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THE STOICS AND THEIR PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEM

William O. Stephens

The Stoa

Unlike the Epicureans, the philosophy of the Stoics neither originated from, nor rigidly adhered to, a fixed set of pronouncements by one authoritative thinker. Whereas Epicureans followed Epicurus, Stoics are named after an architectural structure. A stoa is a portico or porch. At the *Stoa Poikilē* ("Painted Stoa") in the marketplace of ancient Athens, beginning around 300 BCE, a group of men gathered to philosophize about the world, its nature and causes, the divine, language, meaning, and the goal of life. These "members of the Stoa" devised a powerful system that would endure and evolve for centuries. Thus, since its inception, Stoicism was never the intellectual property of any one philosopher—no matter how brilliant—who called himself a Stoic. The Roman Stoic Seneca explains: "Will I not walk in the footsteps of my predecessors? I will indeed use the ancient road—but if I find another route that is more direct and has fewer ups and downs, I will stake out that one. Those who advanced these doctrines before us are not our masters but our guides. The truth lies open to all; it has not yet been taken over. Much is left also for those yet to come" (*Ep.* 33.11; Graver and Long 2015: 112). Consequently, Stoicism is better understood as a living, organic body of interrelated ideas located in conceptual space. Stoics have always interpreted, built upon, debated, and modified their ideas. Stoics today continue to discuss which doctrines to embrace and which to reject. I contend that within the expanse of the history of philosophy there is a distinct Stoic perspective demarcated by an identifiable territory of cohesive concepts. So, who were these Stoics?

Zeno of Citium (334–262 BCE)[1]

Born in the town of Citium (modern day Larnaca) on the island of Cyprus, Zeno was the founder and first scholarch (head) of the Stoa. He was nicknamed "the Phoenician." One report has it that his father, a merchant, brought back from his frequent trips to Athens many books about Socrates, kindling his young son's love of philosophy. A more dramatic account has it that at the age of thirty Zeno was shipwrecked on a voyage from Phoenicia and lost all his cargo. Arriving bedraggled in Athens, Zeno entered a bookseller's shop, read about Socrates, and asked where he could find such a man. The bookseller directed him to the Cynic Crates. In any case, Crates became Zeno's first teacher. Crates' emphases

on living according to nature, virtue, austerity, and disdain of conventional values like wealth and reputation appealed to Zeno. He also studied with Xenocrates of Chalcedon, head of the Platonic Academy from 339 to his death in 314 BCE, and his successor, Polemo of Athens. Zeno also learned from two Megarian philosophers: Stilpo, who taught the self-sufficiency of the wise, and the great logician Diodorus Cronus.

Zeno was said to have shown the utmost endurance against heat, cold, rain, and pain. He practiced great frugality, wore a thin cloak, and ate raw food, often simple bread and figs. In temperance, dignity, and happiness he surpassed everyone. Zeno was perhaps the first to divide philosophical discourse into logic, physics, and ethics. He may also have been the first to introduce the word *kathēkon* ("appropriate action"), writing one of his 27 recorded treatises on this subject. Zeno declared that nothing is more unbecoming than arrogance, especially in the young, who ought to behave with perfect propriety in walk, gait, and attire. He taught Persaeus of Citium, Dionysius of Heraclea, Sphaerus of Bosporus, Philonides of Thebes, Callippus of Corinth, Posidonius of Alexandria, Herillus of Carthage, and Athenodorus of Soli. His most notable pupils were Aristo of Chios and Cleanthes. The Athenians honored Zeno with the keys to the city walls, a golden crown, and a bronze statue. They buried him in the Ceramicus.

Cleanthes of Assos (331–232 BCE)

When Zeno died in 262 his student Cleanthes became the Stoa's second scholarch. The story told is that Cleanthes, a boxer from Assos (modern day Behramkale) in northwest Asia Minor, came to Athens with a pittance of four drachmas, which was perhaps very roughly equivalent to four days' pay for a skilled worker or a hoplite soldier. Too poor to buy paper, Cleanthes wrote down Zeno's lectures on oyster-shells and the blade-bones of oxen. He endured extreme poverty doing manual labor. He became famous for his hard work. By day he was said to study arguments. By night he hoisted water from wells in gardens. Asked in court to explain how so burly a man made a living, Cleanthes produced as witnesses the gardener he drew water for and the woman who employed him to crush grain into meal. For his toils and brawn he was called a second Heracles. A long fragment of Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* survives. It allegorizes the active principle of Stoic physics, praising Zeus as the giver of every gift and the sovereign ruler of the heavens, the earth, and all its creatures. Those obedient to God's universal law, Cleanthes writes, can obtain the true wealth of a noble life. The wicked unwittingly chase the evils of fame, gain, folly, or carnal pleasures. Emphasis on the one *logos*, the cosmic harmony of good and evil, and the fiery thunderbolt reflect Heraclitus' influence. Titles of 50 other writings are attributed to Cleanthes, including four books interpreting Heraclitus. Other works address virtues, education, beauty, freedom, gratitude, friendship, love, time, and logic. Sphaerus of Bosporus and Chrysippus were his pupils.

