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**The Meaning of Stoic Perception in Ryan Holiday's The
Obstacle is the Way (2014): An American Transcendentalist
Reading.**

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Dedication

This humble memoir is dedicated to my dear mother and father. Without their advice, prayers and support, this thesis would not be accomplished. To my dear sister Lina and my brother Mebarek. This memoir is dedicated also to my sweet aunts and my grandmother. To my friends Anais, Siham and Yasmine. "A friend in need is a friend indeed".

Ould Amer Lamia

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, especially my beloved parents who supported me all along my studies. I also wish to thank my friends and my relatives for their encouragement to accomplish this work.

Bouindour Amel

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Abstract

The current dissertation has examined the transcendentalist vision of stoic perception in Ryan Holiday's *The obstacle is the way* (2014). The aim from this research is to point out major obstacles to perception that stand on the way of success and self-improvement such as powerlessness, emotion and subjectivity, as well as to analyze Holiday's redefinition of modern stoicism in the light of traditional American culture and thought. In order to reach this aim, a focused attention has been put on stoicism, the American transcendentalist philosophy and the work of Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Self-reliance* (1841). These three important concepts emphasized on the importance of the individual and self-discipline to attain a good perception and to reach success.

Key terms: American transcendentalist reading, Emotion, Modern stoicism, Powerlessness, Self-reliance, Stoic perception, Subjectivity.

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General Introduction

I. General Introduction

“Stoicism teaches us to live by a set of values that contribute to emotional resilience, calm confidence and a clear direction in life. Just like an old reliable walking stick, it’s a guide to life based on reason rather than faith, a guide that supports us in the pursuit of self-mastery, perseverance, and wisdom. Stoicism makes us better human beings and teaches us how to excel in life” (Salzgeber, 2019, p.5).

The epigraph shows that the philosophy of stoicism is a philosophy of life since it provides lessons for living well and reminds people of what is important by providing them with practical virtues. It does not always show the solutions for problems but it orients them through the way to release them. Stoicism, thus, differs from the other philosophies in the world because its teachings are still relevant in the contemporary world and practiced by many people. It teaches how to live happy and how to retain control even when facing adversity. Its principle focus was how to live a virtuous life, how to make from every obstacle an opportunity and how to turn adversity into an advantage.

Stoic ideas and texts are now found in many books that provide answers to everyday life challenges, such as anxiety, stress and fear. Ryan Holiday’s book, *The Obstacle is the way* (2014), is one of those works which are inspired by the philosophy of stoicism and the teachings of ancient stoics, namely, Marcus Aurelius and Cicero (Holiday, 2014,p.4).Ryan Holiday is an American and a modern stoic born in June 16th. 1987. He is the owner of the Painted Porch Bookshop and host of the podcast *The daily stoic*. He served as the former director of marketing and eventually an advisor for American Apparel. Holiday is known for his notable works on stoic philosophy among them *The obstacle is the way* (2014) and *The daily stoic* (2016) (Pigliucci, 2016).

Perception is an important concept in the philosophy of stoicism and in Holiday’s book. It is considered as a way used to understand and perceive the world in a good or a bad way depending on one’s personality and his way of thinking. It makes sense how one looks at

problems in the first step and his ability to manage them (p.11). As a matter of fact, perception has a great impact on people and their lives. Therefore, it varies from one person to another and it depends on their situations. This means that every individual interprets his or her circumstances in a different way according to his own perceptions and believes. Hence, a good perception makes every bad situation a new source of good, whereas a bad perception is a path towards weakness and obscurity (p.11). Holiday in his book presents perception as an obstacle that prevents people from achieving success and self-improvement. He shows the negative side of perception and major obstacles attached to it with providing examples from real events.

Obstacles are a central theme in *The obstacle is the way* (2014); an aspect that cannot be ignored or go unnoticed when reading the book. The author focuses on most obstacles to perception experienced by many people and mentioned by the philosophy of stoicism, such as the inability to recognize power, control negative emotions and observe with an objective eye. He gave a great importance to the obstacles of perception since the good perception depends on individuals' view of the world around them or the fact that it can affect them in a negative way.

1. Review of the Literature

Stoicism is known as a school of thought that flourished in Greek and Rome antiquity. It was one of the loftiest and most sublime philosophies in the record of western civilization. Stoics have always believed that the goal of all inquiry is to provide a mode of conduct characterized by tranquility of mind and certainty of moral the worth (Pigliucci, 2016). They believed that perception is the basis of true knowledge. In logic, their comprehensive presentation of the topic is derived from perception, yielding not only the judgment that knowledge is possible but also that certainty is possible, on the analogy of the incorrigibility of perceptual experience. For them, the goal of humans is to live according to nature, agreement with the world design. In addition, Stoicism enables individuals to better order their own life and to avoid the excesses of human nature that promote disquietude and anxiety. It was easily the most influential of the schools from the time of its founding through the first two centuries, and it continued to have a marked effect on later thought (Pigliucci, 2016).

Throughout centuries this philosophy witnessed revivals and still developing in the contemporary world. Therefore many writers use it in their books as a mean of providing logic and rationality to the individual. For instance, Ryan Holiday in his book *The obstacle is the way* (2014) where he shows the virtues and doctrines that stoicism exercise in order to turn adversities to opportunities. Also, Jonas Salzgeber's *The little book of stoicism* (2019) grants readers with some stoic practices and helpful notions that can help individuals to have timeless wisdom and to gain resilience, confidence and calmness. Along with many other authors who contribute to the expansion of this philosophy. Hence, modern stoicism becomes the essence that guides individuals to arrange their thoughts and to meditate their lives with consciousness and calmness.

Stephan Ryan in his book *Modern stoicism* (2021) defines modern stoicism as “a way of living that places a lot of emphasis on reality rather than illusion or idealism” (p.5). In addition, he asserts that the creation of contemporary stoicism goes back to those numerous individuals who are impacted by the stoics and stoicism itself (p.5). Therefore, they see that philosophy is appropriate in our current world and they decide to write books that include some stoic principles and virtues which can help people to deal with the obstacles of life (p.5). Clearly, modern stoicism inspires authors, theorists and politicians throughout history and that is the reason why stoicism has seen a noticeable resurgence and quick change. Moreover, Stephen (2014) represents three significant reasons that lead to the revival of stoic philosophy, which are permeability of information, the collapse of socialization mechanisms and universality of its advice (p.7). The first means that skills are permeable today, which means that more knowledge is created every week comparing to the ancient years. Besides, it is really simple for an idea to catch on and become popular worldwide due to how quickly it spreads.

As a result, people are drawn to stoicism because everyone wishes to improve, to be more resilient, and to become more self-aware and powerful. Hence, stoicism offers a simple explanation for all of these. In addition to this, several outstanding works about stoicism are released annually. For instance, *The obstacle is the way* (2014) by Ryan Holiday, *Lives of stoics* (2020) by Ryan Holiday and Stephen Hansel Man, *Stoic notes* (2014) by RymkeWiersma. The second cause of the revival of the philosophy of stoicism is the collapse of socialization mechanisms or the abandonments of the practices that people use in earlier periods. In the past, individuals relied on institutions to help them make sense of their lives such as the Church, the schools and the family unit. However, the significance of these structures in the modern world has diminished is that many people do not regularly attend the Church (p.8). Furthermore, today, the value of the internet exceeds the value of the schools.

In addition, many families are headed by single parents. Subsequently, many individuals can not afford the surroundings in which they live. As well as, they always search the best way that can help them to turn their adversities to advantages. As a result, the enduring essence of contemporary stoicism contains principles which help individuals in finding some stability in this turbulent world (p.8). The last cause of the emergence of modern stoicism is the universality of its advice which means that advice of the stoics is relevant to everyone and it embodies timeless wisdom which can aid people to have positive reasoning. In addition, human nature will always be human nature regardless of race or origin and the core of stoicism concerns with how to deal with human nature by recognizing the process of dealing with one's self and other people. Besides enjoying the immensity of existence is incredibly attractive that prompts individuals to have objective perception (p.9). Therefore, it is up to people to do both things, to enjoy the vastness of being and to take into consideration the advice of stoicism mainly the cardinal virtues that stoicism contains.

In the 20th century, stoicism becomes popular again for its insistence on the value of the individual and the place of value in a world of strife and uncertainty. Stoicism is returning to its roots as a practical philosophy, as the ancient stoics very clearly meant their system to be primarily of guidance for everyday life, not a theoretical exercise. Stoicism and its approach to life is one of the most pragmatic methods of handling life and human nature that has been invented by western civilization. It is appealing to the masses because everyone wants to get stronger and to be resilient (Pigliucci, 2016).

2. Issue and Working Hypothesis

Ryan Holiday's book, *The obstacle is the way* (2014), claims to be based on modern stoicism, since it applies the teachings and the virtues of the ancient stoicism in the contemporary world. Holiday claims that there have been countless lessons and books about achieving success, but no one ever thought how to overcome failure and everyday life challenges (Holiday, 2014, p.2). This is why he tries to show people the way to turn every obstacle into an advantage and make those teachings of stoicism real. In this book, Holiday shares the collective wisdom in order to help people to accomplish the very specific goal which is overcoming mental, physical, emotional and perceived obstacles. He explains that people are facing this kind of obstacles everyday and modern societies are collectively paralyzed by them.

However, our dissertation explores Holiday's redefinition of modern stoicism in the light of American culture and thought. This is shown in his use of some notions which are related to the transcendentalist philosophy, such as self-discipline and self-restraint. These notions were widely explored by the transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson in his essay entitled *Self-reliance*(1841).The latter will be used in our discussion of one of the most important notions in Holiday's book, namely Obstacle, and the philosophy of perception that underlays it. Our objective is to show how the author repositions traditional American thought in his discussion of modern reconceptualization of culture. In so doing he not only manages the circulation of American ideas, but also gives them a ting of universality.

By reading *The obstacle is the way* by *Self-reliance* we intend to achieve a number of objectives. One of these objectives is to underline the similarities between them and to point out any eventual differences. The second of these objectives is to understand to what extent Emerson influenced Holiday. Finally, in putting the two authors in perspective we will try to

understand the process of appropriation which enables Holiday resuscitate aspects of Emersonian philosophy and to endow them with relevance to our world, today.

