

Listing And Evaluating Stoic "Techniques"

Post by "Cassius" of April 26, 2018 at 1:19 PM

STEP 1: I am going to try to organize some kind of comparison document contrasting Epicurean advice with Stoic "techniques." In preparation I posted this [[at Facebook](#)]. In subsequent posts here I'll try to compile a list:

Recent questions indicate that I need to devote some time to a written response to the Stoic "techniques" that we get asked about so frequently. I will try to work something up, so: (1) Does anyone have a link to a list of the primary Stoic "techniques" which I should be sure to address? Modern or ancient, either is fine, but I would prefer clarity above all so that I can be sure to hit the "high" points (or the "low" points, depending on perspective). (2) For those new to this exercise, I would be particularly grateful for any lists that include the Stoic equivalents to the first two Epicurean doctrines (A. That we owe nothing to and have nothing to fear from supernatural gods, and B. that our lives are terminated by death, so that all the "happiness" we will ever experience must be gained in THIS life.) I cannot imagine helping someone achieve pleasurable living without resolving those two issues first, so I am sure that there must be some much-vaunted Stoic doctrines that provide help similar or better than PD1 and PD2 - Correct? (Or is it possible that the Stoics don't see these two issues quite the same way Epicureans do?)

I ask our fellow Epicureans for their indulgence in this request, and that they tolerate the pain of what they may read for the sake of avoiding the greater pain and/or achieving the greater pleasure that comes from gaining for themselves and for their friends a better understanding of the issues involved.

Some responses:

(1) <https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3...EgXD5xgUTMMxkO3>

(2) From William B. Irvine's A Guide to the Good Life, we have these psychological techniques:

1. Negative visualization
2. The dichotomy of control - which Irvine turns into a trichotomy
3. Fatalism
4. Self denial - "practicing poverty"
5. Meditation, but I get the impression that by meditate they mean think about things a lot rather than sitting without thinking.

In terms of the first two principle doctrines, one source that I have describes the Stoic view of God as being the same as nature. Thus when they use the term they are referring to everything in the cosmos. They also believed that the soul survives death, but apparently there was disagreement on how long the soul existed and the author suggests that they believed in reincarnation. I wasn't happy with the treatment of Epicureanism in this book, so I'm not sure how reliably accurate it is for Stoicism either. The book is *The Systems of the Hellenistic Age* by Giovanni Reale.

Some of the way I wrote my post was joking / sarcastic, but I do honestly think it would be helpful to draft a list of the "classic" stoic suggestions so that we can then comment and evaluate them in an Epicurean context. For example, you have listed "For example evaluating a thought for its rational content compared to accepting any emotional prompting." That is an EXCELLENT one to discuss, because I think there is clearly a different angle on that from an Epicurean perspective. But before I / we devote a lot of time to discussing your particular formulation of it, it would be most helpful to the most people if we found that kind of statement on some "authoritative" list of Stoicisms so that we can debate details while minimizing the response that "well that's Eric's position but "Epictetus didn't say that" or "Modern Stoics don't believe that." I know you're widely read in that -- other than going to Epictetus himself have you seen a site or list that does the best job of distilling this down into something that "most" Stoics would agree represents true Stoic views?

Maybe the most authoritative list is just to use the *Enchiridion*? Or is the modern stoic version so different from that as to make it a poor choice to start?
<http://classics.mit.edu/Epictetus/epicench.html>