Aristo of Chios (c. 320–c. 240 BCE)

Aristo (Ariston) the Bald was from the island of Chios in the eastern Aegean Sea. He attended the lectures of Polemo and was a student of Zeno. Chrysippus would later establish a Stoic orthodoxy, including the doctrine that virtue is the only good, vice is the only bad, and all other things are classed "indifferent" since, by themselves, they bring neither happiness nor misery. The orthodox doctrine distinguished "preferred indifferents," e.g. life, health, wealth, and good reputation, from "dispreferred indifferents," e.g. death, illness, poverty, and ill repute. The former can be selected, and the latter avoided, so long as virtue

is always preserved. But Aristo argued that the goal of action is a life of complete indifference to everything that is neither virtue nor vice. Thus, he recognized no distinctions among indifferents. To defend this view, he adduced the alphabet. In writing names, sometimes we place some letters first and at other times others, suiting them to the different circumstances (as D is first when writing Dion, I when writing Ion, O when writing Orion). Some letters are preferred over others not by nature, but because the situation requires it. Similarly, in the things between virtue and vice there is no natural preference of some over others, but rather a preference according to circumstances (Ioppolo 2012: 211–12). Aristo compared the wise man to a good actor who, when cast to act the role of a (brutish) Thersites or a (kingly) Agamemnon, plays either role with equal skill.

Even more at odds with Zeno and Cleanthes, Aristo rejected logic and physics entirely, contending that physics was beyond us and logic did not concern us. Dialectical arguments he likened to spiders' webs—their workmanship impresses, but they remain useless. For Aristo, ethics was the only legitimate subject of philosophy. He challenged Zeno's belief in a plurality of virtues, affirming instead their unity. Aristo held that the wise man holds no opinions. Practical rules of advice he dismissed as useless to those lacking wisdom. He defended the virtuous person's infallible discernment of what to do in each case. Called "the Siren" for his great eloquence, Aristo taught his independent-minded, uncompromising doctrines to large audiences in the Cynosarges gymnasium, a location associated with the Cynics. Among his many students were Apollophanes, Miltiades, Diphilus, and the scientist Eratosthenes. Aristo often debated the Sceptic Arcesilaus, the head of the Academy.

Chrysippus of Soli (c. 280–c. 205 BCE)

Born in the town of Soli in Cilicia, on the southern coast of Asia Minor, Chrysippus was a physically unimposing long-distance runner. He studied with Cleanthes and, on his death, became the Stoa's third scholarch. The famous quotation: "Had there been no Chrysippus, there would have been no Stoa" (DL 7.183) is hardly an exaggeration. Some regard Chrysippus as the most important of all Stoic philosophers (Sellars 2006: 7). He assimilated the doctrines of his predecessors, crafted an arsenal of original arguments to support them, and constructed a sophisticated, unified philosophical system that would establish Stoic orthodoxy. More than 705 books are credited to him. An extensive catalogue of the titles lists dozens on logic. Chrysippus' prodigious writings survive only as fragments preserved by non-Stoic authors. His brilliance in dialectic was said to be dear to the gods (DL 7.180), so it is no surprise that he was called arrogant.

Zeno of Tarsus succeeded Chrysippus as the fourth head of the Stoa. After Zeno, Diogenes of Babylon (c. 230–c. 145 BCE) became the fifth scholarch. His pupils included Apollodorus Ephillus (of Seleucia), Boethus of Sidon, and Antipater of Tarsus, who succeeded Diogenes as head of the Stoa. Antipater's most important student was Panaetius.

Panaetius of Rhodes (c. 185–109 BCE)

Born of a noble Rhodian family, Panaetius studied at Pergamum with the Stoic philosopher and grammarian Crates of Mallus, head of the city's famous library, before moving to Athens. There he attended the lectures of all three of the Athenian philosophers sent as ambassadors to Rome in 155 BCE—the Peripatetic Critolaus of Phaselis, the Academic Sceptic Carneades of Cyrene, and the Stoic Diogenes of Babylon. At some point Panaetius was made a priest of Poseidon Hippios (god of horses) at Lindus on the southeastern coast of Rhodes (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003: 1104). Panaetius' philosophy was shaped

predominantly by Stoic ideas, but also by Plato and Aristotle. When Panaetius moved to Rome his eclectic Stoic doctrines made quite an impact. He joined the associates of the great Roman general Scipio Africanus and attracted as pupils distinguished Romans like Quintus Aelius Tubero the Stoic and Quintus Mucius Scaevola Augur, Cicero's mentor and teacher, as well as Hecato and Posidonius. Scholars believe that Cicero (106–43 BCE) drew heavily on Panaetius' lost work *On Appropriate Actions* in writing his own very influential *On Duties* (*De Officiis*).