II. Methods and Material

1. Methods

a. American Transcendentalism

Transcendentalism is an American legacy and a philosophical movement developed in the United States of America during the nineteenth century. “Transcendentalism arose out of a literary background in the Romantic Movement in America, Britain, and Europe” (Manzari, 2012, p.1798). It is viewed as a step forwards an ideal spiritual state of individuals’ intuition and a mixture of new ideas in literature, culture and religion. This philosophy emphasized on the importance of an individual and adopted respect for human abilities. It believes in intuitive thought, which is the ability to know something through instinctive feeling rather than conscious reasoning (p.1799). As Buell (1986) writes

“Transcendentalism, in fact, really began as a religious movement, an attempt to substitute a romanticized version of the mystical ideal that mankind is capable of direct experience of the holy for the Unitarian rationalist view that the trusts of religion are arrived at by a process of empirical study and by rational influence from historical and natural evidence” (p.146).

The quotation above shows that the transcendentalist philosophy began as a religious movement, supported individualism and believed in the power of an individual and his nature. It encouraged human abilities and emphasized on the importance of one’s thoughts and beliefs.

Furthermore, the transcendentalist philosophy believed in the power of nature and considers it as a tool to observe and understand the structured inner workings of the natural world. It helps them to improve spirituality and to perceive of the world in the right way.

“People could develop their capacity by submersing themselves in the beauty of the natural world” (Manzari, 2012, p.1793). This means, in order to achieve the spiritual state individuals should develop themselves through nature, believe in its power and consider their abilities.

The philosophy of transcendentalism and its specific view regarding nature and individualism have a special impact on the American literature especially in the works of some great American writers, including Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay *Nature*(1863) and *Self-reliance* (1841). Emerson has a great influence on this period because he expressed the basic ideas of transcendentalism and celebrated the self, the individual and advice Americans to follow their own self and to make relations with themselves (p.1793). He emphasized on the importance of an individual and believed on the power of their intuition. He believed in nature and stand against conformity.

Transcendentalists believe in the inherent goodness of people and the power of the individual and nature. They believe that “the world of spirits is the only source of reality. A person sees only appearances, which are transient reflections of the world of spirit, in the existing world” (Manzari, 2012, p.1792). Transcendentalists value individualism and the freedom from conformity and saw that society and its institutions corrupt the purity of the individual. The theme of individualism and conformity is widely explored by Emerson in his essay *Self-reliance* (1841) where he insists on the importance of an individual and argues against society: “for nonconformity the world whips you with its displeasure. And therefore a man must know how to estimate a source face” (p.6).

The roots of this philosophy goes back to Unitarianism which is a governing religious movement emerged in Boston in the early nineteenth century. It began to develop in Harvard University in New England where most transcendentalists were students. Thus, transcendentalists believe that there is a gap in Unitarianism and they should fill it and address

the issues so they convert some notions in order to advantage individuals to recognize that rationality in a cardinal virtue in their daily lives (p.5). Subsequently, transcendentalism is marked with its inner, spiritual and mental essence of man.

b. Summary of Emerson's *Self-reliance*(1841)

Self-reliance is an essay written by Ralph Waldo Emerson first published in 1841. It is centered on the idea that the most important realization for individuals is that they should trust themselves and follow their own thoughts, beliefs and stay away from society and its corrupting aspects so as to recover their self-reliance and confidence. Emerson shows his position as being a transcendentalist by exploring the principles and ideas of the philosophy of transcendentalism in his essay such as individualism and nonconformity. Therefore, he emphasizes on the importance of an individual and believes on the power of their intuition and stand against conformity. Emerson (1841) writes “who would be a man must be a nonconformist” (p.3).

Furthermore, Emerson opens the essay with three epigraphs that display the theme of self-reliance, and explains the importance of being confident and expressing ideas and opinions without thinking of others. Then, he reflects on the relationship between individuals and society by noting that people must embrace non-conformity to recover their self-reliance and confidence. Emerson wants people to have their own thoughts, ideas and to follow their own paths. For him, a self-reliant person means to be independent and to think without the influence of others. He states that “society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members” (p.3). This means that society stands on the way of individuals and prevents them from thinking and behaving according to their own beliefs. In addition, the right way of living and to be a self-reliant, according to Emerson, is to do what is correct according to an individual and not society and its institutions because they make people

dogmatic and pollute their humanity. Society is considered as an obstacle that turns people into conformists.

In addition, Emerson assumes that if any individual wants to achieve virtue, he must go to war against the things that oppress his sense of individuality and should struggle so as to achieve his goals, he says “it is easy to see that a greater self-reliance must work a revolution in all the offices and relations of men” (p.15). This means that a self-reliant person should trust himself and consider his abilities in order to stand against society and its institution. Moreover, Emerson argues that conformity has a negative impact on the American culture and thought. He believes that those individuals, who are trying to make things alone with their best and not concerned with any failure or conforming to society, will change the American culture and history. He writes

“If the American artist will study with hope and love the precise thing to be done by him, considering the climate, the soil, the length of the day, the wants of the people, the habit and form of the government, he will create a house in which all these will find themselves fitted, and test and sentiment will be satisfied also” (Ibid: 18).

Emerson concludes his essay by noting that self-reliance must be applied in all sides of life and it is the true path to peace, to achieve self-trust and self-restraint. He writes, “Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles” (p.21). Hence, the end of this essay is an advice for individuals to trust themselves, to live according to their principles and their beliefs and to stay away from society.

Hence, Emerson’s *Self-reliance* (1841) presents an extreme example of free-mind and self-realization for all men and teenagers unwilling to be ordinary on their path to self-believe and non-conformity. A key element of a free mind according to Emerson is that an individual should follow his own beliefs and to do what concerns him, not what others think (p.5). This expresses two important principles of Emerson’s work is so far to live life according to one’s perceptions and understanding of events according to one’s free mind. The latter is to stay far

from society and its influences. In Addition to this point, the centrality of Individualism in Emerson’s work indicates a clear connection between perception and reality. For him, it is for an individual to have an objective interpretation of reality in order to understand the world entirely around him without external influences (p.4).

2. Material

a. Summary of *The Obstacle is the Way* (2014)

The obstacle is the way is a self help book written by Ryan Holiday first published in 2014. It is inspired by an ancient philosophy named Stoicism and contains lessons about achieving success, how to overcome failure, how to think about obstacles and the way to face them. It explores how some of the most successful people in history have applied the teachings of this philosophy so as to overcome difficult situations. Furthermore, this book treats real obstacles that prevent people from reaching their goals and make them unable to treat things with reason. Indeed, obstacles are part of life and considered as the enemies of one’s personality especially those of perception.

This book provides stories from history and refers to great philosophers like Marcus Aurelius and Cicero by showing how they perceive obstacles and the ways they use to tackle them. Furthermore, the author tries to collect and understand lessons and tricks of this philosophy and shows readers the way to turn every obstacle into an advantage. This book shares the collective wisdom in order to accomplish the ultimate goal which is overcoming obstacles. It is divided into three sections: Perception, Action and Will. As Holiday (2014) writes

“Overcoming obstacles is a discipline of three critical steps. It begins with how we look at our specific problems. Our attitude or approach; then the energy and creativity with which we actively break them down and turn them into opportunities; finally, the cultivation and maintenance of an inner will that allows us to handle defeat and difficulty” (p.9).

The first part of the book is devoted to ‘The Discipline of Perception’ which is the base of our dissertation. It is centered on the ability to observe with objectivity, to control emotions and to recognize power while facing obstacles. Holiday discusses in this section that the way people perceive the events and obstacles is significant because they play a major role in both the creation and the possible destruction of any obstacle they face. He explains that the way to endure pain, adversity and everyday life challenges is through the teaching of perseverance and resilience. He mentioned the example of John D. Rockefeller who was a bookkeeper and aspiring investor, a small-time financier in Cleveland, Ohio. He was able to see the obstacle and the panic of the financial crisis of 1857. Rockefeller succeeded to understand and control the situation while others could not. He was able to perceive the advantages that the crisis offered, take action and start on his way through success (Holiday, 2014, p.13). Hence, the discipline of perception in this book means staying in control, seeing clearly and keeping control of thoughts and emotions. If people are well disciplined in this way, they will be able to see all negative situations as positive ones and well be able to overcome their obstacles with self-moderation and wisdom.

The second section of the book is about ‘The Discipline of Action’ which is an important tool to dismantle obstacles and turn them into opportunities. Action in this book means to do something about the problems and to respond to them with creativity, persistence and some ingenuity through using what people have and try to do the best of their ability. It needs boldness, deliberation and self-confidence to be the right one. Furthermore, Holiday explains that the only way to tackle obstacles is to start from anywhere without taking the conditions into consideration and to start again in a better way after failure. He refers to stories of great success among them the one of Amelia Earhart. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Amelia Earhart wanted to be a great aviator but at that, time people still thought that women were frail, weak and did not have the stuff. She could not make her living

as a pilot, so took a job as a social worker. Then, in order to accomplish her dream, she accepted to be the first female transatlantic flight but only as an unpaid passenger. She did not consider the conditions but she just accepted and moved on. Five years later, she was the first woman to fly alone across the Atlantic and became one of the most respected people in the world (Holiday, 2014, p.71-72). Indeed, Holiday shows that the first step through a successful life is to work hard and to move on without looking into the conditions.

The last section of the book is 'The Discipline of the Will' which is a sort of building the inner fortitude, strength and understanding of morality. It is according to Holiday an internal power that can never be affected by outside world. It looks at the parts of the things that people cannot control right and prepares them to be calm and ready to work even when they are in the worst situations. In order to achieve the will power, people must learn the art of acquiescence and practice cheerfulness even while facing obstacles. Holiday explains that power of the will is what enables people to stay persistent and keep doing despite their failure and adversity. Moreover, this section tells the story of Tomas Edison, who was at the age of 67 years old when his entire laboratory burned down, including all his experiments, prototypes, notes and research. He faced this horrible situation with calmness and courage. Despite the loss of almost one million dollars, he would marshal enough energy to make nearly ten million dollars in the revenue that year (Holiday, 2014, p.150-151). From this story, Holiday shows that when facing obstacles, the most important thing is to accept reality as it is and try to respond to it in a simple manner with courage and persistence. Indeed, true will is quite humility, resilience, and flexibility. Holiday (2014) writes

“This is the avenue of the final discipline: the Will. If Perception and Action were the disciplines of the mind and the body, then Will is the discipline of the heart and the soul. The will is the one thing we control completely, always” (p.130).

