

# PLATO and the Stoics

EDITED BY A. G. LONG



## PLATO AND THE STOICS

Plato was central both to the genesis of Stoic theory and to subsequent debates within the Stoa. These essays provide new and detailed explorations of the complex relationship between Plato and the Greek and Roman Stoic traditions, and together they show the directness and independence with which Stoics examined Plato's writing. What were the philosophical incentives for consulting and then returning to Plato's dialogues? To what extent did Plato, rather than Xenophon or Antisthenes, control Stoic reconstructions of Socrates' ethics? What explains the particular focus of Stoic polemic against Plato, and how strong is the evidence for a later reconciliation between Plato and Stoicism? This book will be important for all scholars and advanced students interested in the relationship between a major philosopher and one of the most important philosophical movements.

A.G. LONG is Lecturer in Classics at the University of St Andrews. His other books are *Conversation and Self-Sufficiency in Plato* (2013) and a translation, with David Sedley, of *Plato: Meno and Phaedo* (2010) for *Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy*.



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## *Abbreviations*

The English translation of the title, or of part of the title, is provided if the translation is used in the volume.

Alexander of Aphrodisias (Alex.)

*De Mix.*

*De mixtione*

Aristotle

*Cat.*

*Categoriae (Categories)*

*EN*

*Ethica Nicomachea*

*Met.*

*Metaphysica (Metaphysics)*

*PA*

*De partibus animalium*

*Protr.*

*Protrepticus*

Asclepius

*In Metaph.*

*In Metaphysica*

Calcidius (Calc.)

Cicero (Cic.)

*Acad.*

*Academica*

*Div.*

*De divinatione*

*Fin.*

*De finibus bonorum et  
malorum*

*Leg.*

*De legibus*

*Luc.*

*Lucullus*

*ND*

*De natura deorum*

*Rep.*

*De republica*

*Sen.*

*De senectute*

*TD*

*Tusculanae disputationes  
(Tusculan disputations)*

Clement of Alexandria	
<i>Strom.</i>	<i>Stromateis</i>
Cleomedes (Cleom.)	
Cornutus	
<i>Theol. Comp.</i>	<i>Theologiae Graecae compendium</i>
Damascius	
<i>In Phd.</i>	<i>In Phaedonem</i>
Diogenes Laertius (D.L.)	
Epictetus	
<i>D</i>	<i>Dissertationes (Discourses)</i>
Galen	
<i>PHP</i>	<i>De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis</i>
John Philoponus	
<i>Aet.</i>	<i>De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum</i>
LS	A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley (1987) <i>The Hellenistic Philosophers</i> , 2 vols. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
Marcus Aurelius	
<i>M</i>	<i>Meditationes (Meditations)</i>
Philo of Alexandria (Phil.)	
<i>Aet. Mundi</i>	<i>De aeternitate mundi</i>
<i>Leg. Alleg.</i>	<i>Legum allegoriae</i>
Plato	
<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apology</i>
<i>Crat.</i>	<i>Cratylus</i>
<i>Euthd.</i>	<i>Euthydemus</i>
<i>Gorg.</i>	<i>Gorgias</i>
<i>Leg.</i>	<i>Laws</i>
<i>Men.</i>	<i>Meno</i>

<i>Phd.</i>	<i>Phaedo</i>
<i>Phdr.</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>Phil.</i>	<i>Philebus</i>
<i>Prot.</i>	<i>Protagoras</i>
<i>Rep.</i>	<i>Republic</i>
<i>Soph.</i>	<i>Sophist</i>
<i>Tht.</i>	<i>Theaetetus</i>
<i>Tim.</i>	<i>Timaeus</i>
Plotinus (Plot.)	
Plutarch (Plut.)	
<i>An. Procr.</i>	<i>De animae procreatione in Timaeo</i>
<i>Comm. not.</i>	<i>De communibus notitiis</i>
<i>De Alex. virt.</i>	<i>De Alexandri magni fortuna aut virtute</i>
<i>Plat. Quaest.</i>	<i>Platonicae quaestiones</i>
<i>Quaest. Conviv.</i>	<i>Quaestiones convivales</i>
<i>Stoic. rep.</i>	<i>De Stoicorum repugnantiis (Stoic Self-Contradictions)</i>
<i>Virt. mor.</i>	<i>De virtute morali</i>
Porphry	
<i>De abst.</i>	<i>De abstinencia</i>
Proclus	
<i>In Eucl.</i>	<i>In primum Euclidis Elementorum librum</i>
<i>In Tim.</i>	<i>In Platonis Timaeum</i>
Quintilian	
<i>Inst. Or.</i>	<i>Institutio oratoria</i>
Seneca (Sen.)	
<i>Ben.</i>	<i>De beneficiis</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae morales ad Lucilium (Letters)</i>
<i>NQ</i>	<i>Naturales quaestiones</i>
<i>Prov.</i>	<i>De providentia</i>

Sextus Empiricus (S.E.)

*M*

*Adversus mathematicos*

*PH*

*Pyrrhoneioi hypotyposes*

Simplicius (Simp.)

*In Cat.*

*In Aristotelis Categorias*

*In Phys.*

*In Aristotelis Physica*

Stobaeus (Stob.)

*Ecl.*

*Eclogae*

*SVF*

H. von Arnim (1903–24)

*Stoicorum Veterum*

*Fragmenta*, 4 vols. Leipzig,

Teubner

Syrianus

*In Metaph.*

*In Aristotelis Metaphysica*

Xenophon (Xen.)

*Mem.*

*Memorabilia*

# *Introduction*

*A.G. Long*

The papers brought together in this collection explore the contribution of Plato's dialogues to the intellectual life of the Stoa. The strength of interest in the topic today is shown by other recent collections in which the reading of Plato by Stoics is a key object of study.<sup>1</sup> One cause of this interest has been the growth of scholarship on Stoicism. This scholarship has brought in its wake studies of the origins of Stoic doctrines, and in some well-known cases the doctrines – or, as often we should rather say, the experiments – in Plato's dialogues constitute the most important antecedent.<sup>2</sup> The sophistication of current work on Stoic philosophy has also spurred scholars to provide suitably measured, nuanced or otherwise cautious accounts of passages where Stoics seem to Platonize, a phenomenon that becomes particularly striking in the later history of the Stoa.<sup>3</sup> (Here and elsewhere, 'Stoa' is used in a broad sense and refers not merely to the building in Athens but to the philosophical tradition from Zeno of Citium to Marcus Aurelius.) Some of the attention has come from the other direction – that is, from the study of Plato. Scholars are increasingly inclined to suppose that the interpretation and appropriation of a text by later generations fall within the purview of those who work on that text. This has coincided with a surge of interest in Plato's *Timaeus*. Given this coincidence, and given the extraordinary range of affinities between the Stoic cosmos and the world described

<sup>1</sup> Bonazzi and Helmig 2007; Harte, McCabe, Sharples and Sheppard 2010.

<sup>2</sup> See particularly Brunschwig 1994 (Stoic ontology); Schofield 1999a: 22–56 (Stoic political thought); Sedley 2002 (Stoic theology).

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 7–9 below.

in Plato's *Timaeus*, in hindsight it was inevitable that Plato's cosmology would soon be read with an eye to its appropriation by Stoics.<sup>4</sup>

The scope of this collection is narrowly defined: we consider how Stoics responded to Plato, appropriated Platonic ideas or simply found Plato good to think with. We do not consider how Platonists for their part responded to Stoics;<sup>5</sup> developments in the Academy and, more generally, in the Platonic tradition are considered only insofar as they help us understand Stoic perceptions of Plato's dialogues and the intentions with which Stoics engaged with Plato.<sup>6</sup> And throughout the book it is *Stoic* engagement with Plato that we aim to understand; we do not consider in broader terms than that how Plato was interpreted or 'read' in antiquity.<sup>7</sup>

In introducing the chapters I shall refrain from the common editorial practice of providing abstracts on the contributors' behalf. Instead I shall outline the principal questions that belong to our shared area of inquiry, and say enough about what lies ahead to sketch how they are addressed during the course of the collection. My overview of the following chapters will accordingly be selective and focus on their contributions to these questions, as well as on connections between the chapters.

#### WHOSE SOCRATES?

According to Philodemus, Stoics (or at least some Stoics) wished to be known as 'Socratics',<sup>8</sup> and the life of Zeno in Diogenes Laertius (7.2–3) credits Xenophon's account of Socrates with piquing Zeno's interest in philosophy. Pioneering philosophical scholarship<sup>9</sup> in the twentieth century has established the connections between Stoic and Socratic thought. It is now widely agreed that Stoic moral philosophy was undertaken as a development of Socratic ethics, and Socrates' significance for the Stoics may have extended beyond ethics, for Stoic

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. Reydamas-Schils 1999 and 2003; Betegh 2003; Sedley 2007: 225–30; Mohr and Sattler 2010 (particularly the chapter by A.A. Long, 'Cosmic craftsmanship in Plato and Stoicism').

<sup>5</sup> Contrast Sedley 1999a; Bonazzi and Helmig 2007.

<sup>6</sup> See particularly Gretchen Reydamas-Schils, Chapter 2, but also the last section ('Conclusion') of Chapter 6 by George Boys-Stones.

<sup>7</sup> Contrast Tarrant 2000; Tarrant and Baltzly 2006; Harte, McCabe, Sharples and Sheppard 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Philodemus *On the Stoics* XIII (Dorandi). <sup>9</sup> Long 1988; Striker 1996.

cosmo-theology seems to have drawn on Socrates' statements in Xenophon (*Mem.* 1.4.5–18, 4.3.2–18) about the divine design of the world and its human inhabitants.<sup>10</sup> Allegiance to Socrates, or identification with Socrates, does not require a similar attitude to his follower Plato, and, as the above references to Xenophon suggest, it was not to Plato alone that Stoics went when they sought a point of reference for their own versions of Socratic philosophy.<sup>11</sup> Whenever we consider the Stoics as the self-appointed heirs of Socrates, we need to consider *which* Socrates, or *which author's* Socrates, offered the theory, paradox or challenge that, at least as Stoics themselves saw the matter, received its fullest and clearest exposition inside the Stoa.

Malcolm Schofield's [chapter](#) ('Cardinal virtues: a contested Socratic inheritance') discusses the four-virtue theory in early Stoicism and argues that the competing versions of that theory reflect different answers to the question: 'Which author's Socrates should guide the Stoic reconstruction of Socratic theory?' The writings of Xenophon and Antisthenes were an important alternative to the Platonic portrait of Socrates and informed Cleanthes' thinking on the subject of the virtues. Zeno, on the other hand, had turned to the accounts of the virtues in Plato's *Meno*, *Phaedo* and *Protagoras*, and Chrysippus later took Stoic theory back to the Platonic interpretations of Socratic ethics. One feature of Schofield's analysis that is worth singling out now is his explanation of why Chrysippus returned to a more Platonic account. Chrysippus effected a change not out of deference to Plato but rather in order to revive Zeno's theory and to put appropriate emphasis on practical reasoning. As we shall see, other contributors in this volume bring into view the independence from Platonic authority with which Stoics made use of Plato's dialogues.

#### ACADEMIC MEDIATION?

The question 'which Socrates?' brings us to our next question, 'which Plato?', for Plato in his turn soon became the object of competing interpretations. A debate attested from an early date concerns the *Timaeus*. Aristotle mentions and then contradicts (*De Caelo*

<sup>10</sup> DeFilippo and Mitsis 1994; Sedley 2007: 212–25. <sup>11</sup> See also Panaetius fr. 126.

279b32–280a11, 280a27–34) an interpretation, ascribed in later texts<sup>12</sup> to Xenocrates and to the commentator Crantor (a contemporary of Zeno), according to which Plato did not believe the world to have been created in the distant past but described it as such ‘for the sake of instruction’, like a teacher drawing a diagram one line at a time. So far as we can tell from the surviving evidence, before Antipater (see ‘A later rapprochement?’ below) Stoics were happy to leave squabbles about the correct interpretation of Plato to Aristotelians<sup>13</sup> and Platonists; Zeno, Chrysippus and their contemporaries in the Stoa had other priorities. But even at the times when Stoics were not interested in contributing to debates about Plato’s true meaning, they may nonetheless in their own reading and appropriation of Plato have been guided by the interpretations currently being defended, or taken for granted, by others. I have already mentioned the story in Diogenes Laertius about Zeno’s attraction to Xenophon’s Socrates; here too biography, despite the difficulty of separating ‘the historical truth from the aetiological historical myth’,<sup>14</sup> has been a stimulus to inquiry, in this case the story that Zeno studied with the Academic Polemo and was accused by Polemo of stealing his doctrines (Diogenes Laertius 7.2, 25). An important article by David Sedley<sup>15</sup> has examined the evidence concerning Academic physics and argued that Polemo promoted a version of Platonic cosmology that anticipated Stoic physics more closely than the *Timaeus* itself had done. We may wonder then whether some of the modifications to Platonic cosmology that are usually associated with Stoicism – including in particular the elimination of extra-cosmic causes and the replacement of Plato’s ‘receptacle’ with matter – were first undertaken not in the Stoa but in the Academy and then received by Stoics as parts of the ‘Platonic’ picture.

In this volume, Gretchen Reydams-Schils (‘The Academy, the Stoics, and Cicero on Plato’s *Timaeus*’) challenges the view that the Old Academy was a bridge between Plato’s writing and Stoicism. For

<sup>12</sup> See Simplicius’ commentary on the *De Caelo*, ad loc.; Plutarch *An. Procr.* 1013a–b. For Crantor’s commentary see Sedley 1997: 113–16; Tarrant 2000: 53–6; Dillon 2003b: 87–9.

<sup>13</sup> For Theophrastus’ involvement in the debate about the *Timaeus* see John Philoponus *Aet.* 145 (Rabe).

<sup>14</sup> Mansfeld 1986: 347 n. 108. Mansfeld suggests that attempts to associate Zeno with the Academy were undertaken in order to emphasize the Socratic provenance of Stoicism: ‘the Academics, after all, were Socratics’.

<sup>15</sup> Sedley 2002.



the most part, her chapter examines the evidence concerning members of the Academy, but her arguments point to a conclusion about Stoicism, namely that the Stoics read and developed Plato's cosmology independently of Academic interpretation. Her conclusion about direct Stoic reading of Plato has a broader importance for the other chapters in the collection, and in particular Jenny Bryan's discussion of the *Timaeus* (Chapter 3).

#### APPROPRIATION AND RESPONSE

Zeno and Chrysippus both wrote works in which they set themselves in opposition to Plato. But they also developed sympathetically suggestions put forward in Plato's dialogues, such as the hallmark of 'being' that is offered in the *Sophist*.<sup>16</sup> It is noteworthy that in their use of Platonic material Stoics did not confine themselves to the suggestions that are still officially in play, and not refuted or abandoned, at the dialogues' conclusions; for example, the Stoic account of impressions seems to borrow from the comparison in the *Theaetetus* (191c–196c) of the soul (or rather of the part or aspect of soul by which we remember) to a block of wax, even though that view of the soul has been set aside by the end of Socrates' inquiry into false judgement. When Zeno and Chrysippus read a Platonic dialogue and found ideas that to their mind were (or, properly developed, could be made to be) plausible, they were not constrained by the dialogue's own verdict on the ideas contained within it.<sup>17</sup> If Plato rejected a credible theory, then (the Stoics would say) that is Plato's loss, not theirs; Plato's decision need not debar a revival of the theory. On occasion, contributors in this volume will talk about Plato's 'influence', but that should not be taken to suggest uncritical or unreflective reception on the Stoics' part. Plato's theories were considered, selected and refashioned before some of them became a tributary of Stoicism.

Some Stoic discussions or doctrines, particularly those reminiscent of the *Timaeus*, are very obviously indebted to Plato. In such cases our

<sup>16</sup> See 'Platonic connections' and, for opposition to Plato, 'Zeno contra Plato' and 'Subsequent polemic' in my [Chapter 5](#).

<sup>17</sup> 'If, as seems probable, Zeno knew the *Theaetetus*, he knew Plato's refutation of the model of knowledge as an imprint in the soul, but he could have thought he had overcome it because of his different conception of the soul' (Loppolo 1990: 438).

job is not to show the existence of a debt; it is rather to explain *why* Stoics found certain Platonic dialogues to be congenial or instructive companions for their own reflections, particularly in areas where they disagreed with Plato. On the other hand, once we accept that Stoics read Plato closely, we should become sensitive to evidence of broader reading and appropriation; given that the Stoics took over parts of Plato's *Timaeus*, they may have looked to other Platonic dialogues when developing their own cosmology, even though the *Timaeus* is Plato's most obviously cosmological dialogue. Here the connections between Plato and Stoicism may become more subtle and more open to dispute, and so we shall need to consider whether independent evidence concerning the Stoic reading of Plato makes it reasonable to postulate borrowing. Both the explanation of familiar debts and arguments for further debts, not yet acknowledged in the scholarship, are represented in this volume; together we aim both to provide a fresh perspective on the relationship between the *Timaeus* and Stoicism and to show further connections between Plato and Stoic physics. Jenny Bryan in [Chapter 3](#) ('Chrysippus and Plato on the fragility of the head') discusses the theological side of Stoic cosmology and one of the clearest appropriations of Plato in Chrysippus' writing. She shows why Chrysippus, despite disagreeing with Plato about the location of the soul in the human body, in his theodicy borrowed from the *Timaeus*' explanation of the vulnerability of the human head. Her study uses careful interpretation of the original passage in the *Timaeus* in order to understand why Stoics were attracted to that passage. Paul Scade in [Chapter 4](#) ('Plato and the Stoics on limits, parts and wholes') then turns to the physical constitution of the Stoic cosmos and argues that Stoic mereology borrows from Plato's *Parmenides*. On Scade's account, the Stoics distinguished between two kinds of limit and between two kinds of part, and their distinctions derive from the antinomies in the second part of the *Parmenides*.<sup>18</sup> Much of Scade's chapter is devoted to showing why the Stoics needed a distinction between kinds of limit and between kinds of part. As we see in Malcolm Schofield's chapter, Stoic use of Plato shows not deference

<sup>18</sup> As Paul Scade observes in [Chapter 4](#), Sedley 1985 and Caston 1999 have already suggested that there are connections between Stoicism and the *first* part of the *Parmenides*.

so much as Plato's ability to shed light on difficulties generated by contemporary Stoic thought or by the previous Stoic tradition.

Sometimes, when it is clear that Stoics are echoing Plato, it is much less clear whether or not they intend their readers to notice a *reference* or *response* to Plato, and whether the point of a reference is to highlight the deficiency or the strength of the Platonic referent. It is tempting to suppose that our uncertainty reflects the nature of the surviving evidence. The meagreness of the evidence of course plays its part, but even Zeno's or Chrysippus' original readers must sometimes have found themselves uncertain about the relationship between Plato and Stoic thought, at least in cases where Zeno or Chrysippus did not adopt the pose of admirer or adversary. In [Chapter 5](#) ('Subtexts, connections and open opposition') I see how far the evidence for early Stoics permits us to distinguish between direct response (particularly direct polemical responses) and indirect allusion to Plato. I show that open polemic against Plato dwelt on Plato's political theory, with the exception of a short-lived episode in which Chrysippus included Platonic ethics as a further object of open attack. Here, once again, it is shown how Stoic thought motivated the particular use that was made of Platonic writing – in this case how Zeno's political thought gave rise to an anti-Platonic posture from which Stoics, even when contradicting Plato, sometimes refrained.

#### A LATER RAPPROCHEMENT?

*On Plato's doctrine that only the morally admirable is good*,<sup>19</sup> composed by the scholarch Antipater in the second century BC, marks two shifts in the Stoic reading of Plato. Antipater's Stoic predecessors, such as Zeno and Chrysippus, took Plato to task for some of his 'errors', used certain passages in the dialogues as a launch-pad for their own philosophy, and probably were aware of debates going on in the Academy and Lyceum about Plato's true meaning. But in Antipater we find, first, a Stoic who wishes to *contribute* to debates about the interpretation of Plato and, secondly, a Stoic drawing attention to agreement between Platonic and Stoic teaching. Neither of these need indicate a rapprochement with the second-century Academy; on the

<sup>19</sup> Clement *Strom.* 5.14.97.6 (SVF 3(Antipater).56).

contrary, Antipater may have seen writing in support of Plato as a way of writing against the Academy, for, by showing common ground with Plato, Antipater was showing that the Academy's founder had espoused the Stoic moral doctrines currently being attacked by Academics.<sup>20</sup> Antipater's writing nonetheless points to a more sympathetic attitude to Plato himself and to a more historical approach to Plato's writing, particularly when taken in conjunction with the work of his successor Panaetius and Panaetius' pupil Posidonius.<sup>21</sup>

Panaetius is said to have deemed the *Phaedo* inauthentic (frs. 127–9); if by that Panaetius meant that its author was not Plato,<sup>22</sup> one of his motives may have been to bring Plato into line with his own views about the soul's mortality (for which see Cicero *TD* 1.79). Posidonius is said to have interpreted or expounded (ἐξηγούμενος) Plato's *Timaeus* (fr. 85), to have interpreted the discussion of soul in Plato's *Phaedrus* (fr. 290) and, even more intriguingly, to have 'written a sort of summary' (γέγραπεν οἷον ἐπιτομὴν τινὰ) of what Plato said on the subject of educating and training children (fr. 31). But while there is good evidence for exegetical or exegetically aware interest in Plato's dialogues, it is less certain that this new kind of interest in Plato came at the cost of authentically Stoic doctrines. Both Panaetius and Posidonius have been regarded as Platonizing in their accounts of the human soul, on the ground that they renounced the Stoic unitary conception of soul in favour of a bipartite (Panaetius) or tripartite (Posidonius) conception, but that view of their psychology has recently been challenged.<sup>23</sup> The reluctance in contemporary

<sup>20</sup> So Sedley 2003: 20. At the end of Chapter 5, I suggest that Antipater was also responding to Chrysippus. For the development outlined here see the second volume (*Der hellenistische Rahmen des kaiserzeitlichen Platonismus*) of Dörrie and Baltes 1987 ff.; Sedley 1997; Bonazzi 2007: 120 n. 41; Gill 2006: 213 n. 20.

<sup>21</sup> I had hoped to include in this collection a paper on Posidonius by the late Anna Ju. For her important contributions to Posidonian scholarship see Ju 2009 and Ju 2013.

<sup>22</sup> Tarrant 2000: 56–7 (cf. 217 n. 13) suggests that Panaetius meant instead that the *Phaedo* does not accurately represent Socrates. This would indicate an effort on Panaetius' part to rescue Socrates, not Plato, from the erroneous immortality thesis. See, however, Gourinat 2008b, which sets out the evidence for an edition of Plato by Panaetius. Notice that, at least according to Plutarch (*Demosthenes* 13.4), Panaetius gave Demosthenes similar treatment to that given by Antipater to Plato: Panaetius said that in Demosthenes' works only the noble is treated as inherently worthy of choice.

<sup>23</sup> For the challenge see particularly the work of Teun Tieleman, such as Tieleman 2003, 2007a, 2007b: 136, but also Ju 2013 and Sedley 1993: 313 n. 4.

scholarship to treat later Stoics as heterodox Platonizers has more than one origin. Unsurprisingly, the evidence for later Stoics has been scrutinized in order to show that their interest in Plato did not take them outside the Stoic tradition.<sup>24</sup> But a second factor has been the increasing awareness of the complexity and range of *early* Stoicism, and so of what the ‘Stoic tradition’ properly includes; what would otherwise look like an innovation in a later Stoic writer can now be viewed as taking up ‘a strand that was present in Stoicism all along’.<sup>25</sup>

Two chapters in this collection explore late Stoic authors whose texts have survived and where the question of a rapprochement can be addressed with more confidence. George Boys-Stones in [Chapter 6](#) (‘Seneca against Plato: *Letters* 58 and 65’) considers Seneca’s response to the Platonist revival; far from finding signs of a new consensus, Boys-Stones argues that Seneca’s letters contain a polemical response to Platonism in which Plato himself (and in particular Plato’s *Phaedo*) is implicated. Above I suggested that Panaetius’ exclusion of the *Phaedo* may reflect his thinking about immortality, but Boys-Stones reminds us that the *Phaedo* was perceived in antiquity not merely as a discussion of the soul’s immortality but as the classic account of Platonic Forms, and he argues that Seneca’s attack on Plato’s *Phaedo* was above all an attack on Forms. Thomas Bénatouïl in [Chapter 7](#) (‘*Theôria* and *scholê* in Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius: Platonic, Stoic or Socratic?’) discusses the allusions in Epictetus and Marcus to Plato’s discussions of contemplation, above all *Theaetetus* 172–7. Bénatouïl shows that, in the hands of these Stoics, Plato’s conception of the significance and objects of contemplation is transformed, and that Marcus and Epictetus do not abandon the mainstream Stoic position on the place of contemplation in the good life. Like other contributors, Bénatouïl considers what attracted Stoics to the particular texts from which they borrowed, and suggests that one reason why the *Theaetetus* held a special appeal was that it was perceived to be an authentically *Socratic* dialogue. Epictetus and

<sup>24</sup> ‘What Posidonius may have been doing was translating Platonic ideas into Stoic form’ (Gill 2006: 214).

<sup>25</sup> I quote from Algra 2009: 230. Compare Inwood 2005: 64 and the following: ‘this strand in Stoic thinking may seem to be somehow a foreign graft, since we see it so clearly in Plato and Aristotle. But not only is this attitude also reflected in other Stoic sources, it is in itself no less Stoic than Aristo’s complete rejection of physics and logic’ (Inwood 2009: 214).

Marcus Aurelius turn out to be engaged in much the same activity as the Stoics discussed in Schofield's chapter: developing their own versions of Socratic ethics.

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## CHAPTER I

# *Cardinal virtues: a contested Socratic inheritance*

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## INTRODUCTION

The idea of four cardinal virtues, perhaps most famously articulated in Book 4 of Plato's *Republic* (427e–435c, 441c–443c), was embraced by the Stoics, as in much other subsequent Greek and Roman philosophy. We find it represented as their canonical doctrine not just in doxographies, but in texts such as Book 1 of Cicero's *De Officiis* (where it is presented and explicated in Panaetius' distinctive version: in summary form at 1.15–17) and Seneca's treatment of the good in *Letter* 120 (at *Ep.* 120.11). A history of how and why the Stoics' conceptualization of the cardinal virtues and their interrelations developed over time would make rewarding reading. In this chapter, I look at a particularly important beginning episode in that history, although later developments are not neglected altogether.

I discussed one aspect of the early Stoic debates about virtue some years ago, in my article 'Ariston of Chios and the unity of virtue',<sup>1</sup> and I shall not be traversing much of that ground again. What I shall be arguing here is that the different versions of the theory of four cardinal virtues that we find attested for Zeno, Cleanthes and Chrysippus indicate a similar battle over the proper interpretation of their Socratic inheritance. Should Antisthenes or Xenophon be the Stoics' guide in the way they understand and expound the theory? Or does the Platonic Socrates supply the correct model? I shall suggest that those who opted for Plato emerged victorious, to the extent that it was

<sup>1</sup> See Schofield 1984; cf. Cooper 1999: 76–117.

their version that shaped standard Stoic doctrine as we find it set out in the doxographies.<sup>2</sup>

The standard doxographical accounts of Stoic ethics tell us that they recognized four primary virtues: *phronêsis*, *sôphrosunê*, *andreia*, *dikaïosunê* (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.60.9–15, D.L. 7.92). I give this quartet their names in transliterated Greek without translating, to avoid suggesting that translation does not already involve interpretation, and to acknowledge that it is virtually impossible to find any single satisfactory equivalent for *sôphrosunê*, in whatever context – Stoic or non-Stoic – we find it. With these caveats, however, I propose as working English equivalents: wisdom, moderation, courage, justice. It seems likely that, as so often in early Stoicism, it was Chrysippus who firmly established as Stoic doctrine (i) that virtues were to be divided into the primary and the secondary, and (ii) that the primary virtues were the four listed by Stobaeus and Diogenes Laertius.

#### ZENO

It also seems likely that in identifying his quartet of primary virtues Chrysippus took himself to be articulating or elaborating upon the view of Zeno of Citium himself. Later authors certainly treat Zeno as a philosopher who was a pluralist, not a monist, about virtue. Diogenes contrasts him as such with his independent-minded follower Aristo of Chios (D.L. 7.161), who according to Plutarch (*Virt. mor.* 440e–f) held that virtue was one in its essence, but is exercised relative to a number of different areas of activity (Plutarch seems to imply that Aristo thought using different names of virtues on that account was a mistake).<sup>3</sup> Plutarch himself also takes Zeno to be someone who ‘like Plato’ recognizes a plurality of virtues distinguished by their specific differentiae: namely, *phronêsis*, *andreia*, *sôphrosunê*, *dikaïosunê* (*Stoic. rep.* 1034c). If there is a specific Platonic passage being alluded to here, the likeliest

<sup>2</sup> My topic is one of the main subjects of a fine article (Gourinat 2008a), published at around the same time as I presented my material at the 2008 St Andrews colloquium. I am glad to find myself largely in agreement with its findings. This is an appropriate point at which to thank Jean-Baptiste Gourinat for an invitation to deliver a version of the present chapter to the Léon Robin seminar in Paris in January 2011, where I profited from the comments of those present, and for his kindnesses on that occasion, not least in presenting me with a copy of the volume in which his paper appeared.

<sup>3</sup> See my discussion in Schofield 1984: 87–9.



candidate seems to me to be *Laws* 12.963c–964b, which has just this list (not, for example, *sophia* instead of *phronêsis*), in a context where Plato actually himself debates the question whether virtue is one or many.<sup>4</sup>

But Plutarch draws attention to something he takes to be a problem in Zeno's treatment of the four virtues in question. He also tells us that Zeno 'defined the *phronêsis* involved in the sphere of distribution as justice, in the sphere of choice as *sôphrosunê*, and in the sphere where endurance is called for as courage' (*Virt. mor.* 441a; cf. *Stoic. rep.* 1034c). That, he objects, makes it look as though Zeno drifted after all into a version of Aristo's virtue monism (*ibid.*). The charge is that in truth Zeno recognizes only one and the same *phronêsis* throughout, merely cropping up in different circumstances. Plutarch also reports a defence against this complaint: in the context of his account of justice, moderation and courage, Zeno meant by *phronêsis* 'knowledge', *epistêmê* (*Virt. mor.* 441a; perhaps Chrysippus was author of this claim: see *Stoic. rep.* 1034d).

How this piece of interpretation was meant to work as a defence is not further explained. But the point of the suggestion was presumably to insist that Zeno did not differentiate the virtues merely in terms of the different fields within which *phronêsis* operates, but gave the *phronêsis* operating in a specific field a specific intellectual content, which supplied the basis of a genuine differentia for the specific virtue in question.<sup>5</sup> We can get an indication of the kind of content probably envisaged by those who defended Zeno in this way from a standard presentation of Stoic virtue theory such as is preserved in the following extract from Stobaeus (*Ecl.* 2.59.8–11):

Moderation is scientific knowledge (*epistêmê*) of what is to be chosen or avoided (or neither). Justice is scientific knowledge of how to distribute to

<sup>4</sup> But this list of four has been operative since the very beginning of the dialogue: see *Laws* 1.630a–b, 631c; cf. 3.688a–b.

<sup>5</sup> Hirzel took it that in explaining that *phronêsis* here meant *epistêmê*, those who offered this account will have been wanting to rescue Zeno from having confused *phronêsis* as one of the four cardinal virtues with *phronêsis* as the foundation of all the rest: according to them, he must have intended to be talking about it only in the general sense of *epistêmê* (see Hirzel 1882: 99–101). The issue of Zeno's treatment of *phronêsis* will be further discussed below, pp. 15–17, but whatever the merits of Hirzel's hypothesis it will not serve in itself to meet the objection that Zeno's position in the end amounted to the same as Aristo's. To avoid that charge, Zeno needs to show that he gives each of the virtues he discusses a specific differentia, not simply a particular field in which *phronêsis* (or *epistêmê*) gets deployed (cf. Long and Sedley 1987: 1.384).

each person what he merits. Courage is scientific knowledge of what is or is not to be feared (or neither).

Does this attempt to rescue Zeno for pluralism of the kind represented by the standard Stoic theory, effective so far as it goes in its own terms, succeed in capturing his own meaning? One might suspect that construing *phronêsis* in the Zeno formulations reproduced by Plutarch as ‘scientific knowledge’ (*epistêmê*) is simply later Stoic revisionism. Here, however, we should bear in mind Zeno’s Socratism. Recent scholarship has well demonstrated the Socratic intellectualist cast of the early Stoic theory of virtue more generally.<sup>6</sup> The Stoics evidently saw themselves as heirs of Socrates, and texts representing what Socrates thought are likely to have been regarded by them as authoritative. The most obvious antecedent for Zeno’s conception of *phronêsis* as Plutarch records it is what Socrates says about virtue in the *Meno* and *Phaedo*. More particularly, in the *Meno* Socrates introduces his claims about *phronêsis* to support the thesis that virtues are nothing other than forms of *epistêmê* (*Men.* 87c–89a).<sup>7</sup>

Socrates sums up the view he argues for in the *Meno* as follows (*Men.* 88c–d; I am adapting Bob Sharples’ translation):<sup>8</sup>

Then, in short, all the undertakings and endurings of the soul end in happiness if they are guided by wisdom (*phronêsis*), but in the opposite if they are guided by folly? – It seems so. – Then, if virtue is a possession of the soul, and necessarily beneficial, it must be wisdom, since all the qualities associated with the soul [moderation, justice, courage, quickness at learning, memory, largeness of outlook, and ‘everything of that sort’ have been listed: 88a] are in themselves neither beneficial nor harmful, but by the application of wisdom or folly they become harmful or beneficial. So according to this argument, since virtue is beneficial, it must be wisdom of some sort. – Yes, I think so.

The same position – that the essence of all the virtues, insofar as they are true virtues, is *phronêsis* – is articulated in the *Phaedo* (69a–c), in a famous passage where Socrates claims that the only true coin in questions of value is not pleasure or pain, but wisdom (*phronêsis*).

<sup>6</sup> See above all the classic study: Long 1988.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Euthd.* 281a–e for a similar shift from *epistêmê* to *phronêsis*, this time within the general context of a thesis about *sophia*.

<sup>8</sup> See Sharples 1985: 87.

‘With the application of wisdom, there in reality is courage and moderation and justice, and in sum true virtue.’ Otherwise virtue of those sorts is ‘in reality slavish, and quite unsound, and not the true thing’.

It is hard to doubt that these must have been key texts for Zeno as he reflected on Socrates’ teaching about virtue and enunciated his own version of the theory of four cardinal virtues, which similarly has *phronêsis* exercising the ‘guidance’ which in different fields of activity results in one or other of the behaviours characteristic of courage, moderation or justice. While the overall argument of the *Meno* passage will work only if *phronêsis* is construed as a form of *epistêmê*, it is not clear there that a treatment of the virtues as differentiated by different epistemic content is intended. But Zeno might have been fortified in thinking that was the right way to understand Socrates by the summary of his argument in the *Protagoras* as the attempt ‘to demonstrate that all things are knowledge (*epistêmê*) – justice and moderation and courage’ (361b). In this context *epistêmê* does mean or imply knowledge of some specific content or other, as is apparent from the immediately preceding treatment of courage as wisdom (*sophia*) about what is to be feared and what is not to be feared (360c–d).<sup>9</sup>

I have just spoken of Zeno’s version of ‘the theory of four cardinal virtues’. But one might object that to speak in those terms is to suggest that *phronêsis* is for him a species of virtue co-ordinate with the other three. Yet while Zeno did talk as though moderation, justice and courage have a primacy among the virtues, so far as our knowledge of his theory goes *phronêsis* figures as the core of all three (as in the *Phaedo*). Would it not therefore distort the shape of his thinking to attribute to him a belief in four cardinal virtues?

<sup>9</sup> From the *Meno* and *Phaedo* texts Zeno may have inferred that *phronêsis* was Socrates’ own preferred term for wisdom; note also that Aristotle expressed Socrates’ position as the doctrine ‘that all the virtues are forms of *phronêsis*’ (EN 6.13.1144b17–21). When Plato has him talk of *sophia* in dialogues like the *Euthydemus* and *Protagoras*, this is in a context of debates with sophists, i.e. with professional practitioners (as they or others saw them) of *sophia*, a term which Socrates will then need to appropriate for his own purposes. On the other hand, Xenophon’s Socrates when listing virtues invariably speaks of *sophia* (e.g., *Mem.* 3.9.4–6; 4.5.6; 4.6.7), although quite how he understood *sophia* is a matter for debate: see Morrison 2010 (with useful bibliography). Perhaps significantly, in his final summing up Xenophon refers to Socrates as *phronimos* (*Mem.* 4.8.11).