Unlike earlier Stoics, Panaetius doubted the efficacy of astrology and divination, but like them he affirmed divine providence. He denied Chrysippus' doctrine of the cyclical destruction of the universe by fire known as the conflagration (*ekpurōsis*), instead asserting (with Aristotle) its eternity. In ethics Panaetius departed from Stoic orthodoxy on the doctrine that virtue by itself is sufficient for happiness, again agreeing with Aristotle that material goods are also needed. But Panaetius defended Stoic orthodoxy in affirming the soul's mortality, contrary to Plato (Sellars 2006: 9). Panaetius emphasized the challenges of ordinary people rather than the perfections of the Stoic sage as the early Stoics had. This shift was followed by the Roman Stoics. In 128 BCE Panaetius succeeded Antipater as head of the Stoa. Mnesarchus and Dardanus became its co-heads after Panaetius.

Posidonius (c. 135–c. 51 BCE)

Nicknamed "the Athlete," Posidonius was born in Apamea, Syria. When his teacher Panaetius died in 109 BCE, Posidonius left Athens for the isle of Rhodes, where he became a politically active citizen. He served as an ambassador to Rome in 87–86 BCE. Though Rhodes was his home base for teaching philosophy, he traveled widely around the Mediterranean. On trips to Spain, Gaul, Liguria, Italy, Sicily, Dalmatia, Greece, and North Africa he researched other cultures and amassed copious scientific information. As a result, he became quite a polymath. His scholarly repute attracted many to his school. His numerous writings spanned philosophy, literature, history, anthropology, geography, geology, hydrology, biology, meteorology, astronomy, astrology, and mathematics. Like Panaetius, Posidonius admired the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. Some scholars believe that he accepted Plato's division of the soul into reason, emotion, and desire. This tripartite psychology conflicted with Chrysippus' monistic psychology. Yet some doctrinal disagreement with Chrysippus does not mean Posidonius was not a Stoic. His student Athenodorus Cananites taught Octavian (Augustus). Both Posidonius and the logician Diodotus taught Stoicism to Cicero.

Our knowledge of the views of the Stoics of the first three centuries BCE derives only from fragments quoted by authors often keen to distort or criticize them. However, the first two centuries CE yield abundant texts written by actual Stoic authors or their students. These men are often called the "Roman" or "imperial" Stoics. The most important are Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius.

Seneca (c. 4 BCE–65 CE)

The philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca, called "the Younger" to distinguish him from his father, was born into a wealthy family in Corduba in southern Spain. The second of three brothers, his father was a knight [*eques*] who wrote and taught rhetoric in Rome. Equestrians were the class of aristocracy ranked second only to senators. From childhood the son was raised in Rome and taught literature, grammar, and rhetoric. Seneca studied philosophy with Attalus the Stoic and Sotion the Pythagorean. Throughout his life Seneca suffered

from asthma and poor health, including possibly tuberculosis. His brilliance in oratory so offended the megalomania of the Emperor Caligula that only the assurance that the sickly Seneca would soon die saved his life. In 41 he was accused of adultery with the Emperor Claudius' niece and exiled to Corsica. A few weeks earlier his only son had died. Recalled to Rome in 49, Seneca became praetor in 50, married the younger, wealthy Pompeia Paulina, and was made tutor to the future Emperor Nero. The powerful friends Seneca made included Sextus Afranius Burrus, the prefect of the Praetorian Guard. In 54 Claudius was murdered. As advisers to Nero from 54 to 62, Seneca and Burrus wielded great clout. By making high interest loans throughout Italy and the provinces, Seneca amassed vast personal wealth and properties. When Burrus died in 62, Seneca retired from public life. In 65 his enemies accused him of complicity in Calpurnius Piso's plot to kill Nero. Though his guilt is doubtful, Nero ordered Seneca to kill himself. Tacitus reports that Seneca met his death calmly, despite the process being painful, difficult, and protracted.

Seneca's works, all in Latin, are by far both the most diverse in genre and easily double the size of the extant writings derived from the other Roman Stoics combined. He wrote nine tragedies, a satire on the apotheosis of the Emperor Claudius, and a kind of scientific treatise, *Natural Questions* (in seven books). His nine shorter essays treat assorted ethical topics. Each of three other essays consoles a loved one who had suffered a loss. *On Mercy* (in three books) gives advice to Seneca's mentee the young Emperor Nero. The seven books of *De Beneficiis* detail how to give and receive favors. Seneca also composed 124 letters of varying length, addressed to a friend named Lucilius. These letters conduct an interpersonal philosophical exchange centering on the moral improvement of both the addressee and the author. Seneca's writings shaped the reception of Stoicism in Europe for centuries. The Latin Church Fathers, medieval readers, and Renaissance humanists regarded him as a pagan whose philosophy harmonized with Christianity. The content and style of Senecan prose was a model for essays, sermons, and moralizing literature in the sixteenth through eighteenth century.

