

Training book/framework for new Epicureans

Post by “Cassius” of May 17, 2023 at 9:19 PM

Yes I can definitely be harsh on the Stoics on occasion, but in reading a little more into Emily Austin's book tonight I came across a couple of relevant paragraphs from Chapter 15 that remind me to keep the pressure on due to the different approaches to dealing with what is and what is not in our control:

- "Epicurus, unlike the Stoics, suggests strategies for coping with and counteracting grief rather than encouraging its elimination. The Stoics seek to eliminate grief because they think it arises from a false judgment that something bad has happened. Epicureans, by contrast, manage grief, and they recommend distracting ourselves by replaying pleasant memories, expressing gratitude for past and present pleasures, and engaging with close and caring friends. Taken together, we have three Epicurean points about misfortune: some losses are genuine misfortunes that merit grief, we should cope with our grief rather than seek to eliminate it, and the most effective strategies involve cultivating gratitude and caring friendships.
- The Stoics generally advocated a providential account of the universe, according to which the gods structure the cosmos for the best and to the benefit of human beings. As such, most of the Stoics thought that everything under the control of the gods happens for a good reason, even things which might at first appear to be serious misfortunes. In contemporary religious discourse, endorsement of complete providence secured by an all-powerful and beneficent God might" express itself in phrases like "the Lord works in mysterious ways.
- Seneca captures this Stoic attitude toward loss with the story of Stilbo, cast as a model of Stoic virtue. Stilbo survived the destruction of his country and the death of his wife and children. When the man responsible for Stilbo's misfortunes asked how he was holding up, Stilbo responded, "I have lost nothing!"³ While Stilbo's response does seem admittedly badass, it depends on the underlying assumption that none of the things he lost contributed to his happiness, so their loss cannot diminish his happiness. His children were "nothing." Whether by a providential or non-providential account, Stoic doctrine leads to the conclusion that grief is irrational because nothing bad or harmful has happened."