



# Stoicism and Emotion

*Margaret Graver*

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On the surface, stoicism and emotion seem like contradictory terms. Yet the Stoic philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome were deeply interested in the emotions, which they understood as complex judgments about what we regard as valuable in our surroundings. *Stoicism and Emotion* shows that they did not simply advocate an across-the-board suppression of feeling, as stoicism implies in today's English, but instead conducted a searching examination of these powerful psychological responses, seeking to understand what attitude toward them expresses the deepest respect for human potential.

In this elegant and clearly written work, Margaret Graver gives a compelling new interpretation of the Stoic position. Drawing on a vast range of ancient sources, she argues that the chief demand of Stoic ethics is not that we should suppress or deny our feelings, but that we should perfect the rational mind at the core of every human being. Like all our judgments, the Stoics believed, our affective responses can be either true or false and right or wrong, and we must assume responsibility for them. Without glossing over the difficulties, Graver also shows how the Stoics dealt with those questions that seem to present problems for their theory: the physiological basis of affective responses, the phenomenon of being carried away by one's emotions, the occurrence of involuntary feelings and the disordered behaviors of mental illness. Ultimately revealing the deeper motivations of Stoic philosophy, *Stoicism and Emotion* uncovers the sources of its broad appeal in the ancient world and illuminates its surprising relevance to our own.

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