Cornutus (flourished c. 54–68 CE)

Lucius Annaeus Cornutus was born in Leptis Magna, Libya around 20 CE. Around 50, he began teaching philosophy, rhetoric, and grammar in Rome. He may have received the patronage of Seneca. Seneca's nephew Lucan was among Cornutus' students. Cornutus was the friend and teacher of Persius, whose *Satires* he helped to revise for publication after the poet's death. Nero banished him (in 66 or 68) for having indirectly belittled the Emperor's projected history of the Romans in heroic verse. Cornutus' one extant work, *Theologiae Graecae Compendium*, uses allegory to interpret traditional Greek myths and etymology to decode divine names. His lost writings include a critique of Aristotle's *Categories*, a treatise on spelling, and commentaries on Virgil.

Musonius Rufus (c. 20 to 30–c. 80 to 100 CE)

Gaius Musonius Rufus was a Roman knight from Volsinii, an Etruscan city of Italy. When Emperor Nero banished his friend Rubellius Plautus around 60 CE, Musonius accompanied him into exile in Asia Minor. After Rubellius died in 62 Musonius returned to Rome, where he taught and practiced Stoicism. On discovery of the Pisonian conspiracy in 65, Nero exiled Musonius to the desolate island of Gyaros in the Aegean Sea. He returned to Rome under the reign of Galba in 68 and tried to advocate peace to the Flavian army approaching Rome. In 70 Musonius secured the conviction of the philosopher Publius Egnatius Celer,

who had betrayed Rubellius' friend Barea Soranus. Musonius was exiled a second time, by Vespasian, but returned to Rome in the reign of Titus. Highly respected and a renowned teacher, Musonius had a considerable following. His greatest student was Epictetus.

For Musonius philosophy was nothing but the practice of noble behavior. He advocated the simplest vegetarian diet, minimal garments and footwear, and an austere abode. He taught that philosophy must be studied not to cultivate cleverness, but to develop good character, a sound mind, and a hardy body. Musonius condemned all luxuries and extra-marital sex. He praised marriage and raising many children. He believed that women should receive the same education in philosophy as men, since the virtues are the same for both sexes (Stephens 2017).

Euphrates of Tyre (c. 35–c. 118 CE)

Possibly a student of Musonius, Euphrates was a highly respected Stoic famed for great eloquence. Hearing him once, Timocrates of Herakleia became his student. Epictetus commends Euphrates for an exemplary life of putting philosophical theory into practice (Frede 1997).

Epictetus (c. 55–c. 130 CE)

With a name meaning "Acquired," Epictetus was born a slave in the town of Hierapolis, Phrygia in central Asia Minor. At some point he traveled to Rome, where he was owned by Epaphroditus, Nero's freedman and administrative secretary. His master allowed him to study Stoicism with Musonius Rufus. After he was freed, Epictetus taught in Rome until he and other philosophers were expelled from the city by the Emperor Domitian (in 89 or 92 CE). Epictetus moved to Nicopolis in northwest Greece, set up a school, and taught Stoicism to adolescent Romans preparing for public service and other visitors. Epictetus never married, but late in life he adopted a child in need of parental care.

Other than a few fragments in later authors, his teachings survive in four books of *Discourses* and a short compendium called the *Handbook*, both recorded by his student Arrian of Nicomedia. Epictetus was lame, possibly because his master broke his leg. His experience as a slave surely contributed to the emphasis on freedom in his philosophy. Epictetus' biggest hero was Socrates, but he also admired Diogenes the Cynic. One of the greatest teachers of Stoicism in antiquity, Epictetus strongly influenced Marcus Aurelius, Christian writers, and the sixteenth century neo-Stoics Justus Lipsius and Guillaume du Vair. Rene Descartes, Blaise Pascal, Elizabeth Carter, Samuel Johnson, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, Joseph Butler, Francis Hutcheson, Adam Smith, Mathew Arnold, Thomas Jefferson, and Walt Whitman all acclaimed Epictetus.

Hierocles (second cent. CE) and Cleomedes

We know little more about Hierocles than his two writings. His *Elements of Ethics* appears to be a textbook introduction to Stoicism describing the doctrine of *oikeiōsis*. The developmental process of perceiving what belongs to oneself, *oikeiōsis* steers social bonding and originates justice. Passages of his other work depict duties to others as an expanding series of concentric circles.

Though he may have lived as early as the first or as late as the mid-fourth century CE, the Stoic Cleomedes wrote *Elementary Theory* [*of the Heavens*]. This treatise on astronomy and cosmology preserves some earlier research of Posidonius and Eratosthenes (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003).