Hence, according to Holiday, mastering these three disciplines and practicing the advice mentioned in his book will help people to recognize their power, face obstacles and turn them into opportunities. They make them perceive with objectivity, aware of their actions and behaviors, and practice cheerfulness even in the worst situations.

b. Brief History of Stoicism

Stoicism is a school of philosophy that hails from ancient Greece and Rome in the early parts of the 3rd century, BC. It is a philosophy of life that maximizes positive emotions, reduces negative emotions and helps individuals to hone their virtue of character. At any moment, in any situation, and at any stage of life, stoicism provides a framework for living well. It reminds people of what is important and provides them practical strategies to get more of what is valuable. Stoicism covers a wide range of topics including self-reliance and self-control, which are important to gain self-restraint and to reach a greater appreciation for life. Moreover, it offers a framework for a good living and serves as a reminder of what is genuinely important by offering strategies for maximizing what is valuable (Pigliucci, 2016).

Zeno of Cyprus originated the philosophy of stoicism, whose teachings of virtue, tolerance, and self-control have inspired generations of thinkers and leaders. The name stoicism comes from the Stoa Poikile, the decorated public colonnade where Zeno and his disciples gathered for discussion. Furthermore, the foundation of this philosophy goes back to three important phases that took place in Greece and Rome. It is the reason that it is given the name of Greco-Roman philosophy. The first phase is named the Early Stoa which spanned from Zeno of Citium to the third head of the school Chrysippus (300 B.C.E). Then, it is followed by the second phase which is called the Middle Stoa (late II and I century B.C.E). It includes Panaetius and Posidonius. The Late Stoa is the third phase which is the most popular

in the Roman Empire. It includes Seneca and Marcus Aurelius (I through II century C. E) (Pigliucci, 2016).

In addition, the stoic philosophy has a significant impact on people's lives. It is credited as being the main philosophy that enables humans to turn their lives around after expressing debilitating obstacles. Along with the concepts and ideas that stoicism contains, it inspires people to recognize and obtain inner power, lessen negative emotions and to have an objective perception of event. Indeed, according to stoic philosophers is crucial because there are times where life does not turn out on the way that a person wants it. One of the most famous stoic writers was one of the Rome's greatest emperors over the course of the 19th years reign; stoicism gave Marcus Aurelius the resolve to lead the empire through two major wars, while dealing with the loss of many of his children. Stoicism was an active philosophy for several centuries in Greece and Rome, as a formal institution, it faded away but its influence has continued to this day (Pigliucci, 2016).

Stoicism has its beginnings in a changing world, in which earlier codes of conduct and ways of understanding proved no longer suitable. But it was also influenced by tenets of the older schools. The original philosophy was more than just an attitude; stoics believe that everything around them operates according to a web of cause and effect, resulting in a rational structure of the universe, which they called 'Logos'. They try to deal with the world as it is while pursuing self-improvement through four cardinal virtues which are practical wisdom, temperance, justice and courage. Importantly, the stoic philosophy changed over time, shifting focus from logic and physics to more psychological concerns like tranquility and well-being. Also, the stoics could never convene to affirm all their tenants precisely, but there are certain principles at the core of the stoic operating system. They believed that perception is the basis of true knowledge. In logic, their comprehensive presentation of the topic is derived from

perception, yielding not only the judgment that knowledge is possible but also the certainty is possible.

III. Research Outline

Our substantive analysis will consist of three significant chapters. In the first chapter, we will explore the issue of powerlessness as an obstacle to perception. Along these analyses, we will focus on the American transcendentalist philosophy and Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay *Self-reliance* (1841), and we will refer to the concept of indifference as an obstacle that drives to the state of powerlessness. For the second chapter, we will deal with emotion as an obstacle to perception. In this section, we will refer to various negative emotions such as anxiety and fear that stand on the way of self-improvement and achieving eudemonia. We will also discuss how self-talk and perturbation of one's thoughts entail stress and confusion in one's personality. In the sense that, self-talk can serve as a success stepping stone or a significant roadblock and perturbation of one's thoughts might give rise to the irrational thinking and negative reasoning. Therefore, these two concepts act as a catalyst for negative emotions. In the last chapter, we will treat subjectivity as an obstacle to perception. Accordingly, we will clarify the term of unawareness which refers to the irrational observation and the feeling of fear that arises from external things and negative imagination. So as to reach this aim, we will explain these two concepts with reference to the subjective visualizations of things and events and we will discuss the reasons behind the feeling of fear and its outcomes.

IV. Results

While carrying out this study, we have reached interesting findings. Throughout the research, we analyzed the meaning of stoic perception in Ryan Holiday's *The obstacle is the way* (2014): An American transcendentalist reading. As it is presented in this dissertation, the concept of stoicism fits best our work since its major features which are self-restraint, self-discipline and overcoming obstacles are all explicitly displayed in *The obstacle is the way*.

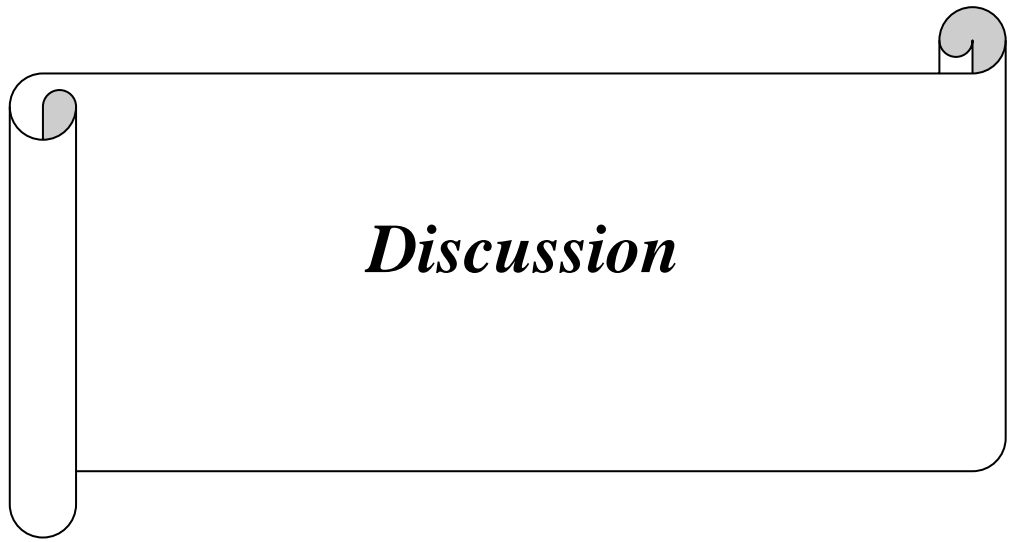
The first chapter of our dissertation explored the issue of powerlessness as an obstacle to perception. This part has shed light on the American transcendentalism and Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay *Self-reliance* (1841). We have demonstrated the transcendentalist view of individualism and its influence on human perception and perspectives. We noticed that conformity is a central theme in Emerson's *Self-reliance* and one of the main reasons of individual's powerlessness because it corrupts their purity and stands on the way of their success. We have also presented the concept of indifference as an obstacle that drives to the state of powerlessness. After the analyses, we have come to the result that both transcendentalism and stoicism emphasized on the importance of an individual and adopted self-discipline to attain a good perception of events and to avoid the fact of being powerless and indifferent.

In the second chapter, we have developed the concept of emotion as an obstacle to perception. So as to accomplish this part, we have studied negative emotion from different perspectives in relation to the Greek word eudemonia and the stoic therapy of passion. Besides, we have shown that the bad spirit and major negative emotions, namely anger and anxiety stand on the way of self-improvement and achieving a happy life. We have also denoted how self-talk and perturbation of one's thoughts entail stress and confusion in individuals' personality. Then, we have reached the result that negative emotions, self talk

and perturbation of one's thoughts are presented in Ryan Holiday's *The Obstacle is the Way* (2014) as obstacles to emotion and perception.

In addition, the last findings we have reached include that the subjective part of human beings is considered as an obstacle to perception. In this part, we have recognized that subjectivity perceives negative things and major setbacks especially while being under stress. Throughout analyzing this chapter, we have explored unawareness as one of the strongest negative impressions that prevent individuals from observing with an objective eye and lead them to the state of ignorance. On the other hand, we have demonstrated the concept of fear in the sense that individuals' fear makes them out of their rational thought and reason. Thus, the ultimate result of this part is to affirm that unawareness and fear are resulted from the subjective part of human beings that is considered as an obstacle to perception.

Throughout analyzing Ryan Holiday's *The obstacle is the way*, we have come to the result that the philosophy of stoicism exists in the contemporary world and to confirm that its lessons and virtues are still relevant and practiced by many people. We have also reached the result that the transcendentalist philosophy shares the same point of view with stoicism in the concept of individualism and stands against conformity and its corrupting aspects. In addition, this study has shown that major obstacles to perception mentioned by Ryan Holiday's *The obstacle is the way* (2014), such as powerlessness, emotion and subjectivity, stand on the way of success and self-improvement.



Discussion

V. Discussion

Our discussion discusses different obstacles mentioned in Ryan Holiday's *The obstacle is the way* (2014). We have divided our work into three sections. The first chapter analyzes powerlessness as one of the strongest obstacles in one's way to success and self-fulfillment. It investigates how people become unable to recognize power while facing difficult situations. We explored this idea referring to major concepts which are conformity, individualism and indifference as obstacles to power. For the second chapter, it discusses the concept of emotion as an obstacle to perception when it stands on the way of achieving a virtuous life and eudemonia. It explores major negative emotions, self talk and perturbation of one's thoughts as obstacles to emotion. The last chapter discusses subjectivity as an obstacle to perception in the sense that the subjective part of human beings prevents them from achieving objectivity and perceiving things in a logical way. In accomplishing this part, we have mentioned two main obstacles to subjectivity which are unawareness and fear.

Chapter One: Powerlessness as an Obstacle to Perception

“Desperation, despair, fear, powerlessness _ these reactions are functions of our perceptions. You must realize: Nothing makes us feel this way; we choose to give into such feelings. Or, like Rockefeller, choose not to” (Holiday, 2014, p.16).

The quotation above shows that in *The obstacle is the way* (2014), Holiday introduces the concept of powerlessness as one of the functions of perception and claims that nothing pushes people to be powerless but they choose either to be in such feeling which means the state of powerlessness or not to. The fact of being powerless, thus, is considered as a barrier that stands on the way of success and prevents individuals from attaining their goals and objectives in life. Generally, this barrier comes from ignoring personal abilities, inner strength and the lack of self confidence. It is also viewed the lack of inner strength, control and confidence when facing adversity. Therefore, this chapter aims at analyzing the issue of

powerlessness as an obstacle to perception and to introduce the main concepts attached to it such as conformity, individualism and indifference in the light of American culture and thought.