The issue of whether someone who talks of four primary virtues implies that the four are co-ordinate species of one genus is not straightforward. As we shall be noting in a moment, for Plato the answer is plainly that there is no such implication. But when we look at what we are told about Cleanthes' position on virtues, it will transpire that he is best interpreted as accepting the implication. Some scholars have supposed that Zeno must have thought that, too, and have followed Pohlenz, the original Teubner editor, in emending the text of Plutarch (at *Stoic. rep.* 1034c), which appears to be corrupt in any event, to make it read:

He says that courage is wisdom <in the sphere of endurance, moderation is wisdom in the sphere of choice, wisdom in the special sense is wisdom> in the sphere of action, and justice is wisdom in the sphere of distribution.<sup>10</sup>

Jean-Baptiste Gourinat has rightly questioned the credentials of this highly speculative restoration of the text. As he points out, the distinction it attributes to Zeno between *phronêsis* as a species of virtue and *phronêsis* as 'knowledge' or 'science' generically finds no support in the parallel passage at *Virt. mor.* 441a.<sup>11</sup> I want to suggest that the restoration any way rests on the dubious basis of what we might call the co-ordinate species assumption.

There is good reason, I submit, to believe both that Zeno talked of four virtues he took to be primary, and that one of these, *phronêsis*, was foundational for the other three. What supports the claim that he treated a quartet of virtues as primary is that both Cleanthes and Chrysippus seem to have written in similar terms. Since in general they evidently saw themselves as interpreters (albeit sometimes rival interpreters) of Zeno himself,<sup>12</sup> the fact that both of them identified four primary virtues strongly suggests that Zeno had done so before them. But that need not mean (contrary to the co-ordinate species assumption) that he saw *phronêsis* as co-ordinate with the rest. As precedent for an alternative position, we can cite Plato in the *Laws*. Plato is explicit that there are four primary virtues (*Leg.* 1.631c–d, 3.688a–b, 12.963a–965e). But at the same time he makes *phronêsis* first among

<sup>10</sup> These include Cherniss in the Loeb, Long and Sedley 1987 (61C), and Casevitz and Babut in the Budé. The conjecture was wisely relegated to the *apparatus criticus* by Westman when he revised Pohlenz's Teubner.

<sup>11</sup> See Gourinat 2008a: 180–3. <sup>12</sup> See e.g. Sedley 2003: 15–18.

them: 'the leader of the entirety of virtue' (688b).<sup>13</sup> More generally, he presents government by wisdom and reason (*nous*) as his ethical and political ideal (*Leg.* 2.632c–d, 3.687e). And he indicates that moderation and justice are to be defined partly in terms of wisdom (631c–d).<sup>14</sup>

I am not suggesting that Zeno will have understood the other three virtues as the *Laws* understands them. The point is simply that to see *phronêsis* as the leading virtue, implicated in a proper specification of each of the others, was not thought by Plato, at any rate, to preclude counting it as one of a quartet of primary virtues. It seems unreasonable to deny that Zeno may well have taken the same general view. When we come to consider the kind of account of *phronêsis* that became standard in the Stoa (very likely on account of Chrysippus' treatment of the subject) we shall find that it, too, reflects something of that same approach to the primacy of *phronêsis* as cardinal virtue.

#### CLEANTHES

The plot thickens when we turn to Plutarch's evidence about Cleanthes' treatment of the virtues.<sup>15</sup> He writes as follows (*Stoic. rep.* 1034d–e):<sup>16</sup>

And Cleanthes, in his *Physical Memoranda*,<sup>17</sup> says that tension is a 'stroke of fire', and that if in the soul it reaches a pitch such as is sufficient for

<sup>13</sup> For discussion of this idea in the *Laws*, see Bobonich 2002: 179–209; Dixsaut 2008: 134–9.

<sup>14</sup> Courage is there apparently treated as self-standing, not said to be dependent on *phronêsis*. But I take it that this is simply a tactical manoeuvre: the Athenian Stranger is at this point trying to persuade his Dorian interlocutors to take a larger view of virtue than the sole focus on courage he has represented as characteristic of Cretan and Spartan ideology, not yet to rethink their idea of courage *ab initio*. There is an excellent discussion of the treatment of virtue in the *Laws* in Stalley 1983: 45–58.

<sup>15</sup> This topic has been well studied in the literature. After a good start at the end of the nineteenth century (Hirzel 1882: 96–105; Pearson 1891: 301–2), there have been excellent recent contributions: Bénatoui 2005, Gourinat 2008a: 177–90 (mostly recapitulating material in Gourinat 2007: 232–9).

<sup>16</sup> Editors have been interventionist in the text of the Cleanthes quotation that they print. I translate a version much closer to the MSS tradition in the clauses relating to control and courage: ἐν τοῖς ἐπιφρονέσειν ἐμμενετέοις . . . ἐν τοῖς ὑπομμενετέοις.

<sup>17</sup> Or perhaps 'somewhere in his physical treatises': see Gourinat 2008a: 177 n. 3 (cf. the translation 'dans les traités physiques' given in Bénatoui 2005: 8)? But where as here there is verbatim quotation, reference to a specific named treatise seems more characteristic of doxographical practice (on which see Mansfeld 1986: 328–73), and so more likely to have been intended.

realizing the behaviour that is incumbent upon us, it is called 'strength and might'. Then he continues in these exact words: 'This strength and might, when it arises in the sphere where persistence is manifestly called for, is control; in the sphere where endurance is called for, courage; concerning what is merited, justice; concerning choices and avoidances, moderation.'

Plutarch is here continuing with his complaint that the Stoics contradict themselves on the issue of whether virtue is one or many. In Cleanthes' case he does not spell out in so many words what he takes the contradiction to consist in. But the point is obvious enough. Cleanthes clearly recognizes distinct virtues of control, courage, justice and moderation. But at the same time his explanation of what makes these virtues different also makes it clear that he recognizes only a single strength and might in every case. The circumstances differ in which this force gets exercised, but nothing he says suggests that *it* takes on different characters when it does so.

Two things are obvious immediately about Cleanthes' list of virtues. First is that they number four. These are not explicitly presented to us as the primary virtues, but it would be hard to doubt that this is how Cleanthes intended them to be understood. Second is that the last three he lists map neatly on to Zeno's account of the three guises in which *phronêsis* exhibits itself. Cleanthes too recognizes courage, justice and moderation; and like Zeno he specifies them in terms of the circumstances in which the one thing at their core will deliver the appropriate behaviour. What these two features of Cleanthes' list suggest is that he was working with a theory of virtues he appropriated from Zeno, and that he took Zeno to hold that the cardinal virtues number four.

The virtue included on Cleanthes' list but not Zeno's is *enkrateia*, which I have translated 'control' (more usually rendered 'self-control' or 'continence'). I take it to be no accident that it occurs first on the list. Virtue in general is identified as 'strength' (*ischus*) and 'might' (*kratos*); and since *ischus* would have sufficed on its own, the etymological relationship between the otherwise gratuitous *kratos* and *enkrateia* presumably indicates a particularly salient manifestation of power in the control a person exercises when being appropriately persistent (hence my choice of 'control' as translation). Moreover, Cleanthes must surely here be drawing on a tradition of Socratic ethics that is

transmitted not by Plato so much as by Antisthenes and Xenophon.<sup>18</sup> We recall the doxographical report on Antisthenes that in his view virtue is sufficient for happiness, since that needs nothing except 'Socratic strength' (*ischus*) (D.L. 6.11). Xenophon for his part takes *enkrateia* to play a fundamental role in Socratic ethics. His Socrates says that everyone should reckon *enkrateia* the foundation of virtue, and establish it first (i.e. presumably before any of the virtues) in the soul (*Mem.* 1.5.4). The first discourse of Book 2 of the *Memorabilia* (which, inter alia, contains the narrative of Prodicus' 'Choice of Heracles') sums up Socrates' teaching as a protreptic to practice (*askein*) *enkrateia* (*Mem.* 2.1.1); and the theme is further illustrated in the fifth discourse of Book 4, where possession of *enkrateia* is systematically argued to be a precondition of the exercise of a variety of virtues and worthwhile pursuits.<sup>19</sup>

All that may seem a long way from Zeno's talk of *phronêsis*. At this point, however, it is important to note that Plutarch's report on Cleanthes is drawn from a work of his called *Physical Memoranda*. Cleanthes will not have been wanting to contradict Zeno's representation of virtue as wisdom, but to explain its material identity: as a particularly heightened form of tension (*tonos*, a key explanatory element in the conceptual repertoire of Stoic physics).<sup>20</sup> His message is surely that the Socratic strength that is the source of virtue can be understood properly only in terms of that Stoic explanatory scheme. That does not in the least exclude that, from another point of view, wisdom is at the core of virtue.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, if Cleanthes intended his

<sup>18</sup> The importance of Xenophon's Socrates for the Stoics is well established: see again Long 1988.

<sup>19</sup> For Xenophon's treatment of *enkrateia*, see Dorion 2003. He argues persuasively that Xenophon sees *enkrateia* as the basic requirement for the acquisition and exercise of virtue, but not as a virtue itself (note *Mem.* 4.5.2, where it is treated as among those things that are 'useful in the direction of virtue'). Dorion points out (2003: 652–3) that in at least one passage of the *Memorabilia*, Xenophon speaks as though *enkrateia* and *sôphrosunê* are identical (*Mem.* 3.9.4). But the main claim at *Mem.* 3.9.4 (perhaps recalling *Prot.* 332a–333b) is that Socrates assimilated *sôphrosunê* to *sophia* (yet the one seems nonetheless to be associated with knowing what is fine and good, and the other with practising it); while *Mem.* 4.5.7 treats *sôphrosunê* as the virtue of 'taking active care for what is appropriate', which clearly is not the same as *enkrateia*, and where indeed the argument implies rather dependence upon it: without *enkrateia* such behaviour will be impossible.

<sup>20</sup> For fuller discussion see Bénatouil 2005, to which my own discussion is much indebted.

<sup>21</sup> So Hirzel 1882: 97 n. 2, 102 n. 1, followed by Pearson 1891: 301–2.

account of the virtues to relate to Zeno's, in which *phronêsis* has primacy, understanding wisdom and strength as two ways of describing one and the same thing – virtue – is precisely what he must have been implying. We know that, like Antisthenes, he held that virtue is teachable, which presupposes that it is wisdom or knowledge (D.L. 6.10, 7.91). Moreover, among the book titles attributed to Antisthenes is one described as 'Heracles; or regarding wisdom or strength' (D.L. 6.18). In agreement with Thomas Bénatouïl,<sup>22</sup> I take Cleanthes to be Antisthenean in seeing these as the complementary intellectual and physical dimensions of virtue.

What *is* excluded on Cleanthes' scheme is any role for *phronêsis* as one of four cardinal virtues. It looks very much as though one thing motivating that exclusion was commitment on his part to the co-ordinate species assumption. That is to say, he was evidently persuaded that Zeno was right to posit four primary virtues, but also clear that the Zenonian theory would be improved or clarified<sup>23</sup> by making those four all co-ordinate with each other. His solution was accordingly (as we have been seeing) to go for help not to Plato but to Antisthenes and Xenophon; to remember the maxim that virtue needs only 'Socratic strength', and to interpret it in terms of Stoic physics; to promote *enkrateia* into the ranks of the cardinal virtues themselves, as co-ordinate with the others while holding a primacy among them comparable with its role in the ethics of the *Memorabilia*; and to relocate *phronêsis*, to make it – what in Zeno's formulations of courage, moderation and justice it already looks close to being – the essence of virtue itself, as from the physical perspective strength (*ischus*) is its essence.

To put it another way, Cleanthes effectively distinguishes in this context two sorts of primacy. Strength and wisdom have a primacy because they are what virtue is, and therefore all other virtues are different forms of strength and wisdom. *Enkrateia*, by contrast, has pride of place *among* the virtues, as the strength of soul exercised where 'persistence is manifestly called for' ('manifest' takes the Greek *epiphanês* as effectively equivalent to what other Hellenistic

<sup>22</sup> See Bénatouïl 2005: 9–11.

<sup>23</sup> 'Attributing his own original contributions', as Cooper conjectures for Chrysippus, 'to the recognized founder of the school, as what the founder had "really meant"': Cooper 1999: 106.



philosophers might have called *enargês*, ‘transparently clear’). For without *enkrateia* so understood, as unshakeable ‘foundation of virtue’, there is going to be no sustainability in the exercise of any of the other cardinal virtues in their own proper spheres (compare again Socrates’ line of argument in Xen. *Mem.* 4.5), for there will be no firmness in cognitive grip on what we should or should not do. My suggestion is that Cleanthes would at the same time have construed such persistent grip as a form of wisdom, as well as a form of strength. Indeed, unless *enkrateia* has a cognitive dimension, it is hard to see how he could have accounted for its focus on the ‘manifest’.

In the fully developed account of what is presumably at root Chrysippus’ treatment of primary and secondary virtues in Stobaeus, we find Cleanthes’ formulation of the nature of *enkrateia* further articulated, but converted into Chrysippean theory, and with its elements divided between the distinct secondary virtues of *enkrateia*, subordinate to *sôphrosunê*, and *karteria* (‘endurance’), subordinate to courage: ‘Control is scientific knowledge that cannot be overcome of what becomes manifest (*phanentôn*) in line with right reason;<sup>24</sup> endurance is the scientific knowledge of how to persist in right decisions’ (*Ecl.* 2.61.11–13). Chrysippus must have thought that Cleanthes’ formula ran together two different dispositions: persistence (more helpfully defined as a matter of sticking with one’s correct decisions), and *enkrateia* or unsusceptibility to *akrasia* where the cognitive grasp of what is clearly apparent to the mind is at stake. It looks, too, as though he thought the reference to ‘right reason’ would make it explicit that *enkrateia* is concerned with clear presentations as

<sup>24</sup> In the version of this definition at D.L. 7.93 (discussed in Gourinat 2007: 225–31), as also at Clem. *Strom.* 2.18.80.4, we have *anhuperbaton* (predicated of *diathesis*, ‘disposition’) instead of Stobaeus’ *anhuperblêton* (‘that cannot be overcome’). Gourinat, in agreement with Wachsmuth, argues that *anhuperbaton* was probably the reading in the original Stoic source, and should be construed here (so LSJ) as ‘not to go beyond’ – yielding at D.L. 7.93 ‘a disposition not to go beyond what <becomes manifest> in accordance with right reason’ (reading Marcovich’s text); a formulation which he relates to the Stoic theory of passion as ‘the overflowing of impulse’ (e.g. D.L. 7.110). It is somewhat surprising to find *anhuperbaton* in an active sense taking a genitive (the verb *huperbainô* (‘overstep’) invariably takes the accusative), but it may be that the ubiquity of genitives in the definitions of the other virtues listed at D.L. 7.92–3 has exerted an attractive force. Perhaps *diathesis* was maladroitly substituted for the *epistêmên* preserved by Stobaeus: there is obviously no problem in construing the genitive construction ‘what <becomes manifest> in accordance with right reason’ as dependent on *epistêmên*.

to what we should do (not with matters having no direct ethical import), and is therefore rightly reckoned one among other moral virtues. I cannot see why Cleanthes might not have accepted these corrections to his position (although of course not Chrysippus' treatment of *enkrateia* as a secondary virtue).

Whatever the merits of Cleanthes' theory (assuming that the reconstruction I have proposed is on the right lines), there is an obvious problem. The theory gives priority in the sequence of cardinal virtues to the disposition to persist in a proper grasp of what it is manifestly plain that we should or should not do. But it gives no place at all on the list to any virtue concerned with grasping such truths in the first place. Cleanthes might perhaps have said in his defence that such an objection does not take the force of his appeal to the 'manifest'. To the eye of wisdom what we should or should not do will be transparently obvious. So there is no need to postulate a virtue specifically concerned with working that out. The virtue there is must consist rather in sticking with the 'manifest' given that it will be already apparent. However, if practical reasoning is inevitably a more complex and challenging business than Cleanthes' rather intuitionist posture can accommodate<sup>25</sup> (if, as Chrysippus' revised formulation implies, 'right reason' needs to do some work), he will stand accused not merely of putting the cart before the horse, but of neglecting any mention of the horse at all.

#### CHRYSIPPUS

Chrysippus seems to have agreed with Cleanthes about the structure appropriate for a theory of cardinal virtues, while radically disagreeing with him about the substantive content of the theory. It is true that we have no passage similar to those in Plutarch relating to Zeno and Cleanthes that specifically associates Chrysippus by name with the

<sup>25</sup> If indeed that was his posture: elsewhere we are told that he thought that part of philosophy 'useful' which consists in formulating precepts for those in particular roles: husbands, fathers, masters of slaves, for example (Sen. *Ep.* 94.4). Perhaps, however, he did not think such detailed ethical advice necessary for the wise, who would just see what it was right to do in any situation and on account of their *enkrateia* stick to that through thick and thin (which is presumably why he took virtue to be 'incapable of being abandoned' – 'on account of firm apprehensions' (D.L. 7.127), as he is said to have put it).

standard Stoic quartet of cardinal virtues. But it seems unreasonable to doubt that here, as in so many areas of what came to be classic Stoic doctrine, it was Chrysippus who established the mould. Given that hypothesis, we can say that he, like Cleanthes, plainly signs up to the co-ordinate species assumption; and that likewise he too opts in effect for two forms of primacy that he may have thought Zeno in danger of confusing: the primacy of the essence of virtue itself, which he in this context takes to be *epistêmê* (knowledge), and the primacy of *phronêsis*, which on his account is first among the co-ordinate species of virtue. Cleanthes' *enkrateia*, as we have seen, is treated as a secondary virtue; we will look at the fate of *ischus* (strength) in later Stoic doctrine below ('Second century epilogue').

To get a sense of the shape and content of Chrysippus' theory, it will be useful to start with a fuller version of a passage setting out standard Stoic thinking already cited in part above ('Zeno') (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.59.4–11):

Wisdom (*phronêsis*) is scientific knowledge (*epistêmê*) of what should or should not be done (or neither), or of those things that are good and bad (or neither) on the part of an animal social by nature [this final clause is to be understood in all the definitions that follow]. Moderation is scientific knowledge of what is to be chosen or avoided (or neither). Justice is scientific knowledge of how to distribute to each person what he merits. Courage is scientific knowledge of what is or is not to be feared (or neither).

Two things are clear immediately about this scheme relative to Cleanthes' theory. First, *phronêsis* is again treated as one of the cardinal virtues, as it evidently was by Zeno, although now on a basis informed by the co-ordinate species assumption. Chrysippus could not implausibly have represented himself as more faithful to Zeno's intentions accordingly. Second, in building reference to knowledge into the definitions of all the virtues, Chrysippus avoids the apparent difficulty in Cleanthes' theory articulated above: of giving insufficient recognition to the importance of practical reasoning.

The scope of *phronêsis* is given different specifications in different doxographical reports of standard Stoic doctrine, no doubt reflecting writings of other philosophers in the school besides Chrysippus, as well as the fact that in his voluminous writings he must have

looked at the virtues on many occasions from various angles, and probably not just in the three works for which titles are given in the catalogue partially preserved in our manuscripts of Diogenes Laertius (D.L. 7.202: as it happens all our surviving citations are taken from these three treatises). Sometimes the scope of *phronêsis* is specified in terms apparently designed to relate to one or other of the main divisions of ethics recognized by the Stoa (cf. D.L. 7.84), e.g. 'things good and bad' (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.59.5–6), or *kathêkonta*, proper functions or duties, in contrast with *hormai*, human impulses (the sphere of the virtue of moderation: Stob. *Ecl.* 2.60.12–13). Sometimes, on the other hand, the scope of *phronêsis* is expressed using the kind of verbal adjectives we find in the formulations of the spheres of the different virtues reported for Zeno and Cleanthes by Plutarch.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, *phronêsis* is often said to be concerned with what should or should not be done (as in the Stobaeus text cited above or at D.L. 7.126), in contrast with moderation, concerned (as Zeno and Cleanthes had agreed) with what should be chosen or avoided (e.g. Stob. *Ecl.* 2.59.8–9). An interesting attempt to explain the relationship between wisdom and moderation is recorded by Clement: 'They say that moderation is the disposition which by choice and avoidance preserves the decisions of *phronêsis*' (Strom. 2.18.79.5). One deviant text takes what should or should not be done as the concern of virtue in general, and treats 'should be chosen' as the business of *phronêsis* and 'should be persisted with' as the business of moderation, before then reverting (inconsistently) to the standard treatment of *phronêsis* (D.L. 7.126). Diogenes has cited as authorities Chrysippus in Book 1 of *On virtues* and then books by the second-century Stoics Apollodorus (like Panaetius a pupil of Diogenes of Babylon) and Hecaton (a pupil of Panaetius; more of Hecaton later).<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> A more extended survey of the different formulations of the scope of *phronêsis* is supplied in Gourinat 2008a: 168–77.

<sup>27</sup> In Apollodorus' case we are told that his discussion was to be found in a work (interestingly) on physics (its title has unfortunately been corrupted in the transmission, though the emendation that yields 'in the *Physics*, at the beginning [sc. of the treatise]', substituting *arkhên* for *arkhaian*, produces something consistent in style with the other references to titles listed in the passage: cf. Hirzel 1882: 492 n. 1). One wonders whether making things that 'should be persisted with' the job of *sôphrosunê*, with the associated change in the scope of *phronêsis*, reflected study of Cleanthes' *Physical Memoranda* on his part. Perhaps in consequence of that, Apollodorus did some rethinking of virtue theory, which, inter alia, resulted

The obvious inference is that the deviant treatment derives from Apollodorus or Hecaton.<sup>28</sup>

The prime position of *phronêsis* in the standard listing is never explained or commented upon. But it does indicate the primacy of the virtue in Stoic ethical theory. To say that its province is things good and bad is to say that it is concerned with the basic human values which need to govern everything we do in life. To say that it deals with duties or proper functions, or with what should or should not be done, is to say that assessment of the appropriate behaviour in any and every situation is a matter for *phronêsis* – even if other virtues are needed in order, e.g., to apply *phronêsis* in the sphere of distribution, or to keep impulses stable and sound (cf. Stob. *Ecl.* 2.63.16–17).<sup>29</sup> In short, the concerns of *phronêsis* as interpreted in the standard Stoic treatment are fundamental and general, just as Cleanthes had no doubt taken to be true of *enkrateia*, which we can take to be similarly presupposed in the exercise of each of the other cardinal virtues in their own proper spheres.

One way of putting the thrust of the response that I take it Chrysippus was making to Cleanthes' account of the virtues would be to talk of rePlatonization: Chrysippus rePlatonizes Socratic ethics as championed by the Stoa. Cleanthes had thought that he could legitimately develop Zeno's treatment of the virtues in a way which would give due weight to what both Plato's Socrates and Xenophon's

in an attempt to restore the idea of persistence, associated by Cleanthes with *enkrateia*, to the province of one of the cardinal virtues (elsewhere it is treated as the business of the subordinate virtue of endurance: e.g., D.L. 7.93).

<sup>28</sup> The deviant section begins with the remark that the virtuous person is capable of both theorizing and practising what has to be done. Since there is reason to think the conceptualization of virtue into these two fundamental dimensions was an innovation of Panaetius (D. L. 7.92), his pupil Hecaton might well have been the immediate source of this doxographical report, although of course here as elsewhere Diogenes Laertius is intent on presenting all Stoic authorities as united (with occasional exceptions) in their teaching (cf. Tieleman 2003: 231–42).

<sup>29</sup> This makes Chrysippus' view structurally very similar to that adumbrated in Plato's *Laus*, when the Athenian Stranger treats the second virtue as 'moderate disposition of soul involving reason [and therefore wisdom, the first virtue]', and the third (justice) as 'resulting from these two [i.e. wisdom and moderation] blended with courage' (*Leg.* 1.631c–d). He was to give formal articulation to considerations of this kind in the subtle and complex theory according to which each virtue has within its scope in a secondary way the prime business of each of the other virtues (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.63.6–25, in a version probably due to Panaetius, named *ibid.* 2.63.26; the passage operates with his distinction between theory and practice). The theory is discussed briefly in Schofield 1984: 92–5, and at greater length in Cooper 1999: 96–104.

Socrates had said on the subject. But clearly the promotion of *enkrateia* to primacy among the virtues downplayed not only the need for hard rational thinking in ethical decisions, but the overwhelming preoccupation with knowledge and consistency that permeates the conversation of the Platonic Socrates.<sup>30</sup> So, in reformulating Stoic theory, Chrysippus determined that *phronêsis* must have the prime position among the cardinal virtues that I have been trying to explain. No less important for the rePlatonization programme was his insistence (if indeed he was the Stoic who came to Zeno's defence: Plut. *Stoic. rep.* 1034d) that when Zeno made each of the primary virtues a form of *phronêsis* generically understood, he meant that each was a form of *epistêmê*, scientific knowledge.

The definition of knowledge that has the best claim to be associated with Zeno's thinking (on account of what we are told about his famous fist analogy: Cic. *Luc.* 145; *Acad.* 1.41) is that given in Sextus Empiricus as: 'Knowledge is a cognitive grasp that is secure and firm and unshiftable by reason' (*M.* 7.151; cf. Stob. *Ecl.* 2.73.19–21),<sup>31</sup> where in each element of the definition there is an echo of something pertinent in Platonic epistemology. And it is presumably this conception of knowledge that we should take to be assumed in Stoic formulations of definitions of the virtues (like those quoted above from Stob. *Ecl.* 2.59.4–11), which specify that each is a form of knowledge. There is explicit evidence at least for the case of courage that Chrysippus articulated a definition of this form: 'Courage is knowledge as concerns things to be endured' (Cic. *TD* 4.53; cf. D.L. 7.126: Cicero also quotes a more elaborate definition by Sphaerus). And, of course, it is likely that he is either the author or the inspiration of many of the large number of Stoic virtue definitions of this type that survive in doxographies.

## SECOND CENTURY EPILOGUE

Chrysippus' Platonized version of what it meant for Stoic ethics to be Socratic proved victorious. One might wonder whether Cleanthes'

<sup>30</sup> Nor is it actually very Xenophonic, since Xenophon's Socrates (see n. 19 above) does not seem to make *enkrateia* itself a virtue, for all its importance, and since he treats *sophia* as 'the greatest good' (*Mem.* 4.5.6).

<sup>31</sup> See further Bénatouil 2005: 14–19.

more Antisthenean writing of the Socratic script was more or less forgotten until Plutarch resurrected it for his own polemical purposes. But we have already seen some reason, emerging from consideration of the 'deviant' definitions of the cardinal virtues in D.L. 7.126, for doubting that.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, a number of doxographical texts attest a distinction between virtues which (like the canonical quartet) are forms of knowledge, and others which are not (including 'strength of soul') and are not even forms of expertise either. 'Complete' or 'perfect' virtues are scientific because, *inter alia*, the knowledge they consist of has the structure of a body of theorems. The others 'supervene' upon them as powers that result from exercise (*askêsis*) (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.58.5–14, 62.15–20). We are told of at least one later Stoic, Hecaton of Rhodes, in the late second century BC, who interested himself in this topic. How much of the theory of these two forms of virtue is his original work is impossible to tell.<sup>33</sup> What we do not otherwise hear of is a more precise claim he made in this connection. He said that, in any given case, following upon and co-extensive with the epistemic virtue (e.g., wisdom or justice) would be a corresponding non-epistemic virtue (e.g., health or strength of soul). Thus, health of soul follows upon the theorized virtue of moderation 'as strength supervenes on the building of an arch' (D.L. 7.90).

There is reason to think that one job these distinctions are designed to achieve is the incorporation of Cleanthes' conception of virtue into Chrysippean theory, to the extent that that could be achieved without inconsistency. This emerges when we consider the specifications given for what health or strength of soul might consist in. Health is 'a good blend of the doctrines in the soul'; strength is 'a tension sufficient in deciding and acting or not' (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.62.22–4, 62.25–63.1). The treatment of strength as tension clearly echoes Cleanthes' analysis of virtue. The suggestion is presumably that for any particular epistemic virtue, there will correspond, as a non-epistemic virtue sustained by exercise, a tension that will suffice – just as Cleanthes supposed – for making the appropriate decisions and taking the appropriate actions

<sup>32</sup> See pp. 24–5 and nn. 27 and 28 above.

<sup>33</sup> In the opinion of Teun Tieleman (discussing this theory): 'If one should characterize Hecaton's contribution, one could say that he expanded and formalized the position of his great predecessor [i.e. Chrysippus]' (Tieleman 2003: 235).

that fall within the scope of the virtue in question. The implicit verdict: Cleanthes was right that such tension is virtue.<sup>34</sup> But it is not virtue in the full sense (as he held), nor is it the physical dimension of *phronêsis* itself (as it seemed he may well have wanted to say). Rather, it is a physical power of the soul resulting from and associated with something distinct from it: perfect virtue.

The comparison with Diogenes Laertius' testimony about Hecaton suggests that once more 'we are dealing with systematization based by Hecaton on Chrysippus' *On Virtues*'.<sup>35</sup> It may be that Chrysippus himself had already downgraded the status of tension as virtue in the way Stobaeus indicates.<sup>36</sup> Or it might be that renewed interest in early Stoicism in the second century BC led either Apollodorus or Hecaton to fit Cleanthes' preoccupation with strength of soul as virtue into the Chrysippean ethical scheme, naturally on Chrysippus' terms.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Gourinat 2007: 234: 'it is likely that standard Stoicism accepted Cleanthes' "strength of soul" but refused to consider it as the basis of the four cardinal virtues'.

<sup>35</sup> So Tieleman 2003: 236. <sup>36</sup> So Bénatouïl 2005: 12.



# *The Academy, the Stoics and Cicero on Plato's Timaeus*

*G. Reydam-Schils*

The fundamental influence that Plato's *Timaeus* exerted on Stoic cosmology has received fresh attention in recent scholarship.<sup>1</sup> But how much of this influence is due to a direct engagement with Plato's work by the Stoics remains a vexed question. In the wake of Hans-Joachim Krämer,<sup>2</sup> both David Sedley<sup>3</sup> and John Dillon<sup>4</sup> have argued that an important mediating role was played by the Old Academy, which, they claim, anticipated key aspects of the Stoics' physics and shaped the Stoics' interpretation of the *Timaeus*. Cicero's works are a central source for this alleged mediation, which had already started in the Hellenistic era. In order to re-examine Sedley and Dillon's thesis, this article turns first to Speusippus and Xenocrates, then to Polemo and Antiochus of Ascalon, and finally to Cicero. Though I will focus here on the evidence for physics, the questions it raises have broader implications for our understanding of the Stoics' access to and handling of Plato's work in general. Dillon and Sedley, I will argue, underestimate the complexities of the hermeneutics of rivalry and co-optation.<sup>5</sup> There are many features of the Old Academy's metaphysics that have no counterpart in Stoicism; our evidence for Polemo is too scant to posit him as a missing link, and is open to different interpretations; Antiochus' rendering of the previous tradition

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<sup>1</sup> Long 2010, Gourinat 2009, Betegh 2003. This chapter revisits some of the issues I previously addressed in Reydam-Schils 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Krämer 1971. <sup>3</sup> Sedley 2002; see now also Sedley 2012. <sup>4</sup> Dillon 2003a.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Owen 1983.

belongs in the context of a deliberately polemical attempt to rewrite the history of philosophy; and, finally, Cicero's rendering of Antiochus' views is itself coloured by his own interests.

Unlike Sedley's work, which focuses on Polemo, the third head of the Academy after Plato, Dillon's deals with the entire tradition of the Old Academy. There is much of great value in Dillon's reconstruction of the views of the Old Academy, but for the purposes of this chapter I will focus on his claim that these views anticipated the Stoics' notions of the divine and the principles of reality. Dillon may be putting too much weight (see 2003a: 26 and 98) on the division of philosophy into physics, ethics and logic that has been attributed to Xenocrates (fr.1 = Sextus Empiricus *M* 7.16–19) and that appears to have acquired quasi-canonical status among the Stoics. (In the immediate context of this fragment Stoic usage of the division dominates and Posidonius is singled out.) Using this classification as a lens through which to assess the views of the Old Academy, however, muddles the inquiry from the outset, as long as the attribution of this tripartition to Xenocrates is taken to show that the Old Academy and the Stoics have a similar approach to the issue of the first principles of reality. Even if we grant that the attribution to Xenocrates is genuine, the fact in itself that a thinker adopts this tripartition, as it turns out, does not settle the question whether or not a given theory allows for any supra-physical principles.

Alcinous' *Didaskalikos*, a much later text, shows most succinctly what is at stake here (chs. 3 and 7). Although Alcinous is aware of the division of philosophy into ethics, physics and logic, he integrates these categories into a very different framework, identifying the main branches of philosophy as practical, theoretical and dialectical. Of these three, practical philosophy is clearly the equivalent of ethics, and dialectic of logic. In the theoretical branch of philosophy, however, Alcinous makes an important and polemical shift: in an adaptation of an Aristotelian division (cf. *Met.* 6.1), physics represents only one subfield of theoretical knowledge, hierarchically preceded by mathematics and followed by theology. In this schema, theology deals with first causes, the unmoving and the divine, whereas physics covers the movements of the heavenly bodies, the composition of the universe, the nature of the whole, human beings' rapport with the gods, divine providence, and the existence of other, secondary gods.

This alternative division, I suggest, reflects an ongoing polemic with the Stoics over the issue of immanence versus transcendence. Stoic physics embeds the principles of reality within physical reality itself, a position hotly contested by the Platonists. So it remains an open question, not an *a priori* resolved matter, to what extent the Old Academy would have subsumed the study of first principles under physics. Plato's *Timaeus* indeed came to be known very early on as an inquiry into nature, but Plato's views on first principles are certainly not limited to the *Timaeus*.

The Peripatetic Theophrastus (a contemporary of Speusippus and Xenocrates) provides crucial testimony on this issue:

He [Plato] concerned himself chiefly with 'first philosophy', but also attended to phenomena, taking up the inquiry concerning nature; here he wished to make the principles two in number, one underlying [things] as matter – and this he calls receptive of all things; the other being cause and source of movement, and this he attaches to the power of god and the good. (trans. Fortenbaugh *et al.*, slightly modified; fr.230 = Simplicius, *In Phys.* 1.2, 184 b15)<sup>6</sup>

Notice the distinction Theophrastus makes in this context between 'first philosophy', on the one hand, and the examination of 'phenomena' as an 'inquiry into nature', on the other. Theophrastus goes on to postulate god and matter as principles for the *latter form of inquiry*, about nature, with an unmistakable echo of the receptacle in the *Timaeus*. But he clearly leaves room in his rendering of Plato's views for an additional analysis of principles under the heading of 'first philosophy', and the importance of this nuance cannot be overestimated. Paradoxically, as David Runia rightly points out, given the debates to which the *Timaeus* gave rise, Plato himself may not have wanted to discuss the ultimate principles of reality at all in this work (see *Timaeus* 48c2–d2).<sup>7</sup>

In the following fragment from Proclus, Theophrastus again clearly delineates the question and demonstrates that, barring Plato and Aristotle, the Old Academy could not lay sole claim to setting the terms of the debate about first principles:

<sup>6</sup> Cf. also Atticus fr.2.1.    <sup>7</sup> Runia 2003.

It is reasonable for Theophrastus to say [in his exchange with Plato] that the soul is the source of movement *without postulating anything else before it, and to think that there is no need to search for the principle of what is [itself] a principle*. For he too grants that the heavens are animate and for this reason divine. If it is divine, he says, and has the best mode of existence, it is animate; for nothing that is honorable is without soul, as he wrote in his *On Heaven*. (trans. Fortenbaugh *et al.*, emphasis added; fr.159, 27–end = Proclus, *In Tim.*, I.122)

This fragment confirms Theophrastus' critical engagement with Aristotle's notion of a radically transcendent Unmoved Mover in the latter's *Metaphysics*. Can the universe be explained on its own terms, or does its order depend on some higher, ultimate principles? (If Proclus' report is reliable, Theophrastus endorsed the first alternative, positing a soul in the heavens as responsible for the structure of the universe.)

The fundamental realization that a division of philosophy into physics, ethics and logic does not always preclude a thinker from positing transcendent 'first' principles is relevant for all the sections of this chapter: it allows us to reassess the evidence from the Old Academy and throws new light on Antiochus' and Cicero's hermeneutical strategies. If in treating physics one brackets the question of any supra-physical principles, it becomes much easier to align Platonist and Stoic interpretations of the *Timaeus*. But if the broader debate was indeed cast in terms of alternative explanations for the ordered *kosmos*, which line of thought did the first heads of the Academy after Plato, Speusippus and Xenocrates, pursue?

#### ANTICIPATING STOIC PHYSICS? SPEUSIPPUS AND XENOCRATES

Re-examining the role of 'first principles' in the Old Academy will allow us to see to what extent their thought anticipated Stoic physics. In his chapters on Speusippus and Xenocrates, John Dillon posits that in the Old Academy the World Soul of the *Timaeus* takes on a larger role, as an intra-cosmic demiurgic (i.e. ordering) power. And Speusippus, Dillon claims, may even have relegated the label 'god' to the World Soul. He translates this fragment of Speusippus:

Σπεύσιππος τὸν νοῦν οὔτε τῷ ἐνὶ οὔτε τῷ ἀγαθῷ τὸν αὐτόν, ἰδιοφυῇ δέ (Aetius *Placita* 1.7.20)

as follows (2003a: 63):

Speusippus [declares *God to be*] Intellect, *which* is not identical with the One or the Good, but has a nature peculiar to itself. (emphasis added)<sup>8</sup>

The Speusippus fragment occurs in a listing of views of ‘what god is’, or ‘on god’, and is followed by a section on matter. This structure of headings reflects a binary scheme of the principles, prevalent in Middle Platonism, of god versus matter,<sup>9</sup> which, as we have seen above, Theophrastus had already attributed to Plato (fr.230 Fortenbaugh *et al.*). (This sequence of headings will also prove important for Polemo, as shown below.) Moreover, in the elliptical presentation of a number of views, the first accusative noun, in this case intellect/*nous*, does appear to stand for what a given thinker considers the focal notion of god. So Speusippus could indeed be considering intellect, as opposed to the One or the Good, as god.

