

Epicurean philosophy vs. Stoicism in public popularity

Post by "Don" of March 13, 2021 at 5:49 AM

Interesting thread. I also saw the other techniques thread. Here are some thoughts off the top of my head...

Stoicism (along with Aristotle) got accepted and rationalized into the Christian club early on. The whole [first chapter of the Gospel of John](#) talks about Jesus being the Logos/Word, a concept [straight out of Stoicism and Greek Philosophy](#). In some ways, Stoicism glorifies the bearing up against suffering and pain, the stiff upper lip, even voluntarily undertaking painful experiences to "train" yourself (Stoics) or "purify" yourself (Christianity). Stoics also saw pleasure as dangerous, and this also was the view of the Christian Church Fathers. This all could fit in with the Christian worldview and so Stoicism could "go stealth" and its tenets could never really die out as a dominant Western worldview. Look at the connotation of "stoic" - it's generally deemed positive by society: bearing up under pressure, not succumbing to emotional reactions, rational.

Now, consider "epicurean": decadent, fussy, snobbish, elitist. It's becoming more positive in a foodie culture, but overall I'd say it has a more negative connotation in society at large. Christians and thus Western culture have had more than a millennia and a half to denigrate the memory and philosophy of Epicurus. And Epicurus's physics have gone mainstream since the renaissance (thanks in large part to Lucretius), but not under Epicurus's name. They've taken the bathwater but left the baby behind.

Because of this established connotation of small e "epicureans" it creates a hurdle to get people to think they might be capital E "Epicureans." Stoics could also capitalize on the macho, tough-guy, warrior stereotype and target that audience. What's the natural audience for Epicureans? (I genuinely don't have an answer. Thoughts?)

I also think the penchant for referring to Epicurean philosophy as EP is off-putting. It's very in-group jargony with no semantic content to a wider world. It reminds me of [TM](#) or [EST](#). I may be reopening the can of worms by saying this, but I see no issue with using the terms Epicurean and Epicureanism. It makes a much more immediate contrast with Stoicism in people's minds. We're not Epicureanists anymore than they're Stoicists. Practicing Epicureanism vs practicing Stoicism sets up a definite choice for people. Both, in my opinion, are philosophies of personal responsibility. Both offer definite life paths and ways to set your priorities. But one glorifies overcoming pain (Stoic); one emphasizes seeking pleasure. There are also a number of "techniques" that can be gleaned from Epicurus, Lucretius, Philodemus, and the fragments. But more on that later...