Marcus Aurelius (121–180 CE)

Marcus was born to a prominent family in the town of Ucubi in southern Spain. While still a baby, his father died, and his grandfather adopted him. Said to be solemn from early childhood, Marcus was austere, modest, reserved, and yet friendly. The Emperor Hadrian nicknamed him Verissimus, meaning "Truest." In 138 Hadrian arranged for Marcus and his stepbrother Lucius Verus to be adopted by Antoninus Pius, who succeeded Hadrian as emperor. Marcus studied philology, literature, history, rhetoric, law, and philosophy. His two most eminent teachers were Herodes Atticus, the greatest Greek orator of the age, and Marcus Cornelius Fronto, the famous Latin orator regarded a close second only to Cicero. But it was the philosopher and politician Quintus Junius Rusticus (c. 100–c. 170 CE) who, lending Marcus his copy of Epictetus' *Discourses*, won the prince's devotion to Stoicism. The Stoic Apollonius of Chalcedon, Claudius Maximus, and Sextus of Chaeronea were three other philosophers who strongly influenced Marcus (Stephens 2012: 16). When Antoninus Pius died in 161, Marcus accepted the imperial powers conferred upon him by the senate only on the condition that his adoptive brother Lucius be his co-emperor. Marcus had been helping Pius run the empire for 14 years, had more distinguished offices, and was ten years older. So, Marcus had greater authority than Lucius. When Lucius died in 169, Marcus became sole emperor.

Marcus gave no title to his sole surviving philosophical work, written in non-technical Greek. In the first of its 12 books he thanks all his relatives, teachers, and mentors for the traits of character each gifted him. The remaining eleven books rehearse a set of philosophical themes, echoing Heraclitus and Epictetus, designed to console, invoke mindfulness, and exhort virtuous conduct. Traditionally called the *Meditations*, these texts remind Marcus of how to think about time, change, the self, values, and duty. A more accurate title is arguably the *Memoranda* (Stephens 2012: 2).

Over thirty years of marriage Marcus and his wife Faustina had no fewer than fourteen children. Only six lived to adulthood. Marcus grappled greatly with grief over these deaths. The mortality of all living things, including loved ones, is a common refrain in the *Memoranda*. Marcus affirms that Stoicism can dispel all fears, including the fear that one's child will die, with the reminder that all generations of human beings are leaves the wind blows to the ground (x. 34). He investigates the significance of a thing by viewing it as a whole composed of lesser parts, or as a constituent part of a greater whole. The world is a dynamic, eternal whole that endlessly recycles every fleeting part it spawns and reclaims. From this cosmic perspective, material wealth, fame, and bodily pleasures are transient, trivial, and empty. Precious is the wisdom and dignity of a righteous mind that acts with kindness and love. One must live harmoniously both locally with the fellow citizens of our community and globally with all rational beings sharing the same universe as home.

The System

Of all ancient philosophies, Stoicism is the most systematic. The Stoics divided philosophical discourse (doctrine) into three parts: logic, physics, and ethics. They offered several analogies to illustrate this tripartition. If philosophy is like a living being, then logic corresponds to the bones and sinews, ethics to the flesh and blood, and physics to the soul. If philosophy is compared to an egg, then logic is the shell, ethics is the white, and physics the yolk. If philosophy is like an orchard, then logic is the surrounding fence, physics the land and trees, and ethics the fruit (LS 1987, v. 1: 158–159). The organic nature of these analogies is telling. In contrast to Stoicism, the basis of Epicureanism is mechanical—

countless, lifeless atoms darting through a boundless, lifeless void. The Stoic system does not develop in a line from first principles. It is like a living, self-sustaining organism in which none of its organs or cells are unambiguously prior to any others and all are inseparably interconnected.

Logic

"Logic" derives from the Greek word *logos*. At its root *logos* means rational utterance. We are told that some Stoics divided the logical part [*to logikon*] of philosophical discourse into rhetoric and dialectic, and others added further divisions of canonic (dealing with criteria of truth) and definition. Canonic examines criteria of evaluating impressions to discover truth. Definition recognizes truth using common notions to grasp facts. Thus, canonic and definition fall within epistemology. By "rhetoric" the Stoics understood the science of speaking well on matters presented in plain narrative. They divided rhetoric into deliberative, forensic, and panegyric (lofty praise). Rhetoric involves the invention, expression, arrangement, and delivery of arguments. Mastery of rhetoric was very important for Stoics, whether they were lecturing to pupils, delivering public addresses, or debating with opponents.