In the first part of this analysis, we will examine the two main concepts conformity and individualism which are important aspects in the transcendentalist philosophy and viewed as central themes in Emerson's *Self-reliance* (1841). In order to accomplish these analyses, we will discuss the influence of conformity in American societies that supports conformity and its institutions and how it affects individualism and human personality. We will also introduce conformity as an obstacle that stands against individualism and regarded as a form of social influence that corrupts the purity of individuals. Clearly, we will outline Emerson's definition of self-reliance as a central idea in his work and his position in society as a nonconformist. We will also refer the connection between perception, reality and self-reliance.

For the second part of this chapter, we will explore the concept of indifference which is considered as an obstacle that drives to the state of powerlessness and characterized by the lack of interest and attention. The feeling of indifference comes from the lack of self-moderation and self-control especially when facing difficulties. Through analyzing this concept, we will refer to the word apathy, which means lack of passion, emotions and seen as a desirable state of ascendancy over unwanted emotional influence. We will refer also to the concept of ennui which is about dissatisfaction. This concept arise the feeling of dissatisfaction when one lacks interest and emotions towards things in life. We will also explain how an indifferent attitude produces an apathetic response that leads to the state of ennui.

a. Conformity Vs Individualism

The two main concepts conformity and individualism played a significant role in America during the 19th century and left a great influence on human personality. During this period, American societies confuse individuals with its strict norms and corrupting aspects. They become bound by the strict rules which lead them to underestimate themselves and look for solutions to get out from this ordeal. Therefore, the transcendentalist movement served as a path out from the corrupting aspects. It advises individuals to follow their own thoughts and to stay away from society that corrupts their purity and it pushes them to be something different.

Conformity is the act of changing individual's behaviors and their way of thinking in order to confirm the norms of a group or other individuals (Mahmoudi &Yahi, 2016, p7). It is seen as an opponent of development and a prisoner of freedom. It makes individuals ignore their personal abilities and inner power. It is also viewed as an agreement to majority position that alters people's behaviors and regarded as a form of social influence that can affect them in an overt or covert manner. Emerson manifests that conformity is an enemy to individual's personality because in a wide range it is an obstacle that alters their beliefs. Clearly, when individual's notions and ideas are changed according to the norms that society imposes, it will be difficult for him to reason solely and correctly (p.20). Therefore, the way of being unique is the ultimate way to comprehend his manner of thinking and his internal power that he possesses. Subsequently, releasing himself from the norms of society is an effective process that drives him toward creativity and excellence. As Emerson (1841) states in *Self-reliance*

“Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. Society is a joint stock company in which the members agree for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most requests is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. It loves not realities and creators, but names and customs. Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist” (p.116).

However, Individualism is a self-centered idea that places a lot of emphasis on individual's goals. It is considered as a practice or a principle of self-dependence and self-reliance and crucial because it helps people to have confidence in themselves and to believe in their abilities. In order to achieve this goal, people should stay away from conformity and other perspectives. Furthermore, individualism is an important and essential aspect in the philosophy of transcendentalism that prevailed primarily in American society during the nineteenth century. It is a significant concept that insists mostly on self-dependence and self-reliance. Moreover, the two main figures Emerson and Thoreau act against social, Religious, and cultural impacts which thought individuals during nineteenth century (p.8). Their prevention of repressive norms prompt people from perceiving that their awareness and internal power are really important than everything, especially while facing government, unjust authority, adversity and the norms imposed by society. Emerson (1841) states in his essay

“Every man discriminates between the voluntary acts of his mind and his involuntary perceptions, and knows that to his involuntary perceptions a perfect faith is due. He may err in the expression of them, but he knows that these things so, like a day and night, not to be disputed. My willful actions and acquisitions are but roving; the idlest reverie, the faintest native emotion, command my curiosity and respect” (p.10).

Emerson's ideas are embraced by Thoreau's work but he concentrates more on the government and saw it as a barrier for the dreamers because society compels individuals to act as machines in order to lean them under its strict orders. Emerson and Thoreau consider that individuals should be accountable for them and should not rely on the protection of the state. Moreover, they affirm that people have the freedom to do anything they desire and should disregard the persistence of other people.

“The objection to conforming to usages that have become dead to you is that it scatters your face. It loses your time and blurs the impression of your character. If you maintain a dead church, contribute to a dead bible society vote with a great party either for the government or against it, spread your table like base housekeepers under all this screens I have difficulty to detect

the price man you are and of course, so much force is withdrawn from your proper life” (Emerson, 1841, p.5).

These two concepts are central aspects in the philosophy of transcendentalism, which is based on the ideology that everyone has a natural capacity to realize his potential, overcome adversity and confront obstacles. Hence, transcendentalists develop into independent or self-reliant people. They do not need to look for approval from others by listening to their inner voices (p.7). In other words, transcendentalists believe that society and its corrupting aspects are considered as an obstacle that turns individuals into conformists and makes them unable to recognize power, which helps them to attain their goals.

Emerson is mindful in conveying a variety of themes to his audience. His ideas about individualism all revolve around the idea of self-reliance, which is a gap that people miss at that time. Accordingly, the lack of this principle prompts individuals to lose their self-confidence and not to acknowledge their inner strength. It is a real obstacle that many people face even in the contemporary world. As a result, *Self-reliance* (1841) evaluates the idea of self-autonomous rather than social ideas and norms. In addition, the foremost objective of Emerson's is persuading people to act honestly and freely, rather than, automatically adhering to social perspectives and majority's will. Therefore, it is esteemed to say that Emerson uses some Latin quotations in his essay in order to affirm the notions that he records. For instance, the expression of 'Ne te Quaseveris extra' which is a moral principle that recommends individuals to find solutions with themselves without looking elsewhere (p.1). Also, the statement 'Man is his own star', which means the power of man is derived from his inner soul and the way of being ideal is to remove himself from society pressure (p.1).

“Insist on yourself never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life ‘cultivation, but the adopted talent of another, you have only an extemporaneous, half possession” (Emerson, 1841, p.18).

The quotation above shows that Emerson advocates people to embrace their uniqueness and to be away from conformity. He also shows that individuals' talent can be displayed in every opportunity life time and to realize that they should believe on their potentials.

Emerson claims that society is a structure of institution that persistently crushes any aspirations to achieve manhood. Therefore, it is an offensive to self-reliance and it serves as an oppressive symbol also he adds that whoever, want to be a man should be an individualist. In the second part of his essay, he uses the logo 'Trust thyself' to indicate his declaration on non conformity and the insistence on self-dependence as the only way to understand reality (p.2). The interest of Emerson is to motivate individuals to believe themselves in order to enable them to recognize the ideal of being unique and creative without leaning to the pressures of imitation which push them to dismiss their power. On the other hand, he states that in order to live in harmony with God and nature, man should not care about what has already happened in his life or what will happen in the future in order to gain their self-esteem and not fall upon the obstacle that takes away their power and make them feel powerless.

Henry David Thoreau is another individualist who covers America in the nineteenth century politically, socially and struggles against conformity which is regarded as an obstacle that many people confront at that time. Therefore, this issue stresses individuals and makes them unable to understand or believe that their inner power is really important for their modes of living. Besides, the structures that the government imposes are not a course of action to earn self-possession and self-confidence (p.9). Thus Thoreau's fundamental thesis in the article *Resistance to civil government* (1848) is that American citizens must reject this oppressive authority. He asserts the following

“If the injustice is part of the necessary friction of the machine of government, let it go, let it go: perchance it will wear smooth _certainly the machines will wear out. If the injustice has a spring or a pulley, or a rope, or a crank exclusively for itself, then perhaps you may consider whether the remedy will not be worse than the evil; but if it is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of the injustice to another, and then I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter _friction to stop the machine. What I have to do is to see at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn” (p.14).

The quotation above shows Thoreau’s position against injustice and the oppressive society that considers its citizens as machines. He wants people to be free from laws, to follow their own, nature and to believe in themselves.

b. Indifference

In Stoic philosophy, indifference means to be strong enough that there is no need to go in a particular direction. It is about the acceptance of what may come in life either good or bad and acting in accordance to the situation in the most effective way possible (Wiersma, 2008, p.59). That is to say, the fact of being indifferent is a powerful tool used by stoics to encounter everyday life challenges and to make them powerful. They believe that there is no need of being sad or even mad about the things that one cannot control or change because it makes him feel bad and disappointed. Sometimes, it is important to look at things in life as an indifferent observer in order to reach peace of mind when things go wrong or when problems become worst. Rymke Wiersma quoted Epictetus in his book *Stoics notes* (2008):

Some things are in our control and others not, things in our opinion, pursuit, desire, aversion, and in a word, whatever are own actions. Things not in our control are body, property, reputation, command, and, in one word, whatever are not our actions (p.60).

The quotation above shows that some things are within one’s power, which means they may change with mind moderation and training, while others are not. Therefore, people should not care about those things that are out of their control because they will not change; they have to

accept reality as it is and move on rather than stick on those things that seem out of their power.

However, in the contemporary world, the fact of being indifferent is seen as an obstacle that drives to the state of powerlessness since it is characterized by a lack of interest, concern, or even sympathy about things in life. “Indifference means a lack of interest and attention; this being a matter of some one’s having or not having a certain attitude or orientation towards something” (Lillehammer, 2017, p.18). This means that, the feeling of indifference comes from the lack self-moderations and self-control. Indeed, indifference may occur when the problems of life may seem so overwhelming that one feels quite powerless to do anything about them or when ignoring them until they become unchangeable. This means, even when people notice what happens around them and understand the situation; they may feel unable to change them or to make a difference. So, instead of trying to find solutions or take actions, they simply accept the reality of obstacles and move on.

The fact of being indifferent can take two forms. The first one is when someone shows that he has no awareness towards others or things in life. The second one is when an individual shows his indifference in the purpose of showing his lack of interest in such things (p.18). In addition, being indifferent or not interested toward things in life does not mean that such difficulties and obstacles are managed but they are becoming worse. As a matter of fact, when people ignore their problems, everything may seem fine at first because there are no arguments towards those difficulties, but when they realize that those obstacles are still there, they will feel discouraged and disappointed. This is because they lack motivation and self-moderation in life. Indifference thus, has a great influence on individuals’ personalities and lives, as it is considered a real issue that people should pay attention to.