But, as Dillon himself concedes, intellect/*nous* is not easy to locate in Speusippus’ system. Based on the *Timaeus*’ claim that ‘*nous* cannot be present to anything but soul’ (30b, or, in Zeyl’s translation: ‘it is impossible for anything to come to possess intelligence apart from soul’; cf. also 46d) – which notoriously creates a problem for the status of the Demiurge – he suggests that for Speusippus, intellect would stand for ‘the World-Soul in its rational, demiurgic aspect’.<sup>10</sup> But this is a mere hypothesis, which, moreover, could be contradicted by the

<sup>8</sup> Taken by itself, one could also translate this fragment more simply as: ‘Speusippus declares that intellect is not identical with the One or the Good, but has a nature peculiar to itself’ (see Tarán 1981: 377). This alternative translation would leave room for the possibility that it is actually the One or the Good, as opposed to intellect, that constitutes god for Speusippus. Such a reading would turn on a contrast, first, with those thinkers who do see intellect as the focal divinity and, second, with the Pythagoreans, who, according to this doxographical listing (t8), equate intellect (αὐτὸς ὁ νοῦς) with the Monad/One and the Good. If, however, one takes the full context of the doxographer into account as well as the grammatical parallels, Dillon’s translation makes sense.

<sup>9</sup> As in Alcinous, ch. 9 (subsuming the ideas as the thoughts of god) and Diogenes Laertius on Plato (3.69, 75–6); for a fuller discussion of this topic, see Dörrie and Baltes 1987ff. vol. 4 (*Die philosophische Lehre des Platonismus* [1]), secs. III–22, with commentary on pp. 377–489.

<sup>10</sup> Also confirmed, Dillon claims (2003a: 63), by Cicero *ND* 1.32. There appears to be, however, quite a bit of slippage in Dillon’s argumentation, both in the Speusippus chapter and the book as a whole. In the Speusippus chapter, for instance, earlier on (53–4) he *distinguishes* between ‘(a) an archetypal aspect, which is *transcendent* Intellect . . . and (b) an “executive”

doxographical listing in which the Speusippus fragment is embedded: his view is also set apart from the one shared by ‘Diogenes, Cleanthes, and Oenopides who [declare god to be] the soul of the world’ (17, τὴν τοῦ κόσμου ψυχὴν). Moreover, for the Stoic Zeno’s view (23), the doxographer added the explicit stipulation, missing from the Speusippus fragment, that Zeno [declares god to be] the fiery intellect *of the world* (νοῦν κόσμου πύρινον). In contrast to these positions, the doxographer appears not to align Speusippus’ notion of god with the World Soul, and his notion of intellect is not tied into the *kosmos*. Furthermore, at least one fragment of Speusippus explicitly distinguishes between the substance of intellect and that of soul (fr.29c = Asclepius *In Metaph.* 379.12–15).<sup>11</sup>

Even if we grant the point that Speusippus would have reserved the label ‘god’ for intellect (whether intra-cosmic or not, and distinct from the World Soul or not), it still remains the case that the One and Multiplicity are more fundamental than intellect and World Soul in terms of accounting for the structure of reality (as Dillon concedes, 2003a: 192). Moreover, this One is so radically transcendent as to be above being altogether, and as such should, strictly speaking, not even be called good (fr.42–3, 48).

Speusippus may have reserved his focal meaning of ‘god’ to a lower rung in his metaphysical ladder, but his successor Xenocrates does not even go that far. Before we turn our attention specifically to Xenocrates’ treatment of the principles of reality and the divine, a more general reflection pertaining to both Speusippus and Xenocrates is in order. It is undeniable that for the first two heads of the Old Academy after Plato, the notions of the One, Monad or Limit for god, and of Multiplicity, Dyad and Unlimited for matter, constitute the central designations of the principles attributed to the Pythagorean tradition, as developed in Plato’s *Philebus* and described in Aristotle’s

function, which would be most naturally transferred to the World-Soul’ (emphasis added). So, at times he himself interprets ‘intellect’, or an aspect of intellect, as standing over and above ‘soul’, and at other times he argues for a combination of these two in the World Soul. He presents a third option on p. 25, where he talks about intellect as *cosmic* intellect, yet as such distinct from the World Soul; see also 235.

<sup>11</sup> Tarán himself dismisses this evidence on the grounds that it appears to be merely dependent on Aristotle’s information and that it is possibly contaminated by Neoplatonism (1981: 303). He proposes instead that intellect is indeed related to soul, but that the principle of soul here does not stand for the World Soul (47–8, 376–9).

works. The Stoics, by contrast, do not adopt this terminology; their dominant analysis of the principles relies on the active-passive distinction, according to which matter is characterized not by flux and instability, as it is for Speusippus and Xenocrates, but by complete neutrality, as being quality-less (*apoios*) and malleable.<sup>12</sup>

The difference in these approaches can be accounted for, I would argue, by a fundamental tension in Plato's *Timaeus* itself. Initially the receptacle (Plato himself did not call it matter) is compared to substances such as gold, the liquid base for perfumes, or any soft and easy-to-mould material (50a–51b), which have to be neutral and malleable enough to take on other features. At a subsequent stage, however, we are told that the receptacle, independently of any intervention by the Demiurge, displays irregular movement and contains traces of the elements, and thus appears also to be characterized by disorder rather than by mere neutrality and receptiveness, as in the earlier account (52d–53b). It looks as if the Old Academy resolved this tension in the *Timaeus* by focusing on the second description of the receptacle, whereas the Stoics pushed the first to its natural conclusion by positing a matter devoid of all qualities, yet still corporeal in its own right. This position is strong evidence for an independent reading of the *Timaeus* on the Stoics' part.<sup>13</sup>

In their interpretation of Xenocrates' view of the divine in its relation to the *kosmos*, both Krämer (1971: 118–22) and Dillon (2003a: 102–7; 131; 154) rely heavily on the following fragment (fr.15), preserved by Aetius (1.7.30, under the same heading under which the Speusippus fragment discussed above is also listed):

- (a) Xenocrates, son of Agathenor, of Chalcedon, [holds] as gods the Monad and the Dyad, the former as male, having the role of father, reigning in the heaven (ἐν οὐρανῷ βασιλεύουσσαν), which he terms 'Zeus' and 'odd' and 'intellect', which is for him the primary god; the other as female, in the manner of the Mother of the Gods, ruling over the realm below the heavens, who is for him the Soul of the world.

<sup>12</sup> Gourinat 2009; Reydam-Schils 1999: 53; developed in greater detail by Decleva Caizzi 1988: esp. 439 ff. and 455.

<sup>13</sup> For more evidence of such an independent reading, see also Reydam-Schils 1999: 41–83.

- (b) He regards the heaven also as a god, and the stars as fiery Olympian gods, and he believes also in other beings, invisible sublunary daemons. He also holds the view that <certain> divine powers penetrate the material elements as well. Of these, <that which occupies the air> he terms <Hades>, as being invisible, that which occupies the water Poseidon, and that which occupies the earth Demeter the Seed-Sower. All these identifications he adapted from Plato, and passed on to the Stoics. (trans. Dillon, slightly modified)

In the first part of this fragment, (a), Krämer and Dillon read the designation ‘reigning in the heavens’ as Xenocrates’ attempt to keep the highest principle tied into the *kosmos*. But too much hangs on this phrase, which could very well be metaphorical, as Dillon himself originally argued (2003a: 102 n. 44). If we compare Xenocrates’ approach with that of Speusippus, and this fragment with other extant evidence (as set out below), the following points become evident:

- (1) Unlike Speusippus, Xenocrates sees the Monad as the primary god and as intellect (*nous*).
- (2) Xenocrates distinguishes his highest god from the World Soul.<sup>14</sup>
- (3) Plutarch (*Plat. Quaest.* 9, 1007f = Xenocrates fr.18) claims that ‘Xenocrates calls that Zeus who is in the realm of what is invariable and identical “topmost”, but “nethermost” him who is below the moon.’ So we know that Xenocrates distinguished between different levels of Zeus and that a third, mediating divinity may have been left out of Plutarch’s account.
- (4) The phrase ‘the realm of what is invariable and identical’ (τοῖς κατὰ ταῦτὰ καὶ ὡσαύτως ἔχουσιν), to which the ‘topmost’ Zeus is assigned in Plutarch’s passage, is likely to refer to the intelligible realm or the Forms; and on that reading Xenocrates’ highest Zeus would transcend the *kosmos*.<sup>15</sup>
- (5) According to Sextus Empiricus (*M* 7.147–149 = Xenocrates fr.5), Xenocrates holds that ‘the sensible [οὐσία, which Dillon 2003a: 124 renders as ‘form of existence’] is that which exists below the

<sup>14</sup> There is a problem in this passage with the identification of the Dyad, normally assigned to matter, with the World Soul, but this issue is not relevant for my discussion here.

<sup>15</sup> For Plutarch’s wording, see also *Plat. Quaest.* 1001d, *An. Procr.* 1015f, 1022e and (for fixed stars and diversity in identity) 1024e.



heaven, the intelligible is that which belongs to all things *outside heaven* (ἐκτὸς οὐρανοῦ), and the opinable and composite is that of the heaven itself; Aristotle (*Met.* 1028b24 ff. = fr.34 Heinze) states 'some [followers of Xenocrates] hold that the Forms and numbers have the same nature, and that other things – lines and planes – are dependent upon them; and *so on down to the substance of the heaven* (μέχρι πρὸς τὴν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ οὐσίαν) and the sensible realm'. Both of these passages indicate that the intelligible realm does not coincide with heaven, not even with its outer edge.<sup>16</sup>

In sum, if we combine all the evidence, it does not appear that Xenocrates abandoned the notion of a transcendent first divine principle in favour of an intra-cosmic ordering presence. His Monad, also an intellect, the highest Zeus and the anchor for the intelligible realm, cannot be tied into the structure of the *kosmos* itself.<sup>17</sup>

The second section of the Xenocrates fragment quoted above (fr.15) appears to offer more evidence of an influence on the Stoics, and in fact, explicitly claims that Xenocrates passed on these views of Plato to the Stoics. The Stoic divine principle indeed permeates matter, and the Stoics turn the so-called lower gods into aspects of this divine principle as it manifests itself in different parts of the world. But the last line that attributes this connection to Xenocrates is clearly a note on his views by the compiler of this doxographical list or his source. As such, it *results* from a certain *interpretation* of the relation between the Stoics and the Old Academy already mediated by a stance similar to that of Antiochus of Ascalon, to whom we will return below.

In addition to Xenocrates' treatment of matter and the divine, his views of the soul constitute another excellent case for assessing his alleged influence on Stoic physics. Although Dillon (2003a: 148)

<sup>16</sup> Dillon (2003a: 123) renders another passage, Theophrastus *Metaphysics* 6b6–10, fr.26 (fr.100 Isnardi Parente), as 'he [Xenocrates] does somehow assign everything its place in the universe, alike objects of sense, objects of intellection, mathematical objects, and divine things as well'; but, again, Theophrastus' phrase ἅπαντ' ὡς περὶ τῆσιν περὶ τὸν κόσμον could imply no more than that Xenocrates provides all the factors pertaining to the structure of the *kosmos* (Gutas 2010: 311–12). (For grammatical and idiomatic reasons, Usener proposes διατρίθῃσιν instead of the MSS reading περὶ τῆσιν; I disagree with van Raalte's claim, 1993: 267–8, that the περὶ plus accusative has to be the equivalent of ἐν plus dative, though Theophrastus does use it sometimes in this sense.)

<sup>17</sup> Thiel 2006: 283–5 arrives at a similar conclusion through a different line of reasoning, namely, that one should not confuse the part of the cosmos in which a certain divine agency manifests itself with the location of that agent.

discusses the following fragment in an overview of Xenocrates' ethics, any discussion of the nature of the soul is also relevant for physics:

And as with all creatures nature has given to one, one distinguishing feature, to another another which each of them preserves as its own and does not depart from, so to man she has given something far more pre-eminent – although the term 'pre-eminent' ought to be applied to things which admit of some comparison; but the soul of man, plucked (*decerptus*) as it is from the divine intellect can be compared with nothing else, if it is right to say so, save God alone. Therefore if this soul has been so trained, if its power of vision has been so cared for that it is not blinded by error, the result is intellect made perfect, that is, complete reason, and this means also virtue. [And if everything is happy which has nothing wanting, and whose measure in its own kind is heaped up and running over, and if this is the peculiar mark of virtue, assuredly all virtuous men are happy. And so far I am in agreement with Brutus, that is to say with Aristotle, Xenocrates, Speusippus, Polemo]. (trans. King, Cicero *TD* 5.38–39)<sup>18</sup>

This passage is framed by references to an agreement between Aristotle, Xenocrates, Speusippus and Polemo regarding the goal of human life and happiness (cf. also 5.30). As Dillon points out (2003a: 147 n. 163), Heinze includes only the ending of this passage (marked with square brackets) in his collection of Xenocrates' fragments (fr.85).<sup>19</sup> Brutus here represents the perspective of Antiochus of Ascalon, who, as we will have further reason to explore, claimed that his views derived from an alignment between Aristotle and the Old Academy, with which the Stoics, he alleged, were in large agreement. Taking Antiochus' claim as historical truth, Dillon (2003a: 148) interprets this entire passage as reflective of the Old Academy and Xenocrates in particular.

<sup>18</sup> 'Et ut bestiis aliud alii praecipui a natura datum est, quod suum quaeque retinet nec discedit ab eo, sic homini multo quiddam praestantius, etsi praestantia debent ea dici, quae habent aliquam comparisonem, humanus autem animus decerptus ex mente divina cum alio nullo nisi cum ipso deo, si hoc fas est dictu, comparari potest. Hic igitur si est excultus et si eius acies ita curata est, ut ne caecaretur erroribus, fit perfecta mens, id est absoluta ratio, quod est idem virtus. Et, si omne beatum est, cui nihil deest et quod in suo genere expletum atque cumulatam est, idque virtutis est proprium, certe omnes virtutis compotes beati sunt. Et hoc quidem mihi cum Bruto convenit, id est, cum Aristotele, Xenocrate, Speusippo, Polemone.'

<sup>19</sup> As does Isnardi Parente (fr.242); this limited section also happens to agree with other references to a similar claim, at *TD* 5.30, 51 (where only Xenocrates is mentioned), and 87.

Yet the Ciceronian passage in question betrays a highly Stoicized influence, shown most clearly in the claim that 'the soul of man is plucked from the divine intellect'. Cicero uses the past participle of the verb *decerpere* to describe the relation between the human soul and the divine intellect, which both King, in his Loeb translation, and Dillon render as 'derived'. But the Latin term conveys a much stronger physical sense of separation<sup>20</sup> than 'derived'; 'plucked' or perhaps even 'torn off' would be more appropriate. The stronger sense is reminiscent of the Stoic claim that human reason is literally a piece broken off from (*apospasma*) or a part of divine reason, both being corporeal substances or 'breath' (*pneuma*).<sup>21</sup> The Stoic model thus posits the strongest possible physical continuity between human and divine reason. Plato's *Timaeus*, by contrast, posits a significant ontological gap between the World Soul – which, on a literal reading, is not the highest divine entity in his account – and its human counterpart, the latter composed out of the less pure remnants of a mixture from which the former was made (41d). Moreover, the human soul has two other parts attached to it besides reason – spirit and appetite – that do not have counterparts in the World Soul, and that, in the *Timaeus* at least, are considered mortal (42d–e, 69c–72d). So the crucial question then becomes whether one should take Antiochus and Cicero at their word and retroject the strong continuity that the Stoics posited between human and divine reason onto Xenocrates and the Old Academy; perhaps we have good reason to be more careful with this reconstruction.

If we put aside that question for the moment, so far our inquiry into the principles of reality proposed by the Old Academy suggests that even if we grant that Speusippus and Xenocrates relegated the role of the Demiurge at least to some extent to an intra-cosmic intellect or World Soul, they did not posit these as the ultimate principles of reality. For the Stoics, in contrast, intellect and universal soul were not

<sup>20</sup> Compare this passage with the view curiously attributed to Pythagoras by Cicero's Epicurean spokesperson Velleius in *ND* 1.27, which uses *carpere*, and the even stronger *discerpere*, for god being torn apart. In *Sen.* 78, in which Cicero again attributes the view to Pythagoras, he uses the much softer *delibatos*, that 'our souls have flowed from the universal divine intellect'; cf. also *Div.* 1.110, 2.26. At *Div.* 1.70 a similar position is attributed to the Peripatetic Cratippus, who taught both Cicero and his son.

<sup>21</sup> As in Diogenes Laertius 7.142–3; Epictetus *D* 1.14.5–6; 2.8.6.

just the *main* ordering factor *in the world*, but rather were aspects of *one and the same* active and immanent divine principle.<sup>22</sup> So returning to the Theophrastus fragment (fr.159) discussed above, if one asks whether the *kosmos* needs to be explained in terms that go beyond its framework, Speusippus and Xenocrates appear to have held the standard Platonist affirmative position, whereas the Stoics made a radical move in the other direction. A comparison of Theophrastus' answer and the positions defended by Speusippus and Xenocrates would lead to the conclusion that the Early Stoics aligned themselves with Theophrastus on this issue rather than with the Old Academy. They could have indeed found further confirmation for their views: first, in Plato's own *Laws*, not only for its views on the role of a cosmic soul, but also for its analysis of providence (903b4–d3; cf. also Reydamas-Schils 1999: 72–4); second, in the *Epinomis* attributed to Philippus of Opus and composed in the wake of Plato's death; and, last but certainly not least, in an alternative Socratic tradition of which Xenophon has preserved glimpses.<sup>23</sup>

#### ANTICIPATING STOIC PHYSICS: POLEMO AND ANTIOCHUS OF ASCALON

The plot, however, seems to thicken considerably with the third head of the Academy after Plato, Polemo, who was a contemporary of the founder of Stoicism, Zeno of Citium. Here, Sedley and Dillon claim, we may find the strongest clues for the Old Academy's anticipation of Stoic physics and readings of the *Timaeus*. Our sources attest that Zeno studied with both Polemo and the Cynic Crates,<sup>24</sup> so it is not unlikely that via Polemo the Old Academy helped to shape Stoicism. Polemo, however, was most known for his contributions to ethics, including in particular his view of the importance of (i) living according to nature, and (ii) practical philosophy, which do appear to bear

<sup>22</sup> As in Diogenes Laertius 7.135–7, *SVF* 2.1076 (from Philodemus *De pietate*), 1.160 (Lactantius on Zeno); Seneca *NQ* 2.45, *Ben.* 4.7.1.

<sup>23</sup> As in *Mem.* 1.4.5–18, 4.3.2–18. For discussion of competing Socratic traditions see Malcolm Schofield, [Chapter 1](#).

<sup>24</sup> On Crates, see Diogenes Laertius 7.2, and for Polemo see 7.2, 25.

similarities with the Stoic approach.<sup>25</sup> In this context, however, we will focus on physics.

Why would one automatically assume, as Sedley and Dillon do, that any influence operated only in one direction, from Polemo to Zeno? It is true that Polemo represented an established authority in the Old Academy, whereas Zeno was the newcomer. Yet their active lives as philosophers overlapped, and once Zeno started to style his views in conscious opposition to Plato and to attract attention to himself, the rivalry could well have led to attempts on Polemo's part to respond to Zeno and co-opt his thought. Such a development could also explain Arcesilaus' disgust with the path the Old Academy had taken and have motivated his radical turn towards scepticism. In truth, we have hardly any information about the exact relationship between Polemo and Zeno, but we cannot exclude *a priori* the possibility that the influence may have worked in the other direction as well.

Although we know little about Polemo's views on physics, both Sedley and Dillon give a lot of weight to the one fragment that is preserved in the same doxographical context in which we already encountered Speusippus' and Xenocrates' views on the focal meaning of 'god':

Polemo declared that the *kosmos* is god

Πολέμων τὸν κόσμον θεὸν ἀπεφήνατο (Aetius 1.7.29)

For Polemo, according to this passage, the *kosmos* is god, not a transcendent Monad/One, not an intellect, not even the World Soul. So does this claim represent a radically immanent view of the divine, one that anticipated the Stoics on this crucial point? The phrase can be read in different ways, and is very common also in accounts that leave room for other gods (see below).

At least one alternative explanation presents itself if we compare Polemo's wording with the *Timaeus* itself:

Dictum ascribed to Polemo: Πολέμων τὸν κόσμον θεὸν ἀπεφήνατο

<sup>25</sup> As in Diogenes Laertius 4.18, Clement of Alexandria *Strom.* 2.22.133.7; for references in Cicero, cf. n. 46 below.

*Timaeus* (92c):

So this world, a visible living thing that contains the visible things, a perceptible god, image of the intelligible, the greatest, best, most beautiful and most perfect has come to be, this heaven one and unique.

[ῥδε] ὁ κόσμος [οὔτω, ζῶον ὁρατὸν τὰ ὁρατὰ περιέχον, εἰκὼν τοῦ νοητοῦ] θεὸς [αἰσθητός, μέγιστος καὶ ἄριστος κάλλιστός τε καὶ τελεώτατος γέγονεν εἰς οὐρανὸς ἔδε μονογενὴς ὢν]

The elements of the *Timaeus* account missing from the version ascribed to Polemo appear in square brackets above. In this passage, Plato declares the *kosmos* to be god,<sup>26</sup> most beautiful and perfect, and heaven as one of a kind. But, of course, in Plato's longer version of the dictum, the *kosmos* is also visible and sensible, and as such it is a mere image of the intelligible realm. It is not implausible that a doxographer with a tendency to present truncated snippets simply lost the broader context of Polemo's claim. Moreover, the line attributed by Aetius to Polemo can also be read as 'the *kosmos* is a god'. And it can be fruitfully compared with a formula used by Plutarch: 'in the realm of becoming, the *kosmos* is (a) god' (Plutarch *Plat. Quaest.* 1007d: ἐν γενέσει θεὸς ὁ κόσμος).

Moreover, the view that the doxographer attributes to Polemo is also strikingly different from his rendering of the Stoics: Posidonius considers god to be intelligent and fiery 'breath' (*pneuma*) (19); Zeno, the fiery intellect of the *kosmos* (23); and the Stoics in general consider god to be intelligent, a craftsman-like fire (πῦρ τεχνικόν), a breath that permeates the entire *kosmos* (33). According to the doxographer, they also called the *kosmos*, the stars and earth gods, but posited at the top of their hierarchy (ἄνωτάτω, i.e. ranking higher than the *kosmos*) an ether-like intellect as god. It appears that to this doxographer at least, the Stoics' view looked significantly different from Polemo's, in that the former distinguished their divine principle from the *kosmos* that is the *manifestation* of its ordering activity. Given that the Stoics, with the possible exception of Panaetius, endorsed a periodic world conflagration, the world itself could hardly have been the highest god (Cicero *ND* 2.118).

<sup>26</sup> Compare with Cicero's wording in his *De natura deorum* attributed to Plato's *Timaeus* and *Laus: mundum deum esse* (1.30); this phrase runs through the entire survey of philosophical views of the divine presented by the Epicurean Velleius (1.18–41); it also reoccurs in the Stoic section of Balbus' exposition (as in 2.21, 39, 46, 80).

According to Sedley and Dillon, Cicero's *Academica* (1.24–6) provides another significant source for reconstructing Polemo's views on physics. But Cicero's account reflects an earlier and elaborate reconstruction of the history of the Academy and rival systems of thought by the Platonist Antiochus of Ascalon, and thus scholars have tended to question its reliability. Sedley and Dillon rightly challenge this automatic assumption: one has to articulate the reasons why this report may not be reliable. Such reasons, however, do present themselves when one looks more closely.<sup>27</sup>

Antiochus, in his attempt to get past the deadlock of scepticism, famously claimed that the views of Plato, the Old Academy, Aristotle and the Peripatetics, and the Stoics converged on almost all essential points, ultimately inspired by Socrates. In Cicero's *Academica*, Varro is the spokesperson for this point of view, and he presents what certainly looks like a highly Stoicized account of 'Academic' physics. But based on the one other fragment we have of Polemo's physics, namely, the view that the world is god, Sedley and Dillon make the case that perhaps there is more authentically Old Academic material in Varro's overview than scholars have tended to assume. In other words, they argue (i) that Antiochus' claim that the Old Academy anticipated Zeno's thought and Stoicism is one that deserves to be taken more seriously, and (ii) that Polemo's views in particular would constitute the missing link between them. If this hypothesis holds, then the account in Cicero's *Academica* could also be used, so they argue, to expand our knowledge of and reconstruct Polemo's thought.

Whereas Sedley focuses on physics and Polemo's role, Dillon extends this reasoning to the fields of ethics and logic and to other members of the Old Academy, notably Speusippus and Xenocrates (see above). For example, given that Antiochus' reconstruction mentions or alludes to the notion of 'appropriation' (*oikeiōsis*) so essential to Stoic ethics, Dillon suggests (2003a: 164–5) that this notion also could have been anticipated by the Old Academy.<sup>28</sup> Dillon is right that an argument such as Sedley's opens the door to establishing more

<sup>27</sup> For other critical assessments of Sedley's hypothesis cf. Algra 2003a: 76–8; Lévy 2003; Frede 2005a; Gourinat 2009: 51–5; Inwood 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Earlier research had focused on the possible antecedents in Aristotle and Theophrastus, but those findings are not conclusive either; cf. the still important analysis by Brink 1955–1956.

antecedents for Stoicism in the Old Academy based on Antiochus' reconstruction.

But how plausible is this starting assumption, after all? The one bit of evidence of Polemo's views of physics that has been preserved independently of Cicero's account is, I have argued, more under-determined than Sedley and Dillon assume it to be. (And it remains to be seen how independent that doxographical account actually is; accounts subsequent to Antiochus of Ascalon could very well bear traces of his reconstruction.) In the case of Antiochus' point of view, we face a major methodological problem. While it is true that there must have been some plausibility to Antiochus' claims for them to have had any purchase at all, it is impossible for us, in retrospect, to detect where to draw the line between the historically accurate information and the retrojection. In order to avoid circular reasoning, it would make sense to exert more caution the more a particular rendering looks Stoic, unless a particular view is corroborated as belonging to the Old Academy by *other* evidence that is not derived from Antiochus. The crucial point is not that the Antiochus-based account that Cicero attributes to Varro does not have *any* genuinely Platonic features transmitted via the Old Academy, but rather that *some* key Stoic views have been retrojected. Even among the Platonic features, however, some, such as the interchangeability of 'principles' and 'elements' (*Acad.* 1.26; see Sedley 2002: 55) or the fluidity in the designation of the passive principle (Sedley 2002: 55), could have been derived directly from the *Timaeus* itself (48b–c; 47e–53b) and do not require any mediation by the Old Academy. After all, Cicero himself knew the *Timaeus* very well; he worked on a translation, to which we will return below.

But let us take a step back and examine the broader cultural practice of reconstructions such as the one by Antiochus of Ascalon. There is a clear polemical undercurrent to Antiochus' approach, which in its own way continues the fierce polemic between the so-called 'sceptical' or New Academy and the Stoics. How does one deal with a philosophical rival? As representatives of the New Academy, Arcesilaus and Carneades famously exploited the disagreements among different philosophical systems in order to recommend that one suspend judgement. They also used an *ad hominem* technique of adopting Stoic tenets only to turn these against the Stoics and to undermine



their views by unmasking internal contradictions or pointing out possible consequences that the Stoics themselves would have considered undesirable. The main problem of this approach is that it appears to leave very little room for any system of positive doctrines, Platonic or other, with real content.

Antiochus, one could argue, adopted a different strategy. In order to preserve truth as much as possible against the need for a suspension of judgement, he tried to elide doctrinal differences and co-opted as many views as he could of both Aristotle and the Peripatetic tradition and the Stoics. To legitimize this approach, he retrojected these views onto the Old Academy as the true heirs of Socrates and Plato. In so doing, he simultaneously discredited the Peripatetics and especially the Stoics by denying their originality. He showed greater restraint towards Aristotle and the Peripatetics; after all, Aristotle had been a pupil of Plato himself, and Antiochus appears to use the Peripatetics as allies of the Platonists against the Stoics. Thus, the Stoics get the full blow of the plagiarism charge: according to this account, they mostly kept the same notions, but merely changed their terminology. Finally, to the extent that the Peripatetics and Stoics diverged from Plato, this approach suggests, they mostly got it wrong. This explanation gives us a plausible motive for Antiochus' reconstruction.<sup>29</sup> It also suggests that Antiochus minimizes the differences between Plato and Aristotle – a case in which we have enough evidence to carry out an independent comparison (even if we factor in the lost works of Aristotle) – which gives us good reason to assume that he does the same with the Stoics.

All these strategic elements are present in Varro's exposition in Cicero's *Academica*: his claims that (1) 'the famous old system of philosophy took its start from Socrates' (1.3; 1.15–16);<sup>30</sup> (2) Plato is the anchor of the views of 'old philosophy' (1.3; 1.19); (3) the Peripatetic and the Academic schools differ in name only, and in reality reflect a single uniform system derived from Plato (1.17–18); (4) even so, Aristotle and the Peripatetics deviated in some respects from

<sup>29</sup> Cf. also Bonazzi 2012, who focuses on the Platonic Ideas and epistemology as well as on psychology and the passions.

<sup>30</sup> But not without some criticism of Socrates' approach; on this point, cf. also Karamanolis 2006: 51–9.

Plato, and so were inferior to the Old Academy (I.33); and (5) Zeno engaged in nothing more than a 'reform' of the old system (I.35, 43), in most cases applying changes in terminology rather than substance (I.37).

Antiochus of Ascalon was neither the first nor the only thinker to use the strategy of creating a philosophical ancestry to legitimize his position, discredit his rivals as unoriginal, and co-opt some of their views. (Nor were philosophers the only ones interested in genealogies as a means of establishing socio-cultural capital; this practice permeated all aspects of ancient culture.) The best-known examples date from a later period and resulted from the rivalry between Christianity and so-called pagan culture: in an elaborate game of one-upmanship, both pagans and Christians tried to claim that their views were both older and more established than those of their rivals and had anticipated most of the later insights. But among philosophers the practice became more pronounced already from the fourth century BC onwards, and Plato was not exempt from plagiarism charges.<sup>31</sup>

Plato himself tried to give his *Timaeus* an unmistakably Pythagorean tone by making his spokesperson hail from Locri in Southern Italy. Speusippus and Xenocrates too tried to make Pythagoras the father of their views. But Plato's attempt may have backfired, as such attempts often do, and Antiochus, as we will see, is no exception to this pattern. Take, for example, the curious text attributed to 'Timaeus Locrus' in doricized Greek, *On the Nature of the World and the Soul*, which has many points in common with Plato's *Timaeus*, without being a summary, and adopts a threefold framework consisting of god, ideas and matter (c. 7). This text is shrouded in mystery. The author's name is probably a pseudonym actually derived from Plato's work.<sup>32</sup> If 'Timaeus Locrus' is merely an assumed name, as is generally believed, what was the purpose of the work? It could have served to complement the *Timaeus*, reinforce

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Ziegler 1950: 1970–4.

<sup>32</sup> Thesleff posits that the treatise was written around 200 BC but that it reflects genuine Pythagorean material predating Plato and that an original source Q could have been written as early as 300 BC (Thesleff 1961: 62, 102, in response to a hypothesis developed by Harder 1936, who, however, dates the source Q to the first century BC and the treatise itself to the first century AD). The date which scholars attribute to the text ranges from the fourth century BC to the first century AD, though the majority opinion considers it a work belonging to the later Hellenistic period. Zürcher (1954: 154–7) entertains the hypothesis that Polemo could have

Plato's claim to Pythagoras' legacy, or, on the contrary, discredit and displace him as lacking in originality. We have evidence of the latter tack: according to Proclus, Timon of Phlius (c. 325–c. 235) claimed that Plato cobbled together his *Timaeus* out of material he got from Timaeus Locrus (*In Tim.* 1.1.8–16).<sup>33</sup> Be that as it may, the text shows how far an author was willing to go to create the illusion of a certain lineage.<sup>34</sup>

All is fair in war, love and cultural rivalries. Viewed against this background, there is nothing particularly unusual about Antiochus' attempt to reconstruct the history of Academic thought and its relation to other schools. Aristotle famously rewrote the history of philosophy from the perspective of his own views, as in Book One of his *De anima* or Book One of the *Metaphysics*. Sedley and Dillon could have found support for their reasoning in the fact that according to Plutarch (*Stoic. rep.* 1045f), Chrysippus himself did not hesitate to claim Polemo as an ally of the Stoics in a genealogy consisting of 'Plato, Aristotle and their successors down to Polemo and Strato, and especially . . . Socrates'. Then again, Chrysippus consistently tried to build his arguments on as widespread a consensus as possible as well as on common opinion. By the time somebody like Clement of Alexandria came onto the scene and used a genealogy that in other respects is very similar to that of Antiochus, Plato had become dependent on Pythagoras and both of them on the Egyptians (as in *Strom.* 6.2.27), whose wisdom, in turn, did not equal that of the Hebrews. The construction of such lines of influence required considerable cultural sophistication, which was meant to showcase the intellectual mastery of both proponents and their audience. This game was governed by complex rules: the reconstruction had to be plausible enough to gain some credibility but at the same time,

been the author. Matthias Baltes (1972) suggests that the version we have bears traces of the influence of Posidonius and Antiochus of Ascalon, but O'Daly 1975 raises valid objections to this hypothesis.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. also Diogenes Laertius 8.85, Timon fr.54, Aulus Gellius 3.17.1–5; for a collection of passages that contested the value and originality of Plato's work, cf. Dörrie and Baltes 1987ff. vol. 2 (*Der hellenistische Rahmen des kaiserzeitlichen Platonismus*), secs 36–8.

<sup>34</sup> Plato's self-representation as an heir of Pythagoras was hotly contested according to two testimonies preserved by Diogenes Laertius (8.54, 8.55), which state that Plato, like Empedocles before him, was excluded from the Pythagorean circle because he brought the Pythagorean teachings out into the open.

I would argue, the one-upmanship needed to be sufficiently obvious in order to be effective in the context of ongoing rivalries.

If we now return to Cicero's account of physics in his *Academica* (I.24–9), how did Antiochus of Ascalon try to pull off such a feat? In light of Theophrastus' crucial distinction between 'first philosophy' and physics, Antiochus' most important move, I would argue, would consist, precisely, of his use of the division into ethics, physics and logic. If one puts the inquiry into the foundation of the order of the *kosmos* under the heading of 'physics', where physics is conceived of exclusively as the study of nature, the question of any supra-physical principles is bracketed from the outset. This restriction makes it much easier to find common ground between the Platonist and the Stoic interpretations of Plato's *Timaeus*.

How thoroughly the Forms or any intelligible, supra-physical realm have been bracketed in Cicero's section on physics emerges from its echoes of the *Timaeus*, which, as Görler very perceptively notes, appear out of context.<sup>35</sup> In Varro's exposition, for instance, we read (I.24), 'nothing exists that is not necessarily somewhere' (*nihil est enim quod non alicubi esse cogatur*). The *Timaeus* (52b) indeed reads φάμεν ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι πού τὸ ὄν ἅπαν ἐν τινὶ τόπῳ ('we say that all that exists must exist in some place'), but the context makes clear that this principle does not apply to the intelligible realm of Being and the Forms because they exist independently of the receptacle. Similarly, at 52c, the *Timaeus* states in connection with the intelligible realm that 'true being is sustained by the accurately true claim that as long as two things each remain what they are, one cannot ever be in the other (οὐδέτερον ἐνοῦδετέρῳ), and so become one and the same thing, and two, at the same time'. In Cicero's account, however, this restriction does not apply to the relation between the active divine principle and the passive principle matter: 'each of the two principles is present in the combination of both' (*in utroque tamen utrumque*, 24), and both together constitute 'body'. Thus, Cicero's rendering here focuses on claims of the *Timaeus* that apply to physical reality and systematically leaves out any reference to an intelligible, supra-physical realm.

<sup>35</sup> Görler 1990: especially 127–9. These crucial points made by Görler seem to have got lost in the subsequent debate.

Yet, if for our purposes here we leave aside the contested question of how Antiochus interpreted the intelligible realm and the Forms, it is still worth noting that the Forms have not altogether disappeared from Cicero's account but are included under logic (I.30) – an approach sometimes also adopted by later Platonists such as Alcinous (under the guise of dialectic, *chs.* 4–6). Aristotle is said to have been 'the first person to undermine the Forms' (I.33). Varro's own words imply that no member of the Old Academy, not even Polemo, deviated from Plato regarding the importance of the Forms. On the contrary, 'Speusippus and Xenocrates, the first inheritors of the system and authority of Plato, and after them Polemo and Crates, and also Crantor, gathered in the one fold of the Academy, were assiduous defenders of the doctrines that they had received from their predecessors' (I.34).

