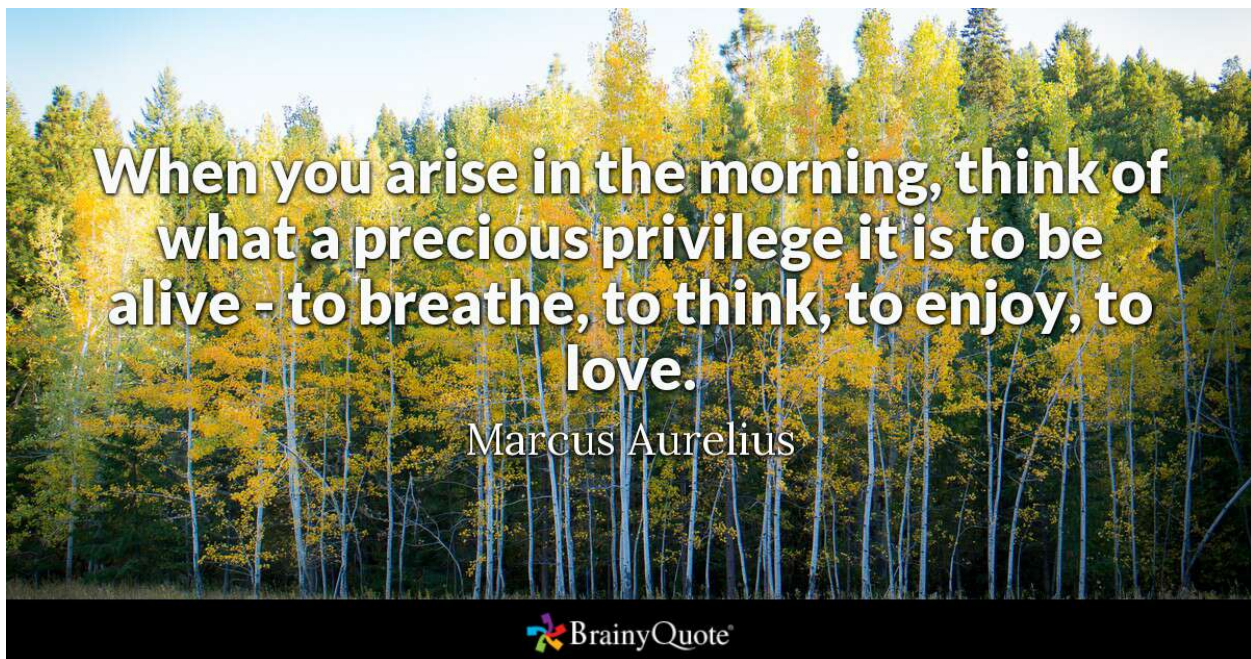




Welcome to a Deeper Conversation

Use this reflective guide yourself or with a group. Don't feel you need to explore every idea on every page. Use what draws you into reflection and conversation.



Reflect and Discuss

The Stoics had a powerful way of articulating wisdom. Reflect and discuss Marcus' quote. Is this how you awaken? What routine do you employ in the morning to enhance your gratitude for the privilege of being alive?

Reflect and Discuss

Early in the conversation, Nancy conveyed this idea: The stoics were some of the first philosophers to highlight the importance of living as a community of interdependent beings. They believed we are all joined together. Therefore, if we cut ourselves off from each other we will experience ongoing trouble.

David Fielder put it this way: In the cosmopolis, there is a moral community of rational beings, which implies a collaboration with others and society. For the Stoics, our inner nature demands that we fulfill our potential and become vitally involved in the world community of which we are a part.

Reflect and Discuss

Think about, and discuss, the idea above. What do you think it means to be “a moral community of rational beings?” What does it mean to live with others in mind? How do we practically do this? We perhaps have all had the feeling of being “cut off” from others during the pandemic. What has this taught you about community and the importance of relationships?