Furthermore, there are several concepts that share the same meaning with the word indifference among them, the word apathy, which means the lack of passion and emotions. It is deriving from the Greek word 'Pathos' (p.19). In the article *Apathy: A practical guide for neurologists* (2015), Biba R. Stanton and Alen Carson argue that “stoic philosophers refer to apathy as a desirable state of ascendancy of reason over unwanted emotional influence. In common use today, apathy means lack of interest; concern or emotion and can refer to an aspect of normal experience” (p.1). That is to say, an apathetic person is without feelings and passions, this is because he cannot or he has no desire in taking action or in doing something else. Generally, apathy happens when people lack motivation to do anything or when they do not care about what happens around them either in their relations or even about their lives. Thus, being indifferent or an apathetic person may lead to the lack of response to vital situations and leave individuals unable of understanding their personal feelings over things in life.

The two main terms presented so far, indifference and apathy, have a close relative and share nearly the same meaning with the concept of ennui. Indifference and apathy are characterized by the lack of concern and emotions; therefore, ennui is about dissatisfaction. “It is the feeling of listlessness and general dissatisfaction resulting from lack of activity or excitement” (Collins, 2012). Furthermore, in *The demon of noontide: ennui in western literature* (1976), Reinhard Kuhun defines ennui as being “the state of emptiness that the soul feels when it is deprived of interest in action, life and the world, a condition that is the immediate consequence of the encounter with nothingness, and has as an immediate effect a disaffection with a reality” (p.13). This means that, individuals sometimes feel indifferent or not interested because of their lack of emotions, dissatisfaction and the lack of interest towards things in life; this is what leads them to the state of ennui and arises the feeling of dissatisfaction. Basically, when people are not able to see value in something or not interested

towards a certain entity, they will fall in the tendency of ennui and act in accordance to the situation without reasoning. Thus, while an indifferent attitude produces an apathetic response to individual's impressions, the multiplied experience of his apathy leads him to a state of ennui.

Chapter Two: Emotion as an Obstacle to Perception

“Welcome to the source of most of our problems down here on Earth. Everything is planned down to the letter, then something goes wrong and the first thing we do is trade in our plan for a good ol’ emotional freak-out” (Holiday, 2014, p.27).

This chapter aims at analyzing the issue of emotion as an obstacle to perception that prevents people from achieving self-reliance and self-control. Therefore, Holiday in *The obstacle is the way* (2014), introduces the concept of emotion as an obstacle to perception in the sense that unhelpful emotions such as fear, anger or grief stand on the way of success and self-moderation. He centers on the idea that emotion is the root of one’s attitudes and behaviors because either it orients on the right direction or it can be the source of weakness: “If an emotion can’t change the condition or the situation you’re dealing with, it is likely an unhelpful emotion. Or, quite possibly a destructive one” (p.30). Hence, to address the aim of these analyses, we will discuss Holiday’s definition of emotion with reference to three major concepts that may lead to the feeling of stress and lack of confidence such as negative emotions and eudemonia, self-talk and perturbation of one’s thoughts.

In the first part of this chapter, we will explore the concept of negative emotions and eudemonia in the sense that negative emotions prevent people from achieving a happy life which means ‘eudemonia’ and stand on the way of their success and self-improvement. Through analyzing these concepts, we will refer to the word ‘demon’, which is the bad spirit that entails stress and confusion. It has a great impact on individuals’ perspectives and reactions because it makes them unable to reduce unhelpful emotions. We will refer also to major negative emotions attached to this study such as anger and anxiety. These destructive emotions effect human minds in a negative way and make them out of their rational thought especially when facing obstacles.

For the second part of this chapter, we will explore the concept of self-talk which is considered as an inner dialogue that influences human personality and perception in a negative way. This notion is related to individuals' consciousness and generated from hypothetical and virtual thoughts. In accomplishing this part, we will focus on the notion of inferiority complex. In the sense that, inferiority complex is the lack of self-esteem, undervaluing of one's self and considered as one the negatives of self-talk.

In the last part of this chapter, we will examine the concept of perturbation of one's thoughts introduced by Ryan Holiday as an obstacle to emotion because it raises the emotion of dissatisfaction and makes people disturbed and stressed. Throughout analyzing this part, we will refer to mental clutter that creates negative emotions and the daily-stress that many individuals feel because of their life challenges. Indeed, all these concepts are considered as obstacles to emotion and perception.

a. Negative Emotions and Eudemonia

Negative emotions are part of human experience which may lead to the feeling of stress and confusion. They are easy to notice on people's mind and body through their ways of thinking or reactions because they stop them from thinking and behaving rationally and seeing situations in their true perspective. Therefore, the main reasons of falling in those emotions are everyday life challenges because they are designed to make people emotional and less objective, as Holiday (2014) says it will in his book "obstacles make us emotional" (p.29). Generally, negative emotions are resulted from lack of control, thinking negatively, and facing difficult life circumstances. Hence, obstacles make people feel sad and uncomfortable; this is because their negative feelings stand on the way of their success and prevent them from perceiving in the right way, achieving Eudemonia and self-trust.

The concept of eudemonia is regarded as one of the main goals of the philosophy of stoicism and transcendentalism. It is a central aspect of attaining peace of mind and achieving a virtuous life. In Jonas Salzgeber's *The little book of stoicism* (2019), the most common translation of the Greek word eudemonia is happiness. In a sense to be good with the inner spirit and to live in harmony with the highest self, more importantly to get as close as possible to that high potential self (p.16-17). That is to say, eudemonia is about achieving the spiritual state of an individual, self-confidence and peace of mind. Therefore, Thinking about the concept of eudemonia, various conceptual definitions arose to describe individuals' thinking and behaving among them the word 'demon', which is according to Salzgeber a bad, spirit that entails stress and confusion (p.16). There is a reason to think that the bad spirit has a great impact on individual's perspectives and reactions. It is because negative emotions are the sickness of the soul that pushes it to create stress, disturbances and negatively affect the body and the mind of individuals. It is known that the soul was driven by immediate sensual satisfaction, like desire for pleasure or avoidance of pain; therefore this part of the soul needs to be controlled (p.19). Furthermore, for stoicism overcoming one's emotions is sometimes called the stoic therapy of passions in the sense that to understand first the perception of one's emotions and passions then to try to manage them. Stoics had a proper understanding of the mind and developed psychological techniques to prevent any unnecessary emotional distress or suffering that can be the result of negative beliefs, perspectives and expectation (p.20). Hence, the stoic understanding of the mind is seen in the transcendentalist concept of individualism in the sense that to be an individual depends on the power of the mind.

Moreover, the feeling of anger is regarded as a strong negative emotion that prevents people from achieving self-reliance and eudemonia. It can be resulted from a bad experience or unmanaged obstacles that try to involve again. Generally, this feeling arises due to how people interpret and react to certain situations or due to a last experience; therefore they

express their points of view through their anger and rage in order to show how strong they are. However, the fact of being angry does not change the situation or improve it but it makes it more difficult and makes problems worse than what they are. Salzgeber assumes that “Anger is a passion, a negative emotion the Stoics want to minimize” (p.150). In addition, the feeling of anger brought on when a person feels offended or threatened. It affects the mind in a horrible way and makes people completely out of reason; they act in accordance to their instincts and take decisions without reasoning. As Salzgebersays “once we get carried away by anger, reason counts for nothing, anger will do as much as it chooses, and it’ll be hard to turn it off” (p.150).

The transcendentalist philosophy recommends individuals to have self-dependence and to stay far from the influences of society that prevent individuals from achieving emotional regulation. However, Anxiety is another negative emotion that can influence human perception and lead to the loss of self-esteem and confidence through false representation of events and the raise of expectations. It happens when a person encounters a threat or such difficult situations for the first time which make him worry and act in unexpected way. According to Salzgeberone can be in a state of anxiety if he wants something out side of his control or if he is too attached to something that is not in his power to keep, the one who does not desire anything outside of his control cannot be anxious (p.153). Therefore, while one worry about something his body perception may change, and he may start to have problems with his self-image and blaming himself for certain situations or reactions; anxiety certainly has the ability to alter how people respond to situations and perceive the world around them. In short, the feeling of anxiety is a destructive emotion that alters human minds and makes them hard to perceive the events and understand the world in the right way; also it stands on the way of success and eudemonia (Salzgeber, 2019, p.154).

It is highly important to examine the fact that negative emotions are outside of human control, they appear while dealing with obstacles or when they were under the repressive norms of society, therefore such difficult situations make them unable to control themselves. Salzgeber assumes that it is difficult to deal with something which is out of one's control this is why Stoics advise people to focus on the things which are within their control and accept other things as they are like negative emotions because they often reduce self-control and self-esteem (p.75). Indeed, when those destructive feelings encounter people's minds, they urge them to do the opposite of what they think is right and make them out of their rational thought. Salzgeber (2019) says

“Once our mind has been captured by negative emotions, or passions as the Stoics call them, such as irrational fear, grief, anger, or greed, these passions take over, and we react impulsively without being able to think about it” (p,76).

The stoic philosophy views emotions as part of nature and a way to experience the world through human thoughts, beliefs or judgments. Stoics observe strong emotions such as irrational fear, grief and anger as their ultimate weakness; especially when they let them dictate their behaviors and make them feel miserable or far away from being at good terms with their ideal self. They believe that negative emotions are toxic to eudemonia and they are at the root of all human suffering in a sense that those feelings prevent individuals from achieving happiness, success and safety of thoughts (p.19). Therefore, stoics and transcendentalists try to control their negative emotion in order to prevent them from raring their disruptive heads since they are complex and often misunderstood. Additionally, Holiday (2014) explores the performance of stoic philosophy and its self-mastery in managing one's emotions and achieving happiness, for him the best way to overcome obstacles is to keep those emotions in check no matter what happens or how worse the situation is (p.29). That is to say, self-restraint and moderation are essential aspects for individual's perception and his

ability to control himself and the events around him without considering the disturbing desires and emotions.

b. Self Talk

“Creating your own thought and determining the direction of your own future is the most important personal responsibility you will ever have _and taking that responsibility will give you more control over your own life that you ever have had before” (Shad, 1982, p.231).

