

Vonnegut (1922-2007)

The Urth list — 50 messages, 21 voices, 13 Apr 2007

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4815>

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Matthew Groves — 13 Apr 2007, 00:19

I was hoping to find some discussion of Vonnegut on the list today. It's been too long since I read *Slaughterhouse Five* for me to offer anything. (All I remember is "Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time.") Are there any thoughts on Vonnegut from Wolfe's fans?

Batrinque at aol.com — 13 Apr 2007, 00:34 · follows Matthew Groves

In a message dated 4/12/2007 8:20:27 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time, matthewalangroves at gmail.com writes:

I was hoping to find some discussion of Vonnegut on the list today. It's been too long since I read *Slaughterhouse Five* for me to offer anything. (All I remember is "Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time.") Are there any thoughts on Vonnegut from Wolfe's fans?

I'm still digesting the news to offer any cogent comments. There has been some discussion of his passing in the Patrick O'Brian mail group to which I belong.

Bruce Trinkle
Amston, CT

Kurt Schwind — 13 Apr 2007, 00:45 · in reply to Matthew Groves

We've lost another master. Vonnegut's works are a pure pleasure to read. A very different style than Wolfes, but Vonnegut is one of my favourite writers of all time.

I had an opportunity to go hear Kurt Vonnegut speak. He was as funny, smart and witty in person as he is in his books. I'll miss him greatly.

On 4/12/07, Matthew Groves <matthewalangroves at gmail.com> wrote:
I was hoping to find some discussion of Vonnegut on the list today.
It's been too long since I read *Slaughterhouse Five* for me to offer anything. (All I remember is "Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time.") Are there any thoughts on Vonnegut from Wolfe's fans?

brunians at brunians.org — 13 Apr 2007, 01:02 · in reply to Matthew Groves

I was hoping to find some discussion of Vonnegut on the list today.
It's been too long since I read *Slaughterhouse Five* for me to offer anything. (All I remember is "Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time.") Are there any thoughts on Vonnegut from Wolfe's fans?

Overrated.

Whines a lot.

Wrote some OK stuff, but no more than OK.

.

don doggett — 13 Apr 2007, 01:09 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

--- brunians at brunians.org wrote:

Overrated.

Whines a lot.

Wrote some OK stuff, but no more than OK.

Lived through Dresden.

Buried countless bodies.

Was a charitable enough spirit that he probably
wouldn't be offended by your comments.

Spencer Hensley — 13 Apr 2007, 02:18 · in reply to don doggett

Amen, don.

Brunians, your comments are offensive and unnessecary.

"So it goes."

On 4/12/07, don doggett <kingwukong at yahoo.com> wrote:

--- brunians at brunians.org wrote:

Overrated.

Whines a lot.

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The fish are biting.

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brunians at brunians.org — 13 Apr 2007, 02:22 · in reply to don doggett

Lived through Dresden.

Buried countless bodies.

Things are tough all over.

Was a charitable enough spirit that he probably
wouldn't be offended by your comments.

No, we'd probably get along.

And I'd tell him to his face that he whines too much, also.

.

Four Color — 13 Apr 2007, 02:47 · follows brunians at brunians.org

I had the good fortune to have lunch with Kurt Vonnegut in 1992. He was a funny, wise guy. I'll always remember the presentation he made earlier that day, including a brief deconstruction of the conventional plot triangle, using Kafka's "Metamorphosis":

[Vonnegut on stage, at chalkboard, mic in one hand, chalk in other. Audience expecting to see the plot triangle drawn on the board.]

"One morning, as Gregor Samsa was waking up from anxious dreams, he discovered that in bed he had been changed into a monstrous bug."

[Vonnegut draws a line going straight down.]

"Oh sh**."

Much my feeling when I awoke this morning and discovered that he had died.

Regards,
Tim

Spencer Hensley — 13 Apr 2007, 02:49 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

Brunians, you were pretty curt and rude on the thread I started too. I guess I can't say whether or not Vonnegut would have gotten along with you, in particular. But I'm having trouble seeing how ANYone could stomach your antics.

In any case, your comments neither a) contribute to dialogue about Veonnegut, nor b) comment on his death. If you don't like him, that's fine, but at least let us know why so that a conversation might evolve from it. Otherwise, why do you think we want to know what you think?