If under the heading of physics one focuses on the order of the world as such, leaving aside the question of transcendent first principles, it becomes easier to see how the Platonists and the Stoics could similarly posit both passive matter and some intra-cosmic active divine ordering principle, as principles *of nature*. After all, unlike the Epicureans, whom Antiochus does not invite to the table (I.6), Platonists and Stoics alike posit a rationally ordered world in which everything has its role and purpose. The similarities are strong enough for the Epicurean Velleius in Cicero's *De natura deorum* to lump the *Timaeus* and the Stoic notions of god together in his invective (I.18–25). That the 'force' (*vis*) governing the world is 'the mind of the world, and is also perfect intelligence and wisdom, which they entitle god, and is a sort of providence' (*Acad.* I.29) looks like an ideal reconciliation of the views of Platonists and Stoics, though Antiochus' purpose is not that conciliatory and he appears intent on putting the Stoics down as second-rate.

Once this way of establishing common ground becomes available, Antiochus can retroject Stoic material into a Platonic frame without breaking that frame. A number of strikingly Stoic-looking features have made it into Cicero's rendering of Antiochus' reconstruction:

- (1) Matter is said (I.27) to be devoid of any form or quality.<sup>36</sup>
- (2) The divine 'force' 'they also sometimes call Necessity, because nothing can happen otherwise than has been ordained by it under

<sup>36</sup> As in *SVF* I.86–8, 2.316–317.

a fated and unchangeable concatenation of everlasting order' (1.29), with an echo of the Stoic definition of fate as an inexorable chain of causes.<sup>37</sup>

Dillon rightly points out (2003a: 173) that the description of the active principle in Cicero's section on physics leaves out the Stoic designation of the active principle as 'fire' or 'breath' (173). But Cicero's account itself provides an explanation for this omission. As pointed out above, according to Cicero, all that is left for Zeno is a 'mere reform' of the system (1.35, 39). In physics, Zeno's innovations are said to consist only of a rejection of the fifth element and the assumption that both the active and the passive principles have to be bodies in their own right, because only bodies can act and be acted upon. This last issue constitutes a major breaking point between the Stoics and the Platonists. Antiochus could not have claimed that the Old Academy or any right-thinking Platonist would consider soul, reason and intellect as corporeal without his entire reconstruction tottering and losing all credibility.

By now we have established a motive for why Antiochus of Ascalon would make the Old Academy look more Stoic, namely, the desire to diminish the Stoics' status as real contenders in the philosophical game by minimizing their originality, and to co-opt their insights. We also have a plausible description of the strategy by which he attempted to do so: cleverly establishing as much common ground as possible and retrojecting Stoic material that could be made compatible with his rendering of Platonic views. As to the argument that if Antiochus' reconstruction of the history of philosophy had not contained a significant kernel of historical truth, it would have been challenged,<sup>38</sup> in fact it was. Cicero denounced Antiochus' strategy, as did others, if the testimony of Sextus Empiricus, Numenius and Augustine counts for anything.<sup>39</sup> They turned the tables on Antiochus of Ascalon, accusing him of having betrayed and polluted Platonic

<sup>37</sup> Cicero himself attributes this view to Posidonius at *Div.* 1.125, and to the Stoics at *ND* 1.55; cf. also 39. Cf. also *SVF* 1.98, 2.917, 946, 1000. Sedley admits (2002: 73–5) that this claim presents a problem for his hypothesis, though he presents a tentative solution.

<sup>38</sup> Sedley 2002: 51.

<sup>39</sup> On Cicero, cf. below; Sextus Empiricus *PH* 1.235, Numenius fr.28 (des Places), Augustine *Contra Academicos* 3.41, *De civitate dei* 19.3. Cf. also Plutarch *Cicero* 4.2–3.

thought by crossing over to the Stoic camp, of being a Stoic in all but the philosophical affiliation he claimed for himself, and of merely pretending to be a bona fide Platonist. This realization leads us to Cicero's role in this configuration of actors.

#### WHERE DID CICERO GO?

So far we have dealt with the importance of the *Timaeus* for the Stoics, the Old Academy as possible mediators between the *Timaeus* and the Stoics, Polemo's role, and Antiochus of Ascalon's reconstruction of the Old Academy's physics. As if this configuration were not already complex enough, one could argue that Sedley and Dillon overlook one other major player: Cicero. We have the history of the Academy as reflected back to us not merely by Antiochus of Ascalon, but also by the spokespersons whom Cicero puts on stage in his writings. And Cicero is anything but a transparent screen or a neutral medium, as becomes clear when we analyse how he uses the reconstructions of Antiochus and others not only in the first book of the second edition of his *Academica* but throughout his philosophical writings. Because Cicero composed most of these in a period of two years towards the end of his life, it makes all the more sense to examine patterns in his authorial voice. The purpose here is, obviously, not to give an exhaustive account, but to draw attention to the kinds of complexity one needs to take into account when interpreting this material.

*Translating the Timaeus.* As Carlos Lévy (2003) has argued, Cicero's rendering of the *Timaeus* shows clear traces of a Hellenistic, and specifically Stoic, influence, as if later interpretations of Plato's account had become inseparable from the original text. The Preface that accompanies the incomplete translation contains an allusion to the *Academica* (1) and appears to be the introduction to a planned dialogue on physics featuring P. Nigidius Figulus, noted for his Pythagorean leanings, and the Peripatetic Cratippus. This framework again indicates that Cicero approaches the *Timaeus* as first and foremost a work on nature. Given that the same person wrote Varro's account of physics in the *Academica* and did the translation of the *Timaeus*, it should not come as a surprise that the two accounts share crucial features:

- (1) The status of Plato's Demiurge is lowered considerably in Cicero's rendering, and he is made subject to nature (Lévy 2003: 100–3): when Plato claims (30a) that God wanted to make the world as good as possible, Cicero renders the restriction κατὰ δύνανμιν as *quoad natura pateretur*, 'to the extent that nature would permit'. Cicero's account of the Stoic notion of the divine, put into the mouth of the Stoic Balbus in his *De natura deorum*, reinforces this point: 'what craftsman apart from nature, who is unsurpassed in her cunning, could have attained such skilfulness in the construction of the senses?' (2.142). *Natura* is the dominant factor for Cicero, and, in the second example quoted, it has taken over the task of craftsmanship.
- (2) As in Varro's speech, Cicero downplays the relevance of Plato's intelligible realm in his translation (Lévy 2003: 103–5). In the *Timaeus* (30d) we read that the Demiurge made the world to resemble as closely as possible the most beautiful of the intelligible beings' (τῶν νοουμένων καλλίστῳ). Cicero renders this phrase as 'that which can be understood as the most beautiful in the nature of things' (*quod enim pulcherrimum in rerum natura intellegi potest*). Whereas for Plato the distinction between the noetic and physical realms is essential, Cicero conflates the two. Again, of Plato's designation (37a) of the Demiurge as 'the best of the *intelligibles* that always are' (τῶν νοητῶν ἀεὶ τε ὄντων ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀρίστου), all that is left in Cicero is 'the most excellent father' (*optimo et praestantissimo genitore*).<sup>40</sup>
- (3) The Stoics call matter also 'substance', οὐσία. In his translation, Cicero goes in the other direction and renders the two types of 'being' that are relevant for the composition of the World Soul (35a) as *materia*. In other words, he also translates 'indivisible being', which in Plato's text refers to the items that are intelligible as well as indivisible, as *materia* (*materia individua*), whereas other interpreters would only refer to the divisible kind, which Plato

<sup>40</sup> What complicates this matter is that in the Greek it is not entirely clear what governs τῶν νοητῶν ἀεὶ τε ὄντων. The rendering chosen here is endorsed by Plutarch, *An. Procr.* 1016b–c, but Proclus lists alternative constructions, *In Tim.* 2.293.1–295.25. So, from that angle, it is significant that Cicero chose an option that does not draw on a connection between the Demiurge and the intelligible realm.



connects with bodies (περὶ τὰ σώματα), as 'matter'.<sup>41</sup> In this instance, too, Cicero's rendering plays down the distinctness of intelligible reality in Plato's account.

*Physics in Cicero's philosophical writings.* In light of Cicero's Stoicized rendering of the *Timaeus*, how does he view physics throughout his philosophical writings? We consistently find the same thematic connections that are also present in Varro's speech of the *Academica*: (a) physics deals with matter and the efficient cause (*vis et causa efficiendi*, *Fin.* 1.18); (b) Stoics and Peripatetics agree that the *kosmos* is governed by a divine intellect (*Fin.* 4.12); and (c) physics studies the heavenly bodies (see *Acad.* 1.26) and the secrets of nature (*Fin.* 5.9–10, 58; *TD* 1.44, 62–3, 5.68–9, 70 (chain of causes); *Rep.* 6, Dream of Scipio).

Yet when it suits his purpose, as when he responds to Lucullus' exposition of Antiochus' system, Cicero can also choose to emphasize the differences between the different schools of thought and the range of opinions on the principles of the *kosmos* (*de principiis rerum e quibus omnia constant ... dissensio*, *Acad.* 2.118–28; the phrase is in 117). 'Plato', he claims there, 'holds the view that the *world* was made by god out of an all-receiving matter to last forever' (*Acad.* 2.118, emphasis added), a rendering that leaves at least room for a supra-cosmic divine agency. The Stoics, on the other hand, believe 'that this world is wise and is possessed of an intelligence that constructed *both itself and the world*, and that controls, moves, and rules the universe'. They are also convinced that 'the sun and moon and all the stars and the earth and sea are gods, because a "vital intelligence" *permeates and passes through them all*; but that nevertheless a time will come when all this world will be burnt out with heat' (*Acad.* 2.119; trans. Rackham, emphasis added). In contrast to Plato's view, Cicero here highlights the radically immanent character of the Stoic view of the ordering principle of the world, as well as the fact that most Stoics do not consider the world eternal. But even when focusing on the differences between Plato and the Stoics, Cicero does not explicitly mention the Platonic Forms (in a context in which the role of Forms in cosmogony would be highly relevant) or the higher principles endorsed by the Old Academy.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Plutarch *An. Procr.* 1012d, f, 1013b–c; Calcidius ch. 29.

*Cicero's knowledge of Stoicism.* Cicero did not need to rely exclusively or even primarily on Antiochus for his knowledge of Stoicism. His *De natura deorum*, *Tusculan disputations*, *De officiis*, *De finibus*, *De divinatione* and *De fato* prove that he had access to a wide range of material, and Panaetius in particular appears to have been an important source for him. (He often uses the latter as a dissenting voice in the Stoic camp to prove that the Stoics did not even agree amongst themselves,<sup>42</sup> in a manner similar to Galen's use of Posidonius.) In the *De finibus* (1.6), for instance, Cicero talks about reading the Stoics 'Chrysippus . . . Diogenes, Antipater, Mnesarchus, Panaetius, and many others, not least our friend Posidonius'. Antiochus' reconstruction of the history of the Academy, then, could also have functioned merely as a structuring device in Cicero's writings. As such it could have provided a framework into which *Cicero himself*, because of his self-proclaimed allegiance to the Academy, could insert more or less Stoic material, as he saw fit, while maintaining the Stoics' secondary status in spite of his attraction to some of Stoicism's key tenets (and still going after Antiochus himself for allegedly becoming too much of a Stoic, see below). In particular, the claim that the Stoics disagreed with Plato, the Academy and/or the Peripatetics only in their terminology, but not in the substance of their views permeates Cicero's philosophical writings.<sup>43</sup> As a result it becomes impossible to discern which Stoicizing traits in the character Varro's account of physics actually go back to Antiochus and which ones are due to Cicero. But one cannot simply dismiss the possibility that Cicero himself had a hand in the rendering.

*Creating a consensus.* Antiochus' reconstruction was not the only attempt to move beyond a potential deadlock of disagreement, and Cicero's writings show traces of these other attempts as well. Cicero mentions the case of a certain Gellius, proconsul in Athens, asking the philosophers to settle their controversies (*Leg.* 1.53). More

<sup>42</sup> As in *Acad.* 2.107, *Fin.* 4.23, *Div.* 1.6, 12, 2.88.

<sup>43</sup> As in *Acad.* 2.15, 135, *Fin.* 3.5, 10, 4.2, 19, 22, 52, 56–7, 72–3, 5.22, *TD* 4.6, 5.34, *Rep.* 3.12, *Leg.* 1.53; often coupled with a critique of what he considers an excessive subtlety, *Fin.* 3.3, *TD* 4.36. Cicero's Balbus, who represents the Stoic point of view, is made to protest that the differences, on the contrary, are substantial (*ND* 1.16; cf. also Cato in *Fin.* 3.41). Cicero uses this stance mostly to question the relevance of the Stoic category of 'preferred indifferents', that is, for a very specific point of ethics.

importantly, we know that both Posidonius and Panaetius, on the side of the Stoics, effectuated their own rapprochement with Plato and Aristotle. Cicero himself tells us that Panaetius used Plato, Aristotle, Xenocrates, Theophrastus and Dicaearchus (*Fin.* 4.79). And Posidonius, for instance, is said to have 'commented on the *Timaeus*', which does not necessarily imply that he wrote a full-fledged commentary, but does indicate a willingness to return to Plato himself.<sup>44</sup> For the purpose of my argument in this context, we do not need to settle the question to what extent this rapprochement involved a departure from Stoic views and concessions to Plato and other systems of thought, a subject hotly debated in recent scholarship. What matters here is that Antiochus, and even more so Cicero himself, could also have relied on this strand in the tradition for their reconstruction, and, secondly, that the rivalry between the Stoics and Academics also extended to who could most successfully claim a consensus and co-opt other views.<sup>45</sup> In sum, we have evidence of more attempts besides Antiochus' to create a kind of philosophical consensus, and these do not require attributing a mediating role to Polemo.

*Shifting alliances.* If we bracket the complex question of the nature of Cicero's own Academic allegiance, his works show a wide range of reconstructions that change according to any specific claim he wants to make. He has no qualms singling out Polemo specifically as having anticipated the Stoics, but he does so exclusively in the area of ethics – especially in his *De finibus* – not for physics.<sup>46</sup> Thus, it is highly plausible that if Polemo was seen as a key player in establishing the views which Cicero's Varro mentions in the *Academica*, Cicero would not have hesitated to register this point explicitly and to pit him against Zeno.

We know from Diogenes Laertius (7.25) that Polemo had already accused Zeno of co-opting his views, and the overlap in ethics may be sufficient to account for this accusation. According to Cicero himself, both Arcesilaus (*Acad.* 2.16)<sup>47</sup> and Carneades (*Fin.* 3.41) had

<sup>44</sup> Posidonius fr.85.

<sup>45</sup> For a succinct rendering of the debate, with further references, cf. Gill 2006: 212–15; on Panaetius, cf. also, with good bibliographies, Vimercati 2010 and Tieleman 2007a.

<sup>46</sup> As in *Acad.* 2.131–2, *Fin.* 2.34, 4.14, 45, 51, 61, 5.14.

<sup>47</sup> But cf. also Charles Brittain's translation, 2006: 11, which interprets this claim as an aside on

anticipated Antiochus' strategy of denying the Stoics' originality in the area of ethics.<sup>48</sup> For physics, Cicero uses a similar line of attack against Epicurus: Epicurus got most of his views from Democritus, and where he deviated from the latter, for example by introducing the notion of a swerve in the motion of the atoms, he got it wrong (*Fin.* 1.17–21, 4.13; cf. also Clement of Alexandria *Strom.* 6.2.27.1–4).

In his *Lucullus* (*Acad.* 2.113), Cicero undoes Antiochus' reconstruction by hauling the Old Academy (including Polemo) and the Peripatetics over to Carneades' side of the debate on the reliability of representations. But that point, after all, is an innovation of Zeno that Varro's Antiochus both concedes to have been original and approves of in the later edition of the *Academica* (1.40–2).

More important for my purpose here is how, in the course of Books Three and Four of his *Tusculan disputations*, by rejecting any concessions to *metriopatheia* (as in 3.74 and 4.38), Cicero gradually drives a wedge between (i) the Stoic view of the passions, and (ii) that of the Old Academy and especially that of the Peripatetics. This line of argumentation culminates in Book Five of the *Tusculan disputations*, in a manner analogous to the move he makes in the final book of his *De finibus*, in which he concedes that if one acknowledges other goods besides virtue, as the Old Academy and the Peripatetics did, the sage's happiness may become compromised (as in 5.83–6). And so we find Cicero wondering, almost in spite of himself, whether the Stoics are not the only true philosophers after all (*TD* 4.53; 66), even though he continues to make them dependent on Plato and Socrates and does not refrain from criticizing them. Zeno remains 'a mere foreigner and an obscure coiner of phrases, who seems to have wormed his way into ancient philosophy' (5.34; cf. also *Fin.* 5.74: Stoics are thieves altering the labels of stolen goods). But this time we find the Old Academy and the Peripatetics 'stuttering', that is, at a loss for arguments (*TD* 5.75–6). In the end (5.120), Cicero lets Carneades (not Antiochus)

Antiochus' position merely inserted in the phrase about Arcesilaus. The Latin and his translation are as follows: 'posteaquam Arcesilas Zenoni ut putatur obtrectans nihil novi reperienti sed emendanti superiores immutatione verborum, dum huius definitiones labefactare volt conatus est clarissimis rebus tenebras obducere'; 'since the time Arcesilaus objected to Zeno (as it is thought), and, in his desire to overturn Zeno's definitions, tried to cloak the clearest things with darkness (though on our view, Zeno made no new discoveries, but revised his predecessors by altering their terminology)'.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Giusta 1964–1967: 1.82 and 2: 147–8; Lévy 1992: 392–4.

settle the dispute, but in a manner in which the parties are shown to lack grounds for disagreement – which is quite different from saying that the Stoics merely ruined a perfectly acceptable position they had received from others by introducing irrelevant subtleties in terminology:

The controversy between them used to be decided by Carneades in his capacity of referee chosen as a compliment by the disputants; for as all that the Peripatetics [and, we might add, the Old Academy, cf. 119] regarded as goods were also regarded by the Stoics as advantages, and as the Peripatetics did not in spite of their opinion attach more value to riches, good health, and the other things of the same kind than the Stoics did, he said that inasmuch as the determining factor is the thing, not the words, there was no ground for disagreement. (trans. King, modified)

According to this attempt at peace-making, the Stoics do not throw out as completely irrelevant the other things besides virtue which the other party considers goods, and the Peripatetics do not contest the supremacy of virtue.

The few examples analysed here should suffice to demonstrate the fluidity in this style of argumentation that makes its case based on perceived points of agreement and disagreement. Like other cultural actors, philosophers created their own genealogies to strengthen their position and add the weight of authority to their views. And so, as discussed earlier, Antiochus' attempt was nothing unusual. Like others, he too could not avoid the main pitfall of such a strategy, that any alignment of this type could always be rearranged and turned against its originator.

*Going after Antiochus.* In his *Lucullus*, Cicero, at any rate, tackles Antiochus' claims with no holds barred. He reverses the charge Antiochus allegedly had made against the Stoics, claiming that whereas the Stoics kept the substance of the views of the Old Academy and the Peripatetics and merely changed the terminology, Antiochus kept only the name of the Academy and completely changed the substance of its views (*Acad.* 2.70). In his inconstancy, Antiochus, Cicero claims, in effect abandoned the Academy by abandoning his allegiance to his teacher Philo and crossed over to the Stoic side without openly claiming allegiance to that school of thought (2.69, see also 2.67, 97, 113). Thus, although Antiochus presents

himself as a spokesperson for the Ur-Academy, he cannot even be properly called an Academic: if he had made but a very few modifications, he would have been a perfectly genuine Stoic (2.132). Or, again, 'Antiochus is downright a Stoic though stammering on a very few points' (2.137) and never diverges a foot's length from Chrysippus (2.143). The last claim conjures up the image of a dog being loyal to his master. It is hard to imagine how anyone could be more explicit or pointed in denouncing Antiochus' reconstruction as untenable.

The complexities of Cicero's mode of presentation in his philosophical works show that it is problematic to take a reconstruction such as the one Antiochus proposed too literally, looking for and positing specific antecedents that are not confirmed by other evidence, and to forget that such moves are precisely *reconstructions*. If Cicero is to be believed, just about every major school of thought (with the exception of the Epicureans who, according to him, appear to have revelled in their maverick status) played this game with great enthusiasm and intellectual verve, as Cicero himself did with his interlocutors, real or imaginary.

In the final analysis, as I have argued here, there is no conclusive evidence for the assumption that the Old Academy provided the Stoics with the principal cues for their adaptation of Plato's *Timaeus*. And one has good reason to take Antiochus of Ascalon's reconstruction of Platonic thought with a considerable grain of salt, not least because his views reached us only indirectly, through Cicero. The history of the Academy was distorted by these double mirrors. As to the Stoics themselves, the state of our current evidence suggests that while they were attentive to the terms of the debate as it was taking place around them, they could read and think for themselves and did not uncritically adopt Academic interpretations of the *Timaeus*. Zeno did not sneak in through Polemo's garden gate, as Polemo himself allegedly accused him of doing (Diogenes Laertius 7.25); rather, he walked in through the front door and caused quite a stir.

## CHAPTER 3

# *Chrysippus and Plato on the fragility of the head*

Jenny Bryan

## INTRODUCTION

The Stoic interest in Plato's *Timaeus* is well established.<sup>1</sup> Both the Stoics and Plato have a shared concern with the connection between physics and theology and, more specifically, both present the physical cosmos as the work of a rational and provident god.<sup>2</sup> There are, of course, significant differences between Stoic and Platonic cosmology. For example, the immanence of the Stoic god as a material principle in the physical cosmos can be contrasted with the more detached status of Plato's Demiurge.<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding such differences, the points of similarity between these two world views are striking and informative, not least with regard to their shared insistence on the rationality of the cosmic order and the ethical implications of that rationality.<sup>4</sup> This chapter discusses one point where Stoics engage unmistakably with the *Timaeus*, and is focused on a problem raised by their common

Early versions of this chapter were presented at a workshop in St Andrews organized by Alex Long and at the Queens' Arts Seminar in Cambridge. I am grateful to the audiences at both for their very helpful comments.

<sup>1</sup> Sedley 2007: 209 calls the *Timaeus* 'the single most significant ancestor of Stoic physics'. See also Betegh 2003; Reydam-Schils 1999; Scade 2010: 163–7.

<sup>2</sup> See Sedley 2002 and Long 2010. For evidence that the similarity was acknowledged in antiquity, see Sextus Empiricus *M* 9.104–7.

<sup>3</sup> Long 2010: 47 notes that Plato's Demiurge is personified to a greater degree than the Stoic god. On the significance of this issue for our understanding of the development of Stoic physics, see Gretchen Reydam-Schils, Chapter 2.

<sup>4</sup> A point emphasized by Betegh 2003. For an extensive discussion of the interaction between cosmology and ethics in Plato's *Timaeus* see Carone 2005: 24–78. On the debate over the role of physics in Stoic ethics, see, among others, Annas 1993: 159–79; Cooper 1996; Inwood 2009; and Striker 1991.

assertion of a providential cosmos: how to explain the existence of evils in a world created by a benevolent god.<sup>5</sup>

At *Attic Nights* 7.1.1–13, Aulus Gellius records Chrysippus' attempt to defend Stoic cosmology against the objection that 'if there were providence, there would be no evils' (*si esset providentia, nulla essent mala*).<sup>6</sup> The defence comes in two parts, both of them, so Gellius tells us, taken from the fourth book of Chrysippus' *On providence*. The first part presents an assertion of the epistemic and ontological interdependence of good and evil:

adversus ea Chrysippus cum in libro *Περί προνοίας* quarto dissereret: 'nihil est prorsus istis' inquit 'insubidius, qui opinantur bona esse potuisse si non essent ibidem mala. nam cum bona malis contraria sint, utraque necessum est opposita inter sese et quasi mutuo adverso quaeque fulta nisu consistere; nullum adeo contrarium est sine contrario altero. quo enim pacto iustitiae sensus esse posset, nisi essent iniuriae? aut quid aliud iustitia est quam iniustitiae privatio? quid item fortitudo intellegi posset nisi ex ignaviae adpositione? quid continentia nisi ex intemperantiae? quo item modo prudentia esset, nisi foret contra imprudentia? proinde' inquit 'homines stulti cur non hoc etiam desiderant, ut veritas sit et non sit mendacium? namque itidem sunt bona et mala, felicitas et infortunitas, dolor et voluptas; alterum enim ex altero, sicuti Plato ait, verticibus inter se contrariis deligatum est; si tuleris unum, abstuleris utrumque.'

Chrysippus' reply to this, when arguing the point in his *On providence* Book 4, is as follows: 'There is absolutely nothing more foolish than those who think that there could have been goods without the coexistence of evils. For since goods are opposite to evils, the two must necessarily exist in opposition to each other and supported by a kind of opposed interdependence. And there is no such opposite without its matching opposite. For how could there be perception of justice if there were no injustices? What else *is* justice, if not the removal of injustice? Likewise, what appreciation of courage could there be except through the contrast with cowardice? Of moderation, if not from immoderation? How, again, could there be prudence if there were not imprudence opposed to it? Why do the fools not similarly wish that there were truth without there being falsity? For goods and evils, fortune and misfortune, pain and pleasure, exist in just the same

<sup>5</sup> See Goggins 2011 for the suggestion that Chrysippus' view that god could have no responsibility for shameful things (Plutarch *Stoic. rep.* 10.49e) has logical priority over his other responses to the problem of evil. See Frede 2002 for a comparison of Stoic theodicy with that of Plato's *Laws*.

<sup>6</sup> Plutarch *On Isis and Osiris* 369d–371b provides a doxography of the origins of evil.



way: they are joined to each other head to head, as Plato said. Remove one, and you remove both.<sup>7</sup>

This final sentence looks very much like a reference to *Phaedo* 60c1–5 where, reflecting on the essential connection between pleasure and pain, Socrates notes:

I think that, if Aesop had considered them, he would have composed a story that god wanted to end their warring and, when he was unable to do so, he joined them together at the head and so, when anyone has one, the other follows (ἐπακολουθεῖ) later.

The force of the Platonic allusion here seems to be to note a tradition of asserting the ontological interdependence of opposites.<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of the current discussion, it is significant merely insofar as it establishes Plato as an acknowledged source of reference for Chrysippus. The allusion that I wish to discuss is found (albeit implicitly) in the second part of the defence of providence, which argues against the specific charge that a benevolent god created illnesses:

idem Chrysippus in eodem libro tractat consideratque dignumque esse id quaeri putat, εἰ αἱ τῶν ἀνθρώπων νόσοι κατὰ φύσιν γίνονται, id est, <si> natura ipsa rerum vel providentia, quae compagem hanc mundi et genus hominum fecit, morbos quoque et debilitates et aegritudines corporum, quas patiuntur homines, fecerit. existimat autem non fuisse hoc principale naturae consilium, ut faceret homines morbis obnoxios; numquam enim hoc convenisse naturae auctori parentique omnium rerum bonarum. ‘sed cum multa’ inquit ‘atque magna gigneret pareretque aptissima et utilissima, alia quoque simul adgnata sunt incommoda his ipsis, quae faciebat, cohaerentia’; eaque<sup>9</sup> per naturam, sed per sequellas quasdam necessarias facta dicit, quod ipse appellat κατὰ παρακολούθησιν.

Chrysippus also, in the same book, takes seriously and tackles the question ‘whether human illnesses come about in accordance with nature’ – that is, whether nature herself or providence, who created the structure of our world

<sup>7</sup> Texts and translations of Gellius are taken from Long and Sedley 1987: 1(translation).329–30 and 2(text).330–1.

<sup>8</sup> The message of the *Phaedo* passage seems to have a rather different emphasis. Socrates refers at 60b1–c7 to the opposition between ‘this state that men call “pleasant”’ and ‘its supposed opposite’ as an example of two phenomena which are generally experienced in succession and not simultaneously.

<sup>9</sup> Following Long and Sedley and Marache in omitting *non* or *neque* after *eaque*. See Marache 1978: 83.

and the human race, also created the illnesses, infirmities and diseases of the body which men suffer from. In his judgement it was not nature's principal intention to make men liable to disease: that would never have been fitting for nature, the creator and the mother of all good things. But, he adds, while she was bringing about many great works and perfecting their fitness and utility, many disadvantageous things accrued as inseparable from her actual products. These, he says, were created in accordance with nature, but through certain necessary 'concomitances' (which he calls *kata parakolouthésin*).

Having established Chrysippus' general explanation of the existence of illnesses and bodily deficiencies as coming about through 'necessary concomitances', Gellius gives a specific (and rather familiar) example of a necessary concomitance:

'sicut' inquit 'cum corpora hominum natura fingeret, ratio subtilior et utilitas ipsa operis postulavit, ut tenuissimis minutisque ossiculis caput compingeret, sed hanc utilitatem rei maioris alia quaedam incommoditas extrinsecus consecuta est ut fieret caput tenuiter munitum et ictibus offensionibusque parvis fragile; proinde morbi quoque et aegritudines partae sunt, dum salus paritur. sicut hercle' inquit 'dum virtus hominibus per consilium naturae gignitur, vitia ibidem per adfinitatem contrariam<sup>10</sup> nata sunt.'

Just as, he says, when nature was creating men's bodies, it was required for the enhancement of our rationality and for the very utility of the product that she should construct the head of very thin and tiny portions of bone, but this utility in the principal enterprise had as a further extraneous consequence the inconvenience that the head became thinly protected and fragile to small blows and knocks – so too, illnesses and diseases were created while health was being created. Likewise, he says, while through nature's plan virtue was being created for men, at the same time vices were born, thanks to their relationship of oppositeness.

Whilst there is no explicit mention of Plato here, the example of the necessary fragility of the head is, of course, precisely that given at *Timaeus* 74e1–75c7 to illustrate the compromise made between durability and sensitivity in the design of those bodily parts which possess intelligence.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Long and Sedley read *contrariam* rather than *contraria*. For the latter reading, see Rolfe 1927: 94.

<sup>11</sup> For further examples of apparently explicit references by Chrysippus to the *Timaeus*, see Plutarch *Stoic. rep.* 1047c (*Timaeus* 70c and 91a) and 1052d (a reference to *Timaeus* 33c7–d3). See also 'Subsequent polemic' in [Chapter 5](#).

All those bones that had more soul than others he proceeded to wrap in a very thin layer of flesh, while those that contained less he wrapped in a very thick layer of very dense flesh. And indeed, at the joints of the bones, wherever reason did not reveal any need (μήτινα ἀνάγκην ὁ λόγος ἀπέφαινε δειν) for the presence of flesh, he introduced only a thin layer of flesh, so that the ability of the joints to flex would not be impeded, a condition that would have made it very difficult for the bodies to move. A further reason was this: if there were a thick layer of flesh there, packed extremely densely together, its hardness would cause a kind of insensibility, which would make thinking less retentive and more obscure . . . On the other hand, all those bodily parts that do possess intelligence are less fleshy, except perhaps for a fleshy thing – the tongue, for example – that was created to be itself an organ of sensation. But in most cases it is as I said. For there is no way that anything that necessarily undergoes generation and growth (ἢ γὰρ ἐξ ἀνάγκης γιγνομένη καὶ συντρεφομένη) can accommodate the combination of thick bone and massive flesh with keen and responsive sensation. If these two characteristics had not refused their concomitance (συμπίπτειν), our heads above all else would have been so constituted as to possess this combination, and the human race, crowned with a head fortified with flesh and sinews, would have a life twice, or many more times, as long, a healthier and less painful life than the one we have now. As it was, however, our makers calculated the pros and cons of giving our race greater longevity but making it worse, versus making it better, though less long-lived, and decided that the superior though shorter life-span was in every way preferable for everyone to the longer but inferior one. This is why they capped the head with a sparse layer of bone – not with flesh and sinew, given that the head has no joints. For all these reasons, then, the head has turned out to be more sensitive and intelligent but also, in every man's case, much weaker than the body to which it is attached.<sup>12</sup>

In what follows, I will consider the motivation and import of Chrysippus' incorporation of this Platonic example. Considering how and why Chrysippus is appropriating this section of the *Timaeus* will serve several purposes. First, it will provide a clearer understanding of the 'necessary concomitances' cited by Chrysippus as the explanation of cosmic evil and, in particular, of what kind of necessity is at work here. Second, it will serve to clarify our understanding of the example as it is originally employed in the *Timaeus*.

<sup>12</sup> Zeyl's 2000 translation adapted, in part in accordance with Sedley 2007: 114 n. 48.

Finally, we will understand why Chrysippus, when developing his own theodicy, was attracted to this particular Platonic passage.<sup>13</sup>

#### THE PROBLEM OF COSMIC EVIL

At this point, it is worth emphasizing that the focus of my chapter is Chrysippus' account of *cosmic*, i.e. natural, evils, such as the physical illnesses explicitly cited by Gellius, as opposed to the explanation of *moral* evils.<sup>14</sup> The focus of the second half of the Gellian passage is on what Chrysippus has to say about evils in nature rather than those which result from human irrationality.<sup>15</sup> Moral evils are not excluded from Gellius' summary: he ends 7.1 with an explanation of moral evils which seems to combine the idea of the necessary interdependence of opposites with the notion that vice may be a concomitant of virtue:

Likewise, he says, while through nature's plan virtue was being created for men, at the same time vices were born, thanks to their relationship of oppositeness.

For the purposes of this chapter, however, I will set aside such explicitly ethical concerns. Of course, cleaving ethics from physics may seem artificial in the context of a discussion of Stoicism, or indeed of the *Timaeus*. Yet it is a move worth making in this instance, at least insofar as it seems justified by the text, which offers an explicit discussion of the evils of nature.<sup>16</sup> In fact, Stoic explanations of vice have been afforded far more attention than their accounts of apparent failures in nature, not least, of course, because of the Stoic insistence that 'good' and 'bad' should be understood as referring exclusively to objects of moral evaluation.<sup>17</sup> The Stoic system distinguishes between the genuine goodness and badness of virtue and vice, respectively, and

<sup>13</sup> See Gretchen Reydam-Schils, [Chapter 2](#), for a persuasive argument that the influence of the *Timaeus* on Stoic physics was a result of direct engagement rather than of the Old Academy's mediation.

<sup>14</sup> For a brief general discussion of Chrysippus' view of cosmic evil and the various explanations he seems to have offered, see Algra [2003b](#): 170–3.

<sup>15</sup> For a detailed treatment of the Stoic view of *kakia*, see Long [1968](#). See also Kerferd [1978](#).

<sup>16</sup> Seneca also has an interest in natural evil. See *On Anger* 2.27, *NQ* 6.3.1 (discussing earthquakes) and *Prov.* 1.1.3.

<sup>17</sup> See e.g. Diogenes Laertius 7.101–3.

the 'indifferent' status of everything else.<sup>18</sup> Of course, physical illness is a classic example of *dispreferred* indifferent insofar as it is contrary to the natural state of man and, as such, is not something that would generally be considered choiceworthy. Nevertheless, physical illness and other instances in the natural world of what might be classed by non-Stoics as 'natural evil' do not seem to be regarded by the Stoics as genuinely (i.e. morally) evil. In Gellius, Chrysippus describes them as *incommoda*, 'disadvantageous things', and yet his theodicy relies not on the point that they are merely 'disadvantageous' rather than 'evil' or 'bad', but on the concomitance that explains why we, or certain people, are burdened with *incommoda*.<sup>19</sup> Gellius himself, in introducing the discussion, presents it as a response to the existence of 'evils' (7.1.1).

Those who have investigated Stoic attitudes towards natural 'evils' have tended to concentrate on the problem raised by the doctrine of *ekpurôsis*: if the world is good, why must it be destroyed by regular conflagrations?<sup>20</sup> The issue introduced by the Gellian text is rather more prosaic: if god is good and has made the world to be good 'for gods and men' (7.1.1), why do bad (or 'disadvantageous') things like diseases occur in nature? This may appear a less cataclysmically exciting question than that regarding *ekpurôsis*, but it is perhaps also rather more pressing, for the following reason. Presumably only those who accept the Stoic doctrine of *ekpurôsis* (or those, like Plutarch, explicitly seeking to undermine the consistency of Stoic physics) would be concerned by how this is consistent with the Stoic account of the cosmos as providential. In contrast, the question of how illnesses, etc., are to be explained is an obvious question to be asked of anyone arguing for providence and by anyone listening to such arguments, regardless of whether they subscribe to the particular details of Stoic physics or have a particular interest in the coherence of the Stoic position. Indeed, the general applicability of such a question is

<sup>18</sup> Strictly speaking, Stoicism allows for a broader range of goods, including for example the virtuous man himself and friends (who must themselves be virtuous if they are to be friends). See Sextus Empiricus *M* 11.22–6.

<sup>19</sup> Presumably the issue is implicitly that raised by Plutarch at *Stoic. rep.* 1051b–d of why *virtuous* men suffer diseases, etc. The issue of the fragility of the head seems to be a specific question of an apparent flaw in nature's design of the human body.

