

Welcome SmoothieKiwi!

Post by “smoothiekiwi” of January 7, 2022 at 5:52 AM

Thank you so much, glad to hear!

I think that the biggest contributor to this was the book „Rome’s last citizen: The Life and Legacy of Cato, Mortal Enemy of Caesar“. The core dilemma was that when Pompeius and Caesar met in order to avoid a civil war, Caesar offered to lay down all of his legions, except one, and live out his life as the governor of Gallia. Basically, Caesar offered to save the Republic for judicial amnesty.

Cato was the one who called out for justice for Caesar’s crimes; he was the one responsible for the rejection of Caesar’s offer by Pompeius, and- in the end- he was the one responsible for the fall of the Republic.

This example, I think, shows the main flaw of Stoicism quite clearly. The Epicurean would think: „Caesar is out of the game? Great, lets sign this deal, avoid tens of thousands of dead soldiers and a civil war!“ But Cato, as a Stoic, stayed true to the virtue of justice, and thus condemned the Republic to a civil war against the best military commander of that time.

Virtue more often than not is a good thing, there’s no doubt in that. But sometimes, its necessary for a pragmatic person to understand that the law isn’t everything, that it’s sometimes necessary to step over a virtue in order to ensure the greatest good for all, and avoid a lot of pain in the long process. I was one of the people who thought that Epicureanism might be reconcilable with Stoicism, but this conflict was- and stays- irresolvable for me. And, instead of being a Cato and sacrificing my life for an ideal, I think that it makes far more sense to be an Epicurus, live a good and happy life, and improving the society without sacrificing oneself.