

Ongoing Discussion of Jack Gedney's "Untroubled" Substack Blog

Post by "Cassius" of May 30, 2026 at 4:22 PM

While I was writing on this topic and also thinking about what we are discussing in the podcast, I came across a Substack post by Doug Bates entitled "[The Symbol Of What's Wrong With Stoicism](#)" which is critical of Zeno's hand gesture explanation of knowledge as reported by Cicero. This is something that Joshua specifically criticized in our recent podcasts as well.

I found the article a little puzzling however, because it didn't focus on the purpose of the hand gesture as essential to the issue of knowledge, but rather discussed it in terms of "openness" which became the focus of the article (*Put another way, the open hand is openness to all of experience. The partially closed hand is a curating of that experience: this part to focus on; that part to ignore. The fist is that which one is certain one wants to hold onto, and the left hand over the fist is the certainty of the certainty.....*)

I seem to recall that Doug Bates has written in the past more favorably of Stoicism, but maybe my memory is wrong. His blog is now subtitled *Articles about the intersection of ancient Greek philosophy and Buddhism; and in particular, the philosophy that resulted from that intersection: Pyrrhonism.*

Ok, so as skeptic I wouldn't expect him to speak favorably of Stoic ideas of knowledge, but I sort of expected him to track the arguments of Cicero, also a skeptic, rather than Pyrrho.

All that's a long way of saying that this reminded me that there IS an active group of modern Stoics for whom I do have significant respect (not agreement, but respect) - those like Christ Fischer who write at [TraditionalStoicism.com](#). They refuse to limit themselves to a narrow slice of Stoic philosophy and they insist on studying and pursuing the full spectrum of stoic ideas - physics, epistemology, *and* ethics.

Their statements in their ABOUT page could have been written to describe the purpose of the founding of EpicureanFriends.com, just by substituting "Epicurean" for "Stoic," and appropriately replacing the names dropped at the end:

Quote

About the Traditional Stoicism website

While this website and blog are the creation of Chris Fisher, the inspiration and encouragement came from a group of like-minded traditional Stoics from The Society of Epictetus. Traditional Stoics are not as numerous as modern Stoics on social media

sites. As a result, our voice is often lost amidst numerous atheists and agnostics who place the divine and providential cosmos of Stoicism somewhere on the spectrum between “unnecessary” and “unreasonable.” Traditional Stoics consider the physics and theology of Stoicism an essential part of this philosophical way of life. Why? Because the ancient Stoics said it was essential and we have found that to be true in our individual practice. We believe this deeply spiritual, philosophical way of life is a legitimate option for many moderns seeking a rational form of spirituality that is not tied to organized religion. This website and the [Traditional Stoicism Facebook group](#) will provide resources to support traditional Stoics in their practice, and allow interested individuals to explore the traditional form of Stoicism for themselves. While many may find one of the recently formulated modern versions of Stoicism more to their liking, traditional Stoics attempt to follow, as much as possible, the same path toward excellence and happiness trod by Roman Senator, Seneca; freed slave turned philosopher, Epictetus; and Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius.

The same goes for their "What Is Traditional Stoicism?" which could have been written for EpicureanFriends:

Quote

What is Traditional Stoicism?

These posts differentiate traditional Stoicism from the various modern iterations that diverge, often dramatically, from the essential elements of Stoic philosophy as historically understood. The assertion of traditional Stoicism is not that the philosophical system cannot change and evolve, nor does it assert that moderns must assent to everything the ancients did. Instead, traditional Stoicism rests on the demonstrable fact that the ancient Stoics built their philosophical theory and practice around a set of fundamental assumptions about the nature of humankind and the nature of the cosmos. Those assumptions define Stoicism and empower its practice to affect change in lives. Clearly, our understanding of both human nature and the cosmos has increased over time and those new facts can be assimilated into the framework of the original system. However, in our current secular age, many want to abandon fundamental aspects of the framework itself because they conflict with their assumed worldview. The ancient Stoics denied that their system could be changed in this manner; traditional Stoics agree. Traditional Stoicism asserts that we must avoid the impulse to change Stoic practice into something which is no longer recognizable as Stoicism simply to make it more palatable for moderns.

EpicureanFriends goes by "*Classical* Epicurean" rather than "Traditional Epicurean," but the point is the same. In the case of the Stoics you probably don't have to go back too many centuries or even decades to find the majority of self-proclaimed stoics to be exactly in line with

classical stoic views, with the only required tweak being the name of gods being referenced.

In the case of Epicureans, I'd maintain you have to go all the way back to the classical period to find advocates for Epicurus whom the ancient Epicureans themselves would truly recognize as being part of their own school.