The Stoics divided dialectic into subjects of discourse and language. The subject of language, both spoken and written, comprises the parts of speech, errors in syntax and in single words, poetical diction, verbal ambiguities, euphony, and music.[2]

The elements of discourse are "impressions" [*phantasiai*], propositions or "sayables" [*lekta*] and their constituent subjects and predicates, genera and species, moods, arguments, syllogisms, and fallacies. An impression is a sensory stimulus, a thought, or a memory that appears to a perceiving subject, making a (temporary) imprint on her soul. The Stoics were physicalists who believed that only physical bodies exist. Since one's soul causally interacts with one's body, they reasoned that body and soul are both physical. An impression either originates from a real object or does not. For example, as you look at the book you are holding, the image of the book imprints on your mind. When you vocalize "BOOK," the audible pulse of battered air is an utterance [*phōnē*]. This utterance is physical, the Stoics held, because it can be a cause. Only physical bodies can be causes. The vocalizations of nonhuman animals are mere noises, on their view. But when human beings vocalize in language, they produce not noise but articulate speech [*lexis*].

If you form the thought "this book is blue," that thought is a disposition of your physical soul and so a cause. If you say "this book is blue," the meaning expressed is called a "sayable" [*lekton*]. The Stoics held that sayables are not physical, and so do not *exist* as bodies do. Rather, sayables are incorporeals [*asōmata*] that *subsist*. If you think the sayable "I will read this book," then you can either assent to, or withhold assent from, that proposition. If you assent to it, this triggers an impulse to open the book and begin to read. For the Stoics, assent [*sunkatathesis*] is the locus of human freedom. Thus, the Stoics were compatibilists, holding that causal determinism is compatible with human freedom. Though all events are fated, some acts of adults are free. A free act is one an agent assents to that is also fated. The act is thus co-fated. If an agent withholds assent from a fated event, then she is like a dog tethered to a moving wagon that drags her along behind it despite her effort to resist. Consequently, the concepts of impressions, sayables, and assent intersect with the Stoic theories of dialectic, perception, and action. We can see why the Stoics regarded dialectic as indispensable.

The Stoics held that at birth the mind is like a blank sheet of paper. Impressions stamp themselves on the mind, and the goal is to assent only to those that proceed from real objects (or true thoughts). Such reliable mental stamps are called "apprehending"

[*kataleptikē*] impressions. They always result from real objects or facts and cannot ever come from what is false. So, apprehending impressions are always distinguishable from false impressions. But though the mind of a newborn baby is like a blank page, even that page has inherent characteristics the Stoics called "common conceptions" [*koinai ennoiai*]. These common conceptions are unconscious generalizations everyone with the same human physiology shares. From these common conceptions and myriad impressions, we do our best to acquire the skill of assenting only to sayables that reflect apprehending impressions. When we succeed, we gather true beliefs. When we fail, we get false beliefs. An assertible [*axiōma*] is a complete sayable that is either true or false. The truth or falsity of an assertible depends on who says it, where, and when. For example, "I am female" is not true when spoken by a male. "It is night" is not true when said in the day, etc. Assertibles can combine to form syllogisms. For example:

> If Plato is alive, then Plato breathes.
> Plato does not breathe.
> Therefore, Plato is not alive.

Syllogisms are types of argument. An argument is a whole composed of premises and a conclusion. Syllogisms yield demonstrations. A demonstration is an argument that infers from what is better apprehended (the premises) something less obviously apprehended (the conclusion). Demonstrations help us form correct judgments. Skillful use and excellent memory of demonstrations yield scientific knowledge. Yet ordinary people are fallible, so they are fortunate to have more true beliefs than false beliefs. The Stoics regarded dialectic as a virtue. But since only the reason of the sage has been perfected into wisdom, only the sage has genuine systematic knowledge.

In sum, the "logical" part of Stoic doctrine treated all parts of language, including the causal powers of words, propositions, concepts, meaning, truth, argument, and thought. Their system of propositional logic was more flexible and more sophisticated than Aristotle's categorical logic, though this was not appreciated until the twentieth century (Sellars 2003: 56). Stoic dialectic comprised not only epistemology and etymology but also literary criticism and the allegorical interpretation of myths.

Physics

The physical part [*to phusikon*] of philosophical doctrine describes the totality of physical reality, causation, the elements of the universe, and the principles governing it. Thus, Stoic physics covers the subjects of ontology, cosmology, and theology, as well as astronomy, meteorology, and geography.[3]

The Stoics assert that the universe contains two indestructible, incorporeal principles: the active and the passive. The passive principle is substance without quality, i.e. matter. The active principle is the seminal reason that shapes matter. The Stoics call the active principle God, Zeus, Providence, Fate, Destiny, and Seminal Reason [*spermatikos logos*]. This principle transformed matter into four elements: air (cold), water (wet), earth (dry), and fire/aether (hot). These elements combine to make objects. God can be thought of as either the artificer, or the orderliness, of the cosmos. The Stoics argue that a) animate is better than inanimate; b) nothing is better than the cosmos; c) hence, the cosmos is animate. They deduced that the cosmos is a finite, spherical, living, intelligent, rational being endowed with soul, with fire as its ruling principle. The cosmos plus the infinite, incorporeal void the Stoics call the All, i.e. the totality of things. Time, the measure of the motion of the

