

Promising New Book ("Living For Pleasure") and Great New Article ("Are The Modern Stoics Really Epicurean?") Both By Emily Austin

Post by "Cassius" of November 14, 2022 at 11:42 AM

I spent the morning looking for and skimming the book without finishing [the article that prompted this thread](#). I have now finished the article. It's outstanding! She drives right to the heart of the difference between Stoicism and Epicureanism (the theism embedded in Stoicism) ***and she embraces the Epicurean side!***

Quote

I have good friends, students, and close relatives who fall on opposing sides of the providential creation divide, and I understand that people have their own reasons for choosing one commitment over the other. Modern Stoics, though, cannot simply set aside the fact that the Stoics fell squarely on the side of providence without risk of undermining some of Stoicism's core tenets. Stoicism's emblematic acceptance of suffering follows from their ability to reconceive it as divine providence, as God working in "mysterious ways." Marcus writes that someone who suffers something "unpalatable" should "nevertheless always receive it gladly" because Zeus designed individual suffering "for the benefit of the whole." Even Stoicism's deep, admirable commitment to caring for all humankind, the notion that we are all "citizens of the cosmos," is fundamentally grounded in the view that all human beings are manifestations of God.

Epicureans, by contrast, build their practical philosophy on a natural science that denies a cosmic significance to suffering, and they see their endorsement of hedonism as an outgrowth of treating humans as sophisticated animals rather than as expressions of a divine rational nature. Epicurus was not an atheist, but he denied a providential God who created the universe or intervenes in its events. Perhaps, then, many Modern Stoics should consider reading more about Epicureanism, since Marcus admired Epicurus' resilience, temperance, and approach to death, which all grew out of a science many Modern Stoics already accept (and that the Stoics vehemently opposed).