

# The Redwood Stoa

## MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 18, 2016, SUNDAY

REDWOOD STOA GROUP MEETING

Met at Café Au Coquelet, University Avenue, Berkeley

10:30AM–1:15PM

Weather: Sunny

**Attendees:** Simon, David, Seamus, John, James, Emmanuel, Mark, Stonly

**This month's theme:** *Fellowship*

### Open discussion

- John shared all the quotes on Fellowship from the Stoic Toolbox
  - Seneca, “The first thing which philosophy undertakes to give is fellowship with all men.”
  - Individuality balanced with community
- The neuroscientist and atheist Samuel Harris
  - Irvine, victimization, and micro-aggressions
- Teaching and sharing Stoicism, and being a role model for others
  - Taking care of yourself allows you to take care of others (oikeiosis, not just ego)
- Fellowship is an important thing about Stoicism, because humanity is a gregarious species
  - A stoic mountain lion, horse, ant colony, in order to live according to Nature, would practice a different Stoicism
  - Opposed but complementary actions/ideas
  - Gaining new perspectives, ideas, imaginations, through socializing, to help develop our rationality
- We are so small, and the world is so big
  - Fellowship allows us to have slightly more power to support and heal each other
- The superpower of the Cynics is that they had control over themselves
- When your car doesn't start
  - Turning the situation into a preferred indifferent
  - Turning the situation into an opportunity to practice virtue, an unexpected chance to improve (“The Obstacle is the Way”)
  - People are often obstacles
- Teaching children Stoic principles
  - James uses an edge of sarcasm to get through to his children
  - Treating younger people and animals as lesser- or non-sentient beings
  - Some current parenting techniques, including modeling good behavior, parallel teaching Stoic principles, like deferring gratification and moderating reactions
- Momentarily touching the state of the Stoic Sage
- Sellar's *Stoicism* (pg. 67) outlines Stoic progress through perceived bad events; we can think about it as four phases



# The Redwood Stoa

- 1. Neutral perception; 2. Involuntary value judgment (called “the first movement”); 3. Taking the time to weigh the perception and the reaction to it, using rationalization; 4. Assent or rejection of the judgment
- The ultimate reaction phase, which only happens once, after death, is the true “pooping your pants” 😊
- Reducing the first movement (“2.”) through practice, habituating the value judgment and reducing the reaction
- The trade off between “2.” for speed of reaction, and “3.” for wisdom of a best action
- What is the best course of action for yourself, but also for your communal tribe
- How would your parents want you to die?
  - Serenely and courageously
  - Trying to save yourself
  - In a way that’s rational and benefits the world

## Stoic practice

- Seamus annoyed his supervisor with a moderate mistake
  - Realized he couldn’t change his boss’ feelings
  - The situation happened, and there’s nothing a person can do to change that
- Simon’s car didn’t start
  - First reaction: swearing a lot
  - But then realizing there are ways to still get to the Stoic meeting, and that the day will be okay
- Stonly took a cold shower
  - First reaction: cursing
  - Made it short, but realized it wasn’t as cold as a mind can paint it
  - Practicing shortening the delay before entering the cold water
  - Mark finds that practicing exercising will-power for taking a cold shower can help draw upon will-power more easily in other situations
- Mark is working on creating a practice of not hitting the alarm
  - Seamus: “You need the Marcus Aurelius alarm clock”
- Emmanuel found \$10
  - Thought that this wasn’t bad 😊
  - But didn’t rejoice!

## Reports and Announcements:

- Meeting location will continue to alternate between Berkeley and San Francisco.
  - Members are open to the idea of meeting at a new venue near Bart, but let’s try Muddy’s again.
- James introduced us to Stoic Bob, a young coastal redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*), who was ceremoniously planted during the meeting!
- John passed out a final draft of the Toolbox.
- Proposal of an additional meeting in January!



# The Redwood Stoa

- A potluck or dinner out would be nice to “kindle” our spirits in the wintertime.
- Revisited proposals to bring more structured time to the group meetings:
  - Facebook group is available for text discussion in between meetings (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/redwoodstoa/>)
  - Wordpress for more detailed discussion threads (see footer).
  - Writing letters to one another, and posting letters to online media.
- Eight members! If the group makes it up to 10 regular members, we should consider splitting into two discussion groups.
- The Stoic Fellowship — Globally Connected – Locally Engaged
  - On the radar: creating an outreach presentation for StoicCon 2017 using Seamus’ and David’s material that has already started to be developed.
  - Check out the site! — <http://www.stoicfellowship.com/>
- James proposed to start a Stoic Christmas Choral group!
  - A possible social fun activity.

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

- Discontinued for the new year. Feel free to share such opportunities during the “Reports and Announcements” section! Providing such opportunities will be counted in the “Group goals achieved” section.

## **Group goals achieved:**

- We met!
- We brought material for discussion!

## **Next Month’s Meeting:**

- Next meeting will be in **San Francisco**, on **January 15th**
- Next month’s theme: **Rational by Nature**

**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!

