

The Island Of The Stoics Should Free Tommy Robinson

Post by "Cassius" of May 28, 2018 at 11:06 AM

In [Seneca's "On Leisure"](#) it is recorded "Epicurus says, the wise man will not take part in politics, except upon some special occasion."

different road. Epicurus says, "The wise man will not take part in politics, except upon some special occasion ; "

Without more context, or even knowing who originated this phrasing, we probably have an example of how exceptions can swallow the alleged rule. I for one believe that PDs 30-40 make observation and appropriate participation in certain events absolutely appropriate and necessary for happy living.

My personal opinion (worth exactly what you pay for it) is that such an occasion is presented by the imprisonment of Tommy Robinson in England. His "crime"? That of live-streaming outside a courthouse to report on an islamic grooming trial.

I call Britain "the island of the Stoics" because stoicism seems to be so deeply rooted there. In fact if we did not historically know that stoicism originated in Greece, it would be hard to believe that the personality of the Greeks ever succumbed to the idea that "feeling" - emotion - is something to be repressed. The "stiff upper lip" mentality of Britain however, seems to provide a primordial soup where stoicism thrives. That's a topic worthy of a lifetime of study in itself.

The [case of Tommy Robinson](#) is [all over the news](#) and needs no explanation here. Free speech is under attack all across the Western world, and this particular threat is being carried out in the name of a religion that is one of free speech's single greatest opponents. Today Tommy Robinson's views on religion are suppressed - tomorrow the right even to discuss philosophy will be ended. That means it is time for defenders of philosophy to speak out and act, and in England, that means it is a time for choosing for the stoics.

Yes, yes - I know that [according to David Sedley](#), stoicism has no tradition of resistance to exit through

of regime they may live under. There was, therefore, no Stoic **tradition** of advocating either tyrannicide or any comparable means of overthrowing repressive regimes. The ultimate Stoic model was Socrates, who had willingly accepted death rather than compromise his philosophical mission or moral standards. And, nearer to home, Brutus' uncle the younger Cato had become the great Roman Stoic hero, embracing death by his own hand rather than accept Caesar's pardon. In the prelude to his suicide, Cato had explicitly defended the Stoic paradox 'Only the good are free'.⁵² Later, under the Empire, Seneca's carefully staged Stoic suicide self-consciously followed that same tradition, while in his *De beneficiis* he had criticized Brutus' act of tyrannicide as pointless and contrary to Stoic principles.⁵³ Likewise, the so-called 'Stoic opposition' of figures like Thrasea Paetus and Helvidius Priscus, despite their reverence for the memory of Brutus and Cassius, showed little if any interest in the assassination of emperors, and much more in courting a heroic death by the exercise of unbridled free speech.⁵⁴ The very notion of political freedom rarely surfaces in Stoic texts:⁵⁵ for a Stoic, freedom is first and foremost a personal matter, exclusive to the wise, who can count on preserving it under any political conditions, however adverse.

To understand Brutus' impassioned defence of political freedom and his denunciation of enslavement to tyranny as altogether intolerable, we must forget Stoicism, and view them instead within the context of Brutus' Antiochean ethics.⁵⁶

I think it no coincidence that repression of free speech is correlated with the absence of appreciation for Epicurean philosophy. Be that as it may, modern stoics represent that they see great merit in some aspects of Epicurean philosophy.

In my view this would be a time when English stoics could profitably learn from the example of both Marcus Brutus (who was NOT a stoic) and Cassius Longinus (the Epicurean) and take a stand for free speech before it is too late.

Tommy Robinson should be freed, and steps should be taken to ensure that something like this never happens again.

Post by “Eoghan Gardiner” of May 28, 2018 at 11:32 AM

I have many friends who are Muslim, they are nice people. I also have family who are Muslim as they live in South Africa. I used to a Muslim when I was a teenager but it's an extremely dangerous religion. I don't agree with Tommy Robinson on a lot, I think at some times he is bigoted for no reason but his points about Islam hit the mark a lot.

It's saddens me that people would rather be a good citizen, even to a state like England which blocks sites and filter information than a good person. My personal view when I first read that quote of Epicurus from Seneca is probably the same as yours: "Avoid politics is probably best for a life of pleasure, however if the circumstance arrives such as suppression of free speech, get involved."

Post by “Cassius” of May 28, 2018 at 12:03 PM

Eoghan my personal knowledge of Ireland is embarrassingly thin. Is it correct of me to think that whatever is in the water in England that inclines so many to stoicism is NOT in the water in Ireland?

Post by “Eoghan Gardiner” of May 28, 2018 at 12:18 PM

No certainly not throughout most of Ireland, although many in our capital would rather emulate the British. Ireland certainly wouldn't allow her free speech to be taken that's for sure. We are called the "fighting" Irish for a reason!

Post by “Cassius” of May 28, 2018 at 5:47 PM

Yes that is the stereotype - the hotblooded red-headed irishman! In the past I didn't appreciate the merits of that, but now how the world has changed!!!