**PART A: STOICISM (SUMMARISED)**

**(Kieran Quill for Kingston Philosophy Cafe, 7 May 2013)**:

* The Stoic policy is not to avoid experience or to accept it passively, but to ***make something of it*.**
* The “*Enchiridion” –the* Stoic “handbook” of Epictetus: First sentence:

*“Some things are up to us and others are not.”*

* Our judgements and opinions are pre-eminently within our power to control, whereas external events, especially sources of wealth and reputation, are ultimately in the hands of Fortune:-  Hence, the Stoic should always strive to cope with adversity by having ready “at hand” precepts that remind him: *“What is mine, and what is not mine, what is within my power, and what is not”* -Epictetus: *Discourses*
* *“What, then, is to be done?  To make the best of what is in our power, and take the rest as it naturally happens”-*Epictetus: *Discourses*
* Seneca the Younger: *“Never have I trusted Fortune, even when she seemed to be at peace. All her generous bounties –money, office, influence –I deposited where she could ask for them back without disturbing me.”*
* The key Stoic virtue is **detachment** –if it’s not possible to influence the world, it is at least possible to diminish the world’s influence on the self. But the purpose of Stoic detachment is understanding, not distain. Stoicism does not imply withdrawal or fatalistic indifference.

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**PART B: RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY (REBT)**

**Summary: “Scientific”/Logico-Empirical Stoicism**

Albert Ellis-charismatic, colourful, and immodest US psychologist/psychotherapist. He was the pioneer of REBT (a type of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy). Ellis died in 2006 aged 93.The American Psychological Association voted him the second most influential psychologist of the 20th century (Carl Rogers came first; Freud was third).

Ellis was described as “the foul-mouthed father of cognitive therapy, and a modern Diogenes”.

The essence of the Ellis approach is that the problem is not with events themselves but with our illusions concerning them and our reaction to them –both of which can be controlled. This strategy is classic Stoicism.

Ellis: Beware the v**ice of musterbation**:

The “unholy trinity” of the **three crippling “musts”** (see Michael Foley, “The Age of Absurdity”, 2010)

**“**I *must* succeed; everyone *must* treat me well; the world *must* be easy”

He called belief in these demands musturbation:

* *“I must succeed*”: the curse of perfectionism
* *“Everyone must treat me well”:* the curse of neediness
* *“The world must be easy”:* the curse of stupidity.

We would do well, he wrote, to have three giant balloons with these three slogans, over every town: This would save much outrage and anguish:

“**Failure is More Common than Success”**

**“Many Will Dislike You Whatever You Do”**

**“The World Does Not Oblige”**

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (of which REBT is a version) has been criticised: Effects can be temporary, especially when attempted with people who unfortunately have deep seated problems caused by childhood mistreatment. This is likely true and great thinkers about the human situation such as Buddha, Spinoza and Sigmund Freud would agree that a process of deep self understanding and transformation is lengthy.

According to **Jules Evans** (tonight’s original speaker), CTB is “now at the heart of the British Government’s mental health policy”.

REBT in particular (in my (Kieran’s) opinion) is very humanistic, quite scientific, and deeply philosophical, and well worth examining as a type of “Empirical Stoicism”. Jules Evans does say:” Ellis and Beck took ideas and techniques from ancient philosophy and brought them into the heart of western science, but in doing so, they removed any mention of ethics, values and the “higher meaning of life”...CBT narrowed down the focus to just the individual, and the result is a somewhat atomized and amoral version of self-help” (This is the question of Stoicism without the *logos*, without a cosmic meaning for nature and mankind).

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