Indifferents - Preferred and Not Preferred

The Stoics believed that living a well-lived life is not dependent on pleasurable external circumstances. They thought that *living a virtuous life* was sufficient for happiness - no matter what is happening to you circumstantially. Now before you quickly judge that idea as pollyanish, consider that most Stoics, living at the time they did, experienced their fair share of suffering and hardship (perhaps more than many of us).

However, as Nancy points out, Stoics were not lobbying for suffering and hardship. They agreed that certain conditions - which they called indifferents - are better than others. Indifferents is not misspelled here. Indifferents is NOT indifference. Indifferents represented to the Stoics all the preferred and not preferred circumstances, situations, and relationships of life. Better to have preferred circumstances and relationships (indifferents) than not preferred ones. But those preferred indifferents are **not** necessary for us to be virtuous and happy.

Here's the core of it. Nancy said: *This is not a simple system; It's complicated. It's OK to select these "good indifferents" but also if you don't get them don't let that derail you.*

Reflect and Discuss

Reflect on and discuss the concept of indifferents. That's not a misspelling. Indifferents represent to the Stoics all the preferred and not preferred elements of life. Do you agree with them? Is virtue independent of my situation? Can I live a virtuous and therefore happy life even my circumstances are difficult? And is there a limit to this? Do you find it difficult or easy to practice virtue when you're in a situation that is NOT preferred? This is a significant element of living a well-lived life. How do you see and experience it?

Dwelling in Advance

With regard to whatever objects give you delight, are useful, or are deeply loved, remember to tell yourself of what general nature they are, beginning from the most insignificant things. If, for example, you are fond of a specific ceramic cup, remind yourself that it is only ceramic cups in general of which you are fond. Then, if it breaks, you will not be disturbed. If you kiss your child, or your wife, say that you only kiss things which are human, and thus you will not be disturbed if either of them dies.

Epictetus - from his handbook on life, Enchiridion.

Around 30 minutes into the main podcast, Dave and Nancy talk about “dwelling in advance” as a way to live a virtuous life and not be overly attached to indifferents. The quote above, from Epictetus, provides a practice where we pre-rehearse a not-preferred indifferent. The ultimate example of this is death - either my own or of a loved one. This is not a morbid dwelling on potential calamity, but a recognition of the reality of the nature of something - pots break, and people die. That’s their nature. Knowing, and facing this, can bring a deep appreciation for something that I know impermanent.

Reflect and Discuss

What do you think about the idea of dwelling in advance on possible or definite future difficulty? Do you see value in it?

Do you believe that pre-rehearsing a situation that could go different than you want it to go, could actually help you better engage that situation when you’re in it? Do you have examples of this in your own life?

How about death? Do you reflect on your own death in a way that brings deep appreciation for life? It seems as though all wisdom traditions recommend this. How do you see it?

Digging Deeper - After-Cast - Adapting in the Moment and with the Moment

*After watching the After-Cast, reflect on, and discuss, Nancy's quote below.
How can you live more in alignment with the quote below?*

In the sage's case, there is quick responsiveness to new information. This is a highly idealized case: The sage's impulses align with the present epistemic landscape. The sage doesn't assent to future (wished for) contingents. He keeps updating impulses in light of updated beliefs. In short, the sage doesn't get stuck on what's wished for or what was. Motive always tracks cognitive changes. And cognitive agility guarantees keeping up.

Sherman, Nancy. *Stoic Wisdom* (pp. 65-66). Oxford University Press. Kindle Edition.

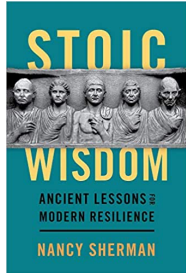
Digging Deeper - A Perspective on Indifferents, Life, Love and Affection for Life and People.

Here's a thought provoking article that digs deeper into indifferents and dwelling in advance.

*Epictetus on Love and Affection: A Stoic Paradox
Is Stoicism as cold and indifferent as it seems?
By Gregory Sadler*

[Click HERE to access the article](#)

If you're interested in some of Nancy's work on Stoicism. Here is a link to her new book.



[Click HERE to see more about the book.](#)