cosmos, is also incorporeal. The past and the future are infinite, whereas the present is finite. The cosmos must end because it began. They also argue that a) that which has perishable parts is a perishable whole; b) the parts of the cosmos transform into each other and so perish; c) ergo, the whole cosmos must perish. The Stoics describe the world and the heavens as God's substance, so they hold that God is not anthropomorphic, but a living, immortal, rational, perfectly happy being, devoid of evil, that provides and cares for the cosmos and everything in it. Nature [*phusis*] refers to either that which holds the cosmos together or that which causes earthly things to grow. Nature is a force moving by itself, producing and preserving in being its offspring in accord with seminal principles, within set periods, and effecting results homogeneous with their sources. The Stoics describe nature as artistic fire [*pur technikon*] equivalent to fiery or creative breath [*pneuma*]. Because *pneuma* pervades every corner of the cosmos, all its parts are intimately linked in sympathy. The Stoics reason that this ubiquitous causal interlinkage is so seamless that all events are fated. Fate [*heimarmenē*] is thus an endless chain of causation whereby things exist. Consequently, Stoics other than Panaetius believed in divination [*mantikē*]—forecasting future events from present clues. The intensity of the tension [*tonos*] of the *pneuma* determines an object's qualities. Minerals have the lowest level of cohesion [*hexis*]. Next up is the vegetative nature [*phusis*] in plants. Above that the tension of *pneuma* in animate soul [*psuchē*] is found in animals with sensation and impulse. The highest level is rational soul [*logikē psuchē*] in adult human beings.

Stoic astronomy offered explanations of the stars, sun, moon, eclipses, comets, and meteors. Their meteorology explained the seasons, winds, clouds, evaporation, rain, rainbows, hoarfrost, snow, lightning, thunder, and typhoons. They provided accounts of the arrangement of the earth, earthquakes, the oceans, and the atmosphere. In geography the Stoics theorized five parallel celestial circles of the globe, the Arctic, the summer tropic, the circle of the equinox, the winter tropic, and the Antarctic, with five corresponding terrestrial zones.

Body [*sōma*] is finite substance (matter) that can act or be acted upon. Soul [*psuchē*] is an animating body consisting of fine breath [*pneuma*] that enables locomotion and perception. The human soul has eight parts: vision, hearing, smell, taste, touch, the powers of reproduction and speech, and reason or the "ruling part" [*hēgemonikon*]. The *hēgemonikon* processes impressions [*phantasiai*], triggers impulses [*hormai*], and issues assents. Chrysippus located it in the heart, others in the brain. The Stoics held that individual souls of animals are parts of the soul of the cosmos and are perishable, whereas the soul of the cosmos is indestructible. Cleanthes, it is said, believed that after bodily death all souls survive until the conflagration [*ekpurōsis*]. According to the doctrine of the conflagration, creative fire consumes the whole cosmos, whereupon elemental fire and the other elements again coalesce into a new cosmos. (Boethus of Sidon and Panaetius rejected the doctrine of the conflagration.) Chrysippus evidently thought that only the souls of the wise survive until the conflagration. This compares interestingly with the report that the Stoics believed that the souls of heroes survive their bodily deaths. Epictetus held that when death separates souls from bodies, nature recycles both. The Stoics supposedly believed that spirit-guardians [*daimones*] are in sympathy with and watch over human beings.

Ethics

Ancient Greek philosophers agreed that the goal [*telos*] of all human effort is *eudaimonia*, an enduring state of happiness, well-being, or flourishing. The Stoics believed that the purpose of philosophy is to achieve this goal by mastering the art of living. Stoic ethics

provides education in this art. But to master this art, ethical knowledge must be consistently enacted in one's daily life. This requires perfection of the self.

According to the Stoics' doctrine of *oikeiōsis* ("appropriation" or "affinity"), what nature makes dearest to every animal is itself and its own constitution. This natural self-love leads to self-preservation. Self-preservation motivates an animal to seek what benefits it and avoid what harms it. For plants and non-rational animals, self-preservation is achieved simply by meeting biological needs for water, food, and bodily protection. But when a pre-rational child matures into a rational adult human being, self-preservation becomes more complex. Reason discerns both what is good for a person and how to get it, and what is bad for her and how to avoid it. So, the rationality of an adult becomes dearest to her, rather than, say, her infected toe or a morsel of food. Rationality *is* most of all the self of a rational being. Thus, her rational mind is what a fully realized human being seeks to preserve above all.

The Stoics define the goal [*telos*] as "living in agreement with nature." This formula carries rich layers of meaning. As a living organism, it agrees with one's biological nature to use one's perceptual abilities to sustain the good functioning of one's body. But human beings also naturally associate with others of their kind. So, it agrees with one's social nature to build relationships with others, make friends, create a family, and participate in society. This social dimension of human nature expresses the social theory of *oikeiōsis*. Recognizing the affinity we have with our neighbors, fellow citizens, and all human beings, we establish justice as the foundation of harmonious living in society.