Life is a journey and only one holds the key; it is up for an individual to fix the direction of his life, to have objectives and to advance in order to improve oneself. What matters is one’s responsibility because it is the base of his life. In other words, it is up for a person to create his own thoughts, perspectives and rich his goals in life through self-confidence and self-esteem. Therefore, in order to reach these tendencies one should have a positive self-talk so as to recognize his thoughts, his way thinking and behaving. Therefore, Holiday advises individuals to talk with themselves to avoid the extreme and negative emotions, he writes “try having that conversation with yourself and see how those extreme emotions hold up. They won’t last long, trust that”(Holiday, 2014, p.31). That is to say, the inner voice of a person is the path towards his self-confidence and success. Hence, having a good perception requires a useful self-talk that leads people to have the inner comfort.

In the book, *What to say when you talk to yourself* (1982), Shad asserts that self talk is an inner dialogue that influences human personality and perception. It is an internal conversation that has a link with individual’s consciousness and rationality. It can be the source of self-esteem or it can orient individuals toward inferiority complex which generates negative emotions. Inferiority complex is a lack of self-esteem and undervaluing of one’s self which is resulted from hypothetical and virtual thoughts. It controls individuals instead of being controlled by their thoughts (p.227). Furthermore, in the article *Transcendentalism: essential essays of Emerson and Thoreau*, Rebecca Challman affirms that the

transcendentalist philosophy approves on the notion of self-esteem and dignity. Thus, it advocates individuals to disregard community opinions that lead to inferiority complex and unconscious talk with one's self. Besides, it enhances people to be unique and possess inner faith (p.1). As she notes "Transcendentalism actually refers to that which is within the human mind. It refers to the innate ability within all people to fulfill their potential, to overcome adversity, to face challenges directly, to rely on an inner voice and instinct to guide them through life" (p.1). As a result, the way of achieving the transcendentalism crucial principles is by knowing the art of talking with the inner-self since it plays a significant role on minimizing negative emotions which include mostly depression, anxiety and sorrow.

Transcendentalism philosophy makes reference to the notion of self talk; this is manifested in Emerson's words which designate that every individual has an inner conversation that guides him throughout his life. Therefore, the perception of individuals and their interpretations of things determine how this conversation goes. In other words, external influences such as society and its aspects play a role in the inner speech of a person. It can lead him towards a negative reasoning as far as it can be the weak spot that pushes him to have a weak personality. As a result, self-talk generates negative emotions like dissatisfaction, anger and worry. Ralph Waldo Emerson notes in his essay:

"There are the voices which we hear in solitude, but they grow faint and inaudible as we enter into the world. Society everywhere is a conspiracy against manhood and every of its members, society is a joint stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of hid bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty of culture of the eater, the virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion; it loves not realities and creators, but names and customs" (p.3)

Emerson's words advocate people to stay away from social attitudes and beliefs that draw them towards negative conversations with one self. Subsequently, it directs them to self-reliance which is the base of a positive speech and perception because they are the only ones who have the authority to define themselves, no one else can. Moreover, this exercise opens

the way for them to talk positively with their inner soul and grants peace of mind and satisfaction instead of negative talk that comes from external perspectives and generates negative emotions.

Moving beyond, self-criticism is a form of negative self-talk which is unpleasant and frequently unconscious. It produces negative emotions that prevent individuals from taking the right direction. In *Believe in yourself* (2021), Dora Albert defines inferiority complex as “a problem of subtraction. The strange thing about this problem is that most of the figures you deal with are imaginary” (p.48). Albert’s statement signifies that a path that drives most figures toward personality disorder can generate imaginary thoughts, negative self-talk, or negative emotions such as disturbance, fear and anxiety. Indeed, a person should rate himself by talking positively with his inner soul in order to attain mental health and reach his goals. Albert asserts that the thoughts which create fear of improvement and negative emotions are considered as person’s beliefs, which make him believe that his mistakes are not the same as others’ mistakes, and they are the biggest ones. In addition, the fact of thinking that these seem silly, ridiculous and unconscious about the faults he made, looking like an imbecile and unaware person (p.48-49).

Furthermore, when a person under appreciates himself by introducing negative reasoning and talks, in a certain way he will fail in the setback of emotions, because emotional maturity needs self-estimate and self-acceptance. Therefore, According to Albert to defeat negative emotions, an individual should accept himself and accept all attributes that he has positive or negative. In addition, he should not think that he is the only one who makes mistakes; even if he feels that he has shortcomings when comparing himself to others (p.61). Conforming to Holiday (2014) “we defeat emotions with logic, or at least that’s the idea. Logic is questions and statements. With enough of them, we get to root causes” (p.30).

Albert (2021) came out wisely that logical reasoning and self-awareness come with being able to recognize how to look at one's self from an objective point of view. Moreover, being self-aware is not the absence of mistakes but the ability to talk positively with one's self, correct the faults and making progress from them (p.85). Individuals can turn their negative self-talk and inferiority complex to a golden success by using logic and perception in order to defeat negative emotions. However, if a person does not know the process of using consciousness to overthrow negative self-talk, he will fail in the obstacle of emotions. As Emerson (1841) claims "nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind" (p.4).

Moving beyond this, Holiday (2014) claims that meditation of emotions is an important thing in individual's life. One should differentiate between the harmful and healthy emotions in order to avoid fear, anxiety and panic because rational judgments are important too (p.29). Therefore, when people are able to manage and recognize the procedures of responding to emotional experiences, they will possess logic in order to regulate their thoughts and perspectives. However, inappropriate reactions towards a hard situation can create negative reasoning and thoughts disorder. Further, bad perceptions are the source of generating negative emotions this is why people should regulate their beliefs and thoughts in order to surpass the obstacle of emotion that comes from the bad interpretation of situations and thoughts disorder.

In addition, Shad (1982) shows that perception enables individuals to see the world around them as stable and helps them to treat themselves and events as what they truly are. However, some people have overload thinking and look incidents more or less attractive than what they are in reality. They have the tendency to focus more on the negative stimuli rather than the positive that make them expect the wrong things all time and think in a negative way. The fact that individuals give much importance to the events around them, then if things did

not go as they expect, they will feel sorry, upset and discouraged (p.231). These feelings may affect their emotions and the state of their minds in a passive way. Thus, one can assert that perceptions are sometimes the obstacles themselves which may lead to emotional disturbance and the perturbation of one's thoughts.

c. Perturbation of One's Thoughts

“This is the skill that must be cultivated _freedom from disturbance and perturbations. You can focus your energy on solving problems rather than reacting to them” (Holiday, 2014, p.29).

Holiday claims that meditation of one's emotions is really important in the life of individuals. Therefore, one should differentiate between the harmful and healthy emotions in order to avoid fear, anxiety and panic because rational judgments have a great impact on individuals' life. Besides, one should have the ability to manage and recognize the procedure of responding to an emotional experience and to possess logic in order to regulate one's thoughts and perspectives. However, inappropriate reactions of an individual towards a hard situation can create for him negative reasoning and thoughts disorder;also, they can lead them to the perturbation of thoughts. This is why; people should regulate their beliefs, thoughts and self-reasoning in order to surpass the obstacle to emotion that comes from the bad interpretation of situations and thoughts disorder (p.29).

Similar to this idea, HayetMahmoudi and AsmaYahi in *The impact of Emerson's transcendentalism on modern America*(2016) record that most Americans during the nineteenth century are bounded by society's repressive norms. Therefore, they react according to public perspectives, beliefs and thoughts. Obviously, that causes them mental chaos as far as they cannot attain emotional regulation that drives them away panic and harmful emotions. Hence, Transcendentalism opens the way of regulation and rational judgment and urges individuals to depend on themselves rather than living around the noise

of society (p.3). According to these insights, the way of attaining emotional regulation and thoughts management depend on the perception of individuals. This means that people should pursue two essential things namely differentiation between harmful and healthy emotions also consciousness and self-reliance which plays a significant role to manage one's emotions. Emerson states

“The key to every man is his thought. Sturdy and defying though he looks, he has a helm which he obeys, which is the idea after which all his facts are classified. He can only be reformed by showing him a new idea which commands his own” (p.3).

The quotation above illustrates that the mind of individuals is the manager of their thoughts and perspectives and it is created to be a tool to serve them. Thus, they ought to be effective leaderships over their thoughts and perspectives. Obviously, they can do this by learning on an emotional, spiritual and intellectual level in order to broaden their awareness and arrange their thoughts. However, when they are unable to control that process, they will fall under the influence of random thoughts that arises negative emotions like fear, anxiety and anger.

Perturbation of one's thoughts is considered as an obstacle to emotion because it gives birth to the emotion of dissatisfaction and makes individuals stressed and confused. In *Declutter your mind* (2016), Steve S.J. Scott and Barrie Davenport discuss the main reasons of mental clutter that creates negative emotions, which are considered as an obstacle in the contemporary world. The first reason of creating negative emotions is the daily-stress that many people feel because of overload information, physical clutter and the great number of choices in free societies that causes anxiety, depression, panic, indecision and dissatisfaction (p.12). The authors claim that freedom of choice is another cause, which is called by the psychologist Barry Schwartz 'Paradox of choice'. They also believe that increased choices will not make people happy, even though they can give them better results. Therefore,

they assume that “Food Marketing Institute, in 2014 there were 42,214 items carried in the average super market. What once might have been a 10 excursion to grab necessities? Now requires at least that much time to agonize over the best brand of yogurt or the right gluten-free crackers” (p.13). In addition, Scott and Davenport regard that busyness in absorbing too much stuff and information is the third cause that at some point leads people to be exhausted emotionally. Explaining that people get lost in the clutter of negative thinking, regret and being worried about their lives, relationships, their look, and what other people think of them (p.14). Thus, these thoughts lead them to a kind of negative emotions that make them suffer and weaken their happiness and make it for them hard to achieve their goals.

Furthermore, Scott and Davenport (2016) quoted Dr Rich Hanson “to keep our ancestors alive. Mother Nature evolved a brain that routinely tricked them into making three mistakes: Overestimating threats, underestimating opportunities and underestimating resources” (p.15). They refer to this quotation by saying that people’s nervous system responds in a similar way with their early ancestors when they face threats in order to survive. Besides, they assert that any unfavorable thought that enters the mind feels real, and human beings have the tendency to take it as a truth (p.15). In fact, that these negative thoughts produce negative emotions and people have a tendency to over think, worry and perceive situations more adversely than they actually are. Therefore, to avoid negative emotions, people should control their thoughts which requires consciousness and rationality because if they know the way of responding to a difficult situation with a positive and peaceful mind they won’t be obstacles for them. Indeed, they may even come to visualize them as challenges or opportunities for growth and development.

