

Recent Article on Why Stoicism Remains So Popular (Vis-à-Vis Ancient Rivals)

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There are also a lot of historical trends in our culture (writing this within the borders of America) that reinforce the tone we identify as Stoic . It seems at odds with the tone that was cultivated in the Garden. As Pamela Gordon describes in *The Invention and Gendering of Epicurus*, Europeans slowly began to (negatively) "feminize" Epicurean teachings by associating Epicurus with traits that were not culturally valued (those traits largely being unfair stereotypes of women). Compared with the medieval stereotype of Epicureans, Stoics were seen as *disciplined men of action, cunning, bold, dutiful, and admirably political*. As I have witnessed throughout my life, too many of my male friends believe in *suffering in silence*, and too many women I know fear that their value might only be worth the chores they accomplish at home, and some even view (enviously, I argue ... though I think that is the case with men, too. Despite rejection of feminine men, your average "masculine" American man spends a lot of time watching sculpted male athletes rub against each other on a field, so I honestly question how "masculine" anyone is, really...) but anyway, I think too many women I know view women without children, who pursue careers (etc.) as "missing something". Even though less than 1% of our population identifies as being trans-women, politicians are **obsessed** with demonizing those people, largely because they do not cling to the harmful stereotype with which the rest of us are faced. Likewise, we (historically) has levied criticism against "masculine" females and "feminine" males. We're obsessed with allowing one's sex to define individual choices we make throughout our lives, and Stoicism (among other philosophies ... the Peripatetics are also very guilty of this) reinforces some of those harmful, culturally-biased perspectives. The notion that American man are *anything* but "stoic" seems to repulse traditional minds, and we often, with prejudice, look at femininity as a weakness, and something that is embarrassing or even shameful.

To popularize Epicureanism, we'd either need to hope that the rest of our culture becomes more thoughtful, more observant of nature, more welcoming toward women, more tolerant of cultural differences, more critical of prevailing beliefs ... or, we'd need to change Epicureanism. As Epicurus wrote, "*Never did I reach to please the masses, for truly what pleases them, I did not understand, but what I understood was far away from their perception*" (U187). I'm just grateful for (here's another shameless plug for *Nature's God* by Matthew Stewart) the Epicureans throughout American history that have acted as bulwarks against traditional assumptions that were reinforced, over thousands of years by the philosophies of Epicurus' opponents, like Christian superstition, Aristotle's misogyny, Plato's ableism, and the Stoic paradigm of emotions being undesirable disturbances.