional practices and

professional growth of educators, ultimately benefiting student achievement (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). A key difference lies in their scope of impact. Epicureanism is predominantly individualistic, focusing on personal happiness and mental tranquillity (Hutchinson, 1994). Instructional leadership, however, is systemic, aiming to improve educational practices and student outcomes through effective leadership and strategic planning (Hallinger, 2003). Epicurean principles might be applied to educative leadership by fostering a supportive and stress-free environment, promoting balanced professional practices, and prioritizing mental well-being (Warren, 2009). Nevertheless, the ancient philosophical focus on personal pleasure and tranquillity does not directly address the broader systemic issues that instructional leadership seeks to resolve (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). In summary, while both Epicureanism and instructional leadership value well-being, their applications and focus differ significantly. Epicureanism centres on personal peace and eliminating pain, whereas instructional leadership aims to enhance educational quality and support educators in achieving excellence. Distributed leadership theory and Epicurean moral philosophy offer distinct yet occasionally overlapping perspectives on human flourishing and organizational effectiveness. Epicurus's philosophy prioritizes achieving moderate, sustainable pleasures and mental well-being over physical indulgence, advocating for a life of simplicity and ethical living to achieve happiness (Everson, 1994; Annas, 1993; Warren, 2009).

Distributed leadership theory, conversely, emphasizes the collective, shared nature of leadership within an organization. This approach argues that leadership should be distributed across various members of an organization rather than concentrated on a single individual, with a focus on collaborative decision-making and the empowerment of all participants (Spillane, 2006). It supports the idea that effective leadership emerges from the interactions between individuals and their environment, promoting a culture of shared responsibility and collective growth (Gronn, 2008). A notable similarity between Epicurean philosophy and distributed leadership is their focus on improving well-being and reducing stress. Epicureanism seeks to achieve inner tranquillity and avoid discomfort, which aligns with the distributed leadership emphasis on creating supportive and collaborative work environments (Warren, 2009). Both perspectives value the reduction of unnecessary stress and the promotion of a harmonious, productive environment.

However, differences are also significant. Epicurean philosophy is primarily concerned with individual happiness and mental peace, advocating for a retreat from broader social and political engagement (Hutchinson, 1994). In contrast, distributed leadership thrives on active participation and engagement from multiple stakeholders, emphasizing collective action and shared leadership responsibilities (Spillane, 2006). The focus of Epicureanism on personal calm can be seen as less applicable to the collaborative and interactive nature of distributed leadership, which requires active involvement and dynamic leadership practices (Gronn, 2008). In summary, while both distributed leadership theory and Epicurean philosophy aim to enhance well-being, their approaches and applications differ markedly. Epicureanism focuses on individual mental peace and simplicity, whereas distributed leadership emphasizes collective involvement and shared responsibility within organizational settings.

Ethical leadership theory and Epicurean moral philosophy both emphasize well-being and ethical conduct, though they approach these concepts from different perspectives. Epicurus's philosophy is centred on the pursuit of joy and the avoidance of hurt, advocating for a life characterized by mental serenity and freedom from physical pain. His focus is on achieving sustainable, moderate pleasures and mental peace, rather than seeking intense or fleeting pleasures (Warren, 2009; Everson, 1994).

In contrast, ethical leadership theory concentrates on the ethical behaviour and integrity of leaders. This theory emphasizes that leaders should model ethical conduct, create an ethical organizational environment, and foster a culture of honesty and accountability. It

highlights the role of leaders in shaping the ethical climate of their organizations and stresses the alignment of personal and organizational values (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Ciulla, 2004). Both Epicurean philosophy and ethical leadership theory share a focus on well-being, though in different contexts. Epicureanism seeks personal composure and mental peace through the pursuit of simple pleasures, while ethical leadership aims to cultivate a positive and fair work environment that enhances the well-being of organizational members (Warren, 2009; Brown & Treviño, 2006). Moreover, both approaches integrate ethics into their frameworks; Epicureanism connects ethical living with personal happiness, suggesting that virtues are means to achieve a pleasurable life (Everson, 1994), while ethical leadership theory stresses the importance of ethical behaviour and integrity in leadership (Ciulla, 2004). However, their focus and application differ significantly. Epicurean philosophy tends to be individualistic, concentrating on personal happiness and tranquillity, sometimes at the expense of broader social responsibilities (Hutchinson, 1994). In contrast, ethical leadership theory is organizational in nature, concerned with creating an ethical climate and fostering moral behaviour within teams (Brown & Treviño, 2006). While Epicureanism often advocates for a retreat from public life to maintain personal peacefulness, ethical leadership emphasizes active engagement and responsibility in promoting ethical standards within organizations (Ciulla, 2004).