Chapter Three: Subjectivity as an Obstacle to Perception

“The observing eye sees events, clear of distractions, exaggerations, and misperceptions. The perceiving eye sees ‘insurmountable obstacles’ or ‘major setbacks’ or even just ‘issues’. It brings its own issues to the fight. The former is helpful, the latter is not” (Holiday, 2014, p.32).

The quotation above shows that objectivity and subjectivity are two parts of human mind. One of them is the strongest side; the other is the weakest one (p. 32). In *The obstacle is the way* (2014), Ryan Holiday introduces the concept of objectivity as the observing eye which sees reality as it is and the events clearly without exaggerations. Opposed to it is the notion of subjectivity, the perceiving eye, which sees only setbacks and obstacles. Therefore, subjectivity is an important issue and one of the strongest obstacles to perception since it prevents people from attaining a positive view of things and takes the place of objectivity. Indeed, this chapter aims at analyzing subjectivity as an obstacle to perception and to affirm that individuals’ interpretations of events depend on their own perception as well as to show that the subjective thinking or over interpretation of events block the way of improvement, success and raise the problem of unawareness and fear.

In the first part of this chapter, we will explore the concept of unawareness, which is a problem that comes from the subjective visualizations of things and events. It is one of the negative impressions that make the mind unable to observe in an objective way and push human beings to act in accordance to their inclinations without thinking or reasoning. We will also refer to the influence of unawareness and its impact on human life which entails affection on individual’s emotions, relationships, decision making and the way of behaving. At the end of these analyses, we will mention the notion of ignorance which is one of the negative impressions that makes people unaware of their behaviors and ignore their responsibilities also affects individuals in the same way with unawareness.

In the second part of this chapter, we will examine the feeling of fear which is considered as an obstacle that leads to state of subjectivity and a negative emotion that arises from individuals' subjective view of things. In order to reach this aim, we will discuss the stoic view of fear as a threat to their individuality and their power of reason as well as the way through which they overvalue things which are out of their control such as the judgments of society. We will also introduce the concepts of worry and fear as false beliefs of the mind that perceive only the darkness and shadows and always predict failure. These concepts are regarded as barriers that stand on the way of a good perception, objectivity and lead to failure and disappointment.

a. Unawareness

Negative impressions can carry the power of the mind away and make people lost their thoughts, especially while being angry or stressed. Unawareness is one of the negative impressions that make the mind unable to observe in an objective way and push human beings to do everything that come in their minds without thinking of them. That is to say, when a person is not aware of the things around him, he won't be able to observe objectively or to think with reason. Many people are unconsciously controlled by their emotions and worry about the ultimate outcome that they receive. As a result, this prevents their minds from making objective observations and forces them to act without considerations of their actions. As Jonas Salzgeber says it well in his work, *The little book of stoicism* (2019), "Unawareness is so dangerous: while being unaware, we can't observe and recognize our first impressions and would mindlessly follow along" (p.81). In addition, being unaware of some things in life can give birth to other subjective impressions and make common problems strong, hard or out of control. It can lead to state of ignorance and make people fail in their relationships and

even their lives. Yet, unawareness entails lack of attention, concern and the loss of interest in most things in life.

Unawareness is the reason behind the raise of the negative feelings and reactions toward things in life. When people become unable to understand themselves and their own emotions, then it is not possible for them to perceive others feelings or to create good relations with them. This is because they lack of self moderation and self improvement. As Salzgeberclaims “A lack of awareness is the second reason for negative emotions to raise and to take us over” (p.79). It means the tendency of unawareness effect human emotions in a negative way and makes their minds out of reason. Furthermore, Salzgeber assumes that in order to deal with what happens effectively and to be mindful in reactions, one need to be aware of what happens around him and looks at situations with an objective view. Otherwise, he will obey like a dog that smells sausage (p.81). That is to say, individuals need awareness to detect their irrational fears and cravings before they can endure them with courage and perseverance (p.82).

More generally, the issue of unawareness leads to the lack of responsibility and affects them in a negative way. It makes people unaware of their behaviors and even ignores their responsibilities and duties in life, especially if they are influenced by negative emotions or events. When people lack responsibility, they make random choices and act without thinking of the consequences. As Salzgeber affirms that “we make random choices with no goals whatsoever, until we wonder where our time went” (p.124). Sometimes, unawareness refers to the things that people do not know or other things which are beyond their brain’s ability to learn or to understand. This is what leads to the troubles of the mind and the raise of ignorance. “The troubled mind conies from judging an event as undesirable or bad, often in the form of complaining” (p.71). Therefore, people cannot notice unawareness in their own behaviors, but it is possible for them acknowledge its existence in other people’s reactions and

attitudes. Hence, unawareness amounts to failure due to the lack of responsibility, lack of attention and forgetfulness.

In *Search of America: Nature, spirituality and the self in American transcendentalism and beat generation* (2008), Caithin Cater assert that transcendentalism views awareness as a crucial aspect of human experience and people can better understand their surroundings and connect with reality in an objective way. Moreover, they contend that self-consciousness is a source of all meaningful knowledge that leads people to make thoughtful choices which enhance their relationships and their way of lives (22). The author quoted a passage from Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay *Self-Reliance* where he declares that "Nothing at least is sacred but the integrity of your own mind. Absolve you to yourself and you shall have the suffrage of the world".

Emerson words affirm that sanity is overvalued in people's lives, and relationships are established on its foundation. Additionally, it allows people to interact and observe the environment that surrounds them objectively. However, lack of rationality can draw people to unawareness or the state of ignorance which generate subjective observations and insane behaviors. Hence, it is up to individuals to be mindful in order to maintain healthy relationships and to take aware decisions that determine the right path because mindfulness is the basis of objective observations and healthy relationships.

As unawareness grows, the state of ignorance involves and affects human minds in a negative way. Unfortunately, It is the case of many individuals those who are simply unaware of their lives and of the events around them. They ignore rules and do whatever they think is right without being aware of the consequences. Ignorance consequently may have effects on individual's decision making and lead them to take unconscious decisions and remain completely ignorant of the details. Salzgeber says "If we lack that awareness, we permit

ourselves to get carried away and let our actions become shameful and disregarding” (p.82). Clearly, when people focus more on their subjective part and neglect the objective one, they become unable to think or to react in an objective way and unable to control their actions. Initially, ignorance implies that one cannot simply expect self-interest to overcome all relevant knowledge problems. This is why most people choose to ignore unimportant things rather than push themselves to change them, because they are unchangeable like those things which are out of their control. Indeed, Unawareness and ignorance are negative impressions which make people unable to understand their feelings or to perceive with an objective eye.

a. Fear

“How many problems seem to come from applying judgments to things we do not control, as though there are a way they were supposed to be? How often we see what we think in is there or should be there, instead of what actually is there” (Holiday, 2014, p.33)

In this quote, Holiday illustrates some stoic notions which existed in their teachings and doctrines which are people judgments about things that are out of their control. As well as, he recommends them to embrace reality as it is in order to obviate problems that are generated from external things. In other words , when individuals over think and overvalue tasks that are out of their control such as judgments of society that cause them the feelings of fear, panic and worry which lead them towards disturbance and disorganization of their lives. Furthermore, they can prohibit them to turn adversities into opportunities. Therefore, individuals should agree with the immediate moment as it is in order to advance and not stick on the pain circle where they live. Hence, objectivity is the truth that is free from personal subjectivity bias that is brought on one’s perception, emotions or imagination. Subsequently, individuals should accept facts that are out of their control with reason and rationality away from passive imagination, embarrassed emotions and bad perceptions which arise from frightens bias in the life of an individual.

Holiday (2014) explored the notion of objectivity and subjectivity in great deal in his work *The obstacle is the way*, he gave a simple observation to the opposed concepts. He refers to objectivity as it is the observing eye and subjectivity to the perceiving eye. He states that the observing eye is the ability to prevent the good things from the wrong ones in the difficult situations. Unlike the perceiving eye which sees negative things or major setbacks. Eventually, the challenge of many of people according to Holiday is that when dealing with their own obstacles, they remain unable to see things as what they truly are, they become stressed and act without thinking. Whereas, when dealing with others problems, they see them so simple and they suggest solutions (p.32-34). Therefore, the point here is that when people are under stress and fear, most of them draw on past experiences, old assumptions and biases which cloud their ability to see things clearly and make sound judgments. This is how subjectivity takes the place of objectivity.

Jonas Salzgeber in his book, *The little book of stoicism* (2019), examines the reasons that arises the feelings of fear that Stoics consider as an obstacle that prohibit individuals from objective visualization. For them real fear does not pose a life threatening but the most harmful fear is the one that is imagined, which means many individuals suffer more from fear than from injury and they are often more terrified than the harm itself. Evidently, that fright generates from unconscious imagination and negative expectations that people possess and unfortunately that drive them towards disorder and ignorance that blocks them from recognizing their potentials and achieving their dreams. Salzgeber quoted Seneca in his work “we are more often frightened than hurt, and we suffer more from imagination than from reality” (p.182). He refers to this quotation by saying that people are paralyzed by what is unreal and are restrained by their worries which are the effects of imaginary fear.

Another significant reason of fear is the worry about external things or things that individuals cannot control. That is to say, exceedingly thoughts and expectations about things

which are not under individuals' power can push them to frighten. Salzgeber claims by using Seneca's words "instead of adapting ourselves to present circumstances we send out thoughts too far ahead."(p.182). It is clear that the future projection of something that is out of individuals' control can lead them fear excessively. To illustrate these notions it is evident to say that people are afraid because they desire things out of their control or because they are excessively attached to something that they are unable to maintain. For instance, they are attached to their beloved ones and they fear losing them or they are attached to the security of regular salary but one day will changes and they want things that they are unable to obtain. As a result, individuals should not attach themselves on the things that are outside their authority in order to avoid the feeling of fear which blocks the path of their success. Objectivity requires meditation and rationality that people should possess in order to conquer fear that is within them.

Moreover, anticipations and expectations of persons are not the way towards disorder and disaster but the most remarkable thing is that the process of using them by individuals should be objective rather than subjective. It means that people should optimize their points of view and accept reality as it is because it is not under their control. Obviously, this is the way that lessens the feelings of fear and opens the door of objectivity (p.183). In addition, Marcus Aurelius represents an effective manner of managing the imaginary fear feeling. As he records "clear your mind and get a hold on yourself as when awakened from sleep and realizing it was only a bad dream upsetting you, wake up and see what is there just like those dreams" (p.184). Relying on Aurelius words it is important to recognize that individuals' fears are the result of their imaginations and not the reality. They are terrified of something not because the reality which is bad but because they expect it would be bad. Hence, they must observe objectively and stop negative visualization in order to overcome their fears (p.184).