On 4/12/07, brunians at brunians.org <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:

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Buried countless bodies.

Things are tough all over.

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No, we'd probably get along.

And I'd tell him to his face that he whines too much, also.

.

brunians at brunians.org — 13 Apr 2007, 02:52 · in reply to Spencer Hensley

You seem to be having a bit of trouble, here.

I hope you do feel better.

Thank you very much for sharing your thoughts. However profoundly I may disagree with you, I certainly think you have every right to share your thoughts and feeling with whoever you wish to.

.

Brunians, you were pretty curt and rude on the thread I started too. I guess I can't say whether or not Vonnegut would have gotten along with you, in particular. But I'm having trouble seeing how ANYone could stomach your antics.

In any case, your comments neither a) contribute to dialogue about Veonnegut, nor b) comment on his death. If you don't like him, that's fine, but at least let us know why so that a conversation might evolve from it. Otherwise, why do you think we want to know what you think?

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No, we'd probably get along.

And I'd tell him to his face that he whines too much, also.

.

Jeff Wilson — 13 Apr 2007, 03:41 · in reply to Spencer Hensley

Spencer Hensley wrote:

Brunians, you were pretty curt and rude on the thread I started too.

Please do not feed the energy creature.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com

< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >

brunians at brunians.org — 13 Apr 2007, 04:32 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

Spencer Hensley wrote:

Brunians, you were pretty curt and rude on the thread I started too.

Please do not feed the energy creature.

Pardon?

It's remarkable how stirred up people get over a person expressing their opinion.

I don't think it is right for you to interfere in Spencer's attempt to put me in my place.

It is obviously important to him, and the sooner he learns to distinguish between the things that are under his control and the things that are not under his control, the better off he'll be.

.

Spencer Hensley — 13 Apr 2007, 04:37 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

Oh, you...

On 4/12/07, brunians at brunians.org <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:

Spencer Hensley wrote:

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.

Spencer Hensley — 13 Apr 2007, 04:39 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

Don't worry about it. I'm just blocking your email.

No hard feelings.

On 4/12/07, brunians at brunians.org <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:

Spencer Hensley wrote:

Brunians, you were pretty curt and rude on the thread I started too.

Please do not feed the energy creature.

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It is obviously important to him, and the sooner he learns to distinguish between the things that are under his control and the things that are not under his control, the better off he'll be.

.

brunians at brunians.org — 13 Apr 2007, 04:42 · in reply to Spencer Hensley

Spencer writes:

Don't worry about it. I'm just blocking your email.

If that's what you must do to retain your self-control, so be it.

No hard feelings.

Certainly not.

It seems to me, in my ignorance, that the same thing could be accomplished by not reacting, but what do I know, really?

.

Andy Robertson — 13 Apr 2007, 11:09 · in reply to Matthew Groves

Matthew Groves writes:

I was hoping to find some discussion of Vonnegut on the list today. It's been too long since I read Slaughterhouse Five for me to offer anything. (All I remember is "Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time.") Are there any thoughts on Vonnegut from Wolfe's fans?

An athiest whose beliefs illuminated his writing as thoroughly and wisely as Wolfe's christianity illuminates his.

Very different from Wolfe in every other way, I think, except for being a good man.

- hartshorn

<http://www.thenightland.co.uk>

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Cliff Judge — 13 Apr 2007, 13:50 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

You guys don't get out on the internets of the 21st century much, I think.

On 4/13/07, brunians at brunians.org <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:

Spencer writes:

Don't worry about it. I'm just blocking your email.

If that's what you must do to retain your self-control, so be it.

No hard feelings.

Certainly not.

It seems to me, in my ignorance, that the same thing could be accomplished by not reacting, but what do I know, really?

.

brunians at brunians.org — 13 Apr 2007, 15:18 · in reply to Andy Robertson

An athiest whose beliefs illuminated his writing as thoroughly and wisely as Wolfe's christianity illuminates his.

Not his fault, I suppose, that atheism is so much less interesting than Christianity.

.

stilskin — 13 Apr 2007, 15:26 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

brunians at brunians.org snarked:

Not his fault, I suppose, that atheism is so much less interesting than Christianity.

To Christians, perhaps.