<sup>20</sup> See Mansfeld 1979.

demonstrated by the fact that both Chrysippus and Plato were aware of the need to answer it.<sup>21</sup>

Before going any further, it is necessary to say something about Gellius' worth as a source for Chrysippus. I am assuming, perhaps naively, that his account of Chrysippus' argument is relatively accurate. I am encouraged in this assumption by the fact that Gellius (a) cites the specific book of *On providence* from which he is excerpting, and (b) appears to have no doctrinal axe to grind. However, it is worth noting, as Susanne Bobzien has in relation to *Attic Nights* 7.2 (which contains the famous cylinder passage), that various aspects of Gellius' methodology and style render a 'rigid word-by-word interpretation' of the passage untenable.<sup>22</sup> So we can, perhaps, trust Gellius up to a point, but we should resist the temptation to press the text too hard. I will nonetheless consider the particular phrase *ratio subtilior*, since I think it cannot be ignored in trying to get to grips with Chrysippus' reading of the *Timaeus*.

#### NECESSARY CONCOMITANCES

Chrysippus wants to defend providence against the charge that the world contains apparently non-providential phenomena such as diseases. The question is how and why we should regard the force responsible for *both* the obviously benevolent structure of the world (created 'for gods and men') *and* the apparent disadvantages of disease and weakness of the body as benevolent or providential. As we have seen, Chrysippus' response is to argue that 'it was not nature's principal intention (*principale naturae consilium*) to make men liable to disease'. The implication is that, were nature to have set out with the intention of creating diseases and bodily weakness, this would indeed have been inconsistent with its beneficent status. In fact, Chrysippus argues, these disadvantageous things (*incommoda*) accrued (*adgnata*) as inseparable (*cohaerentia*) from the good things that *were* the principal object of nature's creative activities. So, we can

<sup>21</sup> See Broadie 2001 for a discussion of theodicy in the *Timaeus*. See Sedley 2007: 119–20 on reading cataclysms in the *Timaeus* as beneficial.

<sup>22</sup> Bobzien 1998: 237–8. See Holford-Strevens 2003: 27–80 on the composition and sources of *Attic Nights*.

say that these disadvantages are indeed *per naturam*, but, significantly, ‘through certain necessary “concomitances”’ (*per sequellas quasdam necessarias*).<sup>23</sup> Gellius gives Chrysippus’ own terminology for these concomitances: *kata parakolouthêsin*.

The Gellian passage is not our only evidence for this notion of concomitances. Another, apparently more trivial, example is provided by Plutarch:

In *On nature* book 5 he [Chrysippus] says that bed-bugs are useful for waking us, that mice encourage us not to be untidy, and that it is only to be expected that nature should love beauty and delight in variety. He then adds, in these very words, ‘The best evidence of this would be supplied by the peacock’s tail. For it shows that in this case the animal has been created for the sake of the tail, and not vice versa. That is how the peacock came to be created, with the peahen as concomitant (συνηκολούθηκεν).’<sup>24</sup>

The context of this reference to concomitances is somewhat different from that of the Gellian passage. There, Chrysippus is answering the question how nature can both be the cause of disadvantages and also be regarded as providential, whereas here Chrysippus is arguing that the creation of certain things, such as the peacock, is motivated by nature’s intention to create something explicitly beautiful, namely, the peacock’s tail. The concomitant that is the peahen, which lacks even this beautiful tail, is presumably necessitated by the requirement that the peacock be able to breed. This being the case, the creation of the dowdy peahen is a consequence of nature’s desire to create beauty rather than a result of nature’s particular desire for the world to include the less attractive bird. Although we would not regard the peahen as a disadvantage in the way that we do illnesses, we can see that here, as in the Gellian passage, its creation is an *indirect but necessary* result of the primary creative intentions of providential nature.

<sup>23</sup> Algra 2003b: 171 describes these concomitant evils as ‘collateral damage’.

<sup>24</sup> Plutarch *Stoic. rep.* 1044d (trans. Long and Sedley). The prefix of *συνηκολούθηκεν* is a restoration; Long and Sedley 1987: 2.329 suggest that ‘the term is probably equivalent to Chrysippus’ technical term *παράκολουθις*’. We must be careful here to bear in mind the fact that the passage in Plutarch is restored in light of the Gellian passage under discussion. Nevertheless, it seems that the two passages together present a similar enough position to justify taking Plutarch as support for the notion, if not for the vocabulary, of concomitance.

Gellius, in his account of Chrysippus, makes the necessity of these concomitances explicit in claiming that diseases are explained as *sequellae necessariae*. It is in the context of this claim that Chrysippus introduces the 'head' example from the *Timaeus*. Two questions are prompted by Gellius' account. First, how is this example of the human head intended to illustrate Chrysippus' account of illnesses and weakness of the body as necessary concomitances? A second, closely related question is in what way, if any, should the Timaeian background of the example inform our understanding of Chrysippus' point? Addressing these questions requires us to consider which kind of necessity is involved in the coming-to-be of these *incommoda*, and one fruitful way of pursuing that further question will be to return to Plato and to consider which kind of necessity is involved in the compromise between durability and sensitivity as presented in the *Timaeus* itself. Bearing this in mind, I will consider several candidates for the kind of necessity being adduced by Chrysippus and look at how well each can be supported by, or fits with, the example of the head as it appears in the *Timaeus*.

### *Epistemic/ontological necessity*

The thought that Chrysippus' 'head' example is adducing the epistemic or/and ontological necessity of interdependent opposites might be supported by the fact that, as we have seen, Chrysippus does indeed seem to have argued that evil is in some sense necessitated as the opposite of good. In fact, the excerpted passages of Chrysippus in 7.1 begin and end with the interdependence of opposites. So, at 7.1.3–4, we are told that goods and evils must necessarily exist in opposition to each other and that they are 'supported by a kind of opposed interdependence'. Then, at the end of the chapter (13), we are told: 'Likewise, he says, while through nature's plan virtue was being created for men, at the same time vices were born, thanks to their relationship of oppositeness (*per adfinitatem contrariam*).'<sup>7</sup> This notion of necessary interdependence certainly does have a role to play in the Gellian passage and, further, the latter passage seems to imply an expectation that this Heraclitean notion should inform our understanding of the section on illnesses and the fragility of the head



that it follows.<sup>25</sup> Presumably, on this account, just as there can be no goods without the co-existence of evils and no prudence without imprudence, so there can be no health without illness. Nor would we be able to understand the concept of health unless we understood its opposite too.<sup>26</sup>

Clearly, then, this kind of ontological and epistemological necessity of interdependence is something that Chrysippus adduced to explain the existence of evil in a providential world.<sup>27</sup> However, it cannot be enough to say that, in creating health, nature also created illness *simply* because the existence and perception of health depends on the existence and perception of illness. On the one hand, this hardly seems a sufficient explanation of the existence of either.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, it will prove deeply unsatisfactory if Chrysippus is arguing that every instance of health is balanced by some instance of illness or that every particular good must be tied to some particular bad. For, if this were the case, he would be hard-pressed to maintain that the cosmic order is primarily good. If every case of goodness is balanced by some case of badness, the world itself would be no more good than bad and thus, presumably, no more providential than the opposite.<sup>29</sup>

A rather more satisfactory position might be to emphasize the epistemological interdependence of opposites in such a way as to assert that the *concepts* of good and bad are generally interdependent (and this seems to be what Gellius is recording in Chrysippus' talk of the 'perception' of justice and injustice). Meanwhile, individual instances of badness in the world, in this case liability to disease and

<sup>25</sup> See Long 1996a for a discussion of Heraclitus' influence on Stoicism.

<sup>26</sup> Note that the emphasis of the passage slides between ontological and epistemological interdependence – from the necessary existence of both opposites to the perception of opposites in opposition to one another.

<sup>27</sup> The thought that there could be no good without evil is also attributed to Chrysippus by Plutarch at *Stoic. rep.* 1050f and *Comm. not.* 1065a–b.

<sup>28</sup> So, Plutarch objects (*Comm. not.* 1065b) that, if good does not exist without evil, 'so then, among the gods there is nothing good, since there is nothing evil either'. Note that Aristotle (*Cat.* 14a6–10) rejects the suggestion that the existence of one of a pair of contraries necessitates the existence of its contrary.

<sup>29</sup> A point central to Cotta's criticisms of Stoic providence in the third book of Cicero's *De natura deorum*. Long 1968: 331 notes that, if Chrysippus genuinely argued for the necessary conjunction of good and bad as contraries, the argument 'is a bad one, since it makes a particular situation depend upon its having a contrary as if that fact determined what the situation is as distinct from what we call it'.

the fragility of the head, should be explained on a case-by-case basis, each as a specific and necessary *consequence* of the creation of the good thing at which providential nature explicitly aims.<sup>30</sup> As Long has it, Chrysippus is 'not then asserting the necessary conjunction of contraries, but the necessity of consequence'.<sup>31</sup> This ensures that the bad is always somehow *secondary* to the good, at least insofar as it is not itself independently aimed at by providential creation. The question remains, however, *why* something disadvantageous is a necessary consequence in any particular case (as it presumably is not in every case). So, the interdependence of opposites certainly does have a significant role in *Attic Nights* 7.1, but it does not seem to provide a sufficient explanation of the existence of illnesses (or of specific instances of illness) in a providential world.

Further, it is hard to see how the 'head' example and its Timaeon background serve to illustrate the interdependence of opposites. Both the passage from the *Timaeus* and Chrysippus' version of the 'head' example describe not an ontological or epistemological interdependence of good and evil or health and disease, etc., but rather the *necessary consequences* of teleological physiology.

### *Material necessity*

Bearing in mind the clear allusion to the theodicy of the *Timaeus*, one might well be tempted to propose that Chrysippus is pointing to some kind of material necessity.<sup>32</sup> A fairly standard reading of the *Timaeus*' theodicy runs as follows: the primary cause at work in the cosmos is the divine, rational agency of the Demiurge, which aims at the good. However, in trying to impose order and goodness in the world, this divine agency comes up against the need to work with a second kind of cause, i.e. matter. Insofar as matter is, due to its wayward, wandering nature, resistant to the aims of divine agency, any achievement of

<sup>30</sup> Note that Plutarch (*Stoic rep.* 1050f, *Comm. not.* 1065a–b) quotes Chrysippus as distinguishing vice (*kakia*) from 'dreadful accidents' (*ta deina sumptómata*) insofar as the former comes about 'in accordance with the reason of nature'.

<sup>31</sup> Long 1968: 333: 'Disease and disaster are not the object of his plan but an unavoidable consequence of the good things which are'.

<sup>32</sup> See Kerferd 1978: 486.

the latter's goals will inevitably be qualified.<sup>33</sup> Of course, one of the labels that Timaeus uses to refer to these mechanical causes is 'Necessity' (*anankê*).<sup>34</sup> Now, it is often claimed that the 'head' example at 74e1–75c7 is a paradigm case of the struggle between the rational agency's aiming for the best and the limits set by the nature of his material.<sup>35</sup> At 74e, we are told that densely packed flesh would cause a kind of insensibility 'which would make thinking less retentive and more obscure'. A standard reading of 74e1–75c7 is that the lesser gods, aiming at the good, would, if they could, have designed the head in such a way as to allow it to be both sensitive and durable. Material necessity, however, resists the combination of these qualities and necessitates that our lives be less healthy and more painful than is preferable (to both us and the gods). So, for example, Cornford offers the following summary:

Here the two desirable characters refuse to coincide as concomitants: they are incompatible. Necessity cannot be wholly persuaded by Reason to bring about the best result conceivable. Reason must be content to sacrifice the less important advantage and achieve the best result attainable.<sup>36</sup>

On this reading, matter, i.e. Necessity, resists providential design and necessitates evil.<sup>37</sup> So, in having to make a compromise with matter, the lesser gods, although aiming for the good, bring about as a consequence (i.e. as a consequence necessitated by matter) something bad (or, at least, non-ideal).

Could it be that Chrysippus is employing the example of the head to make a similar point? There is good reason to doubt such a parallel. Certainly, if Chrysippus is pointing to matter as resisting the providential work of the immanent god of the Stoic cosmos, this seems an extremely odd position for him to adopt. Stoic matter is entirely

<sup>33</sup> According to Long 2010: 49, 'Plato's Demiurge, in spite of all his power and benevolence, is constrained to some extent by material necessity.' See also Zeyl 2000: lxxx: 'Necessity sometimes imposes a constraint on Intellect.'

<sup>34</sup> *Timaeus* 47e4–48a7; 56c5; 68e1–69a5; 75d5–e5. See Sedley 2007: 114 n. 48.

<sup>35</sup> Reydam-Schils 1999: 71. Archer-Hind 1888: 278: 'the conditions of the material nature to which our soul is linked will not admit of the combination of a dense covering of flesh with acute sensitiveness'.

<sup>36</sup> Cornford 1934: 176.

<sup>37</sup> Long 2010: 44: 'The pre-existence of mobile material sets physical constraints on the divine craftsman's workmanship' (compare 30a3, 37d2). Reydam-Schils 1999: 28: 'That the divine artistry is also to a certain extent hampered in its choices is illustrated by the famous dilemma of the creation of the human head.' See Sedley 2007: 115 n. 51 on the history of this reading.

passive and, as such, is not the sort of thing which could resist the active ordering principle. Indeed, the improbability of Stoic matter being the source of cosmic evil is highlighted by Plutarch:

They themselves make god, though good, the origin of things evil. For matter has not of itself brought forth what is evil, for matter is without quality and all the variations that it takes on it has got from that which moves and fashions it.<sup>38</sup>

Not only is matter not able to put up resistance in the Stoic cosmos, but it is equally inconceivable that Chrysippus' god should be hindered in his providential activities:<sup>39</sup>

For since universal nature reaches everywhere, it must be the case that however anything happens in the whole or in any of its parts it happens in accordance with universal nature and its reasons in unhindered sequence, because neither is there anything which could interfere with its government from outside, nor is there any way for any of the parts to enter any process or state except in accordance with universal nature.<sup>40</sup>

Here, however, is a source of puzzlement. Why would Chrysippus reach for a Platonic example of theodicy which depends on the intransigence of matter, if he himself holds matter to be in no way intransigent?<sup>41</sup> One possible solution to the puzzle is to reconsider our reading of the *Timaeus* passage as pointing to matter's essentially resistant nature as the source of cosmic evil.

### *Conditional necessity*

David Sedley has recently argued against the traditional reading of the *Timaeus* as attributing the sources of evil to the recalcitrance of matter.<sup>42</sup> Sedley suggests that the thought that god might on occasion be defeated by matter seems to be 'such an un-Platonic thought that very clear evidence would be needed before the point could be safely conceded'.<sup>43</sup> He goes on to argue that the *Timaeus*, for all its talk of

<sup>38</sup> *Comm. not.* 1076c (trans. Cherniss).

<sup>39</sup> For the surprising suggestion that god's creative powers may be limited, see Epictetus *D* 1.1.7–13.

<sup>40</sup> Plutarch's quotation of Chrysippus at *Stoic. rep.* 1050c–d (trans. Long and Sedley).

<sup>41</sup> See Long 2010: 49 and Sedley 2007: 205–10. <sup>42</sup> Sedley 2007: 113–27.

<sup>43</sup> Sedley 2007: 116.

matter as Necessity, does not provide such evidence. In reference to the 'head' example, Sedley points out that the occurrence of *ex anankês* at 75a7 does not, as has often been thought, refer to the role of matter in necessitating the compromise between durability and sensitivity.<sup>44</sup> Timaeus says the following:

For there is no way that anything that necessarily undergoes generation and growth (ἡ γὰρ ἐξ ἀνάγκης γιγνομένη καὶ συντρεφομένη) can accommodate the combination of thick bone and massive flesh with keen and responsive sensation.

'Necessity' here is not the necessity that is matter, but rather the necessity of generation and growth which follows as a consequence of something's being composed of living bodily tissue.<sup>45</sup> That this is not material necessity is clear from the fact that the matter from which the creator begins to shape the world (52d4–53b5) is, as Sedley notes, 'more or less devoid of determinate characteristics'.<sup>46</sup> It is the Demiurge himself who is responsible for the nature of the simple bodies which he himself designed in the best possible way. Once those simple bodies are designed and created, certain consequences follow. As Johansen has it, 'from these compositions necessarily arise properties that have not themselves been selected for their beauty and order . . . the demiurge does not select these properties as such but they arise as necessary consequences of his selection'.<sup>47</sup> Here, at the microscopic level, we have something very similar to the state of affairs described by Chrysippus in the Gellian passage.

Applying this to the example of the head in the *Timaeus*, we can say that the lesser gods aim for the good in designing it to be sensitive and that, in doing so, they work with material that is itself designed to be optimal. But the *teleological* creative choice that the head should be sensitive necessitates the consequence that the head cannot also be durable, because they are working with a material which, although

<sup>44</sup> Sedley 2007: 114 n. 48.

<sup>45</sup> Sedley 2007: 121: Timaeus is 'presenting the restriction as one caused by the demands of biology, not the nature of matter'. See also Sedley 2002: 74–5.

<sup>46</sup> Sedley 2007: 116. See also Johansen 2004: 99–103.

<sup>47</sup> Johansen 2004: 100: 'Put differently, the necessary attributes are not themselves teleologically caused though they do follow from attributes that are so caused.'

and indeed *because* it is designed for the best, cannot instantiate both durability and sensitivity.<sup>48</sup> This looks like a kind of natural necessity, where we understand that the nature which necessitates is the teleological, generally beneficial structure imposed on passive matter. In fact, it is perhaps best understood, as Sedley describes it, as *conditional* necessity.<sup>49</sup> It is not the case that matter *qua* matter resists intelligence, but rather that intelligence must work with the consequences of its own providential creative activities. Its good aims are not so much resisted as qualified by the degree to which they are compatible with other teleological concerns.

On this reading of the *Timaeus*, Chrysippus' incorporation of the *Timaeus*' 'head' example no longer looks so uncomfortable. In fact, it looks entirely at home in the new context of Stoic cosmology. For Chrysippus can assimilate the Platonic illustration whilst maintaining matter to be entirely passive and unqualified. It is not that matter *qua* matter somehow resists the providential efforts of god.<sup>50</sup> Rather, the Stoic god imposes structure on matter, always with the good in mind and, once providential choices have been made and the requisite structure imposed, certain necessary consequences follow.<sup>51</sup> So Chrysippus' god, for providential reasons, chooses to make the head of 'very thin and tiny portions of bone' and, as a consequence of this choice, the head is 'thinly protected and fragile to small blows and knocks'. Insofar as this fragility is a consequence of his choice of material, it is in that sense caused by nature. But, insofar as it is a necessary consequence as opposed to the primary goal of nature's creative activities, god himself is not responsible for this particular evil. The Stoic god is bound by the physical laws that he himself has

<sup>48</sup> As David Sedley has emphasized to me, *Timaeus* simply does not say why these two qualities cannot be combined in living tissue. It may be that such incompatibility is dictated by the need to work with matter, but this is not the same as matter itself resisting the teleological aims of the creator. See Aristotle *PA* 2.10 656a14–27 for an alternative teleological explanation of the fragility of the head.

<sup>49</sup> Sedley 2007: 116.

<sup>50</sup> Algra 2003b: 172 sees a 'limitation' on the Stoic god as follows: 'as a rational principle, he incorporates the laws of rationality, where opposites may be said to entail each other, and as a physical force he incorporates the laws of physics, according to which some things cannot be created without a certain amount of waste'.

<sup>51</sup> See Frede 2002: 109 n. 50; Salles 2003: 163.

set in place.<sup>52</sup> On this reading, Chrysippus and the *Timaeus* seem to be very much in sympathy.

With this brief summary and analysis, I hope to have shown that we have good reason for reading both the *Timaeus* and Chrysippus as adducing conditional necessity as the source of cosmic 'evil'. Reading the two passages against one another is particularly useful because it allows us to check our understanding of each against the other. It is especially noteworthy that the fact that Chrysippus incorporates the 'head' example from the *Timaeus* is, in itself, evidence against reading the *Timaeus* as attributing to material necessity responsibility for evil.<sup>53</sup> If that were the correct reading of the *Timaeus*, it would be difficult to see how or why Chrysippus should have wanted to allude to Plato's theodicy. Interpreting the *Timaeus* on the same lines as Sedley and Johansen allows us to make sense of Chrysippus' decision to use the same example as Plato and illuminates exactly how Chrysippus sought to explain illness and the weaknesses of human anatomy.

#### SUBTLER REASONING

I turn now to one further puzzle about Chrysippus' appropriation of this section of the *Timaeus*. For one particular disparity between Stoic doctrine and the *Timaeus* renders the choice of the 'head' example rather surprising. In the *Timaeus*, the durability of the head is compromised by its need to be sensitive. As noted above, at 74e we are told that thick flesh causes 'a kind of insensibility, which would make thinking less retentive and more obscure'. Timaeus has elsewhere stated that the rational part of the soul is located in the head (69c5–71e2) and it seems clear that this relates to the requirement for the greater sensitivity and intelligence of the head described in 74e1–75c7. In contrast, Chrysippus locates the commanding part of the soul not in the head, but in the heart.<sup>54</sup> This difference prompts the question

<sup>52</sup> As argued by Seneca *Prov.* 5.8: 'although the actual creator and ruler of the universe wrote the decrees of fate, he follows them; he obeys them forever, but gave the orders only once . . . the craftsman cannot alter his material; this is its condition'.

<sup>53</sup> A point hinted at by Sedley 2007: 210.

<sup>54</sup> Galen *PHP* 2.5.8: 'Therefore thought too is not in the head but in the lower regions, principally no doubt around the heart'. Some Stoics did locate the *hégemonikon* in the head (Philodemus *On Piety* 15). See Long and Sedley 1987: 1.320.

why Chrysippus' providence dictates that the durability of the head must be compromised, if not in order to better allow reasoning. Those who have discussed this passage have tended to assume that Chrysippus is saying much the same thing as we find in the *Timaeus*. So, for example, Long explains that the head's 'fragility is a necessary consequence of the brain's complex structure as the instrument of reason'.<sup>55</sup> Such readings may take their lead from Gellius' reference to the *ratio subtilior* at 7.1.10. Chrysippus is recorded as having claimed that this *ratio subtilior*, along with the usefulness of the product, dictated the delicate nature of the skull:

'sicut' inquit 'cum corpora hominum natura fingeret, ratio subtilior et utilitas ipsa operis postulavit, ut tenuissimis minutisque ossiculis caput compingeret'.

Long and Sedley translate:

Just as, he says, when nature was creating men's bodies, it was required for the enhancement of our rationality and for the very utility of the product that she should construct the head of very thin and tiny portions of bone.

Now, although the head is not the seat of reason for Chrysippus, it is possible that our rationality is enhanced by the delicate nature of the skull insofar as it houses our sense organs.<sup>56</sup> Presumably these organs need to be unencumbered by thick bone and so a delicate skull may serve to promote perception. There is, however, another possible reading of this section of text. Rather than taking *ratio subtilior* to refer to the enhanced rationality of humans at which god aims, one can read it as identifying the 'more refined reasoning' that goes into the choice of a frangible skull.<sup>57</sup> On this reading, it is the providential reasoning of nature itself, rather than the cognitive ability of humans, which is cited as explanatory of nature's creative choices. 7.1.10 can thus be translated as 'just as, when nature was creating men's bodies, a more refined reasoning and the very utility of the product demanded that...'.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Long 1968: 333. See also Salles 2003: 263 and perhaps also Mansfeld 1979: 158 n. 90.

<sup>56</sup> Cicero *ND* 2.140–5 gives an account of the providential design of the head and senses.

<sup>57</sup> Plutarch *Stoic. rep.* 1050f suggests that vice has its own rationality. See n. 30 above.

<sup>58</sup> See Rolfe 1927: 93, who translates *ratio subtilior* as 'a higher reason'. Marache 1978: 83 has 'une structure plus fine'.



In this alternative reading it is even clearer that Chrysippus did not carelessly take over from the *Timaeus* its account of the locations of the embodied soul, an account that he opposes elsewhere.<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, some may worry that such a reading undermines the explicit connection that Chrysippus seems to be setting up to the *Timaeus*. But there does seem to be a precedent for this idea in the *Timaeus* itself. At 74e3–5, Timaeus tells us that ‘at the joints of the bones, wherever reason did not reveal any need (μήτινα ἀνάγκην ὁ λόγος ἀπέφαινε δέειν) for the presence of flesh, he introduced only a thin layer of flesh’. On my construal of the Gellian text, which has providential reason in the driving seat, Chrysippus echoes not the Platonic location of psychic reason, but rather the idea that *providential* reasoning dictates the structuring of the body as is appropriate. Why it is appropriate is not specified, but presumably the fact that this is the head’s nature is taken as proof enough that there is good reason for its being so.<sup>60</sup>

#### EVIL EXPLAINED?

One final issue requires some consideration. In the discussion above, I have taken at face value Gellius’ claim that this is Chrysippus’ response to the existence of evil in the cosmos. However, it is well known that the Stoics limit genuine *kakia* to its moral instantiations. Does this passage indicate an acceptance of cosmic evil that runs contrary to Stoic doctrine? It may well indicate a qualified acceptance of such cosmic evil.<sup>61</sup> This is not to say that Chrysippus thinks diseases, etc., really are evils, for they are, of course, merely dispreferred indifferents. Rather, I take it that this is an example of what Long calls ‘a concession to everyday usage’.<sup>62</sup> It represents an

<sup>59</sup> But see Gill 1997 for an account of how Chrysippus may have found support for his own unified psychology in the *Timaeus*’ account of tripartition.

<sup>60</sup> It may be that the justification is indeed the head’s increased sensitivity, which is fitting to its role as the home of the sense organs.

<sup>61</sup> It is also possible that the discussion of *incommoda* from 7.1.7 onwards is supplementary to the discussion of evils, i.e. that he argues against the existence of evils at 7.1.1–6 and then moves on to classifying *incommoda* from 7.1.7 onwards. However, the final lines of 7.1, which draw a connection back from *incommoda* to vice, may suggest a stronger link between moral and natural evils.

<sup>62</sup> Long 1968: 333.

acceptance that there are phenomena in the world that people tend to label and regard as 'evils'.<sup>63</sup> This is the kind of approach that Plutarch attributes to Chrysippus at *Stoic. rep.* 1048a:

If someone in accordance with such differences wishes to call one class of them [i.e. of indifferents] good and the other bad, and he is referring to these things and not committing an idle aberration, his usage must be accepted on the grounds that he is not wrong in the matter of meanings and in other respects is aiming at the normal use of the terms.<sup>64</sup>

It is possible that the theodicean argument recorded by Gellius is the first step in answering those critics who refuse even to engage with the notion of indifferents.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, it is worth noting that *Stoic. rep.* 1044d suggests that some indifferents, such as the peahen, are necessitated as concomitants of providential creation. One can imagine an objector asking Chrysippus why, if the world is providential, it contains things such as diseases which are evils for men. Chrysippus could reply that such things are not really evils, but merely dispreferred indifferents. But it is perhaps a more subtle and persuasive first response to argue that those things which are generally regarded as 'evils' do not undermine the case for providence because god should not be blamed for their existence. The next step in the argument could then be to point out that they are not even really evils. Here there may be a further role for the *ratio subtilior* clause: a more refined reasoning than that of the common man would recognize the grander plan which dictates the origins of these dispreferred, albeit necessary, consequences. Indeed, a subtler kind of reason would understand that these *incommoda* are better regarded as indifferents.

#### CONCLUSION

I have argued for a reading of the *Timaeus* passage that allows Chrysippus to present himself as in sympathy with the Platonic position. Both Plato and Chrysippus present apparent 'evils' in nature as necessary concomitants of the exclusively providential aims of the

<sup>63</sup> Sedley 2007: 234 notes that critics of Stoicism focused many of their counter-arguments to providence on the world's evident faults.

<sup>64</sup> Trans. Long and Sedley.

<sup>65</sup> Algra 2003b: 158 notes that Chrysippus stresses providential nature against Epicurus.

creator. Both do so, I have argued, by pointing to a kind of conditional necessity. But, of course, the final question is why it should matter to Chrysippus that his own view is anticipated by Plato. My answer to this question may seem rather banal. For it is simply that if, as I have suggested, this is the first, *ad hominem*, step towards the outright denial of cosmic evil, it is clearly an argument targeted at non-Stoics. As such, to be able to point to a precursor of one's own view in the paradigm account of providential design, Plato's *Timaeus*, must surely be an advantage.<sup>66</sup> Further, insofar as the Platonic passage presents an explanation of evil in terms of conditional rather than material necessity, it seems that Chrysippus found this particular aspect of Plato's physics extremely congenial to his own theodicy, notwithstanding their disagreement over the location of the rational part of the soul within the human body. In this case at least, it seems to have mattered to Chrysippus that he was in close agreement with Plato.

<sup>66</sup> See Gretchen Reydam-Schils, [Chapter 2](#), on the tendency of Hellenistic philosophers, and Chrysippus in particular, to construct (Platonic) ancestry for their doctrines. Note that Chrysippus' theodicy need not (and perhaps should not) be read as targeted specifically at Epicureans, who are unlikely to have been much impressed by its Platonic heritage. My claim is simply that it may be an argument intended to engage anyone interested in the problem of cosmic evil but not yet committed to accepting its status as an indifferent.

## CHAPTER 4

# *Plato and the Stoics on limits, parts and wholes*

*Paul Scade*

## INTRODUCTION

An important issue on which no scholarly consensus has been reached in recent years is the question of the nature of limits within Stoic thought. Limits were clearly important to the Stoics.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, however, little evidence survives on the topic and what does remain is frequently embedded in hostile contexts with the sources offering no single, coherent picture of Stoic theorizing in this area. In this chapter I will attempt to address one of the long-standing difficulties with regard to Stoic limits, namely, the question of their ontological status. Typically, discussions of this question have grouped together the evidence that directly mentions the ontological status of limits with the evidence for Stoic thought on infinite division, following Plutarch's combined treatment of these issues (*Comm. not.* 1078e–1080e = LS 50C). This approach has led most commentators to focus their attention on resolving the apparent tensions between these bodies of evidence. The difficulty is as follows. On the one hand, all the texts we have which explicitly assign an ontological status to limits make them incorporeal, and no text assigns them any other ontological status.<sup>2</sup> But,

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<sup>1</sup> This can be seen, for example, in their being listed alongside place and void as the subject of the fifth topic in the five-fold specific division of Stoic physics (D.L. 7.132 = LS 43B). Where possible I have attempted to provide references to Long and Sedley 1987. When such references appear with a quotation I have used their translation unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>2</sup> Plutarch, *Comm. not.* 1080e = LS 50C(8), calls limits incorporeal whilst Cleomedes describes surfaces in the same way (1.1.119–20; references to Cleomedes are to Todd's edition) and later includes them in an open-ended list of incorporeals (1.1.139–142). Some less direct evidence comes from the description of limits as subsisting 'in thought' (see n. 11 below).

on the other hand, Stoic thought on infinite division is best understood as taking limits to be arbitrarily imposed mental constructs.<sup>3</sup> Treatments of the question over the last twenty-five years have tended to see this conflict as irreconcilable and as requiring the emendation or rejection of at least some of our small number of sources.<sup>4</sup> Broadly put, either scholars favour the direct evidence for the incorporeality of limits and do away with the material that seems to make them arbitrary mental constructs, or, more frequently, in order to retain limits as mental constructs, they are compelled to reject the direct evidence for their incorporeal reality. I will suggest that an alternative route is available and that this approach will allow us to retain the bulk of the evidence on both sides more or less intact.<sup>5</sup>

The key, I suggest, is to understand that Stoic thought on limits was complex and recognized more than one type of limit. This possibility has not, as yet, been recognized by the majority of scholars working on this subject: the limits our sources describe as incorporeal have, I think, been illegitimately, although understandably, elided with the limits imposed through an unceasing process of division.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See Long and Sedley 1987: 1.302–4.

<sup>4</sup> Long and Sedley (1987: 1.163, 165, 301) reject the reports of incorporeal limits, preferring to locate them under a third category of ‘something’ for which they find justification in Sen. *Ep.* 58.13–15 = LS 27A. Jacques Brunschwig (1994: 97–8 and 2003: 219) places limits outside the main ontological scheme under the heading of ‘not-something’, along with Stoic universals, a position that is endorsed by White 2003: 150–1 (although compare White’s more equivocal 1992: 285–7). Victor Caston’s attack on the idea that the Stoics treated any objects as not-somethings (1999: 145–213, esp. 162–5 and 192) has been influential in encouraging some scholars to return to the view that limits are incorporeal. David Robertson, in a particularly lucid discussion (2004: 169–91, esp. 170–81), has argued that limits should, indeed, be treated as incorporeals and grounds this argument in the denial that they are mental constructs. Most recently, Anna Ju has suggested that we can account for the descriptions of limits as incorporeals on the grounds that these reports actually represent Posidonius’ view and not that of the early Stoa. The early Stoics, she contends, pursued two distinct lines of thought on limits which they failed to reconcile, seeing them at times as mental constructs and in other contexts as corporeal bodies (2009: 371–89). Other interesting discussions include Sambursky 1989: 81–115 and Nolan 2006: 162–83. See also Papazian 1999: 105–19, who argues, in a discussion concerned with the status of time rather than limits, that mental constructs cannot be incorporeals.

<sup>5</sup> And intact for the early Stoa. It will not be necessary, *pace* Ju (see n. 4 above), to suggest that the evidence must be divided up between early and later Stoics.

<sup>6</sup> And, indeed, further bundled up with mathematical limits. I would seek to distinguish these from either of the types of limits that are exploited in discussing the physical world although I will not be able to discuss mathematical limits in the present chapter. One scholar who does question the unified conception of limits is Robertson (2004: 169–70) although he does not seek to separate the two types of limit that I discuss here.

But when this distinction between the objectively real incorporeal limits of particular bodies, on the one hand, and the mentally constructed, unreal limits reached through infinite division, on the other, is first considered, it rapidly becomes clear that these types must have been distinct; attempting to combine them, I will claim, does irreparable damage to the Stoic physical system as a whole. Once I have laid out my understanding of these two types of limit, and the corresponding types of parts to which they are related, I shall then go on to suggest that the Stoics take their position over, to a very significant extent, from Plato, and that the *Parmenides* in particular provides a model of the relationship between parts and wholes that would have been of great interest to the Stoics. Finally, I argue that the broader evidence for the reading of Plato by Stoics makes it reasonable to suppose that the appropriation of Plato in Stoic physics and metaphysics encompassed not only such dialogues as the *Timaeus*, whose legacy is now known to have been extensive, but the *Parmenides* as well.

#### THE REALITY OF (SOME) LIMITS

I shall argue that the Stoic world-view understands incorporeal limits as playing a vital role in defining the order, structure and unity of the cosmos. The cosmos is an infinitely divisible material continuum but it is also a finitely divided qualitative continuum. In the first sense it can be divided arbitrarily into any number of parts or magnitudes, whilst, in the second sense, at any given time it is only divided into as many tensionally coherent particular individuals as there are in the world. And each type of part will have a corresponding type of limit.

Particular individuals, I claim, are objectively real qualitative units, even if they are frequently co-extensive with each other.<sup>7</sup> Each of the particulars in the world is defined by the tensional ratio in its *pneuma*.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the very thing that makes them particulars, their tension, is also what binds them to each other and to the whole of which they are

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. Nemesius 2.22.3–6 = LS 45D. Whilst the possibility of bodies being spatially co-extensive is clear (see n. 33 below), a harder question to answer is whether, and to what extent, particular individuals can share the same substance as well as the same space.

<sup>8</sup> This presents no problem of spatial or physical discontinuity since particulars can mix with each other through and through (see D.L. 7.151; other examples can be found in the texts collected in LS 48).

parts.<sup>9</sup> One of the consequences of being tensionally sustained as a particular, I will show, is having real limits. These limits are a result of having tenor and are a necessary condition for order and structure. As such, they must be objectively real rather than subjective mental constructs.

A second type of limit is found below the level of qualitative unity and structure where the Stoics posit an infinitely divisible material continuum which underlies qualities as a substrate. On this level we find only qualitatively undifferentiated magnitudes. Any attempt mentally to divide the continuum into parts that do not correspond with tensional particulars will involve the arbitrary marking off of some magnitude and, whereas this arbitrarily defined stretch of the continuum will still be a part, it will not be a whole as well, since it will not have its own particular structure and will not be sustained as a unitary thing by tension. Its individuality or distinctness will be a mental construct and, given that the mental partition is arbitrary, the limits involved in such a partition will themselves be mental constructs. This schema, I think, explains the apparent disagreement between those sources that describe limits as incorporeal and those that talk about infinite division.<sup>10</sup> They are not inconsistent with one another; rather they describe different things.<sup>11</sup>

It seems clear enough that the Stoics do think that the cosmos has an objectively real structure and that it is composed as a whole of its particularly qualified parts. There is no sound evidence that they thought that the distinctions between these parts, such as the

<sup>9</sup> See Alex. *De Mix.* 223.25–36 = LS 47L.

<sup>10</sup> I follow the analysis of infinite divisibility suggested by Long and Sedley 1987: 1.303–4. However, Long and Sedley treat Stoic limits as a single group and, thus, hold that this analysis applies to all limits, while I think that the limits of parts reached in this way must be distinguished from the limits of qualitative partial wholes.

