

The Redwood Stoa

MINUTES FROM

APRIL 23, 2017, SUNDAY

REDWOOD STOA GROUP MEETING

Met at Café Au Coquelet, University Avenue, Berkeley

By John Kn.

Attendees: James, David, Mark, John, Seamus, Joe

This month's theme: *What is in our Power?*

Open discussion

- Despite the theme, discussion centered around interests of the new member, and of the nature of the Good, and of Eudaimonia (happiness, in the inadequate English translation).
- Epictetus: 1st Chapter of the Enchiridion: "Of things, some are in our power, and others are not. In our power are opinion, movement toward a thing, desire, aversion [turning from a thing], and – in a word – whatever are our own acts. Not in our power are the body, property, reputation, offices, and – in a word – whatever are not our own acts."
- The new member discussed his interest in Stoicism:
 - Mentioned Tim Ferris, author who touts Stoicism (David G. notes that Ferris perhaps doesn't have the best moral compass)
 - Mentioned the Stoicism Reddit
 - Value of Stoicism as a Philosophy of Life
 - A book, "The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fuck", by Mark Manson
 - Made mention of <http://dharmafeed.org/>, Buddhist Vipassana
- Stoicism seeks Wisdom (living well) rather than just Technique (expertise in a narrower sense, as seems to be the case in academic philosophy)
 - This echoed the points made by Pierre Hadot, that philosophical discourse is not the same thing as lived philosophy, which is a way of life
- We briefly mulled over the Physics/Providence domain
 - Is the Universe beneficial and intelligent, or otherwise?
- "Hedonic Adaptation"
 - With habitual pleasure, comes a corresponding decline in pleasure: newer, stronger stimuli are needed to attain the same levels of pleasure
 - This becomes a path to addiction to the pleasure-stimulus involved.
- Aristotle, offered three approaches to eudaimonia: Who is most likely to be happy at life's end?
 - The merchant, pursuing pleasure?
 - The sultan, pursuing honors (power, accolades)?
 - The scholar, pursuing understanding?
 - What of Socrates' conclusion, that "to know the Good is to do the Good"? This only works if "knowing" means visceral internalization of wisdom, its real embodiment, as opposed to "knowing" in the sense of having read about it, or of paying lip-service to it.
- Distinguishing between goals of Learning vs. Knowledge



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- Learning focuses on the journey and growth of the Self, while Knowledge focuses on a destination of accumulating information and expertise
- Nowadays it is less useful to be a master of a single craft than to be a master of learning, of dealing well with whatever comes one's way
- Parallel to “Hedonic” adaptation, but with regard to events triggering panic, pity, and other emotions, is there not an “adaptation” here, too – emotion giving way to familiarity?
- First Movements: the automatic emotion-laden presentation of an event
 - Emotion interferes with one's efficiency when dealing with emergencies
 - Negative Visualization (praemeditatio malorum) is used to allay emotions
- Development of Stoic reflexes
 - One should recover faster from stupid responses to events (and, if possible, avoid them), investing oneself in intelligent responses instead
- Discipline of Desire
 - This involves both (a) restraining (and re-training) expectations in life; and (b) Amor Fati, learning to be accepting and at ease with whatever events bring to the world
- Facebook as an “outrage machine”, to the extent that people express and indulge in their prejudices and passions, and grow furious
 - It might be nice to have a Facebook “Eradicator” sometimes
 - But this makes a good Stoic exercise in cultivating Apatheia.
- Determining what is Good, through internalizing what you believe is Good

Stoic practice

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Reports and Announcements:

- Meeting location will continue to alternate between Berkeley, at Au Coquelet, and San Francisco, at Muddy's.
- The Stoic Fellowship — Globally Connected – Locally Engaged
 - Check out the site! — <http://www.stoicfellowship.com/>
 - Two events, and the creation of a Stoic Fellowship newsletter, passed on the first ballot!
 - The first newsletter issue will be out on July 1st and the dedicated Editor is Dan Lampert of the Orlando Stoa
- Suggestion to preserve Stoa meetings as videos?

Group goals achieved:

- We met!

Next Month's Meeting:

- Next meeting will be in **San Francisco**, on **May 21st**
- Next month's theme: **Temperance**



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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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