<http://www.sff.net/people/stilskin>

Jesper Svedberg — 13 Apr 2007, 15:33 · in reply to stilskin

stilskin skrev:

brunians at brunians.org snarked:

Not his fault, I suppose, that atheism is so much less interesting than Christianity.

To Christians, perhaps.

Well, I sort of agree with him. But then, I've always preferred fantasy to realistic literature.

// Jesper

Matthew King — 13 Apr 2007, 15:37 · in reply to stilskin

On Apr 13, 2007, at 10:26 AM, stilskin wrote:

brunians at brunians.org snarked:

Not his fault, I suppose, that atheism is so much less interesting than Christianity.

To Christians, perhaps.

To people who enjoy stories.

"Stuff happened" is much inferior to "Someone made stuff happen"

Matthew

Matthew King — 13 Apr 2007, 16:54 · in reply to Jesper Svedberg

The Arma Virumque blog has an interesting note on KV's passing, from which:

Surely I'm not alone in having spent much of middle and high school reading Kurt Vonnegut and then much of college sneering at anyone gullible enough to read him. If Vonnegut's novels are anything, they're easily outgrown, but what is easily outgrown is very often a perfect place to start. I owe a lot to those books, for one thing the ability to see their influence on some of today's worst writing.

<http://www.newcriterion.com/weblog/2007/04/kilgore-trout-was-here.html>

don doggett — 13 Apr 2007, 17:22 · in reply to Matthew King

brunians at brunians.org snarked:

Not his fault, I suppose, that atheism is so much less interesting than Christianity.

This makes me think of the Chinese curse: "May you live in interesting times."

On Apr 13, 2007, at 10:26 AM, stilskin wrote:

To Christians, perhaps.

Oh, I don't know. I have a lot of affinity for Christianity as my cultural base. It's as good a religion as any. But it gets to be pretty tiresome in fiction after a while.

--- Matthew King <automatthew at gmail.com> wrote:

To people who enjoy stories.

"Stuff happened" is much inferior to "Someone made stuff happen"

Matthew

"Stuff happened" is almost everything. "Someone made stuff happen" is usually laid over it by people trying to make sense of that "stuff". Christians hardly have a lock on interesting fiction, nor are athiests excluded from it.

Don

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 13 Apr 2007, 17:30 · in reply to Matthew Groves

I put my comments on my blog at <http://sturgeonslawyer.livejournal.com> and don't feel a need to repeat them here.

On 4/12/07, Matthew Groves <matthewalangroves@gmail.com> wrote:
I was hoping to find some discussion of Vonnegut on the list today.
It's been too long since I read Slaughterhouse Five for me to offer anything. (All I remember is "Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time.") Are there any thoughts on Vonnegut from Wolfe's fans?

Urth Mailing List

To post, write [urth](mailto:urth@urth.net) at urth.net

Subscription/information: <http://www.urth.net>

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes, writer, trainer, bon vivant

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>

<http://www.danehyoakes.com>

Soon, where Toon Town once stood will be a string of gas stations, inexpensive motels, restaurants that serve rapidly prepared food. Tire salons, automobile dealerships and wonderful, wonderful billboards reaching as far as the eye can see. My God, it'll be beautiful.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 13 Apr 2007, 17:38 · in reply to don doggett

On 4/13/07, don doggett <kingwukong@yahoo.com> wrote:
"Stuff happened" is almost everything. "Someone made stuff happen" is usually laid over it by people trying to make sense of that "stuff". Christians hardly have a lock on interesting fiction, nor are athiests excluded from it.

The last point is certainly true; the first has some truth to it -- but, really, in terms of narrative (and we are creatures of our narrativity), intentional actions are far more interesting than agentless actions.

One of the most impressive narrative tours-de-forces I have ever read was _Fire_, by George R. Stewart (author of the SF classic _Earth Abides_), which took a firestorm as its more-or-less protagonist, and managed to give it agency without personalizing it. He did the same thing, less successfully, for a storm in a book called (of all things) _Storm_.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes, writer, trainer, bon vivant

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>

<http://www.danehyoakes.com>

Soon, where Toon Town once stood will be a string of gas stations, inexpensive motels, restaurants that serve rapidly prepared food. Tire salons, automobile dealerships and wonderful, wonderful billboards reaching as far as the eye can see. My God, it'll be beautiful.

brunians at brunians.org — 13 Apr 2007, 17:40 · in reply to don doggett

This makes me think of the Chinese curse: "May you live in interesting times."

