

# The Redwood Stoa

## MINUTES FROM JANUARY 17, 2016, SUNDAY

REDWOOD STOA GROUP MEETING

Met at Café Au Coquelet, University Avenue, Berkeley

10:30AM–12:45PM

Weather: Scattered Showers

**Attendees:** David, Simon, Seamus, Kevin, Christine, John, James!

**This month's theme: Rational by Nature**

### Reports and Announcements:

- Reflection Survey is open! Great for new members, too! Take a moment to provide your thoughts and help the group excel. <https://redwoodstoa.wordpress.com/reflection-survey-september-2015/>
- San Francisco meeting location options:
  - Muddy's Coffee House. 1304 Valencia St, San Francisco, CA 94110, near the 24<sup>th</sup> and Mission BART station. This is our next meetup location; check meetup for details!
  - Sightglass Café, 10 minutes from Civic Center BART station.
- If anyone wants to see Star Wars, contact James!
- The Stoics Toolbox
  - Proposal to develop it using Quip.com in long and short form collaboration.
  - We now have a Facebook account, thanks to Kevin.
- The Intergalactic Stoic Fellowship (ISF) has made contact with groups in various countries.
  - We are making connections with diverse people
  - There was talk of a Philosophical Olympics
- University of Wyoming puts on a yearly Stoic Camp.
  - May 16-20<sup>th</sup>
  - <http://www.uwyo.edu/philosophy/stoic-camp/>
  - \$300 for registration

### Announcement of upcoming community service opportunities and events:

- Help Restore Huckleberry Park – Oakland Hills 9:30AM Saturday Feb 13<sup>th</sup> @ 6934 Skyline Blvd.

### Goals:

*The Personal Goals section will take a break until new goals are declared in March. We're in "Winter Quarters" now, and it's a time for rest, recharge and reflection, not to mention time to enjoy life and fellowship: All things in balance.*

### *Group Goals –*

- Developing outreach
- Making Stoicism accessible to new people by providing context and background information
- Creating a script for a TED talk



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## Open discussion of theme: Rational by Nature

- "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man." – G. B. Shaw
  - Living up to virtue can require changing the world around you.
- Stoic values for society vs. for self
  - Practicing stoicism individually radiates outward into society.
  - Functionality in a diverse society; John Sellars, Stoicism, pg. 2.
- "So convenient a thing it is to be a reasonable creature, since it enables one to find or make a reason for everything one has a mind to do." – B. Franklin
- Stoicism must be practiced as well as studied.
  - There is more surviving material from secondhand and subsequent philosophers of Stoicism than from the originating teachers.
  - Generally Judaism encourages debate and discussion more than preachy Christianity.
  - Epictetus is known only through a student's transcription
  - Epictetus is straightforward and insulting at times.
- Discussion of being very "first movement" when dealing with a person on meth.
  - If you go ahead and argue with someone who is unreasonable, aren't you also being unreasonable?
- Material provided for meeting: Epictetus Discourses I:6
  - There is a need to habituate your non-rational reaction to situations (the first movement).
  - So it's good to prepare yourself ahead of time for the worst-case scenarios ("premeditatio malorum"), and develop a reflex.
  - It would be good to habituate a 'first movement' such that when you see a baseball coming at your head, you reflexively move to catch it rather than watching its approach in fear.
  - Avoid a vicious cycle of cursing about having cursed.
  - Take a moment to see the situation clearly (the sacred pause).
  - May seem like a lot at first, but can be more habituated.
  - A way to encourage rational thought: picture the fore-brain (seat of judgment) being engaged over the rear-brain (the lizard brain).
  - Ask yourself, How am I feeling?
- Does the pace of technology outstrip the pace of philosophical understanding?
  - Philosophy allows for universal understanding of the basics of humanity.
  - Philosophy does still need us to work to keep pace with people and technology.
  - Sometimes it feels like modern science and technology haven't caught up with philosophy!
  - The actual practice has changed, modern science replacing ancient physics.
- Mindfulness in Stoicism differs from that of Hinduism and Buddhism by centering on virtue.
- Rational by Nature is a foundational principle in Stoicism.
  - It's the capacity to be rational; although, sometimes we seem to be "irrational by nature"!
  - Economics used to be based on people being rational, which they often aren't.



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- People without the actual capacity for emotion can spend hours rationalizing, trying to make a choice.
  - Buridan's ass ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buridan%27s\\_ass](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buridan%27s_ass))
  - Stoics don't consider emotions bad.
  - Becoming a Stoic sage isn't an attainable goal, but an asymptotic aspiration (aspiring to approach a given value without ever reaching it).

## **Other Notes:**

- There is a usefulness of tangible books, and a good translation is important.
- R/stoicism is a reddit thread that discusses stoicism well.
- John and James are taking a Marcus Aurelius course through the College of Stoic Philosophers.
- Historically Stoics believed in a provident god.
- Does "Stoic" equal "Spartan"?
  - A Stoic has no enemies, unlike Spartans.
  - You could be a Stoic Spartan, but you would have to reflect on your purpose.
  - A stoic apartment would be less decorated than a Spartan apartment.

Announcement of next month's theme: **What's in Your Power**

**Join the Redwood Stoa!** Now you can become an official member of the Redwood Stoa by adding your name through the following web form: <https://redwoodstoa.wordpress.com/join-the-redwood-stoa/>  
It's pleasant to do and will help the group effectively plan future events!

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