Finally, Epicureanism offers insights relevant to both adaptive and culturally responsive leadership, particularly through its emphasis on well-being, measured decision-making, and the minimization of unnecessary suffering. Adaptive leadership, which requires leaders to help individuals and organizations navigate change while managing distress, aligns with the Epicurean focus on cultivating tranquility (ataraxia) and avoiding unnecessary turmoil (Heifetz *et al.*, 2009). Epicureans advocate for thoughtful deliberation and prioritizing sustainable sources of happiness over fleeting pleasures, an approach that resonates with adaptive leadership's long-term, strategic decision-making process (Long, 2014). Additionally, Epicurean philosophy encourages leaders to focus on intrinsic rewards, personal contentment, and relationships with trusted allies, similar with like to how adaptive leaders build resilience and encourage reflection among their teams to foster sustainable growth (Northouse, 2021). Despite these connections, Epicureanism differs significantly from culturally responsive leadership. Whereas culturally responsive leadership is deeply engaged with issues of social justice, advocacy, and collective empowerment (Gay, 2018), Epicureanism generally advises withdrawal from political and social struggles to maintain inner peace (O'Keefe, 2010). Culturally responsive leadership emphasizes active engagement with diverse cultural identities, systemic change, and addressing inequities (Khalifa *et al.*, 2016), while Epicureanism's focus on avoiding conflict and pursuing a tranquil life may be at odds with the confrontational aspects of leadership for social justice. However, Epicureanism's emphasis on fostering well-being and meaningful relationships can still contribute to culturally responsive leadership by encouraging leaders to create supportive and nurturing educational environments that prioritize emotional and psychological safety. While Epicurean insights can help leaders maintain personal balance, they must be tempered by a commitment to advocacy and structural transformation to align fully with culturally responsive leadership principles.

## DISCUSSION

The ethical insights of Stoicism, Cynicism, Scepticism and Epicureanism have substantial intersections and yet differences with contemporary educative leadership theories. In transformational leadership, Stoicism's emphasis on virtue and inner resilience aligns with the focus on inspiring and motivating others to achieve their potential, fostering a vision rooted in personal integrity and ethical commitment. Instructional leadership benefits from Stoicism's principles by encouraging leaders to cultivate wisdom and self-control, essential for guiding educational practices and creating environments where rational decision-making and personal growth

are prioritized. In distributed leadership, Stoicism's stress on shared responsibility and collective virtue complements the collaborative nature of this approach, promoting a culture where individuals contribute to the common good with a sense of shared purpose and ethical alignment. Stoic ethics informs ethical leadership by underscoring the importance of aligning actions with moral principles, focusing on internal virtues rather than external rewards, and maintaining integrity in decision-making. Overall, Stoicism's legacy in educative leadership emphasizes the development of character, resilience, and a principled approach to guiding others, which is integral to fostering effective and ethical leadership across various contexts. Stoicism influences both adaptive and culturally responsive leadership by emphasizing resilience, ethical commitment, and rational decision-making in complex educational environments. In adaptive leadership, Stoic principles of inner resilience and focus on what is within control align with leaders' efforts to navigate uncertainty, foster learning, and sustain institutional transformation (Heifetz *et al.*, 2009; Northouse, 2021). Similarly, in culturally responsive leadership, Stoicism's emphasis on moral integrity and self-improvement supports leaders in addressing systemic inequities and engaging in continuous self-reflection (Gay, 2018; Khalifa *et al.*, 2016). However, while Stoicism promotes emotional detachment, culturally responsive leadership requires deep emotional engagement with marginalized communities. This contrast highlights the need to balance Stoic resilience with empathy to create inclusive and transformative educational environments. The ethical legacy of Cynicism impacts leadership theories by emphasizing authenticity, critical reflection, and radical simplicity. In transformational leadership, Cynicism's focus on challenging societal norms encourages leaders to inspire change by promoting values that transcend conventional expectations and fostering a culture of genuine self-expression and integrity. Instructional leadership benefits from Cynicism's critique of societal conventions, urging leaders to question and innovate beyond traditional educational methods. This moral philosophy encourages creating learning environments that prioritize critical thinking and personal growth over rigid adherence to outdated norms.