The full curse is 'May you live in interesting times and come to the attention of influential people.'

The Stoic philosophy (and also Buddhism, coincidentally or not) both teach how to be happy no matter how interesting your times or personal situation.

But I digress.

.

Recursive Loop — 13 Apr 2007, 18:08 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Greetings:

"One of the most impressive narrative tours-de-forces I have ever read was Fire, by George R. Stewart (author of the SF classic Earth Abides),"

Earth Abides was excellent. I'll have to look up Fire. Have you read his non-fiction book on Pickett's Charge? Excellent as well.

FPK3

don doggett — 13 Apr 2007, 18:42 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

--- brunians at brunians.org wrote:

The full curse is 'May you live in interesting times and come to the attention of influential people.'

Ah. Thank you, Josh. That's a nasty curse in any culture.

The Stoic philosophy (and also Buddhism, coincidentally or not) both teach how to be happy no matter how interesting your times or personal situation.

I was under the impression that happiness was inconsequential to both philosophies. Rather they teach one to endure such times and situations with equanimity.

But I digress as well.

Don

don doggett — 13 Apr 2007, 18:46 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

--- Dan'l Danehy-Oakes <danldo at gmail.com> wrote:
On 4/13/07, don doggett <kingwukong at yahoo.com>
wrote:

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The last point is certainly true; the first has some truth to it -- but, really, in terms of narrative (and we are creatures of our narrativity), intentional actions are far more interesting than agentless actions.

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After I sent that letter, it occured to me that all fiction by nature is theistic, since the writer is nothing if not God over the page. Perhaps even polytheistic if there are editors involved. I have a copy of *Earth Abides*, but somehow it has fallen into my backlog and I don't know when I'll get to it.

Don

brunians at brunians.org — 13 Apr 2007, 18:59 · in reply to don doggett

Don writes:

--- brunians at brunians.org wrote:

The full curse is 'May you live in interesting times and come to the attention of influential people.'

Ah. Thank you, Josh. That's a nasty curse in any culture.

The Stoic philosophy (and also Buddhism, coincidentally or not) both teach how to

be happy no matter how interesting your times
or personal situation.

I was under the impression that happiness was
inconsequential to both philosophies. Rather they
teach one to endure such times and situations with
equanimity.

Stoicism definitely claims to teach happiness, and also freedom.

Buddhism, well, the Dalai Lama has gone on record as saying that the goal of Buddhism is to be
happy. I suppose I shall take his word for it.

But I digress as well.

At the risk of an overwhelming chorus of 'Amens', I pray: May the hour of my silence return!

But not too soon, please God.

.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 13 Apr 2007, 20:06 · in reply to Recursive Loop

On 4/13/07, Recursive Loop <recursive_loop at yahoo.com> wrote:
Earth Abides was excellent. I'll have to look up Fire. Have you read his non-fiction book on
Pickett's Charge? Excellent as well.

Are you sure this is the same George Stewart? He wasn't a historian, but an English prof. at
CalBerkeley.

(Goes and looks up Stewart in Wikipedia.)

Wow, it **was** the same guy. He wrote a **lot** of stuff I didn't know about.

And (I didn't know this either):

His 1941 novel Storm, featuring as its protagonist a Pacific
storm called "Maria," prompted the National Weather Service to
use personal names to designate storms and inspired Alan Jay
Lerner and Frederick Loewe to write the song "They Call the
Wind Maria" for their 1951 musical Paint Your Wagon. Storm
was dramatized as A Storm Called Maria on a 1959 episode
of ABC's Disneyland.

Kewl...

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes, writer, trainer, bon vivant

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>

<http://www.danehyoakes.com>

Soon, where Toon Town once stood will be a string of gas stations,
inexpensive motels, restaurants that serve rapidly prepared food. Tire
salons, automobile dealerships and wonderful, wonderful billboards
reaching as far as the eye can see. My God, it'll be beautiful.

Chris — 13 Apr 2007, 23:09 · in reply to Jesper Svedberg

stilskin skrev:

brunians at brunians.org snarked:

Not his fault, I suppose, that atheism is so much less interesting than Christianity.

To Christians, perhaps.