Moreover, for a being with reason, living in agreement with nature means living in agreement with reason. The perfection of reason is what the Stoics call virtue. Virtue, they insisted, is the only good because it alone is necessary and sufficient for *eudaimonia*. Conversely, the only thing that is bad and that guarantees misery is the corruption of reason, called vice. All else is counted neither good nor bad but in the class of "indifferents." Indifferents are inherently neither beneficial nor harmful because they can be used either well (in which case they bring happiness) or badly (in which case they cause misery). Within the class of indifferents orthodox Stoics distinguished the "preferred" from the "dispreferred." Preferred indifferents usually promote one's physical well-being, so selecting them is *usually* commended by reason. Preferred indifferents include life, health, pleasure, beauty, strength, wealth, and good reputation. The dispreferred indifferents are their opposites. It is usually appropriate to avoid the dispreferred indifferents, but in unusual circumstances it can be virtuous to select them. The virtue or vice of the agent is determined not by the possession of an indifferent, but by how it is used. Epictetus compares indifferents to game equipment. A ball lacks intrinsic value. How well a player uses the ball displays her excellence in the ball game. Therefore, the virtuous use of indifferents makes a life happy, the vicious use makes it unhappy.

The Stoics divided virtue into four main types: wisdom, justice, courage, and temperance. Wisdom they subdivided into good sense, good calculation, quick-wittedness, discretion, and resourcefulness. Justice they subdivided into piety, honesty, equity, and fair dealing. Varieties of courage they identified as endurance, confidence, high-mindedness, cheerfulness, and industriousness. Types of temperance they named good discipline, seemliness, modesty, and self-control. Similarly, they divided vice into foolishness, injustice, cowardice, intemperance, and the rest. The Stoics argued that the virtues are inter-entailing and constitute a unity: to have one is to have them all. The Stoics argued that, just as one person is a poet, an orator, and a general, so too the virtues are unified but apply to different spheres of practice.

Wisdom is defined as knowledge of what is good, what is bad, and what is neither. Wisdom is the virtue of the sage. The sage recognizes that living in agreement with nature also means living in agreement with the entire cosmos. The sage is a mortal microcosm in harmony with the providential macrocosm, embracing all events and affirming their meaning and necessity. The sage is free of all disturbing passions [*pathē*]. The Stoics regard as mental illnesses fear, anger, hatred, resentment, envy, jealousy, greed, grief, pity, and lust. These violent passions either are, or result from, false judgments about what things are good, bad, or indifferent. In contrast, the sage experiences three "good feelings" [*eupatheiai*]: joy [*khara*], caution [*eulabeia*], and rational wish [*boulēsis*]. Joy is expressed as delight, mirth, or cheerfulness. Caution is displayed in reverence or modesty. Rational wish is shown in benevolence, friendliness, respect, or affection.

The Stoics believed that the sage is as rare as the phoenix. Some suggested that Socrates, Zeno of Citium, or Cato the Younger may have been sages. The rest of us they regarded as fools. Within the class of fools, one who makes progress toward virtue is a "progressor" [*prokoptōn*]. A progressor can perform an "appropriate action" [*kathēkon*], like exercising to be fit or caring for one's parents. But only the sage performs actions wisely, comprehending their harmony with the universe. The sage performs a "perfect action" [*katorthōma*]. The early Stoics asserted that the sage was infallible. If so, then the concept of the sage serves as a prescriptive ideal Stoics endeavor to approximate. The sage was said to participate in politics if nothing hinders it. The final stage of *oikeiōsis* occurs when a person realizes affinity with not only her family, friends, and neighbors, but also with her fellow-citizens. This doctrine of social *oikeiōsis* explains the origin of justice. Stoics see themselves both as citizens of their country and as citizens belonging to the cosmic realm of rational beings everywhere. Because of this hugely influential doctrine of cosmopolitanism, the Stoics dismissed exile as affecting only their bodies, not themselves. This idea of twin citizenship conferred upon Stoics dual responsibilities. They had both civic duties to inhabitants of whatever locales they occupied or visited, and duties of solidarity with all persons, whether human or divine, throughout the universe, regardless of race, ethnicity, class, creed, age, ancestry, gender, gender expression, or disability. Active participation in the government of their city, province, and republic, as well as uncompromising fidelity to their friends no matter the danger of loss of life or limb, distinguished the Stoics from the Epicureans.

Notes

1 Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (abbreviated DL) Book 7, is the source of most of the details reported here on Zeno of Citium, Cleanthes, Aristo, and Chrysippus, as well as much of the accounts of Stoic logic, physics, and ethics.
2 For more on this topic, see Atherton's chapter, "Stoics and Epicureans on Language and the World."
3 See Ioppolo's chapter, "Nature, God, and Determinism in Early Stoicism."

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