

# Does Happiness Write Blank Pages?

*On Stoicism and Artistic Creativity*

SERIES IN PHILOSOPHY

## About the author

**Piotr Stankiewicz** PhD (b. 1983) is a philosopher, author and teacher specializing in Stoicism. He is captivated by the idea that Stoicism is not only a school of philosophy from an antiquity textbook, but a viable philosophy of life for modern times. This idea, alongside with the attempt to critically evaluate the premises and promises of the Stoics, has been fuelling his work. Stankiewicz has a background in both philosophy and science. He is a member of the “Modern Stoicism” team, an international network of scholars and authors promoting Stoic philosophy. He is based in the Warsaw, Poland.

*“This is a compact book that addresses an interesting but neglected question and does so with admirable precision. It examines the apparent conflict between the images of the tormented poet and the tranquil sage. It offers a critical discussion of some key ideas in Stoicism and an analysis of artistic creativity that draws on a wide range of examples, from high art to popular culture. It shows the ways in which the Romantic image of creative genius is at odds with the Stoic ideal of rational contentment, while also pointing to other models of artistic practice that might be more fitting for someone trying to combine Stoicism with artistic practice.”*

**Dr John Sellars**  
Wolfson College, Oxford, UK

## Summary

Stoicism is coming back in a big way. Seen as a remedy for the craziness of the times we live in, it is experiencing a great surge in academic and cultural interest. Yet, can one live stoically and be a creative artist at the same time? Delving into its underlying tenets, obscure restrictions and limits of applicability, Stankiewicz critically explores Stoicism and its complex association with artistic creativity.

Stoicism and artistic creativity are two great displays of the human spirit. Yet, there are multiple reasons to suspect that they are at odds with each other. Popular culture encapsulates this problem in the figure of the rational, yet emotionally remote Stoic, who achieves serenity through withdrawal, and the contrasting figure of the “cursed poet,” “tormented artist,” or simply a rock star, who lives in a whirl of creative energy, yet falls short of quietude. Is this contrast valid? Other disciplines, including psychology, have explored this problem. But it has never been done philosophically.

Pioneering in its philosophical approach, this book discusses how artistic creativity and its problems of identity, expression and self-creation serve as a great testing ground for Stoicism, as well as its theoretical challenges and practical limits. Stankiewicz presents a detailed investigation into the stereotypes of Stoic life that seeks to explain the cause of Stoicism’s modern revival. This book is an essential read for anyone captivated by Stoicism’s complex allure.

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*On Stoicism and Artistic Creativity*

by  
**Piotr Stankiewicz**

With a Foreword by  
**Lawrence C. Becker**  
Fellow of Hollins University;  
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