Well, I sort of agree with him. But then, I've always preferred fantasy to realistic literature.

// Jesper

"Interesting" is not a positive value judgment, and I suspect he didn't intend it as one.

I sort of disagree, however, on Chestertonian grounds. Christians explain the universe in terms of only a few simple beliefs. Atheists, on the other hand, have to believe in a much wider and more bewildering array of different things.

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brunians at brunians.org — 13 Apr 2007, 23:14 · in reply to Chris

stilskin skrev:

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To Christians, perhaps.

Well, I sort of agree with him. But then, I've always preferred fantasy to realistic literature.

"Interesting" is not a positive value judgment, and I suspect he didn't intend it as one.

It was intended positively, though.

I meant, basically, that there are very few changes to be wrung upon the theme of atheism. 'The world's all random like, things happen for no reason, oh it's scary and dark, poor me'.

In contrast to Christianity, which as a relationship between real, living beings contains infinite possibilities.

.

Chris — 13 Apr 2007, 23:15 · in reply to don doggett

--- brunians at brunians.org wrote:

The full curse is 'May you live in interesting times and come to the attention of influential people.'

Ah. Thank you, Josh. That's a nasty curse in any culture.

The Stoic philosophy (and also Buddhism, coincidentally or not) both teach how to be happy no matter how interesting your times or personal situation.

I was under the impression that happiness was inconsequential to both philosophies. Rather they teach one to endure such times and situations with equanimity.

But I digress as well.

Don

It depends, I guess. The good life that Stoics (and the ancients in general) were after isn't exactly equivalent to our concept of "happiness", but that's probably about the closest fit you're going to get. For a Stoic it's ok to be happy, just don't let yourself get carried away with it.

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brunians at brunians.org — 14 Apr 2007, 01:02 · in reply to Chris

It depends, I guess. The good life that Stoics (and the ancients in general) were after isn't exactly equivalent to our concept of "happiness", but that's probably about the closest fit you're going to get. For a Stoic it's ok to be happy,

As long as you are happy about the right things, that is, because the things under your control (will, desire, aversion, movement towards and away from an object) conform to virtue, that you do not desire what does not belong to you.

If you are happy because you are having pleasant appearances (phantasmata, as they are called: wealth, health a pleasant living situation, a good job), you are not truly happy, because the things upon which your happiness depends are subject to others (they are not the things under your control, as described above).

just don't let yourself get carried away with it.

Not possible, as long as (again) you are happy in the right way.

I'm still learning this stuff. It is just recently, for instance, that I begin to understand what an 'appearance' is. I am afraid that I am not explaining it very well. Here is a link to a short file which epitomizes the Stoic ethic: <http://san.beck.org/Epictetus.html>. Flavius Arrian, he author of the 'Anabasis Alexandri' was a student of Epictetus and also knew shorthand. So we actually have quite a bit of Epictetus' teaching, although he never wrote anything down himself. At some point, Arrian made this epitome, with the object that it be bound in a little pocket book that people could carry around with them.

Incidentally, Epictetus taught in Koine Greek, and is in fact one of our two major sources for this dialect of Greek, the other being the New Testament, about that other teacher from around that time who didn't write anything down.

.

brunians at brunians.org — 14 Apr 2007, 01:02 · follows brunians at brunians.org

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.

don doggett — 14 Apr 2007, 02:38 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

Well everyone, it's been a fun few days discussing everything but Wolfe, but I'm afraid I have to be on my way. Y'see I just got my hands on a copy of The Children of Hurin and I plan to be occupied for a little while. I'll be back later to let you know how it was.

regards

Don

Recursive Loop — 14 Apr 2007, 11:07 · in reply to don doggett

Dang. How the heck? I've had one on order for months and months and I haven't gotten notification of shipping yet?

Enjoy. Hope it has been worth the wait of several decades!

Batrinque at aol.com — 14 Apr 2007, 11:12 · follows Recursive Loop

In a message dated 4/14/2007 7:07:58 A.M. Eastern Daylight Time, recursive_loop at

yahoo.com writes:

Dang. How the heck? I've had one on order for months and months and I haven't gotten notification of shipping yet?

I believe that the Tolkien book is scheduled for an official release date of April 17. So, I would expect Amazon and other online services to begin shipping in the next few days.