Lisa Jimenez in her book, *Conquer fear* (2001), claims that fear is human. It is a necessary component of growing and part of every person's life. Fear is a persistent emotion, even healthy fear exists. Indeed, God has a specific purpose of fear and individuals receive it in order to be secure and to be closer to their creator. In fact individuals are born with three innate fears which are fear of falling, fear of loud noises and fear of abandonment. Therefore, people should have a good visualization technique so as to recognize the process of managing these three fears. That is to say, to conquer these innate fears people should think objectively by observing their dread as a gift that is instilled in them to keep them safe and lead them to faith (p.15). However, many individuals in our daily lives put all their energy on running from their fear or denying it rather than understanding that is a gift that God grants them in order to be closer to him and to have faith as a way to conquer it (p.18). The author Jimenez shows that most people natural response to their fear is to run from it, ignore it or sabotages their attempts. Subsequently, they fail to see the strength that comes from using reason and embracing fear. Besides, they lose the objective visualization that is intended to be (p.17)

Individuals make the feelings of fear as the most dominant problem in their lives and that come from their expectations about that feeling. As well as, that make them experience frightens every day. For instance they are afraid of losing their fortunes, they are afraid of losing their beloved ones, they are hesitant to be authentic. They are afraid of maturing and taking responsibility, they worry about choosing the wrong decision. Moreover, they are frightened of life itself. Clearly, the reason behind those fears is their expectations of the ultimate outcome. Hence, that is an obstacle that blocks their way of progress, sabotaging them and turns their dreams of financial independence, loving relationships and meaningful life into a routine of procrastination and other undesirable behaviors. Therefore, to conquer those bad results individuals have to look only at the present moment as a source of advancements and not prospecting how it will be the ultimate outcome (p.14). In addition, the

author notices that fears of people are a direct mirror of their beliefs. Thus, what generates fear is self limiting and negative belief system (p.23).

Obviously, to break through the negative beliefs and perspectives individuals should be conscious of their negative ideas and understand how to overcome them. In other words, the subconscious mind of individuals is powerful because it is responsible for keeping them safe. So, when it senses fear that is caused by a negative mindset, it will do anything to prevent them from attaining their objectives, some negative beliefs are brought from past experiences. For example individuals who have already harm of interpersonal experiences may fear rejection, loss or feeling unworthy, maybe they are experienced an embarrassed moment in their relationships and because of it they dislike intervention and confrontation. As a result, the way of solving that scare is by learning how to get past every setback and using it as a stepping stone to success. Additionally, to withdraw from that fear individuals should have the virtue of courage that keeps people living an authentic life. Hence, people deserve objective visualization technique, positive beliefs and perspectives which are really important in their lives (p.41).

In the book *Putting the power of your subconscious mind to work* (2009), Joseph Murphy depicts that worry and fear are false beliefs of the mind that perceive only the darkness and shadows and always predict failure (p. 80). This means that when people fear or worry of something, they become unable to react in a logical way and unable of thinking in a positive way. Therefore, these feelings make people think in a negative way and always expect the wrong things. In addition, Murphy claims that people who worry always expect things to go wrong, they will make all reasons why something bad could happen, and they don't even try to make one reason to something good could happen (p.81). This is because people fear of failure and fear of the fact of being disappointed. Most of the time, they choose to do nothing rather than taking action or trying something new. Furthermore, Joseph argue

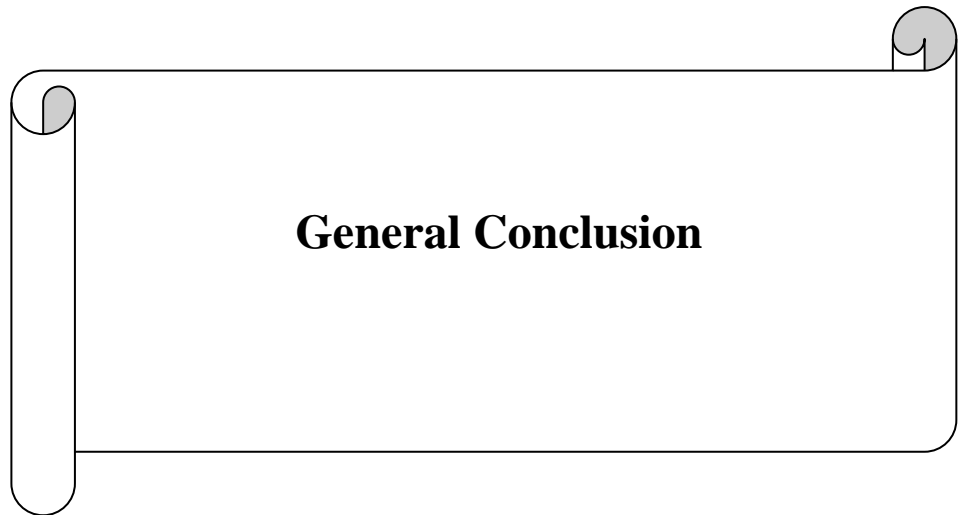
that the act of being fear changes a positive mind into a negative one and no one can think clearly or act wisely; the only way to make those beliefs die is to refuse to give the attention (p.80- 84). Hence, worry and fear make people weaker and less able to meet any challenges that might come along their way.

The feeling of fear is also marked in the philosophy of transcendentalism and goes back to the famous transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson who reveals that facing fear requires courage and that endurance indicates fear mastery and not the absence of it. In The works of Ralph Waldo Emerson Society and Solitude (1870), the author Emerson agrees that

“Each surmounts the fear as fast as he precisely understands the peril and learns the means of resistance. Each is liable to panic, which is exactly the terror of ignorance surrendered to the imagination. Knowledge is the encourager; knowledge that takes fear out of the heart, knowledge in use is knowledge in practice” (248)

Emerson statement manifests that the good recognition of fearful situations serves as a key to removing fear from the heart and that recognition can only be achieved with the virtue of courage. Furthermore, the way individuals deal with frightening situations should be based on objectivity and rationality rather than panic which lead people to not know what they are doing at that moment. So, the process of acknowledging scare moments is the solution towards overcoming fears. Hence, knowledge inspires confidence and removes fear from the heart. In addition, through knowledge individuals may view fearful situations objectively rather subjectively.

To conclude, it is important to say that the philosophy of stoicism and transcendentalism contain important lessons that help individuals to surpass their fears. Moreover, the two philosophies provide procedures and information to enrich the consciousness of people and lead them to transcend their fears.



General Conclusion

VI- General Conclusion

Our dissertation has studied the theme of contemporary stoicism in Ryan Holiday's *The Obstacle is the Way* (2014). Stoicism is an important subject which is overvalued in the contemporary world especially in the American culture. As it is mentioned in the dissertation, stoicism serves as a powerful tool to overcome life challenges. Therefore, Holiday's representation of contemporary stoicism is shown throughout his expressions and recommendations that grant individuals. Therefore, he picked up full of tales and anecdotes as examples of the stoic lessons from some history greatest heroes and heroines, for instance, Nelson Mandela, Thomas Edison, John Glen and Rubin Hurricane Carter.

In this study, we brought up some obstacles to perception that individuals may encounter in their lives. To reach this aim, we have used the philosophy of Transcendentalism and Emerson's essays *Self-reliance*, *circles* and *courage* due to their similarities shared with the philosophy of stoicism such as integrity and self-capacity and how to build self resilience in one's character. Clearly, both of them stand for self-worth, applying logic and developing one's character. In addition, the stoic philosophy is noteworthy because it offers timeless wisdom which is still relevant today. This means that people can benefit much from understanding the ideas given by stoicism and applying it to their adversities.

The notion of self-reliance that stoicism grants is really significant. It recommends individuals to rely on themselves and never be the subject to the will of others and their own desires. Obviously, this notion exists also in the transcendentalist philosophy and it is apparent in Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Self-reliance*. As noted, this essay exhorts readers to act on their own free will rather than complying with social norms. It places a focus on listening to one's own voice rather than leaning on other's institutions such as the Church. Furthermore, it urges readers to be sincere in their interaction with others because being

sincere in interpersonal interactions is being true to themselves. Understandably, they should not treat everyone equally but they should treat everyone with the same amount of respect, positivity and trust. Therefore, this creates a strong personality that makes them self-reliant. As the American president Barack Obama stated: “it is important to make sure that we are talking with each other in a way that heals, not in a way that wounds” (Makes, 2011).

Obama’s words shows the right way of using frankness that pushes people to be self – reliant in the sense that someone must be frank, polite and sincere with others not insolent and rude, because many people confuse insolence with sincerity and wound others with their insolence. Subsequently, this thing does not develop a strong personality that makes people independent. As a result, self – reliance needs pure sincerity that draws people towards personal safety. Moreover, every virtue is built on honesty and sincerity and the art of talking must be transcendental and stoic. In other words, frankness and honesty are the foundation of all virtues. But, individuals must know how to apply them in order to be self- reliant.

The philosophy of stoicism embraces America in this contemporary world and this is shown throughout the expressions that modern American presidents deliver and the stoic literature that are published each year. Evidently, the reason is due to the lack of liberties in the country. As it is documented, the founding values of the United States uphold the ideals of freedom and equality. However, it is a nation established on the systematic exclusion and repression of people of colour. Besides, the contravention of human rights that they have been subjected to. Thus, stoicism took its place in the country and expanded all over the world. It recommends endorsing justice, liberty, citizenship also to avoid violence and the abuses of power. It is worth noting that there are changes for the better in American country and this is seen through the expressions of poets, authors and presidents. For instance, the current president Joe Biden declares that “all our differences hardly measure up to the values we all hold in common” (Autori, 2021). This means, he believes that there is no difference between

individuals except with sobriety and moral values. Therefore, stoicism is based on the moral values that contribute the self- improvement to the best condition.

The final result of our thesis is that we have stated different obstacles to perception that many people confront in the contemporary world. Thus, resorting to the philosophy of stoicism and transcendentalism is crucial. It helps them to endure pains with power and resilience, to reduce destructive emotions and to have objective visualization. The interest of this work lies on examining the issues that give rise to the obstacles so as to facilitate the life in which people live.

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