

A Brief Good Word About "Traditional Stoicism"

Post by "Cassius" of April 27, 2018 at 10:48 AM

This is spurred in part by [Mark Cubbedge's link](#) to a group offering "dialog" between Stoics and Epicureans, and part by the observation that if North and South Korea can be friends, then I can occasionally say something good about the Stoics. And here it is: I completely and fully agree with the following statement by [Chris Fisher at "Traditional Stoicism. com"](#):

"What is Traditional Stoicism? These posts [meaning his work and page] 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."

I think Chris is correct about Stoicism, and I think we could rewrite that paragraph in EXACTLY the same form, just substituting "Epicurean Philosophy" for Stoicism":

"What is Traditional Epicurean Philosophy? These posts [advocates of true Epicurean philosophy] differentiate traditional Epicurean Philosophy from the various modern iterations that diverge, often dramatically, from the essential elements of Epicurean philosophy as historically understood. The assertion of traditional Epicurean Philosophy 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 Epicurean Philosophy rests on the demonstrable fact that the ancient Epicureans 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 Epicurean Philosophy 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 Epicureans

denied that their system could be changed in this manner; traditional Epicureans agree. Traditional Epicurean Philosophy asserts that we must avoid the impulse to change Epicurean practice into something which is no longer recognizable as Epicurean Philosophy simply to make it more palatable for moderns."

Of course I do not accept the need to refer to "Traditional" Epicurean philosophy. "Traditional" Epicurean philosophy - the kind that firmly asserts the absence of supernatural gods, freedom from "fate," this life as the only one we have, and the faculty of pleasure as the true guide to life - IS Epicurean philosophy. Rejection of those foundations "to make it more palatable for moderns" is not Epicurean philosophy at all.

So in this I say nothing but good about Chris Fisher's Stoic point of view.