Bruce Trinqu
Amston, CT

Adam Thornton — 14 Apr 2007, 16:37 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

On Apr 13, 2007, at 6:14 PM, brunians at brunians.org wrote:
I meant, basically, that there are very few changes to be wrung upon the theme of atheism. 'The world's all random like, things happen for no reason, oh it's scary and dark, poor me'.

That's odd.

I generally regard the scientific method as the act of trying to make sense out of the darkness and chaos without an appeal to the supernatural. I don't think this is particularly in conflict with atheism.

Adam

Matthew Keeley — 14 Apr 2007, 16:40 · in reply to don doggett

Nice. My copy, alas, won't be here for a few more days. Also, I've got papers and exams at this point of the year. Once they're done though, I'm starting in on Children of Hurin. Unless I re-read The Lord of the Rings first. In any case, enjoy the book. By all accounts, it should be great. I'm sure Wolfe would approve.

-Matt

On 4/13/07, don doggett <kingwukong at yahoo.com> wrote:

Well everyone, it's been a fun few days discussing everything but Wolfe, but I'm afraid I have to be on my way. Y'see I just got my hands on a copy of The Children of Hurin and I plan to be occupied for a little while. I'll be back later to let you know how it was.

regards

Don

Ahhh...imagining that irresistible "new car" smell?

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Tony Ellis — 14 Apr 2007, 17:19 · follows Adam Thornton

brunians at brunians.org wrote:

I meant, basically, that there are very few changes to be wrung upon the theme of atheism. 'The world's all random like, things happen for no reason, oh it's scary and dark, poor me'.

Oh, so *that's* the theme of atheism. Silly me, I've been doing it wrong all these years.

Gwern Branwen — 14 Apr 2007, 18:40 · in reply to don doggett

don doggett <kingwukong at yahoo.com> writes:

--- Dan'l Danehy-Oakes <danldo at gmail.com> wrote:

On 4/13/07, don doggett <kingwukong at yahoo.com> wrote:

"Stuff happened" is almost everything. "Someone made stuff happen" is usually laid over it by people trying to make sense of that "stuff". Christians hardly have a lock on interesting fiction, nor are athiests excluded from it.

The last point is certainly true; the first has some truth to it -- but, really, in terms of narrative (and we are creatures of our narrativity), intentional actions are far more interesting than agentless actions.

One of the most impressive narrative tours-de-forces I have ever read was *_Fire_*, by George R. Stewart (author of the SF classic *_Earth Abides_*), which took a firestorm as its more-or-less protagonist, and managed to give it agency without personalizing it. He did the same thing, less successfully, for a storm in a book called (of all things) *_Storm_*.

After I sent that letter, it occured to me that all fiction by nature is theistic, since the writer is nothing if not God over the page. Perhaps even polytheistic if there are editors involved. I have a copy of *Earth Abides*, but somehow it has fallen into my backlog and I don't know when I'll get to it.

Don

But what about aleatory literature?

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleatory#Literature>

Or does God really play dice?

Gwern

Inquiring minds want to know.

brunians at brunians.org — 14 Apr 2007, 20:25 · in reply to Adam Thornton

On Apr 13, 2007, at 6:14 PM, brunians at brunians.org wrote:

I meant, basically, that there are very few changes to be wrung upon the theme of atheism. 'The world's all random like, things happen for no reason, oh it's scary and dark, poor me'.

That's odd.

I generally regard the scientific method as the act of trying to make sense out of the darkness and chaos without an appeal to the supernatural. I don't think this is particularly in conflict with atheism.

What, you mean we disagree? Our views of the World are different? Even our basic definition of terms may differ?

Shocking.

How did that happen?

.

don doggett — 14 Apr 2007, 23:50 · in reply to Batrinque at aol.com

I work in a bookstore that lets us check out books. We got ours yesterday but can't sell them till tuesday. Low pay, many perks. I'm at work now, but I'll say it was totally worth the wait. I'm halfway through and expect to finish it by tomorrow.

cheers

Don

Batrinque at aol.com wrote: In a message dated 4/14/2007 7:07:58 A.M. Eastern Daylight Time, recursive_loop at yahoo.com writes:

Dang. How the heck? I've had one on order for months and months and I haven't gotten notification of shipping yet?

