

10-Minute Talk Given at Library Conference: Epicurean Librarians and Stoics in the Stacks

Post by "Cassius" of April 2, 2020 at 12:28 PM

LOL I see what you mean about maybe saying things differently now!

It looks like last October you were pretty much in a standard place where you were already sensing the contradictions between Epicurus and Stoicism without really articulating them. A true Stoic would worried about you and noted that you had a lot less to say about "virtue" than you should have from their point of view. And shockingly you seemed to be operating from the premise that the benefit of being a Stoic had something to do with the practical results of it, and that the goal of it all was to somehow be happy -- and of course that betrays your not being sold on true Stoicism!

It's also obvious that you were digging into the sources, and that's what I think has kept you here. Lots of people who find themselves in your position of last October are going to stay there if all they come into contact with is the Catherine Wilson / Time Okeefe approach. They will mind-meld Stoic and Epicurean views in one way or the other to conclude that Epicurus is focused on "simple pleasure," and that the Stoics didn't really mean what they said about virtue, and they would decide that the two are "close enough" to modern viewpoints so that the original points of the schools, and the differences between the two, can safely be ignored.

And there they stop, put the books back on the shelf, and move on to something else (unless they are paid by their college or university to write these superficial points of view for a living).

There is so much to reconsider and study about even the simplest of assertions that we take for granted, including even such a basic sentence as:

The Stoics and Epicureans, on the other hand, believed *eudaimonia* was achievable by everyone.

There are so many details of the philosophy to drill down to verify. Is the Epicurean goal properly described as "eudaimonia?" Would they have maintained that their goal, whatever the term used to describe it, was achievable by everyone?

I am not sure either of those statements apply to either the Stoics or Epicureans....