<sup>11</sup> A question I will not examine in detail here is the sense in which objectively real limits ‘subsist in thought’ (Proclus *In Eucl.* 1.89.15–18 = LS 50D; cf. D.L. 7.135 = LS 50E). I suspect that their status is similar to that of the *lekta*, which ‘subsist in accordance with a rational impression’ (S.E., *M.* 8.70) but I will not be able to develop this line of reasoning in the present chapter beyond saying that I think that subsistence in thought need neither align these limits with the mental constructions of infinite division nor cause a problem for their incorporeality. Real limits describe structural arrangements within the world and, thus, can be conceived of in terms of the content of thoughts about this structure. It is worth noting that, *contra* White and Brunschwig, subsistence in thought rules out the possibility that these limits are not-somethings, for not-somethings are ‘non-subsistent (ἀνυπόστατα) for thought’ (S.E., *M.* 1.17, see Long and Sedley 1987: 2.299).

distinction between Plato and Socrates, were creations of the human mind. Plato and Socrates are real individuals, each having their own unified structure corresponding to their particular tension. Now, it might be conceded that there are indeed real particulars in the world but still denied that their limits are real. That is, it could be claimed that the Stoics did not equate being a whole (or a partial whole – a part of a whole that is, itself, a whole)<sup>12</sup> with being limited. On these grounds limits could still be claimed to be arbitrary mental constructs whilst allowing that tensional wholes are real. However, there is a significant body of evidence to the contrary, evidence which directly aligns being a real whole or unit with being limited.<sup>13</sup>

The first point that must be noted is that in the Stoic cosmos, unity, coherence and being a whole are all dependent on the presence of a sustaining cause, (αἴτιον συνέχον) and this is associated with the active principle or god and, on a more concrete level, with the tension in a particular thing's *pneuma*. To give a few examples, we are told that 'the universe is unified and sustained by a breath which pervades the whole of it' (Alex. *De Mix.* 223.25–27 = LS 47L(1)); our body, 'which is composed of many parts, is united externally and internally, and it holds firm by its own tenor' (Philo *Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesim* 2.4 = LS 47R(3)); the inward movement of tensile motion is said to be responsible for unity (Nemesius 2.18.5–10 = LS 47J(3)); Chrysippus

<sup>12</sup> I follow Barnes 1988: 225–6 in talking of 'partial wholes' here. The term (μερικά ὅλα) is not authentically Stoic, deriving instead from the Neoplatonists (e.g., Simp., *In Phys.* 501.20–3), but the concept of a part of a whole which is also itself a whole certainly is Stoic and this language will prove extremely useful in my discussion here, as it provides for the distinction of this type of part from mere magnitudes, which can also be thought of as parts but are not wholes, since they lack the tension that is required in order to be sustained.

<sup>13</sup> I have discussed some of this evidence at greater length in Scade 2010. In that article I sought to identify the Stoic notion of cosmological limits (by 'cosmological limits' I mean, quite generally, limits that are a result of the action of the active principle or god; the evidence for structural limits comes largely from sources that have a cosmological scope, but it should be understood that the same analysis is applicable on a microcosmic scale to the limits that are the result of localized tension) but I ended on a note of perplexity about how this evidence was to be fitted with the sources on infinite division. The argument of the present chapter attempts to resolve that issue.



describes the active principle as a principle of unity and cohesion (D.L. 7.139); and Plutarch reports that the passive elements ‘preserve their unity’ and are sustained by being mixed with the tensile active elements (*Comm. not.* 1085c–d = LS 47G). So, the sense of holding together implied by συνέχειν (‘sustaining’) is, then, that of holding something together as a coherent unit or a whole, which is to say, as a particular something.

With this in hand, we can turn now to the evidence for the reality of limits. To begin with, two sources (Calcidius 295; Cleomedes 1.1.7–10) make it clear that being limited is, for the Stoics, a necessary condition for being ordered and structured. Whilst it is tempting to understand this in terms of a claim that the passive principle must be finite in order for the active principle to work upon it,<sup>14</sup> this interpretation should be resisted. Calcidius groups being limited together with a number of other characteristics: ‘the body of the world is limited, is one, is a whole and is a substance’, as well as being continuous and coherent (293). ‘The body of the world’ here should not be understood in terms of the passive principle in complete isolation from the active; rather, I suggest, all of these characterizations derive from the presence of the active principle.<sup>15</sup> Chrysippus held that substance is unified as a whole by the presence of breath (Alex. *De Mix.* 216.14–17 = LS 48C(1)), so we can safely say that the attribution of being one and whole to the body of the world cannot come about in the absence of the active principle. More conclusively, Cleomedes reports (1.1.96–103 = LS 49H) that whilst the Peripatetics claim that if there is a void outside the world, ‘substance would have flowed through it and been infinitely scattered and dissipated (χεομένη δι’ αὐτοῦ ἢ οὐσία ἐπ’ ἄπειρον διεσκεδάσθη ἂν καὶ

<sup>14</sup> Calc. 292, 293, 295, 312 and D.L. 7.150 refer to matter as ‘limited’ and this has normally been understood as meaning just ‘finite’. A number of other texts describe the world as limited (for example, S.E. *M* 9.332 = LS 44A) and can be understood, again, as noting just that the world is finite. Due to interpretations solely in terms of finite quantity these passages have not, to my knowledge, been discussed in the context of the Stoic theory of limits. Whilst I certainly do not want to deny that Stoic matter and the Stoic cosmos are finite, I also do not think that a strict separation between these limits and geometrical limits such as surfaces is warranted. Indeed, at least one passage directly links the two types in an apparently causal manner: ‘The world, they say, is one and finite/limited, having a spherical shape (ἐνα τὸν κόσμον εἶναι καὶ τοῦτον πεπερασμένον, σχῆμα ἔχοντα σφαιροειδές)’ (D.L. 7.140).

<sup>15</sup> Calcidius emphasizes the inseparability of the principles (292, 293, 310, 311 and 321) and even goes so far as to claim that they are identical (294 and 308).

διεσκορπίσθη)’ the Stoics, on the other hand, claim that this infinite scattering and dissipation will not happen because substance ‘has tenor which sustains and protects it’. The finite bounding of matter is, then, directly attributed to the action of the active principle in holding matter together.<sup>16</sup>

So what role do objectively real limits play in Stoic thought? If we turn first to geometrical limits (surfaces, lines and points) we can begin by distinguishing them from shapes. Shape, for the Stoics, is a corporeal quality (Simp. *In Cat.* 271.20–2), and our sources are clear that limits are not corporeal. But despite this distinction it seems plain that the surface of a body *is* directly related to the shape of that body, indeed must be determined by it.<sup>17</sup> The most plausible way of understanding this correspondence is, I think, to see limits as *markers* that map or describe the corporeal structure of the world.<sup>18</sup> Limits overlie the continuum like a grid, marking out the bounds of particulars and the differentiations within the cosmos. There can, of course, be no physical separation in the Stoic continuum, no actual divisions, but in order for particulars to be cognized as distinct from their surroundings there must be some marker of this distinction, and this will necessarily be something that is non-corporeal but, at the same time, objectively real. Geometrical limits will, then, correspond with, and map, certain dimensions of the world’s structure, marking out those differentiations that can be thought of in terms of shape, size and position.

I have argued elsewhere that the Stoic notion of limit is similar in scope to the way in which Plato uses the term and that it includes not just geometrical limits but also the tensional ratios (or harmonic limits) that describe qualitative states.<sup>19</sup> But this wide-ranging, and

<sup>16</sup> That matter should not be able to sustain itself should be expected, given that the passive elements cannot do so either (Plut. *Comm. not.* 1085c–d = LS 47G). For tenor as responsible for the continuity of matter, see Cleom. 1.1.70, 72, and 98–9. That coherence has the same source is confirmed by Stob. 1.166.4–22 = LS 49J (cf. D.L. 7.139). A number of other passages also connect limits to unity and wholeness: see D.L. 7.140; Cleom. 1.1.7–10 and 1.1.104–110.

<sup>17</sup> See D.L. 7.140.

<sup>18</sup> The descriptive aspect of limits might be indicated in Diogenes’ report of the types of limits that descend from surface as the limit of a body (7.135). This list ends by describing a point as ‘the limit of a line – the smallest *marker*’ (στικμὴ δὲ ἐστὶ γραμμῆς πέρας, ἥτις ἐστὶ σημεῖον ἐλάχιστον).

<sup>19</sup> Scade 2010. On Plato’s identification of limit with ratio see, most prominently, *Phil.* 23c–27c. For a text that might be understood as showing the interplay between tensional ratios (here presented in terms of tensile motion) and geometrical limits in Stoic thought, see Philo *Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesim* 2.4 = LS 47R.

perhaps contentious, sense of limit will not be necessary in the discussion I pursue below. What *is* vital for what follows is that it has been established: (a) that limits are a consequence of tension and, as such, correspond to the objectively real structure of the world; and (b) that limits are a necessary condition for order and structure. It follows from these points that limits cannot be arbitrary constructs of the human mind and, given this, I would suggest that we have little reason to disbelieve the direct evidence for the ontological status of limits, none of which describes them as anything other than incorporeals. A great deal more could be said on this topic but considerations of space dictate that I now turn to consider Stoic thought on parts and wholes and to discuss a different type of limit, a type that will indeed turn out to be mentally constructed.

#### PARTS AND WHOLE

The Stoic conceptions of part and whole are inherently bound up with the idea of structure, which is to say that to be a whole is not merely to be a collection of parts or to be identical with the sum of a group of parts. It is, rather, to be something over and above the collection, the whole deriving its identity not from the sum but from its organized structure or arrangement. The Stoic rejection of the idea that just any collection can be a whole is apparent in their treatment of the distinction between the whole and the All. Sextus reports:

The Stoic philosophers suppose that there is a difference between the 'whole' (τὸ ὅλον) and the 'All' (τὸ πᾶν) . . . For they say that the cosmos is a whole, but the external void together with the cosmos is All; and for that reason the whole is limited (πεπερασμένον), for the world is limited, but the All is unlimited (ἄπειρον), for so is the void outside the world.<sup>20</sup>

And Plutarch adds some additional information:

Now the All is neither a part (for nothing is greater than it) nor a whole, as they themselves [i.e. the Stoics] say; *for 'whole' is predicated of what is ordered*

<sup>20</sup> M 9.332 = LS 44A. (I have modified the translation in Long and Sedley.)

(τεταγμένου) whereas the All, because it is unlimited, is indeterminate and lacking in order.<sup>21</sup>

The world is not a whole simply because it is finite but, rather, because it is ordered and structured. Unlimited things, by contrast, are not just infinite; they are also indeterminate and lacking in order. It is the lack of any unifying order and structure that prevents the combination of world and void from being a whole. It is, instead, a mere collection.

So wholes have order, structure and unity for the Stoics. And this is as true of the particular individuals that compose the cosmos as it is of the cosmos itself. However, this is not the full picture as regards the Stoic understanding of the relationship between parts and wholes. Wholes are composed of parts and these parts are also wholes (partial wholes as opposed to complete wholes).<sup>22</sup> Again, the particular individuals in the world are also composed of their own particular parts, such as Socrates' being composed of his soul and his body. But how far down does this nesting of structured partial wholes within greater wholes go?

Plutarch reports Chrysippus as indicating that the relationship discussed above tells only one side of the story:

Chrysippus says that when asked if we have parts, and how many, and of what and how many parts they consist, we will operate a distinction. In relation to the whole (τὸ μὲν ὅλοσχερὲς τιθέντας) we will reply that we consist of head, trunk and limbs – for that was all that the problem put to us amounted to. But if they extend their questioning to the ultimate parts, we must not, he says, in reply concede any such things, but must say neither of what parts we consist, nor, likewise, of how many, either infinite or finite. I have, I think, quoted his actual words, so that you may see how he conserved the common conceptions, urging us to think of each body as consisting neither of certain parts nor of some number of them, either infinite or finite.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Comm. not.* 1074b–c, trans. Barnes, revised (see Barnes 1988: 247–9 on these two passages). Compare Aristotle *Met.* 1024a1–3, cf. 1022b1–3. Unless the Stoics drew directly on Aristotle for this definition (for general problems in assuming an Aristotelian influence on the Stoics, see Sandbach 1985; cf. Barnes 1997: 14–16) we probably have to posit a common Academic source both for the Stoic position and for Aristotle's own description of a whole, which itself seems to be drawing on Plato. Harte 2002: 132–3 notes the relation of the Aristotelian passage to the Platonic scheme, whilst Barnes 1988: 248–9 connects it to the Stoic scheme.

<sup>22</sup> For the distinction between the complete whole that is the cosmos and the incomplete wholes that are parts of the cosmos see Plut. *Stoic. rep.* 1054e–f = LS 29D.

<sup>23</sup> *Comm. not.* 1079b–c = LS 50C(3), trans. Long and Sedley, revised.

This passage has normally been taken to show that the Stoics' doctrine of infinite division led them to deny that there were a fixed number of parts to any body; the passage has also provided considerable support for the claim that the limits of parts must be arbitrary, since the division into parts is itself so. However, I think that if we bear in mind the distinction I have suggested between qualitative and material division an alternative reading becomes available. If we assume that there is only one type of part for the Stoics and that this passage eliminates qualitative partial wholes together with physical magnitudes (understood as parts) then we are forced to conclude that Chrysippus' claim here amounts to a denial that there is a determinate number of tensionally qualified particulars in the world or, indeed, within any given whole. As Plutarch puts it a few lines earlier, we cannot say 'that man consists of more parts than man's finger, and the world than man'. Plutarch certainly seems to want us to come to this conclusion but, despite quoting Chrysippus directly, he leaves the reader largely in the dark about a critical point, for he reports that Chrysippus operated a *distinction* between the type of parts we can identify and enumerate and the type of parts that we cannot. It is in respect of *ultimate* parts that we must not 'concede any such things but must say neither of what parts we consist, nor likewise, of how many, infinite or finite'. We can, however, legitimately identify parts at a different level, and the examples given here of head, limbs and trunk are particularly revealing, for they are all qualitatively different and are not mere magnitudes of body.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> It may be instructive to compare this division to that provided by Socrates in enumerating his own parts in the first part of the *Parmenides* (129c). The parts he indicates are his front, back, right and left sides and *not* head, trunk and limbs. Harte 2002: 56–60 and 85 suggests that this is in line with the notion of a division into parts in terms of spatially extended magnitudes, rather than the division being in terms of parts of a whole in the light of its orderly structure, since this division is not specific to the type of thing that Socrates is. In Stoic terms this would be to say that this is not a qualitative division, and it is worth considering whether Chrysippus' division deliberately avoids this approach, a suggestion that becomes all the more plausible when one examines the connections between the Stoic position and the *Parmenides* discussed below. An analysis of the parts of the body in terms of magnitudes diminishes the importance of structure and thus fits neatly with the idea of composition as identity which underlies the one/many puzzles of the first part of the *Parmenides*, as well as the first two deductions of the second part.

That the first type of division is associated with the division of qualitative wholes receives some support in the text. The division into head, trunk and limbs is said to be τὸ μὲν ὀλοσχερὲς τιθέντας. Long and Sedley translate this as ‘With regard to the inexact question’, following one of the possible meanings of ὀλοσχερής as ‘roughly’ or ‘in a general way’<sup>25</sup> and setting it up in opposition to the presumably exact question about ultimate parts. Cherniss gives ‘in a large sense’,<sup>26</sup> and such a translation again seems reasonable as it allows for the opposition of the large parts with the ‘small’ ultimate parts and manages to convey much the same meaning as Long and Sedley’s offering. However, the primary sense of the word is ‘whole’ and a translation in such terms brings out precisely the distinction that I have been arguing for. In relation to the whole (specifically the whole person here but the point will also be applicable to the cosmic whole or any partial whole within it) we can divide ourselves into our distinct qualitative parts, the brief list providing an example, albeit not an exhaustive one, of such a division. But if we are questioned about our ultimate parts, that is our non-qualitative material parts, we will refuse to answer, because on a material level we are, potentially, subject to an unceasing division.

In any case, the idea that the first answer does not identify real parts is clearly wrong. Let us leave aside the particular examples provided here for a moment, since it might be questioned whether head, trunk and limbs are actually partial wholes (I believe that they are and will return to this point shortly) and reconfigure the question in terms of the cosmos. If asked what parts the cosmos consists of we could answer, in reply to the question about the whole, that the parts of the cosmos are fire, air, water and earth. These parts are qualitative and real.<sup>27</sup> But, again, in response to a question about ultimate parts we would not be able to answer due to the infinite divisibility of the cosmos when considered from the material perspective. If we do not understand the ultimate parts as being material, then the passage implies that the cosmos has an indeterminably large number of arbitrarily defined

<sup>25</sup> LSJ, s.v. ὀλοσχερής 3. <sup>26</sup> Cf. LSJ, s.v. ὀλοσχερής 1b.

<sup>27</sup> For the elements as parts see Cic., *ND* 2.24–8 (cf. Cleom. 1.1.11 and 1.4.244 with the explanation of parts at 1.5.8 (see Bowen and Todd 2004: 22, n. 6)). This text reports Cleanthes’ view that heat is the sustaining cause, but we can assume that the same understanding will apply under an analysis in terms of pneumatic tension.

*qualitative* parts. I do not think that this is a tenable position for the Stoics to hold, as it would commit them to the very awkward claim that any piece of the cosmos we care to mark off in our minds will have tensional unity and particularity, as it must if the parts can be described in terms of quality. Rather, as I will suggest below, the Stoics hold that any qualitative part can potentially be divided unceasingly into further real qualitative particulars but is not, in fact, so divided.

I think then that the distinction insisted on by Chrysippus was, most likely, not just a distinction between different levels of precision in specifying the same types of parts but, rather, a distinction between different types of parts: on the one hand, partial wholes which are real qualitative particulars and, on the other hand, parts of magnitudes which are neither real nor wholes, having no unifying tensional particularity.<sup>28</sup> It is not entirely clear to me precisely where the Stoics would have drawn the line between the two types. There is some evidence that the notion of tensional particulars extended as far as bones, sinews, nails and hairs, all of which are said to have their own tenors (D.L. 7.138 = LS 47O(2); Philo, *Leg. Alleg.* 2.22–3 = LS 47P). Whilst it is not possible to be precise on this front, I think it probable that the Stoics would have allowed any discernible part that has some kind of identifying property to have its own tension (head, trunk and limbs being examples of these). So a hair may have been allowed to be a unique particular.<sup>29</sup> And it is even theoretically plausible, although there is no evidence to support this, that the Stoics might have allowed a further distinction between the root and the main body of the hair, or any other qualitatively discriminable part of it.<sup>30</sup> But what happens if we try to go beyond this? I would suggest that once we exhaust the possible qualitative distinctions we are then left with, simply, a mass

<sup>28</sup> When discussing infinite division Sedley 1999b: 392 puts ‘part’ in inverted commas at one point and so seems to make a gesture in the direction of the distinction between parts of magnitudes and real qualitative parts, but I am not certain whether he intends to make the same distinction as the one I aim at here.

<sup>29</sup> The suggestion here is that a hair will be a particular, even when it is still joined to a head. It is possible that the epistemological insistence on the uniqueness of individual hairs is meant to apply to hairs that have been separated from their original wholes, but it seems unlikely that the Stoics will have claimed that the same hair loses its discernibility when not so separated.

<sup>30</sup> See Simp. *In Cat.* 212.14–16 where it is reported that the Stoics hold that ‘everything differentiated’ (πᾶν τὸ κατὰ διαφορᾶν) is qualified. The point being made here is that not only qualities but also temporary or enduring dispositions can be called qualified; however, that being differentiated has a more general extension is made clear at 214.24–37 = LS 28M.

or magnitude (of the particular hair in my example). Any marking off of parts below this level will be based on the arbitrary division of this magnitude into parts that are entirely mind-dependent. The middle centimetre of a qualitatively homogeneous length of hair will not have its own tension and quality any more than will an inch of the hair that partially overlaps the middle centimetre. The hair will have no ultimate parts because any smallest section that can be marked off will itself be divisible even further, not according to the different qualities of its parts, because there will be none, but according to the actions of the mind doing the dividing. This kind of analysis seems to me to be the best way of reconciling the existence of ontologically real particular wholes within the world with the Stoic insistence on the infinite divisibility of bodies and other continua.

In addition to Plutarch's report of Chrysippus there are two other texts which, when taken together, might be understood as directly implying the theory that I have ascribed to the Stoics. Philo reports that 'Tenor is also shared by lifeless things, stones and logs' (*Leg. Alleg.* 2.22-3 = LS 47P(2)). Now, stones and logs seem to be good candidates for qualitatively homogeneous particulars and it is, I think, telling that when Philo discusses their tenor in another work he informs us that their having tenor is dependent on being physically separated from their original mass: 'In stones and logs *which have been severed from their physical connexion*, [god] created tenor which is the strongest bond' (*Quod deus sit immutabilis* 35-6 = LS 47Q). That severance from their original mass is necessary in order for stones or logs to attain a tenor and, thus, a particular quality is exactly what one would expect if the original masses were considered to be qualitatively homogeneous. The implication here is that the potential stones and logs did not have their own tenor in their original conjoined state and, if the passage is taken as representative, this shows that the Stoics did not consider particular wholes to be infinitely divisible into further partial wholes *within* the original, although actual division, the process of cutting the mass, into real particulars could, potentially, go on indefinitely. So, Plutarch, in criticizing the Stoic position, fails to take into account this distinction between two types of part and two types of division, a distinction that Chrysippus seems to have insisted on.

There remain, however, a number of issues to be resolved here. I have distinguished between, on the one hand, the infinite divisibility



of the material continuum into mentally constructed parts that do not correspond with the real qualitative structure of the world and, on the other hand, the finite division of the cosmos into the particulars that do so correspond. But I have also claimed that qualitatively homogeneous particulars can themselves be cut up into further real particulars, and that this process of cutting can, in theory, be unceasing, in parallel with the unceasing mental division. Is there a contradiction here, since the qualitative particulars themselves also end up being infinitely divisible in this respect? I will suggest that there is, in fact, no difficulty at all, as long as attention is paid to the details of the Stoic scheme I have suggested. First, the mental division of a magnitude and the actual cutting of the same magnitude are distinct processes, each of which has its own rules. In dividing up some magnitude in my mind I am able to mark off parts at will. I can, for instance, identify as parts both the first half of the mass and the first third of the mass. But when it comes to the actual cutting, I cannot cut off both the first half and the first third to make two distinct qualitative particulars, because they will overlap. The reason I can make such divisions in thought is because the mentally constructed parts are merely potential divisions. Both the first half and the first third *can* be said to be parts of a given magnitude, but they cannot both be actualized as distinct particulars; I must choose to cut off one length or the other.<sup>31</sup>

Secondly, we can say of a magnitude that it consists of an arbitrarily large number of parts that can be marked off in the mind. And we can also say that the magnitude can actually be divided into an arbitrarily large number of particular wholes. But there is a key difference here: whilst unceasing division is applicable to both mental and actual division, the product in each case is completely different. For when I actually cut up a mass I do not divide the whole into parts but, rather, I destroy or diminish the original whole at the same time as creating a new whole or wholes. If I cut a plank in two, the two new

<sup>31</sup> In using the language of actual and potential here I do not intend to make any connection to Aristotle's use of this terminology. Gould 1970: 116 claims that Chrysippus takes over from Aristotle the notion of the potential infinite, a view criticized by Todd 1973: 21 and n. 16 on the grounds that the Stoics rejected potential being (citing Plot. 6.1.26; cf. Baltzly 1998: 154–6). My suggestion is not that the Stoics recognized any sort of potential being; it is only the non-technical and, I would hope, uncontroversial claim that they posited an infinitely divisible, but not yet divided, continuum.

spatially distinct and qualitatively unique planks cannot be said to be part of a greater plank, because they have been severed from their original connection. They will still be part of some whole (the cosmos, at least) but they will not, collectively, compose a single structured unit. There is, then, an important distinction to be made between saying that a whole is infinitely divisible into parts or stretches and saying that a whole has actually been cut into a number of further wholes. Whilst the number of potential cuts, and thus the number of mentally constructible parts, will be infinitely large, the number of actual cuts made at a given time will always be finite. If I ask at a given time how many pieces the plank has been sawn into I will always receive a finite number in answer. But if I ask how many parts the plank has, the answer will be, we are told, one that the Stoics will refuse to give, and this refusal is probably bound up with the distinction between potential and actual division, the distinction between how many sections something *can* be divided into and how many sections it *is* divided into.

Another potential problem that needs to be addressed is whether the position I have put forward is compatible with Chrysippus' assertion (as reported by Philo) that 'it is impossible for two peculiarly qualified individuals to occupy the same substance jointly'.<sup>32</sup> If two particularly qualified individuals cannot occupy the same substance, then can a part of a particularly qualified whole be, itself, particularly qualified?<sup>33</sup> Some light may be shed on this question by a passage of Plutarch, who claims that the Stoic idea of the co-extension of Zeus and providence during the conflagration shows that they do allow multiple particulars to occupy one substance (*Comm. not.* 1077d–e = LS 28O(3–4)). The first point of interest is Plutarch's claim that the Stoics do assert that two individuals *can* occupy the same substance.

<sup>32</sup> This prefaces Philo's report of the notorious claim that if we consider two individuals, Dion and Theon, such that Dion is whole-limbed whilst Theon is identical except that he lacks a foot, it is Theon, rather than Dion, who perishes if Dion's foot is amputated (Phil. *Act. Mundi* 48 = LS 28P). For discussion, see Sedley 1982: 267–70.

<sup>33</sup> Lewis 1995: 105–6 believes that the answer is no. He claims that particularly qualified individuals must be spatially separated and the parts of any particularly qualified individual cannot, then, themselves be further particularly qualified individuals. But this cannot be correct, for the cosmos itself is a particularly qualified individual (D.L. 7.137 = LS 44F) and none of the particularly qualified entities in the cosmos are spatially separated from it; they are, instead, parts of this whole.

However, it seems clear that the example of Zeus and providence occupying the same substance as two distinct particulars does not represent Stoic doctrine accurately.<sup>34</sup> But there is something else going on here as well, for Plutarch makes a distinction between multiple particulars sharing the same substance as wholes and multiple particulars sharing the same substance as parts. While Plutarch says that the Stoic theory is about wholes, not parts, one might wonder whether the 'assertions and pretences' of the Stoics 'to the effect that two particularly qualified individuals occupy one substance' should instead be treated as reflecting Stoic thought on particularly qualified *parts* and on their occupying part of the substance of a particularly qualified whole.

Whether or not Plutarch's text is a misrepresentation of this view of parts, the Stoics must, I think, have held such a position, for only on this assumption can they have consistently maintained *both* that it is impossible for two particularly qualified individuals to occupy the same substance *and* that the cosmos as a whole is a particularly qualified individual<sup>35</sup> that contains other particularly qualified individuals as parts. I would suggest that the denial that two particulars can occupy the same substance should be understood only in terms of *distinct* particularly qualified individuals that do not stand in a part/whole relationship. If this is correct, then Chrysippus' claim provides no threat to the view of Stoic doctrine that I have advanced here.<sup>36</sup>

I have argued that: (a) in Stoic theory, being limited is a necessary condition of being an orderly whole; (b) limits are markers that describe or define the orderly structure of the world and the individuals within it; and (c) as such, the limits of qualitative particulars are objectively real and can legitimately be treated as the incorporeals that our sources describe them as being. At the same time, the Stoics hold that the material continuum is infinitely divisible but that there is no infinity that the division reaches (which is to say that there is always a

<sup>34</sup> See Cherniss' commentary in the Loeb edition. Cf. Sedley 1982: 274 n. 36; Long and Sedley 1987: 1.174–5.

<sup>35</sup> D.L. 7.137 = LS 44F.

<sup>36</sup> Further support can be found in the details of the Dion/Theon argument, for Theon stands to Dion as a part to a whole (see Philo *Aet. Mundi* 49–51 and Sedley 1982: 274 n. 41) and it is only when Dion is reduced to a state that is identical to that of Theon through the amputation of his foot that Theon is destroyed, as he is no longer a part of Dion but an equivalent whole.

finite number of actual parts despite the fact that division can potentially continue unceasingly). The question of how many ultimate parts a continuum has is one that cannot be answered, for non-qualitative division is arbitrary and the parts that a mind divides a continuum into are mental constructs which correspond with nothing objectively real. I would tentatively suggest that such fictional entities, and their limits, should be located under the ontological heading of the ‘not-somethings’, along with other fictitious individuals.<sup>37</sup> This Stoic distinction between two types of part and two types of limit is not, I will now go on to show, without precedent. A remarkably similar distinction can be found in Plato’s *Parmenides*, and I shall claim that the discussion there most likely provided the inspiration for the Stoic position.

#### PARTS AND WHOLE IN THE ‘PARMENIDES’

The *Parmenides* provides a precedent for the Stoic distinction between the limited, orderly, qualitative wholes into which the cosmos can be finitely divided and the infinitely divisible magnitudes which provide the material substrate on which this order is imposed. Whilst this distinction comes out in the third deduction,<sup>38</sup> it will help to turn first to the seventh deduction,<sup>39</sup> where the one is assumed not to be, as this will help to show how Parmenides conceives of the others on which the one imposes its structure.

The others are described here as ‘multitudes’ (πλήθη) or ‘masses’ (ὄγκοι), since they cannot be ones if the one is not:

But each mass of them, as it seems, is unlimited in multitude, and if you take what seems to be smallest, in an instant, just as in a dream, instead of seeming to be one, it appears many, and instead of very small, immense in relation to the bits chopped from it. (164d)<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> In agreement with Brunschwig’s location of fictional entities (1994: 97–103).

<sup>38</sup> In the third deduction Parmenides departs from the notion that wholes are composed of the sum of their parts (the view that ‘composition is identity’ as Harte 2002: esp. 48–116, puts it), which underpins the first two deductions (cf. *Tht.* 205a, and also 204a–b with the discussion at Harte 2002: 32–47).

<sup>39</sup> The relationship between the seventh and third deductions is discussed by Harte 2002: 136–7. My understanding of Plato’s thought on parts and wholes is greatly indebted to her treatment of the subject.

<sup>40</sup> I follow the translation in Gill and Ryan 1997.

The first point that comes out here is that any part, that is, 'what seems to be smallest', that one takes of this multitude will turn out to be further divisible into a very large number of further pieces. This is to say that any mass, in the absence of the one, will be unlimited in multitude or infinitely divisible. It will have no smallest piece, no atomic structure. However, whilst there will be no unity amongst this unstructured plurality, there will be the *appearance* of unity: 'Well, then, won't there be many masses, each appearing, but not being, one, if in fact one is not to be?' (164d). There will be apparent unity and this extends to the appearance of smallest pieces amongst the masses: 'Furthermore, a smallest, too, will seem to be among them; but this appears many and large in relation to each of its many, because they are small' (164e–165a). So, whilst any apparent smallest piece will be infinitely divisible, it will *appear* to be a smallest unit in some way. The cause of the inaccurate appearance of unity becomes clear in what follows:

Now won't it appear to have a limit in relation to another mass, but itself to have no beginning, limit, or middle in relation to itself? – Why is that? – Because whenever you grasp any bit of them in thought (τὶ λαβὴ τῆς διανοίας) as being a beginning, middle, or end, before the beginning another beginning always appears, and after the end a different end is left behind, and in the middle others more in the middle than the middle but smaller, because you can't grasp each of them as one, since the one is not. – Very true. (165a–b)

Limits, and the parts which they appear to delimit, are here said to be things that appear to the mind. They are grasped *in thought* but they are ultimately found to slip away because there is no real unity here, since the one is not. The passage continues:

So every being that you *grasp in thought* must, I take it, be chopped up and dispersed because surely, without oneness, it would always be grasped as a mass. – Of course. – So must not such a thing appear one to a person dimly observing from far off; but to a person considering it keenly from up close, must not each one appear unlimited in multitude, if in fact it is deprived of the one, if it is not? – Indeed, most necessarily. – *Thus the others must each appear unlimited and as having a limit, and one and many, if the one is not, but things other than the one are?* – Yes they must. (165b–c)

In the absence of unity, then, an examination of masses or magnitudes finds no real wholes or parts, only appearances of units in one's mind. And these units are divided to the extent that the divider pays attention to them. I assume that this is what Parmenides means with his talk of examining the masses from far away and from close up; these terms must be metaphorical, given the abstract nature of this discussion, and correspond with depth of division in relation to the attention paid by the divider.

There is a very close match between the ideas put forward here and the Stoic notion of infinite division. A passage of particular interest in this context comes from Plutarch's criticism of Stoic views on infinite divisibility. He writes: 'It is contrary to our conception that there should be in the nature of bodies neither an extremity nor a first or last part at which the magnitude of the body terminates, but that, whatever be taken, the invariable appearance <of something> beyond it casts the object into unlimitedness and indeterminacy.'<sup>41</sup> Whilst Parmenides is speaking of abstract multitudes<sup>42</sup> in the absence of the one, the Stoic analysis would be applied to the masses or magnitudes either *below* the level of structural unity or when examining them under the first genus of the four-genera scheme. But allowing for this difference, which will, in any case, disappear when we return to the third deduction, we find that the key concepts match: in each case we have an infinitely divisible continuum with apparent limits deriving from the thought of the observer but dissolving on closer examination.

Not only are Parmenides' limits and parts mind-dependent but he characterizes them in such a way as to undermine the reality of these thoughts. The process of the division of the first apparent smallest into a further immense many (164d) is said to happen 'just as in a dream' (ὥσπερ ὄντα ἐν ὕπνῳ) and, a little later, when Parmenides is describing the various things that will seem to be, but will not actually be, true of the multitudes (they will seem to be one, there will seem to be a number of them, some will appear to be odd and some even, there will seem to be a smallest part, 164d–165a), he eventually comes to say

<sup>41</sup> *Comm. not.* 1078e = LS 50C(1), trans. Long and Sedley, revised.

<sup>42</sup> Parmenides' multitudes cannot be thought of as numerical due to the absence of the one. For the appearance of number but the denial of its reality, see 164e.

(165a) that there will be an appearance of equality (τοῦτο δ' εἴη ἂν φάντασμα ἰσότητος), insofar as each mass will appear to be equal to its many small bits. This last description is particularly loaded as the sense of 'appearance' denoted by φάντασμα conveys a strong degree of unreality such as is appropriate to the dreaming state mentioned earlier.<sup>43</sup> Such descriptions are especially striking if I am correct that the Stoics located their own arbitrarily determined parts and limits under the class of not-somethings, for they use exactly the same term to describe the unreality of another member of that class, the universal concepts, and they, too, link φαντάσματα with the products of dreams.<sup>44</sup>

In the third deduction Parmenides exploits a very similar account of the unlimited multitudes; in most of the deduction the one is assumed to be, but, as we shall see, Parmenides also considers what can be said of the many in the absence of the one. During this deduction the account is integrated with the view of structurally unified parts and wholes in a way that prefigures the Stoic scheme. The parts and wholes that have a share in the one are here said also to be unlimited in multitude: 'Since things that partake of the oneness of a part and things that partake of the oneness of a whole are more than one, must not those things themselves that get a share in the one in fact be unlimited in multitude?' (158b). Initially Parmenides talks in terms of how the things that partake in the one are *before* they get their share of the one, and the characterization of this pre-unified state is very similar to that of the seventh deduction:

Now, if we should be willing to subtract, in thought, the very least we can from these multitudes, must not that which is subtracted, too, be a multitude and not one, if in fact it doesn't partake of the one? –Necessarily. – So always, as we examine in this way its nature, itself by itself, different from the form, won't as much of it as we ever see be unlimited in multitude? – Absolutely. (158c)

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *Tim.* 46a where it is again associated with dreaming; *Rep.* 382a, where it is connected with illusion and falsehood. For some other examples of Plato's use of φάντασμα see *Crat.* 386e; *Soph.* 223c; *Thet.* 167b; *Phd.* 81d.

<sup>44</sup> For universal concepts as φαντάσματα see Stobaeus 1.136.21–137.6 = LS 30A and D.L. 7.61 = LS 30C(2); for φαντάσματα as the products of dreams, see D.L. 7.50 = LS 39A(3).

Again we find that division is infinite and the parts reached by division are thought constructs which can always be divided further. Now, these unlimited multitudes were introduced through a thought experiment in which they are abstracted from their share in the one. But it is not really a temporal sequence of states that Parmenides is interested in. Rather, the state of the multitudes before they partake in the one is meant to illustrate something about the parts and the wholes, that there is a sense in which they are actually unlimited. This comes out in Parmenides' second sentence above, in which it becomes clear that the others retain something of their unlimited nature even *after* they have become wholes. For when we consider a multitude 'itself by itself, different from the form', which is to say when we consider the substrate on which the form is imposed, it will still be unlimited. Partaking in the one does not destroy the unlimited nature of the multitudes but, rather, overlays it with limited structure, and a whole can still be analysed as unlimited by abstracting the structuring form. The unlimited does not *become* one when it gets a share of the one but, rather, something new is generated:

Furthermore, whenever each part comes to be one part, the parts then have a limit in relation to each other and in relation to the whole, and the whole has a limit in relation to the parts. – Quite so. – *Accordingly, it follows for things other than the one that from the one and themselves gaining communion with each other, as it seems, something different comes to be in them, which affords a limit for them in relation to each other; but their own nature, by themselves, affords unlimitedness.* – Apparently. – In this way, indeed, things other than the one, taken both as wholes and part by part, both are unlimited and partake of a limit. – Certainly. (158c–e)

Parts and wholes are not simply limited. Rather they are both 'unlimited and partake of a limit'. Something new, neither solely one nor solely other, neither just limited nor unlimited, comes to be from the communion of the two.