Distributed leadership draws from Cynicism's emphasis on self-sufficiency and collective autonomy, promoting a leadership model where responsibility and decision-making are shared, and individuals are empowered to contribute authentically to the group's goals. In ethical leadership, Cynicism's commitment to virtue and rejection of external validations reinforces the importance of integrity and moral clarity. Leaders are encouraged to uphold ethical standards based on personal virtue rather than external rewards or societal pressures. Cynicism contributes to adaptive and culturally responsive leadership by emphasizing authenticity, skepticism toward institutional norms, and a commitment to ethical integrity. In adaptive leadership, the Cynic rejection of superficial authority and emphasis on questioning societal conventions align with the need for leaders to challenge entrenched systems and drive transformational change. Cynicism's advocacy for radical honesty and self-sufficiency supports adaptive leaders in resisting external pressures and making principled decisions in uncertain environments (Northouse, 2021). In culturally responsive leadership, Cynicism's critique of power structures resonates with efforts to dismantle systemic inequities and promote social justice. Additionally, its emphasis on living in accordance with moral principles aligns with culturally responsive leaders' commitment to integrity and equity. However, while Cynicism often rejects social conventions entirely, culturally responsive leadership requires engagement with diverse communities rather than detachment. This contrast suggests that Cynic ideals can strengthen leadership authenticity and ethical commitment but must be tempered with collaboration and cultural sensitivity. Overall, Cynicism's legacy fosters a leadership style rooted in authenticity, critical thinking, and a commitment to ethical principles, challenging leaders to lead with true self-awareness and resilience. Scepticism's moral legacy influences leadership theories by emphasizing critical questioning, open-mindedness, and adaptability. In transformational leadership, Scepticism's focus on questioning assumptions encourages leaders to challenge established norms and inspire

innovation by fostering a culture of inquiry and continuous improvement. This approach helps leaders drive change by being open to new ideas and perspectives. In instructional leadership, Scepticism promotes an environment where critical thinking and evidence-based practices are prioritized. Leaders are encouraged to question traditional teaching methods and seek more effective, research-backed approaches to enhance learning outcomes. For distributed leadership, Scepticism supports a collaborative model where leadership is shared, and multiple viewpoints are valued. By questioning hierarchical structures and embracing diverse perspectives, leaders can create more inclusive and flexible decision-making processes. In ethical leadership, Scepticism's legacy underscores the importance of ongoing ethical reflection and questioning moral principles. Leaders are encouraged to critically evaluate their values and actions, ensuring that their ethical decisions are grounded in reason and open to re-evaluation as circumstances change. Scepticism informs adaptive and culturally responsive leadership by promoting critical thinking, intellectual humility, and openness to diverse perspectives. In adaptive leadership, the Sceptic emphasis on questioning assumptions and challenging conventional wisdom aligns with the need for leaders to navigate uncertainty, encourage inquiry, and embrace continuous learning. By fostering a mindset that values evidence over dogma, Scepticism helps adaptive leaders remain flexible and responsive to changing circumstances. In culturally responsive leadership, Scepticism's scrutiny of dominant narratives supports efforts to dismantle biases and engage with multiple worldviews, fostering more inclusive and equitable educational environments. However, while Scepticism often leans toward doubt and withholding judgment, culturally responsive leadership requires proactive engagement and advocacy for marginalized communities. This contrast suggests that Scepticism enhances leadership by promoting reflection and adaptability but must be balanced with decisive action and cultural awareness. Overall, Scepticism's influence fosters a leadership style characterized by inquiry, adaptability, and a commitment to continuous ethical reflection.

Epicureanism's ethical legacy in leadership theories highlights the pursuit of well-being, pleasure, and inner peace. In transformational leadership, Epicureanism's focus on achieving a harmonious and fulfilling life encourages leaders to create environments that prioritize well-being and personal growth. This approach encourages leaders to inspire and motivate their teams by fostering a positive and supportive atmosphere that enhances overall happiness and productivity. In instructional leadership, Epicureanism's emphasis on the pursuit of knowledge and pleasure in learning influences leaders to develop engaging and rewarding educational experiences. Leaders are guided to design curricula and teaching methods that make learning enjoyable and meaningful, promoting a sense of fulfillment among students. For distributed leadership, Epicureanism advocates for a collaborative approach where the collective well-being of the team is prioritized. Leaders are encouraged to create systems that ensure mutual support and shared benefits, fostering a cooperative and fulfilling work environment. In ethical leadership, Epicureanism underscores the importance of pursuing actions that lead to long-term happiness and minimizing unnecessary pain. Leaders are encouraged to make decisions that enhance overall well-being and ethical satisfaction for all stakeholders, ensuring that their actions align with the principles of pleasure and tranquillity.

