

Response to Pain; Positive Thinking ? Comparision with Cynics and (modern) Stoics

Post by "Cassius" of August 24, 2022 at 5:52 AM

It is very tempting to try to read these ancient Stoics as being against "disturbing" (negative) emotions while at the same time embracing "happy" (positive) emotions, and I think that is what the modern stoics try to imply in general discussion. But the problem is that that's just not true - because the Stoics identified "virtue" as the goal above all else, they included the positive emotions in with the negative, and saw ALL emotions as things to be avoided. I would say what they were promoting was much in the Spock / Vulcan model we are familiar with from the TV show. Spock does not appear to be a caricature, but an accurate representation of what their Stoic goal really was. And to come to terms with that is to ultimately - for most of us - is to reject it. Stoicism = Theistic Vulcanism.

And when we do come to terms with anti-emotion as core to Stoicism and the like, I think that helps us see that the same goal is even more repelling when we dress it up, stand its originator on his head, and try to call it "Epicurean." Even the ancient Stoics in opposing Epicurus did not stoop to that kind of gross misrepresentation. At least in accusing Epicurus of pursuing pleasure to excess and immorally, the ancient Stoics still acknowledged that "pleasure" as the word is commonly understood was his goal.