

# The Redwood Stoa

## MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 18, 2016, SATURDAY

REDWOOD STOA GROUP MEETING

Met at Helen Crocker Russell Horticulture Library, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco

10:30AM–12:45PM

Weather: Sunny

**Attendees:** James, John, Simon, Katrina, Christine, Mark

**This month's theme:** *Reflection*

### Open discussion

- Philosophy as an art that, over time, can be discovered, developed in the current context, and forgotten, only to be rediscovered
- Tim Ferriss' "The 4-Hour Workweek" draws from Seneca
- Erik Wiegardt, through his New Stoa, almost singlehandedly brought Stoicism to the Internet age
- James has a notebook to organize his reflections on the group, as well as other things
- Goals to reflection
  - Preparation, and embracing the sacred pause, to avoid flying off the handle
  - Appreciation of the moment
- Death as "the worst thing that can happen to you"
  - But it's not particularly a bad thing; there are worse things
  - "Someday we'll die, Snoopy." "But all other days we won't."
- Reflecting on the advantages that you have in life
- The practice of dealing with worse situations
  - Not letting emotions take over, but to logically take it apart and reflecting on the "bad" situation
  - To respond, not react
- Epictetus, from Pythagoras, asks: What did I do wrong today? What did I leave undone? In what way did I strengthen in my philosophy?
  - Every night before going to sleep, Seneca asks: What weakness did I overcome? What strength did I exhibit?
  - Reaffirming of your weaknesses and what you can work on, taking power away from those who notice your weaknesses and would slander you
- The idea of "Be yourself"
  - But the self is not a solid, fixed, whole thing
  - Expanding the boundaries of self, the evolving self identity
  - Attempting to be the Sage, living in conformity with Nature, and contributing to society
- Conforming, resigning to, embracing the values of Nature
  - Realizing a disconnect when it occurs
  - Working to unify your personal nature with Nature



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- Corruption, politics, and the negative aspects of humankind as a part of nature
  - But it is not the only aspect
  - Seeing something negative and having a natural reaction, perhaps through reflection, to move away from that thing and evolve towards something positive
- Rockefeller held Stoic beliefs, but may have failed at living according to nature
  - Perhaps an example of someone whose philosophy included particularly faulty logic
- Job interviewers ask for your weaknesses to see how well you work on your failings
  - Bill Gates would only hire people who had one major screw-up on their record
  - Silicon Valley now wants things to fail fast, if they are going to fail at all
- From a Nature perspective, there's no Good and Bad
  - Nothing but Goodness is good
  - Murray lecture (<https://redwoodstoa.wordpress.com/?s=murray&search=Go>)
- So if you see a rise of a despot, is it in your control to end that reign?
  - Epictetus, Enchiridion I:
    - “Things in our control are opinion, pursuit, desire, aversion, and, in a word, whatever are our own actions. Things not in our control are body, property, reputation, command, and, in one word, whatever are not our own actions.”
  - First, act within the rules of society
  - Some heads of groups are leaders (Ghandi) and some are just reflections of the will of the people
  - How is ‘influencing people’ something in our control?
  - Churchill: “Success is going from failure to failure without a loss of enthusiasm”
  - If a despot rises, and many people die or suffer, is that necessarily Bad?
- Changing your perspective on what the human condition is
  - The rise of diabetes as the new normal?
  - Societal problems, partly developed from Nature
  - Capitalism geared to increasing desire
- Living according to Nature, and reflecting on that
- In order to conform to Nature, we must uphold self-preservation, fellowship, and making logical sense!

## **Reports and Announcements:**

- Welcome, Mark!
- “A Stoic Notebook” packet, a culmination of James’ studies, as well as bookmarks were passed out.
- Meeting location will continue to alternate between Berkeley and San Francisco.
- Simon was given an “Arrian of Nicomedia Certificate of Merit” for his work as the Scribe ☺
- StoicCon – “Get your StoicCon” on October 15<sup>th</sup> will be hosted by the NY Stoic group.
  - <https://howtobeastoxic.wordpress.com/stoicon/>
- Game night!
  - Date October 29<sup>th</sup> by Simon, probably at 6:30pm, in Panera by the Fremont BART station.
- The Stoic Fellowship — Globally Connected – Locally Engaged



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- <http://www.stoicfellowship.com/>
- Currently developing the iconography for the group.
- Working to help develop a Stoa in Athens and one in Rome.
- Stoic Pods
  - Starting with John and James as facilitators.
  - Will be canvassing the group's outlying members for interest!

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

- Help Restore Huckleberry Park – Oakland Hills 9:30AM Saturday October 8<sup>th</sup> @ 6934 Skyline Blvd.
- Little Basin park work exchange; trail maintenance for free camping & meal (November 2016); for more information contact James!

## **Goals:**

### *Group goals achieved—*

- We met!
- We have contributed edits to group documents!
- We brought material for discussion!

### *Personal goals achieved—*

- James has been on the exercise bike!
- James has been working on his course from <http://collegeofstoicphilosophers.org/>

## **Next Month's Meeting:**

- Next meeting will be in **Berkeley**
- Next month's theme: **Attitude**

**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!

