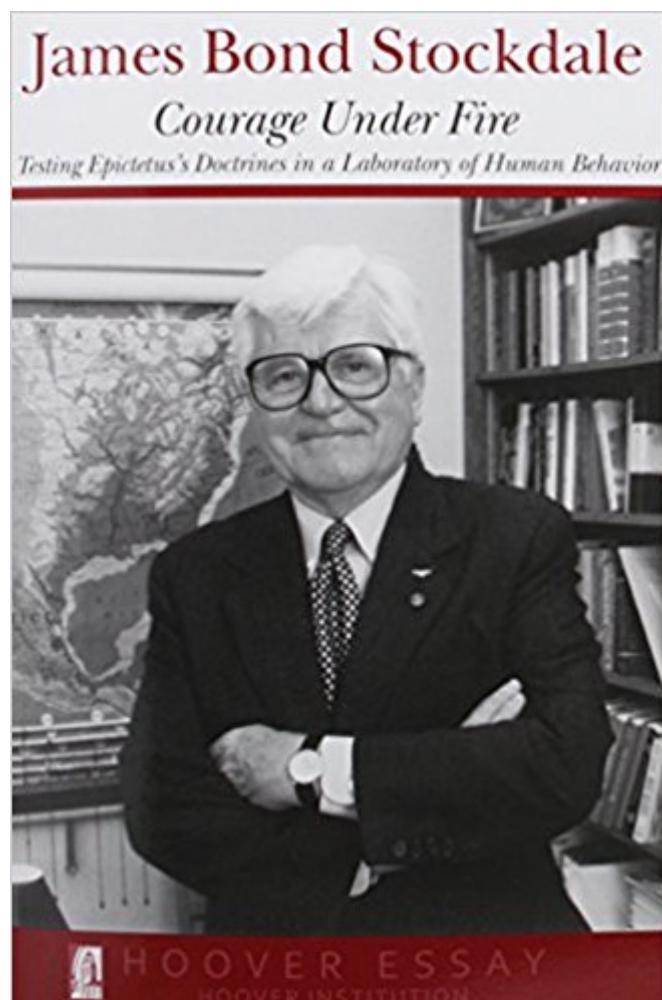


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Courage Under Fire: Testing Epictetus's Doctrines In A Laboratory Of Human Behavior (Hoover Essays)



Synopsis

When physical disability from combat wounds brought about Jim Stockdale's early retirement from military life, he had the distinction of being the only three-star officer in the history of the navy to wear both aviator wings and the Congressional Medal of Honor. His writings have been many and varied, but all converge on the central theme of how man can rise with dignity to prevail in the face of adversity.

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Customer Reviews

I understand that the reviews are all over the place, you need to know what you are getting. If you are looking for an essay of surviving in the world of Epictetus this is IT, as I was looking for more reading by Stockdale, I was really moved by the "Thoughts of a philosophical fighter pilot" (in which you will find this essay as a chapter). If the essay is all you need to study, go for it, for a little more money go for the "Thoughts..."

as the previous reviewer states, but rather an essay. I mention that just to let you the would be buyer know, that you are getting a 21 page essay in a pamphlet format. It would have made a great book, and a great story. That is what I thought I was buying. As for the essay itself; having read the sample pages, I was hoping for insights into how he used the philosophies of Epictetus to handle the events of his imprisonment. He does this only in a general sense.

In 1965, James Bond Stockdale was shot out of the air over North Vietnam, and spent the next 7 years imprisoned. As the most senior officer, he was the focus for brutal interrogations. Through sheer resolve, he managed to not only survive the most horrific conditions imaginable, but walked out better for the experience. The rather short but informative essay is about how Stockdale, as a Naval Officer at the age of 38, decided to take a chance on learning philosophy while in graduate school at Stanford and discovered the Stoic school of philosophy and most namely, Epictetus. Epictetus believed that external events were beyond our control and thus there was no reason to worry about the things we couldn't control. He believed that people were responsible for their own reactions, and that you could control them through self-discipline. It's a simple enough philosophy, but Stockdale used this to his advantage. After he was shot out of the air, he couldn't control the beatings, but he could control his mental state and serve as an example to fellow POWs. Philosophy sometimes struggles for practical applications, but reading this essay will make you believe that words written nearly 2000 years ago still hold relevance, and saved lives. The essay also gives you an understanding of Stockdale the man, who was an amazing officer even before the events that led to becoming a POW. Stockdale's list of awards, including the Medal of Honor, show that he is one of our greatest military heroes. This is a well written essay, and is worth reading if you're in the military or a philosopher. I feel richer for having read this, because I got to learn more about someone I wish I could have met.

This pamphlet, published by the "Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace" at Stanford is a reprint of a speech Adm. Stockdale delivered at the Great Hall, King's College, London on Monday November 5, 1993. The pamphlet is 21 pages long. The booklet begins with Stockdale at Stanford as a middle-aged, gray-haired grad student. He bumps into professor Rhinelander, who persuades him to try studying philosophy. Stockdale gets hooked on the Stoic philosophy of Epictetus. Pages 2 - 7 are a synopsis of Epictetus' philosophy. On page 6 Stockdale says that after we returned to duty he always carried with him the Enchiridion and Discourses of Epictetus, the Memorabilia by Xenophon, the Iliad, and the Odyssey. On page 7 he is shot down and begins discussing the interaction between Stoic teachings and life as a prisoner. I had my 12 year old boy read this pamphlet up to page 13, when it starts to get rough. On page 14 he quotes Epictetus and then relates those lessons to his practice of chanting to himself, "control fear, control guilt, control fear, control guilt," on his way to interrogation. Stockdale explains the psychological aspects of torture and describes some details of how they were tortured. This is a moving story of how he struggled to be a leader to the rest of the prisoners, how he struggled against the torture, and how he used Stoicism to aid him

in his struggles.

This essay is a short, clear introduction to the philosophy of stoicism. It is proof that the ideals of the philosophy can be of real use outside the classroom. It is also an awe inspiring example leadership, patriotism, loyalty, and honour.

Adm. Stockdale was my cousin and I am proud to tell everyone. I am always looking for Books by him and/or about him. He was a great man. He was a P.O.W. in North Vietnam for over seven years, a Congressional Medal of Honor Winner, A President of the Naval War College, and after he retired he was President of the Citadel (a private Military School in S. Carolina). After leaving there he became a Professor at Stanford University until his death in 2005. He taught Philosophy at Stanford and was a Chair holder. He was a wonderful man and this book is not something I would normally read but since it was written by my cousin I did read it. My Pan Pal, of 50 years, in India was in the Indian Navy and had heard about all about Jim. Her husband attended the U.S. Naval War College in 1999-2000. Jim was held in high regard by people associated with the U.S. Naval War College.

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