So, below the level of the structure created by partaking in the one, which provides limits in relation to the other parts and in relation to the whole, the others remain unlimited. The suggestion, I think, is that the unstructured multitudes are limited and structured by the one but that they remain unlimited 'in between' these limits, or below the level of these limits. We might think of a line divided by real limits and defined at each end with a definite limit, these limits collectively



providing it with an objective structure and unity. But the stretches of line in between the objective limits will not be internally structured. The line, then, will be divisible into its real parts, but each of these ultimate real parts will itself be infinitely divisible; the 'parts' reached by this further division will not themselves be genuine parts and, upon closer examination, will turn out to be subject to further division.

This is exactly the same two-level arrangement that I have suggested is required in order to understand the Stoic claims that there are both real, limited individuals in the world *and* the world is infinitely divisible. Partial wholes are limited in relation to each other and the whole but when conceived of in the absence of structure, or when thought of below the level of structure, we find an unlimited and indefinite substrate. That Parmenides' limits are treated quite generally as structuring entities, which are consequences or causes of unity and wholeness, and not just as geometrical surfaces is also important, for the Stoic position, too, takes a wider view of limit. If the analysis of the Stoic theory as presented above is broadly correct, then it can be mapped on to Plato's thought so closely as to constitute a strong case for the influence of the *Parmenides* on Stoic thought about parts, wholes and limits.

#### THE BROADER CONTEXT

In making such a case the close correspondences between the two theories cannot be taken in isolation. There is no evidence that explicitly testifies to an early Stoic engagement with the *Parmenides*, but this is not to say that the case rests on 'mere' similarities; rather, the broader context of Stoic engagement with Plato must also be considered.<sup>45</sup> There is no doubt at all that the Stoics had access to at least some of Plato's dialogues and read these works closely. In some

<sup>45</sup> It is on this point that claims of Plato's influence on Stoicism part ways with the earlier generation of claims about Aristotle's role (see e.g. Hahm 1977). In Aristotle's case, similarities are the *only* grounds that we have for thinking that the early Stoics reflected on his work, and it is even questionable whether the early Stoics had access to those works that now form the Aristotelian corpus and provide the basis for the comparison with Stoicism. In Plato's case, by contrast, we have not only many similarities but also direct references to his works, evidence of ongoing engagement throughout the Stoa, and biographical and historical traditions that consider the Stoics heirs to Plato's thought and that have Zeno training in the Old Academy.

cases we have explicit evidence. Zeno wrote his own *Republic* in reply to that of Plato (Plut. *Stoic. rep.* 1034e–f) and it is likely that Chrysippus' *On Justice* was a response to the same text (it was certainly a response to Plato, see *Stoic. rep.* 1040a–b, d; 1041b–c; *Comm. not.* 1070e).<sup>46</sup> We can also be certain that the early Stoics read the *Timaeus* in great detail, for again we have not only direct evidence of very significant theoretical and linguistic parallels but also examples of Stoics commenting directly on passages of the text.<sup>47</sup> In addition, the Stoics show an enduring explicit interest in a number of key theories that are central to these two dialogues but are also found elsewhere in the Platonic corpus, most notably the Theory of Forms and Plato's tripartite psychology.<sup>48</sup>

When combined with the ancient claims of Platonic influence on Stoicism, including biographical reports that place Zeno in the Old Academy in his formative years,<sup>49</sup> the secure evidence that the early Stoics engaged with certain critical dialogues and central theories suggests that we should be willing to give serious consideration to the possibility that other close similarities between Stoic and Platonic thought are not coincidental. Given such a starting point, it is very difficult to claim that the extremely close connections between Stoic theory and the arguments in texts such as the *Cratylus*<sup>50</sup> and the *Theaetetus*<sup>51</sup> can be accidental. There are also a number of other texts, such as the *Sophist* and the *Laws*, where we find significant, albeit more localized, similarities and/or reasons to think that the

<sup>46</sup> See Alex Long, [Chapter 5](#).

<sup>47</sup> See e.g. Aulus Gellius 7.1.7 = LS 54Q with *Tim.* 75a–d (discussed by Jenny Bryan in [Chapter 3](#)) and Plut. *Stoic. rep.* 1047c with *Tim.* 70c–d and 91a.

<sup>48</sup> On Forms, see Stob. 1.136.21–137.6 = LS 30A; Aetius 1.10.5 = LS 30B; Simp. *In Cat.* 105.8–16 = LS 30E. Valuable evidence of the ongoing interest in this topic throughout the history of the school is found at Syrianus, *In Metaph.* 105.21–30. For discussion see Sedley 1985; Brunschwig 1994; and Caston 1999. For a recent discussion of Chrysippus' possible engagement with Plato's psychology in the *Republic* and the *Timaeus* see Gill 2006: 291–322; see also Alex Long, [Chapter 5](#).

<sup>49</sup> The accuracy of the biographical reports has been substantiated by Sedley's analysis (2002) of Antiochus' account of Old Academic physics in Cicero's *Academica*. But for a critique of Sedley's arguments see Gretchen Reydam-Schils, [Chapter 2](#).

<sup>50</sup> For an extensive discussion, see Long 2005: 36–49. Cf. Long 1996b: 91–2; Long 2002b; Long and Sedley 1987: 1.195.

<sup>51</sup> On the Stoics taking over the metaphor of the wax tablet from *Tht.* 191a ff., see Sedley 1993: 329–30; Mansfeld 1978: 153–4. See also Scott 1995 on the similarities between Plato's theory of recollection and the Stoic theory of preconceptions.

Stoics may have developed their positions at least in part through critical reflection on arguments within these dialogues. In addition, a strong case can be made for the origins of Stoic Socraticism in their readings of a range of Plato's dialogues, including the *Euthydemus*, *Crito*, *Phaedo*, *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, *Meno* and *Apology*.<sup>52</sup> We can say with some confidence, then, that the Stoic engagement with Plato was both broad and deep and that the early Stoics were familiar with the bulk of Plato's work. This evidence provides a framework within which to consider connections that might be dismissed as coincidental if examined independently.

The Stoic interest in, and engagement with, Plato's metaphysics and ontology was not limited to the versions of these positions found in the *Timaeus* and the *Republic*. On the contrary, the Stoics appear to have been highly sophisticated readers of Plato's works who approached his corpus as a unified body of thought and were willing to draw on a range of dialogues to understand, supplement or correct positions found in any given text. The Stoic engagement with the Theory of Forms, for example, is not tied to its presentation in any particular dialogue, and the focus on universals such as Man and Animal, rather than those of such notions as justice or goodness, can be seen as a departure from the concerns that motivated Plato's introduction of the theory.<sup>53</sup> The *Parmenides* is particularly notable in this regard, as the young Socrates is criticized for his uncertainty over whether there are Forms of material things like humans and fire and for his certainty that there cannot be Forms of mundane items such as mud (130c–d). The Stoic understanding of the theory treats it as having the same extension that Parmenides suggests it must have, and this provides one reason for suspecting that the Stoics may have been interested in this text.

Another likely point of interest for the Stoics is Parmenides' rejection of the young Socrates' suggestion that Forms can be thoughts (132b–c). The insistence that a thought of a universal must be distinguished from the object of the thought finds a parallel in the Stoic distinction between conceptions (ἐννοιαί) and universal concepts (ἐννοήματα). It is not, I think, possible to say with any certainty

<sup>52</sup> See, e.g., Long 1988: 164–71; Sedley 1993: 313–14 and 316–17; Vander Waerdt 1994.

<sup>53</sup> See Long and Sedley 1987: 1.181.

whether this discussion in the *Parmenides* influenced the development of the Stoic position but, at the least, the parallel provides another reason to suspect a Stoic interest in this text.<sup>54</sup> Stoic reflection on the Theory of Forms provides, then, good grounds for expecting that they would be familiar with at least the first part of the *Parmenides*. However, there are also other reasons for thinking that the Stoics would have been particularly interested in the third deduction of the second part of the dialogue.

The key point is that the third deduction provides Plato's fullest treatment of the notion of wholeness that underpins the unity of the cosmos in the *Timaeus*. This represents a departure from the earlier deductions, and from the first part of the dialogue, in that the third deduction does not treat wholes as the sum of their parts.<sup>55</sup> The view that wholes are mere sums is explored elsewhere in Plato's work<sup>56</sup> but the analysis Plato draws upon in the *Timaeus* (as well as in the *Philebus* and the *Sophist*) understands wholes in terms of the orderly *arrangement* of their parts, as having an identity that is something over and above the mere sum. This is also how the Stoics understand wholes, and it seems highly likely that they would have turned to the third deduction of the *Parmenides* to read Plato's fullest treatment of this position, either in the context of reflection on their own thought or out of a desire to understand the *Timaeus* more fully. It is particularly interesting to note that Parmenides emphasizes the departure from the model of the first two deductions by denying in the third the identity of the whole with 'all of them', a non-unified plurality.<sup>57</sup> The point is that the whole now has a single character or form and that it is something 'complete'. Not only do the Stoics consider the only true whole (that is, the only whole that is not part of some greater whole),

<sup>54</sup> Sedley (1985: 88) notes the parallel with the *Parmenides* in a discussion of the Stoic distinction between conceptions and concepts (thoughts and the generic objects of thought). Caston agrees that the passage is significant for the Stoa but thinks that 'the connection is even more thoroughgoing' (1999: 179–82).

<sup>55</sup> The view that composition is identity, as Harte 2002 puts it (see, especially, 48–116). The fullest treatment of this view is found in the first two deductions of the second part of the *Parmenides* (see e.g. 145b–c) and Harte (2002: 50–89) has argued persuasively that it underlies the puzzles about one and many presented in the first part of the dialogue (e.g. 129c–130a).

<sup>56</sup> See *Thr.* 205a, cf. 204a–b (discussion at Harte 2002: 32–47).

<sup>57</sup> 157d. On the meaning of the 'all' here and its place in the argument, see Harte 2002: 123–8.

the cosmos, to be complete,<sup>58</sup> but they also distinguish it from the All,<sup>59</sup> the cosmos and void collected together, which is just an unstructured collection of parts – a mere sum.

To summarize, the close mapping that is possible between Stoic thought and Plato's account of parts and wholes in the *Parmenides* should not be considered in isolation. Close theoretical similarities between Stoic and Platonic positions must be seen in the context of what we know about the wider Stoic engagement with Plato, and the broad lines of this engagement demand that we should at least consider the possibility of influence in cases where we find such striking similarities. But in this particular case the more localized context also leads us to *expect* that the Stoics would show considerable interest in the *Parmenides* in general and the third deduction of the second part in particular. Taken together these provide compelling reasons to suppose that the similarities I have identified are not accidental and that they arise from a close reading and selective appropriation of Plato's argument.

<sup>58</sup> Plut. *Stoic. rep.* 1054e–f = LS 29D.    <sup>59</sup> S.E., *M* 9.332 = LS 44A.

## CHAPTER 5

### *Subtexts, connections and open opposition*

A.G. Long

#### A PARALLEL: PLATO'S 'REPUBLIC' ON SPARTA

I begin this chapter with an overview of the discussion of Sparta in Plato's *Republic*; this overview will introduce my questions about early Stoic authors and will be helpful when we consider Zeno's response to Plato's *Republic*. In Book 8 of Plato's *Republic* Socrates mentions the Spartan political system by name (544c3, 545a3) and then evaluates it. Like Crete, Sparta is described as a 'timarchy' or 'timocracy' (545b6–7), and Socrates draws attention to certain key features of timarchy that make it a combination of good and evil (548c3–5) and a foretaste of oligarchy. Visit or consider a timarchy and you will be struck most powerfully by the fixation on victory, on prestige and on recognition by one's peers (548c5–7). But scratch the surface and you will find a competing fixation, namely a fixation on wealth and on the fruits of wealth. Money may not be openly possessed or pursued (547d5–7, 548b4–5), but in secret money is desired, hoarded and lavishly spent (548a5–b2). This is because timocrats overvalue physical training and disregard the mental cultivation that would dispel their desire for wealth and that would show them the wisdom of legal restrictions on property (548b6–c2).

Given that Sparta is named at 544c and 545a, these passages are responding quite openly to Sparta and to Sparta's many admirers<sup>1</sup> by drawing attention to the repressed but keen avarice inside Spartans. Sparta and the Spartans are named only once before Book 8.<sup>2</sup> But the response to Sparta in Plato's *Republic* is not confined to Book 8.<sup>3</sup> For

<sup>1</sup> ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν ἐπαινουμένη (*Republic* 544c2).

<sup>2</sup> 452c9, where Socrates says that Cretans and then Spartans pioneered naked athletics.

<sup>3</sup> Compare Menn 2005.

Socrates' account of a just city, 'Callipolis', and his explanation of how Callipolis could become reality show indirectly<sup>4</sup> the advantages and disadvantages of the Spartan system. Socrates argues that the city needs specialized warriors who do not split their time between warfare and such other activities as farming (374a–d); he does not say 'as in Sparta', but this would have been readily supplied by Plato's original readers.<sup>5</sup> So too when Socrates argues that in his city the rulers will not be permitted gold and silver (416e–417a); the comparison with Sparta is not made explicit but is not hard to see.<sup>6</sup> And when Socrates shows that his philosophically educated guards will not have a strong appetite for wealth (485d–e), he does not say – but perhaps does not need to say – that this will enable Callipolis to avoid a fate similar to that of Sparta. We might say that a subtextual dialectic with the Spartan precedent runs through much of *Republic* 2–7. Plato's response to Sparta in the *Republic* is thus a combination of subtext (in the account of Callipolis) and direct critique (the account of timarchy in Book 8).

Turning now to the central theme of this volume, to what extent was the response to Plato in early Stoic writing direct or open rather than indirect? Did direct responses to Plato by Stoics focus on a particular topic or on a particular set of connected topics? These questions are not often asked,<sup>7</sup> and perhaps that is not surprising. As it stands, the distinction between 'direct' responses and 'indirect' or 'subtextual' responses looks simplistic; allusions to previous authors (or, in the case of Plato's *Republic*, to previous political experiments) vary in subtlety, and plenty of allusions are more subtle than those to Sparta in *Republic* 2–7. In other words, there are degrees of indirectness. And when considering responses to Plato in early Stoicism there is special need for caution, given the state and nature of our evidence. Let us suppose that we have encountered a report of Stoic doctrine that draws attention to an affinity or to a contrast between the doctrine and Plato's theories; the comparison or contrast with Plato

<sup>4</sup> Notice that this indirectness does not depend on Plato's use of dialogue form. A treatise describing life in Callipolis could have the same indirectness in its response to Sparta.

<sup>5</sup> Compare Xenophon *Polity of the Spartans* 7.1–2.

<sup>6</sup> See Xenophon *Polity of the Spartans* 7.6.

<sup>7</sup> See, however, Gill 2006: 212–13 and 305. The outcome of my review of the evidence is broadly in agreement with Gill's analysis; my single disagreement is with his suggestion (305) that Chrysippus, like Zeno, responded to Plato concerning 'political theory'. See pp. 123–7 below.

may have been introduced either by the reporter himself or during the intervening doxographical transmission, and often we have no reason to be sure that the comparison or contrast was openly expressed in the original Stoic writing. A claim by a later author that a Stoic was responding to Plato may be interpretation on the part of the later author, and, even if his interpretation is intelligent interpretation, it may not point to an explicit response to Plato in the interpreted material. One might even wonder whether the questions are worth asking, even if they could be answered with confidence. After all, if our job is to reconstruct the intellectual ancestry of Stoic doctrines and to understand Plato's role as ancestor or opponent, it might seem enough to find Stoic doctrines that contradict Plato or that develop an argument or suggestion put forward by Plato; we need not consider how and how openly Stoics *presented* the relationship between their doctrines and Plato's dialogues.

Presentation matters more, however, when we consider Stoicism not merely as a set of doctrines that may or may not have had Platonic antecedents but as a multigenerational intellectual community, for then we must take into account the legacy of Zeno's writing in that community. Returning to my Platonic parallel, imagine that Books 8–10 of Plato's *Republic* were unavailable to us and that we were left with the discussion of Callipolis in the previous books. What difference would that make to our understanding of Plato's view of Sparta? As I showed above, even if we lacked Book 8 it would still be reasonable for us to find a response to Sparta in the *Republic*. But without Book 8 we would have more room for manoeuvre when attempting to characterize that response. Indeed, we would probably have *more* room for manoeuvre than we would like: does Plato intend (i) to show that it would take only some specific refinements to transform Sparta into a paradigm of justice, or (ii) to draw attention through the discussion of Callipolis to the shortcomings of the Spartan system and to the naivety of Sparta's admirers? Probably some combination of (i) and (ii), but without Book 8 it would be difficult, though perhaps not impossible, to decide whether to put the greater emphasis on (i) or on (ii). Such questions are not simply settled with the addition of Book 8, but Book 8 does impose some constraints on our interpretation of the previous books. Most obviously, once we take Book 8 into account we have to recognize that Plato saw avarice as a pernicious influence in



Sparta, and it becomes harder to deny that Callipolis is designed in such a way as to avoid Spartan avarice.

I suggest that we need this contrast between direct response and indirect response when we consider Zeno's responses to Plato and when we consider how Zeno's successors then negotiated their own relationship with Plato. In some texts Zeno's precise attitude to Plato may have been unclear even to Stoics; it may have looked likely that Zeno was engaging with Plato in *some* way, but there may have been considerable room for disagreement about whether Zeno was opposed to Plato or offering an updated or refined version of Platonic theories and arguments, and indeed about whether Zeno's updates or refinements were intended as a 'response' to Plato at all.<sup>8</sup> But Zeno's *Republic*, his most direct response to Plato, imposed constraints (probably welcome constraints) on interpretation, and this left its mark on the writing about Plato by later Stoics.

#### GALEN, CHRYSIPPUS AND PLATO

To see that the notion of a 'subtextual' response can be usefully applied in our study of the early Stoa, consider a Chrysippean response to Plato whose polemic emerges less directly than we might have expected. One key disagreement between Plato and early Stoics concerned the nature and location(s) of the human soul. Early Stoicism rejected Platonic tripartition and the claim of Plato's *Timaeus* (44d) that the rational part of the soul is housed in the head.<sup>9</sup> Surely then, we might suppose, this rejection of Platonic psychology was prominently emphasized in Stoic writing and particularly in Chrysippus' elaboration of the Stoic doctrine.

As it happens we enjoy an unusually rich supply of information about Chrysippus' *On the Soul*, albeit thanks to an unsympathetic source. One passage of Galen at first sight seems to show that Chrysippus took a direct approach in his opposition to Plato:

So with reference to the powers that govern us, in his first book *On the Soul* he [Chrysippus] (a) says that Plato believed that the reasoning part has been

<sup>8</sup> Here there is a disanalogy with Sparta in Plato *Republic* 2–7, for (at least on my account) these books clearly do contain a response to Sparta's admirers.

<sup>9</sup> Compare pp. 75–7 of [Chapter 3](#).

assigned to the head, the spirited to the heart, and the desiderative to the region of the navel; (b) but subsequently, going his own way, he [Chrysippus again] tries to gather the three (parts) together into the heart. (*PHP* 4.1.6)<sup>10</sup>

Does this show Chrysippus to have been ‘openly opposed’<sup>11</sup> to key features of Platonic psychology? It certainly shows that Chrysippus noted openly the Platonic provenance of a view that he would later contradict. But according to Galen’s own quotation of the passage summarized at (a) above, Plato was introduced by Chrysippus not as an opponent but in order to show the lack of consensus among philosophers and doctors. Here is an extract from Galen’s quotation of Chrysippus:

This being so, there is agreement about all other parts, but about the governing part of the soul there is disagreement, some placing it in one region, others in another. For some say it is located in the chest, others in the head. And there are differences even within these locations, as they do not agree among themselves where in the head or chest it is located. Plato, who said that the soul has three parts, placed the rational part in the head, the spirited in the region of the chest, and the desiderative in the region of the navel. Thus the place seems to elude us, since we have neither a clear perception (of it), as we had with the others, nor sure signs from which this matter might be inferred: otherwise disagreement among physicians and philosophers would not have grown so great. (*PHP* 3.1.12–15)<sup>12</sup>

Galen tells us (3.1.16–17) that this quoted passage introduced Chrysippus’ attempts to show that the governing part of the soul is located in the heart. On the face of it, Plato’s role in the introductory passage was merely to help substantiate Chrysippus’ claim that there was widespread disagreement between the relevant experts. Such disagreement shows the need for further inquiry. So, we might think, Plato is recalled here in order to help motivate Chrysippus’ discussion and not to serve as its opponent.

This may well be too simple-minded, for the passage may contain polemical subtexts. In particular, Chrysippus may intend his readers

<sup>10</sup> I use De Lacy’s translation but have modified it in line with the suggestion (confirmed, as Sedley notes, by *PHP* 3.1.14–15) in Sedley 1993: 313 n. 1 that εἰπὼν ὡς ὁ Πλάτων ὑπελάμβανε means ‘having said that Plato believed that’ and not (as in De Lacy’s translation) ‘takes the Platonic position that’.

<sup>11</sup> Sedley 1993: 313.

<sup>12</sup> For Galen’s other quotations and summary of this passage see Mansfeld 1989: 311 n. 3.

to notice that Plato's theory, involving as it does *both* the chest *and* the head (and the 'region of the navel' too), does not properly adjudicate between the competing claims of heart and head and is instead an attempt 'to have it both ways'.<sup>13</sup> Chrysippus would then be concluding his overview with the Platonic compromise, intended by Chrysippus to be recognized as a mealy-mouthed compromise, in order to achieve maximal contrast with his own decisive and uncompromising verdict (heart and not head). But none of this criticism of Plato is openly stated in the passage quoted above.

What about the sequel, where Chrysippus went on to argue that the seat of the governing part is the heart? At this point Plato vanishes from Chrysippus' text, or at least that is what Galen's complaints seem to imply. Galen says that Chrysippus offered no account of, or response to, the arguments provided by Plato for tripartition; instead Chrysippus proceeds to defend his own view 'as if he had said nothing at all about Plato's view' (*PHP* 3.1.20–1).<sup>14</sup> Galen later claims that Chrysippus did not only reject Plato's view but '*disregarded* and rejected' Plato's view (ἐἴσαι . . . καὶ ἀπορῆψαι) and that this makes Chrysippus' earlier mention of Plato a senile (Galen uses the more sexist 'anile') or schoolmasterly digression (3.4.18). So Galen's point is not merely that Chrysippus 'rejects Plato's view without a hearing',<sup>15</sup> but that Plato's view is denied both a fair hearing and the dignity of an openly worded rejection. According to Galen, after the initial mention of Plato's theory Chrysippus' reader has to glean from the account of Chrysippus' own theory that the Platonic alternative is in fact being rejected.

But here too we may suspect that the reality was more complicated. Even if Galen's testimony is trustworthy about the letter of Chrysippus' text, it does not prevent us from supposing that Chrysippus' readers were meant to find polemical allusions to Plato in the exposition of Chrysippus' own theory. Galen may have failed to see, or have pretended not to see, these allusions. For example, Galen's subsequent quotations from Chrysippus show that the latter employed the Platonic vocabulary of λογιστικόν, θυμοειδές and

<sup>13</sup> Mansfeld 1989: 337. Mansfeld speaks of a 'compromise view' at 1989: 336.

<sup>14</sup> The complaints are repeated at 3.1.27, 3.4.36, 5.7.43, 5.7.51, 8.1.11–12.

<sup>15</sup> De Lacy 1978–84: 636.

ἐπιθυμητικόν (4.1.7–10), and this may constitute a reference to Plato and to Platonic error.<sup>16</sup> In any case, Galen's testimony does not establish that Chrysippus regarded Platonic psychology as an unimportant precursor to his own theory, nor does it show that Chrysippus did not conceive of his psychology as opposed to Plato. But Galen's testimony does suggest that Chrysippus' *On the Soul* reached an anti-Platonic verdict without adopting an overtly anti-Platonic pose.<sup>17</sup>

#### PLATONIC CONNECTIONS

I turn now to Zeno of Citium himself. Some of the theories attributed to Zeno clearly have a close connection with Plato,<sup>18</sup> but often Zeno's precise attitude to Plato in formulating those theories is much less clear, at least to us. I outline two examples in this section. There are various reasons why Zeno's attitude may be hard to discern. Zeno's exploitation of Platonic material may be complicated, particularly in cases where Zeno endorses a thesis proposed in Plato's dialogues but uses that thesis in the service of further claims that contradict Plato. Alternatively, the complexity may lie in Plato's dialogues as much as in Zeno's subsequent use of those dialogues; there are cases where Plato's dialogues try out a range of views on one and the same question, and it may be difficult to tell *which* Platonic treatment of a question was foremost in Zeno's mind. Now, Zeno's original writing may have steered his readers in such a way as to make his view of Plato plain, but – with the one exception of his discussion of Plato's *Republic* – we have no reason to suppose that it did. If his texts lacked such guidance, Zeno's attitude to Plato, at least on topics other than those explored in Zeno's *Republic*, would have been unclear to readers in antiquity as well as today.

<sup>16</sup> So Tieleman 1996: 141; see also Gill 2006: 212.

<sup>17</sup> Compare Galen's claim that Chrysippus' discussion of the passions departs from Plato's view and yet does not mention Plato's view, even at the start of the discussion (*PHP* 4.1.15; unlike De Lacy I take οὐδέ with τὴν ἀρχήν). Galen later says that Chrysippus' *On the passions*, *Logika* and *Therapy/Ethics* (for the title see 4.1.14) were 'completely silent' about Plato's arguments (5.7.52, a passage omitted from *SVF*, as De Lacy notes).

<sup>18</sup> For a concise overview see Long 2002c: 116. In saying that Zeno's *Republic* was 'avowedly anti-Platonic' (2002c: 116, emphasis added; compare Long 1988: 161) Long anticipates my central contrast in this and the following sections.

Consider first the connections between Zeno's ontology and the so-called 'gigantomachy' of Plato's *Sophist* (245e8–249d8), connections that are familiar to present-day specialists and which were already well known in antiquity.<sup>19</sup> In Plato's dialogue, the Visitor describes a battle between two parties: on one side there are the fearsome 'earthborn', who believe that bodies alone exist and who deny the existence of anything incorporeal; against them is ranged a more circumspect group, described at 248a4–5 as 'friends of the forms',<sup>20</sup> who attribute true being exclusively to incorporeal forms. Plato's Visitor argues that if the haughty 'earthborn' agreed to take part in a dialectical discussion (which would require them to be less haughty than they really are), they could be brought to accept that such incorporeal items as wisdom, justice and virtue are, despite their incorporeality, real (246d4–247c7). But what do these incorporeal entities have in common with the bodily entities originally recognized by the 'earthborn'? The 'earthborn', though reformed, are unable to say. So Plato's Visitor offers a hallmark (or, in Taylor's now unfashionable translation,<sup>21</sup> a 'definition') of existence: the capacity either to effect a change or to be acted upon (247d8–e4). The chastened 'earthborn' accept this hallmark of existence.

The connections between this Platonic passage and Stoicism are varied and complex.<sup>22</sup> Most obviously, Zeno, like the 'earthborn', accepts the hallmark of existence proposed by the Visitor, namely acting upon or being acted upon, but then turns Plato's discussion on its head. For this hallmark is used by Zeno in such a way as to take us back to the corporealism of an unreconstructed 'earthborn':

<sup>19</sup> See the description of Stoics as σπαρτοί and γηγενεῖς (compare Plato *Sophist* 247c5 and 248c2) in David *In Porph. Isag.* 111.3–17 and Elias *In Porph. Isag.* 47.26–33, where the 'stones and oaks' of *Sophist* 246a9 are also recalled. I owe these references to Brunschwig 1994: 119 n. 65.

Sellars has called into question the consensus that Stoics read Plato's *Sophist*, on the ground that the claims in the *Sophist* that anticipate Stoicism 'are not presented as elements of a single ontological position' (2010: 201). But why not allow – indeed, why not take it as axiomatic – that Stoics were philosophically *creative* readers of Plato, capable of developing and putting together the Platonic claims that they found most attractive?

<sup>20</sup> I follow convention and use these colourful labels in order to avoid the more sober but potentially misleading 'idealists' and 'materialists'.

<sup>21</sup> Taylor 1961.

<sup>22</sup> See particularly Brunschwig 1994: 115–26 and Vogt 2009. One of the most interesting features of Brunschwig's analysis is the unexpected connections he finds between Stoicism and 'friends of the forms'; I do not attempt to do justice to those further connections here.

Zeno also differed from the same philosophers [i.e. Platonists and Peripatetics] in thinking that it was totally impossible that something incorporeal (to which genus Xenocrates and his predecessors too had said that the mind belonged) should be the agent of anything, and that only a body was capable of acting or being acted upon. (Cicero *Acad.* 1.39)<sup>23</sup>

In Plato's *Sophist* the 'earthborn' could comfortably recognize the existence of soul, maintaining that soul is a kind of body (247b8–9), but, when asked about the soul's virtue and wisdom, they were defeated and conceded that virtue and wisdom were both real and incorporeal. Concerning soul, Zeno shares the insouciance of Plato's 'earthborn' and agrees with them that it is a body.<sup>24</sup> Concerning the soul's wisdom and virtue, however, Zeno stands his ground and maintains that they too are bodies. After all, wisdom and virtue are what make souls wise and virtuous, and so wisdom and virtue have the power to *act*, a power that in Zeno's system has become a mark of corporeality.<sup>25</sup>

Clearly this is an ingenious appropriation of Platonic material, and clearly Plato's *Sophist* was read in the Stoa with close attention.<sup>26</sup> Now, when Zeno used resources in Plato's text in such a way as to rehabilitate a pre-reformation version of the 'earthborn' thesis, he presumably intended his readers to accept his conclusions about bodies and about being. Did he also intend his readers to draw a conclusion *about Plato*, or, in other words, should we regard these aspects of Zeno's ontology as a *response* to Plato? Not necessarily. Even if this was Zeno's intention, we cannot be sure which conclusion was meant to be drawn: were Zeno's readers supposed to see (a) that Plato put forward a sound suggestion about the hallmark of existence and that Zeno has built on that suggestion, or (b) that Plato's ontology and argument against the 'earthborn' were deficient? Here Cicero cannot help us, for we have no reason to suppose that Cicero's contrast between Zeno and other philosophers was openly expressed in Zeno's own writing. The surviving evidence leaves open the possibility that in this context responding to Plato, even at a subtextual level,

<sup>23</sup> I quote the translation in Long and Sedley 1987: 45A. Compare the claim attributed to Zeno in Eusebius *Preparation for the Gospel* 15.14 816d (part of which can be found at Long and Sedley 45G) that both that which acts and that which is acted upon are bodies.

<sup>24</sup> See the Zenonian argument recorded at Tertullian *De Anima* 5.

<sup>25</sup> Stobaeus I.138.14–22. <sup>26</sup> So Brunschwig 1994: 119.

was not high on Zeno's agenda. His priority may have been to get as much philosophical mileage as possible out of Plato's text rather than to indicate an attitude, friendly or hostile, to Plato, or to show Plato's failure or partial success.<sup>27</sup>

Secondly, take Zeno's view of the virtues:

Zeno, like Plato, admits a plurality of specifically different virtues, namely prudence, courage, moderation, justice, which he takes to be inseparable but yet distinct and different from one another. On the other hand, when defining each of them, he says that courage is prudence (φρόνησιν) [in things to be endured, moderation is prudence in things to be chosen, prudence in the specific sense is prudence]<sup>28</sup> in things to be performed, and justice is prudence in things to be distributed, the implication being that virtue is really single but in its operations appears to vary with its relations to objects. (Plutarch *Stoic. rep.* 1034c)<sup>29</sup>

The comparison with Plato was probably introduced by Plutarch himself, for in *Stoic Self-Contradictions* Plutarch delights in showing that Stoics contradict themselves *when they contradict Plato*,<sup>30</sup> and that is why the treatise has much of the most important information about Stoic polemic against Plato. In this case, Plutarch suggests, Zeno is in good company when he acknowledges the differences between the virtues; in defining them all as kinds of prudence, however, Zeno lost Plato's support and Zeno's theory lost its coherence.

There is a clear echo of Plato in the canonical list of *four* virtues, and, in discussing whether the virtues are separable, distinct and kinds of wisdom or prudence, Zeno is clearly returning to questions explored in Plato's dialogues. But Plato's dialogues explore a range of answers to those questions. The most obvious contrasts are between

<sup>27</sup> Compare Gill 2006: 213. Gill reaches the same verdict but provides different examples.

<sup>28</sup> The words in parentheses were supplied by Pohlenz (1939: n. 2). Both Cherniss 1976 and Long and Sedley 61C use this supplement but offer different translations of τῇ ἰδίῳ λεγομένην φρόνησιν from the translation suggested by Pohlenz. Cherniss has 'prudence in the specific sense', Long and Sedley 1987 have 'prudence in the special sense', whereas Pohlenz would have something like 'prudence in the ordinary/common sense': 'wir brauchen ausser der Sophrosyne ein Äquivalent der vulgären φρόνησις, die Zenon kaum mit anderem Namen bezeichnet haben kann'. For a challenge to this restoration see pp. 16–17 of Malcolm Schofield's chapter.

<sup>29</sup> Cherniss' translation, but with my 'moderation' replacing Cherniss' 'sobriety' in the translation of σωφροσύνη. I use Cherniss' translation in subsequent quotations of *Stoic Self-Contradictions* (all exceptions are noted).

<sup>30</sup> See my discussion of Chrysippus (in 'Subsequent polemic' below).

dialogues, such as between the *Protagoras* and *Republic* 441c–442d, but even within one dialogue Plato can make Socrates argue in favour of two competing alternatives, as for example in the *Meno*, where Socrates first (87c–89a) argues that virtue is ‘knowledge’ or ‘prudence’ (the latter translating φρόνησις) and then (89c–96c) argues that the lack of people who teach virtue shows virtue *not* to be knowledge or prudence.<sup>31</sup> In the previous example we at least had good reason to focus on the *Sophist* as the relevant Platonic precedent; concerning the virtues, however, we can only confidently characterize Zeno’s response to Plato (assuming that his theory of virtues really *was* a response to Plato) if we can confidently specify not just which Platonic dialogue but which Platonic passage Zeno had in mind. This is difficult for us and, in the absence of further guidance from Zeno himself, would have been difficult for Zeno’s Stoic readers, even if, as a matter of fact, for Zeno himself the key Platonic texts were those most akin to his own thinking.<sup>32</sup>

#### ZENO CONTRA PLATO

Where, then, was it clear that, and how, Zeno was responding to Plato? Two ancient testimonies discuss a response by Zeno to Plato, and together the two passages suggest that Zeno’s *Republic* was not just opposed but openly opposed to Plato’s *Republic*. There is a large literature on the relationship between the *Republics*, but it is worth reminding ourselves about the evidence for there being an open response to Plato in Zeno’s *Republic*. In the first passage we return to Plutarch’s *Stoic Self-Contradictions*.<sup>33</sup> The context is as follows: according to Plutarch, Zeno put forward a dilemmatic argument to the effect that in a dispute between two parties there is no need, once one side has tried to prove its case, to pay attention to the reply or rejoinder offered by the other side. In order to show self-contradiction Plutarch now needs to convince his reader that Zeno suggested elsewhere that such rejoinders are valuable and deserve attention. A

<sup>31</sup> In the *Protagoras* Socrates’ position changes in the opposite direction: he first argues on empirical grounds that virtue is not teachable and then argues that the virtues are knowledge (thus bolstering the case for their being teachable). See *Protagoras* 319a–320c and 360e–361b; compare Sedley and Long 2011: xxi.

<sup>32</sup> So Malcolm Schofield, *Chapter 1* at pp. 14–17. <sup>33</sup> 1034e–f.



particularly effective way of catching Zeno out would be to find a passage where Zeno himself counters someone else with a rejoinder, and that is indeed one kind of evidence offered by Plutarch:

After he [Zeno] had propounded this argument, however, he continued to write against Plato's *Republic*, to refute sophisms, and to bid his pupils learn dialectic on the ground that it enables one to do this. (1034e)

Unfortunately Plutarch does not indicate where or with which arguments Zeno wrote against Plato's *Republic*.<sup>34</sup> The most likely context is, of course, Zeno's own *Republic*.<sup>35</sup>

It might be argued, however, that Plutarch's report of opposition to Plato's *Republic* is no more than interpretation, perhaps in keeping with the thrust of Zeno's writing, but not deriving from openly worded opposition on Zeno's part.<sup>36</sup> A second passage makes that harder to believe. Numenius' entertainingly intemperate *On the revolt of the Academics against Plato* claims that Zeno subjected Plato to a bitter and abusive attack.<sup>37</sup> According to Numenius, the attack amounted to a shameless 'revolution', although he defers a full discussion of its revolutionary features.<sup>38</sup> The best clue to the context of this attack lies in Numenius' claim that Zeno insulted Plato 'far worse than was appropriate for a Cynic' (ἀτιμώτατα καὶ αἰσχίστα περιυβρικῶς, καὶ ταῦτα πολὺ κάκιον ἢ προσήκει κυνί).<sup>39</sup> Numenius is of course being mischievous, but the humour is most effective if

<sup>34</sup> This unfortunate omission is perhaps revealing. Unless Plutarch is being careless, he could count on his readers to supply this information themselves, which suggests either (a) that the relevant part of Zeno's writing was unmistakably opposed to Plato's *Republic*, or at least (b) that an interpretation of Zeno's writing according to which certain passages were opposed to Plato's *Republic* was established among Plutarch's intended readers.

