

Valueless Virtue in Modern Stoicism

Post by "Condorcet" of January 14, 2019 at 4:25 PM

This discussion of "valueless virtue" brought to mind Cassius' excellent piece "The Real Troika" (Jul 7, 2015).

In it Cassius takes justifiable exception to the media's claim that a "troika" (European Commission; European Central Bank and the IMF) is creating the crisis. Instead he asserts the real troika contributing to the crisis is ; 1) that "god" is sovereign so "all things work together for the good"; 2) that "virtue" is the goal rather than the means of a virtuous life.

And third, that the "troika" is founded on the "false social ideal that abstractions such as the 'group' have interests" superior to the "happiness of each individual."

To support this perspective Cassius asks "are the interests of the Greeks the same as those of Italians or Germans or Spaniards or the Irish?" Here I would answer "Yes" because within these groups we all pursue our common interests in health, safety, security, happiness.

I agree when Cassius asserts "individuals have individual interests." When he rightly shows how "group think" represses individuality. Recall Orwell's INGSOC.

When I consider individual interests versus common interests I believe we share far more common interests and that these persist in spite of "group think."

Donald Brown's Human Universals reveal that we share hundreds of human traits; our "humanity" underlying our cultural and political systems. I am also reminded of Abraham Maslow's list of what we need to be fully realized individuals (physiological needs, safety, belonging etc). (Almost as soon as Maslow published this theory critics renamed the list an "hierarchy." This misdirected attention from the benefits of the theory to our pursuit of happiness. Maslow's clear statements that the list was not an hierarchy are still ignored.)

I like to ponder what happens when we follow Epicurus' suggestion that we consider, "both the ultimate end and all clear sensory evidence, to which we refer our opinions; for otherwise everything will be full of uncertainty and confusion"? Principle Doctrines -22.

Cassius reveals how the EC, ECB IMF "troika" misdirects attention from the "clear sensory evidence" that we have far more in common than the few who inhabit international institutions and sow "uncertainty and confusion" among us. The work of Donald Brown and Abraham Maslow add to the "clear sensory evidence."