I believe that the Tolkien book is scheduled for an official release date of April 17. So, I would expect Amazon and other online services to begin shipping in the next few days.

Bruce Trinqu
Amston, CT

See what's free at AOL.com.

Andy Robertson — 15 Apr 2007, 07:50 · in reply to don doggett

don doggett writes:

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cheers

Don

Envyenvyenvy

- hartshorn (twiddling thumbs waiting for Amazon)

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Bob Miller — 15 Apr 2007, 12:52 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

It depends, I guess. The good life that Stoics (and the ancients in general) were after isn't exactly equivalent to our concept of "happiness", but that's probably about the closest fit you're going to get. For a Stoic it's ok to be happy,

As long as you are happy about the right things, that is, because the things under your control (will, desire, aversion, movement towards and away from an object) conform to virtue, that you do not desire what does not belong to you.

Hmm. I apologize, but it's been my experience that the things described here are often least under our control, anyone else? Will--I've spent my entire life attempting to discipline this unruly and often lazy aspect of my own self. It definitely aint under my control, nor, when dug into, under a preponderance of most people's is their own.

Not being 17 anymore, I can occasionally control my desire; however the bulk here would be a great deal less if my my desire for food were also a great deal less, for example.

Aversion? While there are definitely people who grow used to working in a sulfur mine, I have never met anyone who could choose to not be adverse to doing so. The other virtues listed appear to be variations on the base theme.

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<http://www.freecreditreport.com/pm/default.aspx?sc=660600&bcd=EMAILFOOTERAVERAGE>

brunians at brunians.org — 15 Apr 2007, 15:18 · in reply to Bob Miller

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It takes work. I have had a fair amount of success. I still fall short often.

I strongly apologize if my faulty understanding of this matter leads me to communicate inaccurately, and encourage anyone with real interest to check out the link below, and the (really large amount) of Epictetus' lectures which have survived.

But it is worth doing. These, our own actions, are the only things it is *possible* to control.

Also, the terminology is peculiar, or used in a peculiar way. It has taken me a while to understand, and perhaps I do not completely understand even now (and I work on this stuff every day). I don't remember if I posted this here, but this is a good place to start:
<http://san.beck.org/Epictetus.html>

This translation is different, slightly, then the one I am using (in hardcover). At some point I will do a translation, which will be better than any of the three I have been using.

Of existing things some are in our power,
others not in our power.

In our power are conception, effort, desire, aversion and in a word whatever are our actions; but not in our power are the body, property, reputation, rulers and in a word whatever are not our actions.

Also things in our power are by nature
free, unhindered, unimpeded,
but things not in our power are
weak, slavish, hindered, belonging to others.

So remember, that if
what is by nature slavish you think free
and what is others' your own,
you will be hindered, you will mourn, you will be disturbed, and you will blame both gods and humans, but if you think only yours is yours, and another's, just as it is, another's, no one will ever compel you, no one will hinder you, you will not blame anyone, nor accuse someone, not one thing will you do unwilling, no one will harm you, you will have no enemy, for you will suffer no harm from anyone.

Or perhaps we are all merely wrong and deluded, and you are correct, and it is not possible to control one's own actions. I suppose that is possible. I have certainly been wrong in the past.

Against this, I am not the only person who has achieved some success at this work, or found it valuable.

On the third hand, there are people (epicureans generally, some others) who just think that we are Wrong with a capital W (and stoics traditionally return the favor). There is certainly room for several opinions in this discourse.

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It sounds like you may be a hopeless case for the stoics :P

The question is, do you act with rational deliberation? Whether or not a stranger insults you, for example, is not under your control. What *is* under your control is how you react to it, and what you do as a result. If you don't have control over that, then you don't have control over anything.

But generally speaking I have little patience for any point of view that says we're sort of chemical robots, acting out inclinations that are pre-coded and beyond our control. Whether or not that might be true on one level is beside the point; at the rational level, this just serves as an excuse to avoid critical reflection and write off any responsibility for the way one is.

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brunians at brunians.org — 15 Apr 2007, 22:01 · in reply to Chris

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Also, the Stoics explicitly state that the body is not one of the things under our control. Also, that this stuff has to be learned. It is not necessarily easy (though it gets easier with practice, like everything else) So the stimulus for food or sex or whatever arises within the body. It is still your choice whether or not you accede to it.

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