Epicureanism contributes to adaptive and culturally responsive leadership by emphasizing the pursuit of well-being, tranquility, and the importance of balancing personal happiness with ethical responsibility. In adaptive leadership, Epicurean principles align with the need for leaders to maintain a sense of calm and rationality in the face of challenges, encouraging a focus on long-term well-being rather than short-term gains. This approach helps leaders manage stress, foster resilience, and sustain organizational change with a focus on creating positive, supportive environments. In culturally responsive leadership, Epicureanism's focus on pleasure and contentment supports leaders in cultivating inclusive, harmonious spaces that prioritize the mental and emotional well-being of all

individuals. However, while Epicureanism advocates for personal tranquility and detachment from excessive desires, culturally responsive leadership requires deep engagement with the diverse needs of communities, which may sometimes require a more active, emotionally invested approach. This contrast suggests that Epicurean ideals can enhance leadership by promoting well-being but must be adapted to address the complexities of social justice and community engagement.

## CONCLUSION

The philosophical legacies of Stoicism, Cynicism, Scepticism, and Epicureanism provide valuable insights into educative leadership theories, each contributing distinct perspectives that trace to different ethical frameworks. Stoicism highlights the importance of virtue, resilience, and inner strength. As evidenced in transformational leadership theory, Stoicism emphasizes leading with integrity and fostering personal growth. Instructional leadership benefits from Stoic principles by focusing on wisdom and self-control to guide educational practices. Distributed leadership aligns with Stoicism's emphasis on shared responsibility and collective virtue, while ethical leadership is informed by Stoic dedication to moral principles and internal virtues. Stoicism's insights are also evident in adaptive and culturally responsive leadership, where its focus on resilience and ethical commitment supports leaders in navigating change and addressing systemic inequities while maintaining moral integrity and emotional regulation. Cynicism brings a focus on authenticity, critical reflection, and simplicity. Transformational leadership influenced by Cynicism encourages challenging societal norms and fostering genuine self-expression. In instructional leadership, Cynicism's critique of conventions promotes innovative and critical approaches to education. Distributed leadership benefits from Cynicism's emphasis on self-sufficiency and autonomy, while ethical leadership is strengthened by Cynicism's commitment to virtue over external validation. Cynicism's insights into adaptive and culturally responsive leadership emphasize the importance of questioning power structures and institutional norms, encouraging leaders to remain true to their values and challenge systems that perpetuate inequity or injustice.

Scepticism promotes critical questioning and adaptability. Transformational leadership inspired by Scepticism drives innovation by challenging assumptions and fostering open-mindedness. Instructional leadership benefits from a Sceptical approach by prioritizing evidence-based practices. Distributed leadership is enhanced by embracing diverse perspectives, and ethical leadership is guided by ongoing reflection and adaptability in moral decision-making. Scepticism's insights into adaptive and culturally responsive leadership encourage leaders to remain open to new ideas and question entrenched beliefs and engage in continuous learning to better address the complex, evolving needs of diverse communities.

Epicureanism emphasizes well-being and achieving tranquillity. Transformational leadership guided by Epicurean principles focuses on creating supportive environments that enhance personal and collective happiness. Instructional leadership benefits from designing engaging and fulfilling educational experiences. Distributed leadership promotes collaborative well-being, and ethical leadership aligns with decisions that foster long-term happiness and minimize unnecessary distress. Epicureanism's insights into adaptive and culturally responsive leadership encourage leaders to prioritize the well-being of individuals and communities, fostering environments where balanced, thoughtful decision-making supports both personal growth and collective flourishing.

Overall, it can be concluded that educative leaders can gain valuable insights from each moral philosophy by integrating their strengths into leadership practices. From Stoicism, educative leaders can learn the importance of virtue, resilience, and inner integrity in guiding others and managing challenges. Cynicism teaches the value of authenticity, critical reflection, and challenging conventional norms

to foster genuine growth and innovation. Scepticism encourages leaders to remain open-minded, question assumptions, and adopt practices based on evidence and diverse perspectives. Epicureanism highlights the significance of creating environments that prioritize well-being, fulfillment, and meaningful engagement. Together, these post-Socratic moral philosophies offer rigorous criteria for evaluating and fostering educative leadership.

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