<sup>35</sup> So e.g. Baldry 1959: 5; Babut 1969: 223; Erskine 1990: 30.

<sup>36</sup> So far as I know, this alternative is rarely defended. But compare Dawson 1992: 173, where it is suggested that attacking Plato was not in fact Zeno's 'primary purpose' in *Republic*.

<sup>37</sup> Numenius fr.25. The relevant passage is quoted at Eusebius *Preparation for the Gospel* 14.6 732b–733c. Numenius is discussing the rivalry between Zeno and Arcesilaus and drawing attention to the fact that, when Zeno fought back, Plato and not Arcesilaus received Zeno's fire.

<sup>38</sup> ἄλλα καὶ περὶ μὲν τῶν Ζήνωνι εἰς Πλάτωνα κακῶς τε καὶ αἰδημόνως οὐδαμῶς νεωτερισθέντων εἰρήσεται μοι αὐθὶς ποτε, ἐὰν φιλοσοφίας σχολὴν ἀγάγω (Eusebius *Preparation for the Gospel* 732d–733a). The political application of νεωτερίζω makes the verb particularly apt for describing the response of one *Republic* to another.

<sup>39</sup> The translation of πολὺ κάκιον ἢ προσήκει κυνί by des Places ('avec bien plus de malice qu'il ne convient à un cynique') is surely better than Gifford's 'far worse than he should have treated a dog'. As the translation by des Places suggests, Zeno, not Plato, is the Dog.

Numenius' reference is to a passage or work by Zeno which openly attacks Plato and which bears a strong affinity to Cynicism. Once again, Zeno's *Republic* is the best candidate.<sup>40</sup> It is possible that in the passage to which Numenius refers Zeno was attacking not Plato's *Republic* but some other Platonic saying or dialogue. However, the most economical explanation of the passages in Numenius and Plutarch is to take them to refer to one and the same attack, namely an attack in Zeno's *Republic* on Plato's *Republic*.

What motivated Zeno's attack? This is crowded territory, but territory that still rewards a fresh consideration. Scholars have already noted the differences (as well as similarities) between Socrates' conception of a just city in Plato's *Republic* and the conception of a good city that, according to later writers, Zeno put forward in his *Republic*.<sup>41</sup> But it is not sufficiently recognized that these differences do not by themselves explain the unique character of our evidence about Zeno's *Republic*. Zeno disagreed with Plato on several other topics, including the mortality of the soul<sup>42</sup> and (as we have seen) the corporeality of entities, and yet we do not have evidence attesting that Zeno 'wrote against Plato' when arguing that the soul is mortal, or when denying that any genuine entity is incorporeal, or when arguing that soul in particular is corporeal.<sup>43</sup> Why then *do* we have such evidence concerning Zeno's response to Plato's *Republic*? A promising starting point is to assume that Zeno saw an anti-Platonic pose as an effective way of drawing attention to the distinctive merits of his, Zeno's, own approach to political philosophy.

I now attempt to reconstruct what those merits may have been. Much about Zeno's *Republic* is disputed, but this at least is uncontroversial: one of its features was criticism of contemporary Greek

<sup>40</sup> Compare Erskine 1990: 15. See the famous description of Zeno's *Republic* as having been written on the dog's tail (D.L. 7.4); Schofield 1999b: 204 n. 15 provides further references suggesting that Zeno's *Republic* was long regarded by Stoics as having a Cynic dimension.

At 7.4 Diogenes also records that Zeno wrote a work entitled *Memorabilia of Crates*, which may have been consciously modelled on the account of Socrates in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (and so may have given rise to the anecdote about Zeno, Xenophon and Crates in D.L. 7.2). Zeno's *Memorabilia of Crates* was of course about Cynicism, but, as far as we know, it did not criticize Plato.

<sup>41</sup> Baldry 1959: 11; Erskine 1990: 27–33; Vander Waerdt 1994; Schofield 1999a: ch. 2; Dawson 1992: 175–87; Rowe 2002.

<sup>42</sup> Epiphanius *Panarion* 3.2.9 and Augustine *Contra Academicos* 3.38.

<sup>43</sup> On the soul's corporeality, however, see Sedley 1993: 325–6.

society, or at least criticism of certain Greek societies (Sparta may have been a favoured exception).<sup>44</sup> Zeno evidently began by condemning contemporary education, for we are told that ‘at the start of his *Republic* he declares ordinary education to be useless’.<sup>45</sup> It is not certain that criticism of contemporary cities then continued through every line of Zeno’s *Republic*, for we do not know to what extent Zeno spoke with a countercultural voice in his discussions of Eros and of erotic relationships with the young (Athenaeus 561c and D.L. 7.129). But criticism of contemporary society is implied throughout the other pronouncements that survive from Zeno’s *Republic*.

A brief overview of the evidence will make that clear. Zeno argued that coinage should not be instituted, that men and women should wear the same clothing, with no part of the body concealed,<sup>46</sup> and that exclusive monogamy should be abolished – or, in the pithy formulation used by doxographers, that ‘women be shared’ (D.L. 7.33 and 131). Zeno also claimed in his *Republic* that real citizenship and real friendship are enjoyed only by the virtuous (D.L. 7.33); assuming that Zeno further claimed or indicated that contemporary cities are not populated by the virtuous, his readers would easily have drawn the conclusion that contemporary cities lack true friends and true citizens and that the so-called ‘fellow-citizens’ of, say, Athens are in fact estranged from one another. Finally, Zeno said in his *Republic* that temples, law-courts and gymnasia should not be built ‘in cities’ (ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν, D.L. 7.33). Notice the mention in this last passage of ‘cities’ rather than of a ‘city’. This use of the plural may indicate merely that, while in some contexts Zeno described a good *city*, in this context Zeno was describing good *cities*. Equally, however, it may suggest that the original passage in Zeno’s *Republic* concerned most directly the corrupting or useless institutions of *contemporary cities* and not the institutions (or rather the lack of institutions) in an *ideal city*.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> For the importance of Sparta in Zeno’s *Republic* see Schofield 1999a: 40–2 and 1999b.

<sup>45</sup> τὴν ἐγκύκλιον παιδείαν ἀχρηστον ἀποφαίνειν λέγουσιν [Reiske’s conjecture for the λέγοντα of the MSS] ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς Πολιτείας (D.L. 7.32).

<sup>46</sup> The discussions of coinage and of clothing are not said to derive specifically from the *Republic*, but it is nonetheless reasonable to regard the *Republic* as the source. See Baldry 1959: 4 and Schofield 1999a: 4.

<sup>47</sup> The plural is noted at Dawson 1992: 175 and Vogt 2008: 30. Contrast the singular πόλεως in Athenaeus 561c, and compare ταῖς πόλεσι in Plato’s discussion of non-ideal cities (*Republic* 489a5). A Zenonian argument against temple-building is recorded by Origen (*Contra Celsum* 1.5).

As we have seen, Zeno's *Republic* opened with a condemnation of contemporary education, and criticism of contemporary cities is a natural companion or corollary of all the further claims and proposals summarized in the previous paragraph. Indeed, such criticism was probably a more prominent part of Zeno's text than scholars tend to suggest.<sup>48</sup> For – now entering an area of controversy – the greater Zeno's emphasis on criticism of existing cities, the easier it is to explain how later readers in antiquity were able to project onto Zeno's text the claim that *we should not live in separate cities at all*.<sup>49</sup> If, on the other hand, Zeno's text dwelled at length on life in an individual good city and contained only a short critique of the cities currently available, it is more difficult to see how this interpretation started and then survived.<sup>50</sup>

Philodemus provides a different account of the start of Zeno's *Republic*. According to Philodemus, Zeno declared at the start of his text that in it he would be setting out what was 'suitable' or 'fitting' (τὸ πρόσφορον) for the times and places in which he lived.<sup>51</sup> But this is neatly reconciled with our other evidence about the start of Zeno's *Republic* (namely, the evidence in Diogenes Laertius that its opening declared ordinary education to be useless) if what Zeno deemed 'suitable' for his time and place was assessment and criticism of the societies and political systems available at his time and place, one key part of that criticism being criticism of contemporary education. With the tough love characteristic of Cynics, Zeno was giving his

<sup>48</sup> See Baldry 1959: 7; 'brief critique of contemporary society' (Erskine 1990: 53; Erskine's 'at least ... brief' at 1990: 52 is better).

<sup>49</sup> Here I am following Schofield's account of the development of Stoic political thought (1999a: particularly ch.4). The reading I describe as a 'projection' can be found in Plutarch *De Alex. virt.* 1.6, a passage treated with suspicion at Schofield 1999a: appendix A. Vogt 2008: 86–90 accords it greater respect.

<sup>50</sup> At least it would lack a foundation in Zeno's own writing. Schofield 1999b: 208 n. 85 suggests that the source of the projection is Chrysippean.

<sup>51</sup> Philodemus *On the Stoics* XII.2–6 (Dorandi). Schofield sees anti-Platonic polemic here, but takes Zeno to be saying in effect that his city, unlike Plato's Callipolis, can be realised *here and now*, or in other words that his ideal is not 'the distant utopian possibility' proposed by Plato (1999b: 57). We find such criticism of Plato at the very end of the Stoic tradition: 'do not hope for Plato's polity (πολιτεία), but be satisfied with very slight progress' (Marcus Aurelius 9.29; unfortunately the Loeb translation obscures the reference to Plato). But on Schofield's interpretation, Philodemus' report of the opening of Zeno's *Republic* is hard to square with the different report of the opening at D.L. 7.32; in my own discussion I try to reconcile the two reports.

contemporaries and compatriots exactly what they needed, namely, a hard-hitting account of all that was wrong with contemporary Greek society, plus a way of escaping those evils.<sup>52</sup>

This brings me to Plato. We might suppose that Zeno regarded Plato as an ally, for Plato's *Republic* too poses a challenge to contemporary societies. But Zeno evidently saw the matter differently. It helps at this point to have distinguished between open opposition and subtext, and to have done so concerning the response in Plato's *Republic* to existing Greek societies. In the case of Sparta, as we saw at the start of this chapter, criticism is present in much of Plato's dialogue, but until Book 8 it is present only as a subtext. There are, of course, many other ways in which Plato's *Republic* shows deficiencies in contemporary cities. But until the critique of timarchy, oligarchy, democracy and tyranny in Books 8–9, and with the important exception of the challenges put to Socrates by Thrasymachus and by Plato's brothers,<sup>53</sup> criticism of contemporary cities is either (a) subtextual (as in the contrast between Callipolis and Sparta), or (b) prompted by discussion of some aspect of Socrates' new political ideal.<sup>54</sup> For an example of the kind of prompting described under (b), consider the response to conventional education in Plato's *Republic*.<sup>55</sup> Plato's response is truly radical in its criticism of the poets whose works were long and widely held up as educational. But he turns to contemporary education, and to these poets, only when his discussion of Callipolis requires it. Socrates and Adeimantus agree that they should discuss how the guards of Callipolis are to be educated, and, when looking for the basic components of that education, turn to two well-established kinds of exercise, namely training the body and refining the mind, above all through poetry (376e). Socrates and Adeimantus further agree that stories must be used, that only suitable stories should be used, and that the crafting of stories must therefore be carefully supervised (376e–377c). Only then does Socrates turn to the

<sup>52</sup> Compare Baldry 1959: 5.

<sup>53</sup> See particularly Thrasymachus' description of tyranny, democracy and aristocracy in 336d–e and 344a–c.

<sup>54</sup> For fuller defence of this claim see Long 2013: ch.7.

<sup>55</sup> The vivid portrait of contemporary society in the 'ship of state' (Plato *Republic* 488a–489d) is a second example. The portrait is prompted by a need to bolster the case for rule by philosophers and to explain why philosophers are regarded as useless in contemporary cities.

stories used in contemporary society and argue that they are not suitable.

From Zeno's perspective, this is wholly to misconceive the priorities of political philosophy. Instead the order should be reversed. One should turn one's mind first to the contemporary situation and, in the important<sup>56</sup> case of education, start with a candid assessment of the educational methods currently in use. Discussion of a better alternative should not set the agenda for criticism of current practice, as in Plato, but instead should grow out of criticism of current practice. We might protest that this is deeply unfair to Plato, for a rich and critical response to Athens, Sparta and other cities can be found at a subtextual level through much of Plato's dialogue. But even if Zeno was aware of these subtexts, he was unimpressed by them and thought that Plato's response to contemporary cities needed a good deal less artful indirectness and a good deal more open criticism in the Cynic vein.

Of course, Zeno must have believed that Plato's discussion of Callipolis had reached some of the wrong outcomes and in particular that Plato's condemnation of contemporary education should have been more unqualified. The same is true in fields other than those explored in Zeno's *Republic*; for example, Zeno must have believed that Plato's discussion of the soul's nature and immortality had reached false outcomes. But concerning *politics* Zeno had a further ground for complaint, namely that, by not treating the contemporary situation as his starting point, Plato's fundamental procedure was misdirected. In putting this complaint on the surface of his text Zeno was able to emphasize that, in starting with the failings of contemporary society, he (Zeno) had seen where political analysis should begin. On my interpretation of Philodemus, that is exactly the pose adopted by Zeno at the start of his *Republic*.

#### SUBSEQUENT POLEMIC

I have attempted to explain why, within Zeno's writing, opposition to Plato's *Republic* seems to have been uniquely direct. When we turn to Stoic writing immediately after Zeno, what were the targets of open

<sup>56</sup> Zeno wrote a further work on the subject of Greek education (D.L. 7.4).

opposition to Plato? Intuitively there seem to be two ways in which Zeno's challenge to Plato's *Republic* could be developed. The challenge could be made to include the other dialogues by Plato that discuss ideal and non-ideal cities, the most notable of these dialogues being the *Laws*. Alternatively, Stoics could turn their fire against some other feature of Plato's *Republic*, such as its discussion of the virtues (above all justice). Down to the end of the third century, what we might call 'sustained polemic' by Stoics against Plato (but not all Stoic criticism of Plato) did indeed have these two particular targets in its sights.

As we would expect, nearly all the relevant evidence concerns Chrysippus and is found in Plutarch's *Stoic Self-Contradictions*.<sup>57</sup> Plutarch claims that 'it is when disputing others that he (Chrysippus) is least concerned to avoid self-contradiction and inconsistency' (1039d); fortunately for us, Plutarch enjoys substantiating that claim, particularly concerning Chrysippus' criticism of Plato.<sup>58</sup> Some of Plutarch's testimony yields no clues to the context and target of Chrysippus' criticism.<sup>59</sup> In two cases we are told the context and can deduce the target, but are given no reason to believe that the criticism was part of a broader attack on Plato or that the criticism was sustained through a work (or through a substantial part of a work) written by Chrysippus. First, Plutarch tells us (1047c) that

<sup>57</sup> Galen claims (*PHP* 5.6.1, another omission from *SVF*) that Chrysippus speaks disparagingly of Plato on the subject of the virtues, but unfortunately Galen does not indicate the context in Chrysippus' writing.

<sup>58</sup> Chrysippus' attacks on Plato are then mentioned or discussed by Plutarch at 1038e, 1039d–1040a, 1040a–b, 1040d, 1041b–c and 1047c; at 1040d Plutarch indicates that elsewhere he defended Plato against Chrysippus, probably a reference to his *On Justice Against Chrysippus* [Lampr. 59] (so Babut 1969: 33). Attacks by Chrysippus on other philosophers and writers are mentioned by Plutarch, but in no case as often as attacks on Plato. A list: Aristo (1034d and maybe 1047e), Stilpo and Menedemus (1036f), Aristotle (1040e), Epicureans (1045c, 1051d) and Theognis (1039f); at 1037b Plutarch suggests that Chrysippus was targeting 'those who suspend judgement'. See also Plutarch's vague suggestion, summarized in the next note, that Chrysippus criticized Plato, Aristotle and their successors (and apparently even Socrates, which is harder to believe).

<sup>59</sup> Namely, the claims (a) that Chrysippus exploits Plato's wording (and the wording of other opponents) in a mordant fashion (1038e); (b) that Chrysippus speaks respectfully of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and of Academics and Peripatetics down to Polemo and Strato, and yet criticizes their discussion of 'principle', 'end', 'gods' and 'justice' (1045f–1046b); the criticism of Plato cannot be disentangled from criticism of other philosophers, although we know from other passages in Plutarch that Chrysippus criticized Plato's discussions of justice and of gods.

Chrysippus' *Physical Propositions* urged its readers not to venture 'surmises' similar to Plato's surmise that the liquid we drink is taken to the lungs; the target is obviously Plato's theory, expounded in *Timaeus* 70c7 and 91a4–5, that drink enters the lungs and passes through them. In all likelihood Plato's theory of the lungs was of far greater inherent interest to Plutarch than it had been to Chrysippus himself. Plutarch devoted a portion of his *Quaestiones Convivales* to its defence (697f–700b). From Chrysippus' perspective, on the other hand, Plato's theory was discredited both by philosophers and by leading medical research,<sup>60</sup> and so served as an effective and recognized example of the dangers of unfounded speculation. Here, Chrysippus may even have seen no need to provide an argument against Plato.

Secondly, according to Plutarch (1039d–e) Chrysippus' work on protreptic criticized a claim by Plato that if someone has not learned how to live, or does not know how to live, it is beneficial for him *not* to live at all. Plutarch does not tell us at which Platonic passage Chrysippus was taking aim, but *Cleitophon* 408a has the best fit.<sup>61</sup> In this context Chrysippus does provide arguments, which Plutarch claims to quote, to the effect that Plato's claim is false and, in apparently recommending suicide, is self-defeatingly poor protreptic; as Chrysippus dryly observes, it exhorts us not to undertake philosophy but rather to do 'some other things'.<sup>62</sup> Evidently Chrysippus felt it to be worth his while arguing against a Platonic approach to protreptic. But Plutarch's testimony and quotation do not indicate that this was a major part of Chrysippus' treatise.

*Sustained* polemic against Plato, on the other hand, is represented in our evidence for the early Stoa by three works: Zeno's *Republic*, Persaeus' seven-book *Against Plato's Laws* (D.L. 7.36) and Chrysippus' *On Justice Against Plato*. Unfortunately the title and the

<sup>60</sup> See the objections of Aristotle (*PA* 664b3–665a25) and Erasistratus (presented by Plutarch in *Quaest. Conviv.* 697f–700b). Lonie 1981: 361 and Tieleman 1996: 192 provide helpful overviews of the controversy.

<sup>61</sup> See Slings 1999: 217–19.

<sup>62</sup> ἔτερά τινα is naturally read as a euphemistic reference to suicide; the explanation that immediately follows ('for it is not possible to philosophize without being alive') then makes the obvious point that suicide is not only different from philosophy but leads to an outcome that makes philosophy impossible. I do not see why Westman (1961: 93–4) resists this interpretation of ἔτερά τινα.



number of books are all that we know for certain about Persaeus' *Against Plato's Laws*. Posidonius<sup>63</sup> would later criticize the use of preludes to the laws, defended by Plato in *Laws* 719e–723d, but whether this reflects similar criticism by Persaeus is anyone's guess. Persaeus' other writing is said to have included such titles as *Spartan Polity*, *On Impiety*, *On the Kinds of Love* (D.L. 7.36) and *Sympotic Notes* (Athenaeus 607a). If Persaeus' response to the *Laws* had the same interests as these further works (we do not know whether it did), Persaeus must have responded specifically to Plato's discussions of Sparta, homosexuality, alcohol and irreligion.<sup>64</sup> What seems unlikely (at least if my account of Zeno's *Republic* is correct) is that Persaeus simply applied to the *Laws* the kind of criticism that Zeno had levelled at Plato's *Republic*. For Plato's *Laws* is openly interested in, and critical of, contemporary societies right from the start, beginning with a discussion of Crete and Sparta in Book 1 and offering a historically informed assessment of Sparta, Persia and Athens in Book 3. The new ideal of Magnesia is carefully postponed by Plato and has to wait until these concrete political experiments have been properly discussed. So a complaint that the *Laws* is insufficiently attentive to the contemporary situation simply would not wash. It may even be that Persaeus noticed that the *Laws* was proof against the main anti-Platonic polemic of Zeno's *Republic*, and so devised a set of fresh objections with which to counter Plato's later dialogue. In any case, it is reasonable to suppose that Persaeus did not merely reheat Zeno's objections to Plato's *Republic* and direct them against the *Laws*.

For evidence about Chrysippus' *On Justice Against Plato* we return yet again to Plutarch's *Stoic Self-Contradictions*.<sup>65</sup> Here it is clear that the new polemic by Chrysippus was connected to the precedent set by Zeno (for Chrysippus too was responding to Plato's *Republic*) and yet, far from simply copying Zeno, sought to expand the challenge to

<sup>63</sup> Seneca *Ep.* 94.38 (Posidonius fr.178). This is the only occasion known to us on which Posidonius named Plato and openly disagreed with him.

<sup>64</sup> Schofield 1999a: 41–2 suggests that Persaeus responded to Plato concerning the first three (on Sparta see also Schofield 1999b: 59); he does not however suggest that Persaeus responded to Plato concerning religion and irreligion.

<sup>65</sup> See also, however, Plutarch *Comm. not.* 1070e–f: 'read the first of his books concerning justice written against Plato, for it is worth while for other reasons also to observe the man's verbal ingenuity there sparing absolutely no fact or doctrine at all, either his own or another's'. For the title see Cherniss 1976: 467 note b.

Plato. The task of endorsing and explaining the political proposals of Zeno's *Republic* was reserved for a different work, namely Chrysippus' *On Republic* (D.L. 7.131).<sup>66</sup> So far as we know, the subject matter of *On Justice Against Plato* did not include cities, whether ideal or non-ideal; the surviving evidence suggests instead a focus on *ethics*.<sup>67</sup> In his attack on Platonic ethics Chrysippus considered a surprising range of passages in Plato's *Republic*. We might expect Chrysippus to have focused on the account of justice in Book 4, but evidently he considered Book 1 in some detail. One part of Chrysippus' challenge was to argue that Plato misrepresents justice, or rather *injustice* (Plutarch 1041b–c). Injustice causes social division and social discord, and in the first book of Plato's *Republic* Socrates argues that injustice does not lose its ability to cause division when it is confined to a single soul, for it puts that soul at odds with itself (351d–352a). Chrysippus seized on this passage<sup>68</sup> and argued against Plato that injustice is essentially interpersonal.

Chrysippus did not, however, show merely that Plato misunderstood injustice, but also that Plato offered an inadequate defence of justice. For a further part of Chrysippus' challenge was to show that Plato gave poor and even counter-productive incentives to justice and suggested doctrines that undermine justice. Under that broad heading we may include the following two passages. (a) According to Plutarch (1040a), *On Justice Against Plato* began with a discussion of theology and with an attack on the way in which Plato deters Cephalus<sup>69</sup> from injustice by means of Cephalus' fear of the gods (a reference to Cephalus' discussion of punishments in the afterlife, *Republic* 330d–331b). Chrysippus argued that claims about divine punishment are easily called into question and may attract people to injustice rather to justice (Adeimantus' challenge in *Republic* 362d–366b shows that Plato was fully aware of this latter possibility). The fact that Chrysippus opened *On Justice Against Plato* with criticism of a passage found near the start of Plato's *Republic* may indicate that his

<sup>66</sup> See Schofield 1999a: 26 n. 10.

<sup>67</sup> The distinction between politics and ethics is not anachronistic. Cleanthes had already distinguished between them (D.L. 7.41).

<sup>68</sup> See Boys-Stones 1998: 173 n. 16.

<sup>69</sup> I take Plato as the subject and Cephalus as the object of ἀποτρέπειν. Alternatively, as in Cherniss' translation, 'Cephalus was wrong in trying to make fear of the gods a deterrent [to others?] from injustice.'

treatise kept in step with the sequence in Plato's dialogue and drew attention to problematic or false claims about justice as and when they occurred in Plato's text. (b) Plutarch's next discussion (1040d) of *On Justice Against Plato* outlines an objection by Chrysippus about true goodness. According to Plutarch, Plato 'seems to grant that health'<sup>70</sup> is something good', and this caused Chrysippus to object that such a doctrine destroys all the virtues (including, of course, justice). The clearest statement of such a view in the *Republic* is by Glaucon at 357c2–4. In short, the surviving evidence about *On Justice Against Plato* indicates close scrutiny on Chrysippus' part of *Republic* Book 1 and of the opening of Book 2, although it is surely likely that Chrysippus went on to criticize Socrates' definition and discussion of justice in *Republic* Book 4.

I conclude by briefly looking ahead. In Chrysippus' hands the Stoic response to Plato's *Republic* had become more of an onslaught. Part of Chrysippus' innovation was to turn to Platonic ethics and to draw attention to Plato's suggestion that goodness can be found independently of virtue. In the second century, however, this expanded criticism of Plato would be cut back to size. Antipater's *On Plato's doctrine that only the morally admirable is good* (ὅτι κατὰ Πλάτωνα μόνον τὸ καλὸν ἀγαθόν)<sup>71</sup> may have been intended primarily to discomfit Academic opponents of the Stoa by showing the founder of the Academy to have been a Stoic *avant la lettre*.<sup>72</sup> But perhaps Antipater was also responding to previous Stoic writing. In particular, Antipater may have aimed to correct what he regarded as excesses in Chrysippus' opposition to Plato. If so, the first discernible attempt by a Stoic to develop an *interpretation* of Plato, which to us seems to open a new chapter in the Stoic response to Plato, was an attempt to turn the clock back and to restore the original political emphasis of Zeno's attack on Plato's *Republic*.

<sup>70</sup> Pleasure is mentioned shortly afterwards by Plutarch; it too is a genuine good, according to Glaucon and Socrates in *Republic* 357b4–c1. I read 'seems to grant' (δοκούντος ἀπολιπεῖν) as Plutarch's description of Plato and not (with Cherniss) as part of the content of Chrysippus' charge; in this polemical context Chrysippus probably said that Plato actually committed himself to the pernicious view that health is good.

<sup>71</sup> Clement *Strom.* 5.14 (SVF 3(Antipater).56). According to Clement, Antipater attributed to Plato the doctrine that virtue is sufficient for happiness, as well as further doctrines in line with Stoic teaching.

<sup>72</sup> Tarrant 2000: 57–8; Sedley 2003: 20.

## CHAPTER 6

### *Seneca against Plato: Letters 58 and 65*

*George Boys-Stones*

#### INTRODUCTION

It is a disconcerting fact about our evidence for post-Hellenistic Stoicism that its adherents seem to put up very little fight in response to the rise of Platonism at that period. This is disconcerting because Platonists, for their part, consistently and aggressively defined their philosophy in opposition to the Hellenistic schools, including the Hellenistic Stoa, whose work they liked to depict as the product of a degenerate regression from the insights of Plato. Yet, far from responding in kind, or even defending themselves, it has often seemed that the Stoics of this later era, if they offered any response at all, rather conceded ground to the Platonists: that they sought ‘rapprochement’, maybe even a marriage of sorts; at least an open conversation.<sup>1</sup>

I have argued elsewhere (Boys-Stones 2009) that this impression is false. The principal reason why it is not obvious to us that Stoics of the early centuries AD responded critically to the Platonist revival may be the simple fact that their response did not involve the development of new and eye-catching lines of argument. Post-Hellenistic Platonists had to construct a position against the Stoics from scratch; but as far as the Stoics were concerned, what was wrong with Platonism was what their ancestors had argued was wrong with Plato in the first place – *imprimis*, the belief in non-material causes. No wonder, then, that Platonist polemic is more visible to us. Platonists are hard at work defining their relevance in contemporary philosophical debate; the

<sup>1</sup> E.g. (to mention only works with a focus on Seneca): Sedley 2005: 131–2 (‘rapprochement’); Donini 1979: esp. 159 (partial acceptance) (cf. Natali 1992 and 1994); Inwood 2007a: esp. 110 (‘conversation’).

Stoics, on the other hand, are best served by acting as if the battle had been won 300 years and more earlier.

It may be as a consequence of this that Plato himself is not given the warm welcome among post-Hellenistic Stoics that he received in the Hellenistic school. In fending off Platonists, the Stoics are brought to remember their antipathy to Plato. At least, this is what I shall argue in this chapter. If one takes the Stoic need to defend themselves against the threat of the new Platonism as part of the context for their writing, then their frequent interactions with Plato, the allusions and quotations, agreements and borrowings which lead scholars to see a tendency to eclecticism in the Roman Stoa, may turn out to be evidence of a very much less accommodating move. In particular, I should like to show how this is true of two of Seneca's letters, *Letters* 58 and 65. These letters, dealing as they do with Platonic notions of being and causality, have been singled out as especially important indices of how far Stoics felt able to go in opening a dialogue with Platonism. But they rather seem to me to be – and to need to be – highly polemical: a bullish response to the challenge posed to Stoicism by the new Platonist movement; and ultimately a rejection of Plato too.<sup>2</sup>

#### APPROACHING 'LETTERS' 58 AND 65

The pro-Platonic reading of Seneca has, it must be said, a number of things going for it. Seneca evidently *is* pro-Plato in the sense of holding Plato in high regard as a major figure in the history of philosophy.<sup>3</sup> He uses Plato's dualistic language to lead his audience away from fixation on the body and towards an appropriate respect for the soul and the deeper mysteries of nature (not least in *Letters* 58 and

<sup>2</sup> The most important recent work on these letters includes Sedley 2005, and Inwood 2007a and 2007b. Earlier discussions tend to focus on the question of Seneca's sources (a question about which I shall have nothing at all to say). See in particular Bickel 1960 (with useful pointers to previous discussions) (Bickel sees Posidonius behind 58, and Aristotelian commentators behind 65); Whittaker 1975 (Eudorus behind 58); Dillon 1977: 136–8 (Arius Didymus behind 58, Eudorus or Antiochus behind 65); Donini 1979: 275–95 (Antiochus behind both); Setaioli 1985 (an unknown commentary on the *Timaeus* behind both); Gersh 1986: 194–5 (an early Platonist handbook behind both); Rist 1989: 2010–11 (Arius Didymus behind both); Chaumartin 1993 (Platonist commentators of an Aristotelian bent behind 65).

<sup>3</sup> At *Ep.* 108.38, Plato is listed as one of the original sources for the philosophical arguments trotted out by derivative scholars, alongside Zeno, Chrysippus and Posidonius (*et al.*, clearly, although the text becomes uncertain at that point).

65); on one occasion, he actually defends Plato against the attack of a fellow-Stoic (*Ep.* 94.38). When he turns in *Letter* 58 to what seems to be a fusion of Platonic ontology with principles of Stoic classification, it is only natural to take this very seriously indeed.

The problem is that what appears to be going on in *Letter* 58 is of a different order of significance to Seneca's other Platonic engagements. When Seneca emphasizes the importance of soul over body, he does so without ever abandoning the view that only the material exists, and that the soul is ultimately mortal.<sup>4</sup> The occasion on which he defends Plato (94.38) sees Seneca in disagreement (ironically) with one of the most famously Platonic of all the Stoics, and over a matter of marginal philosophical importance.<sup>5</sup> If reconciliation is really what is on offer in *Letter* 58, on the other hand, then it puts the very basis for a distinction between Stoicism and Platonism at risk. If Seneca is countenancing the existence of (non-material) forms and a transcendent god, then he is doing something much more radical than he does elsewhere: something which might arguably count as giving up on Stoicism altogether.

There is another problem with the 'reconciliatory' reading of *Letter* 58, which is how it is to be squared with the more overtly hostile line taken in *Letter* 65. *Letter* 65 is relevant here, not just because it is the one other letter that deals explicitly with Platonic doctrine, but also because the doctrine it deals with is closely related to that in 58. In 65, Seneca surveys Platonic causal theory, comparing it unfavourably with that of the Stoics. But Platonic causal theory is, of course, closely bound up with Platonic ontology, since the primary causes for a Platonist are precisely the non-material ones (forms and god). At the very least, we can say that if Plato's causal theory does not survive *Letter* 65, Seneca might be expected to find the Platonic ontology of 58 otiose after all.

The response to this latter objection seems to be that the priority of *Letter* 58 in the sequence means that it should be the one to set the tone. The idea would be that it is perverse to read *backwards*

<sup>4</sup> This language above all else has led to a view that Seneca is inclined towards a Platonic 'dualism'; but see now the perspicuous (and definitive) assessment of Reydam-Schils 2010.

<sup>5</sup> The Stoic is Posidonius; the question, whether laws should be written with a preamble. (Posidonius argues that they should not.) See n. 63 in Alex Long's [Chapter 5](#).

from 65 to a negative interpretation of 58. It is more natural to assume that the basically friendly attitude towards Plato established in the earlier letter is meant to ensure that the reader is not misled by the rough-and-tumble of the debate over details in *Letter* 65 into thinking that Seneca really ends up in fundamental disagreement with Plato.

Something along these lines seems to be an important part of the groundwork for the pro-Platonic reading of these letters, and so of Seneca's philosophy as a whole. And it is an approach that works well enough so long as one only has *Letters* 58 and 65 in view. The trouble is that it works very much less well if one considers the broader published context of these letters: the place they occupy in the collection of letters as a whole.<sup>6</sup> It is increasingly well recognized that the collection has a unified character and purpose that transcends and frames the individual letters which comprise it. In particular, the collection is carefully and artfully structured to trace and respond to the developing pedagogical needs of its addressee, Lucilius.<sup>7</sup> But this is crucial for the reader of these letters. Judgements on their interpretation need to take into account the point that Lucilius has reached on his journey towards philosophical maturity; and judgements about developments in emphasis or thought between different letters need to take into account the progress that Lucilius is supposed to have made between those letters. In this light, it is far from absurd to think that the tone of subsequent letters ought to colour our view of letters earlier in the series. On the whole, one can assume that earlier letters are meant to speak to a philosophically more naive audience: the 'official' position might well be the one that Seneca feels able to set out only after suitable preparation, later on.<sup>8</sup> This, I suggest, is precisely what is happening with *Letters* 58 and 65. In order to see how, though, we need to start right back at the beginning of the corpus.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. remarks at Inwood 2007b: 150–2 (though Inwood himself does little more than bring *Letter* 66 into play as well).

<sup>7</sup> See e.g., Wilson 2001: 184–6; Henderson 2004; Griffin 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Wilson 2001: 182 on the 'vehemence with which Seneca repudiates the approach he previously advocated' in the use of maxims as a pedagogical tool.

## THE STORY SO FAR

The apparent hardening of Seneca's attitude towards Platonism between 58 and 65 has, I think, a parallel in a much more famous development that occurs earlier on in the corpus: that in Seneca's attitude towards Epicurus.<sup>9</sup> For Epicurus features prominently in the first three books: in fully 23 of the letters they comprise (*Letters* 1–29, the exceptions being *Letters* 1, 3, 4, 5, 10 and 15), Epicurus is invoked by name, and is often the source for a closing maxim. Yet he is scarcely so much as mentioned thereafter.<sup>10</sup> There is no question that this is because Seneca changed his own mind about Epicureanism as the *Letters* progressed. He refers to Epicureanism as the 'enemy camp' even as he borrows from it early on (2.5: he goes there *non tamquam transfuga sed tamquam explorator*). So why does he appeal to Epicurus in the early letters, when he does not do so later on? The answer lies with Lucilius. Seneca begins his letters as protreptic addressed to a man who is too wrapped up in the affairs of the world to have time for philosophy. What he needs to do is to present philosophy as something both accessible and appealing. Epicureanism can easily be made to seem both.<sup>11</sup> By judicious appropriation of Epicurean language and thought, Seneca is able to lay emphasis on those aspects of philosophy in general which will make it seem attractive to Lucilius: especially its promise of withdrawal and emancipation (already 1.1, but see esp. *Letter* 19) – even, it is hinted, of *otium* (19.8). In doing this, Seneca is conceding nothing to the truth of Epicureanism. He is simply *using* Epicurus as a way into philosophical study that is likely to appeal to someone like Lucilius who, as yet, does not know too much about it.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Reydam-Schils compares Seneca's pedagogical use of Plato to his use of Epicurean material (2010: 214); cf. Inwood 2007a: 110.

<sup>10</sup> To be precise, he is named, or the word *Epicureus* is used, in 13 further letters (viz. 33, 46, 48, 52, 66, 68, 72, 79, 81, 85, 89, 92 and 97) – and not at all in the last four books that we have (Books 17–20 = *Letters* 101–24).

<sup>11</sup> The idea that Epicureanism was a philosophy for 'beginners' is well established in ancient polemic: see e.g. Cicero *Fin.* 3.2–3; *Acad.* 1.4–7.

<sup>12</sup> Though Griffin (2007: 91) may also be right to suggest that Lucilius was interested in Epicurus to begin with. (I certainly agree, by the way, with Griffin's insistence that the letters represent a fictional exchange between Seneca and a fictionalized version of the historical Lucilius. In this chapter, nothing I say about Lucilius should be taken as a historical claim about his real-life counterpart.) A different sort of approach to Seneca's appeal to Epicurus early on is suggested by Inwood (2007c: 146), who notes that it establishes a literary precedent for Seneca's letters in those famously written by Epicurus.



By *Letter* 27 (towards the end of Book 3), Lucilius must have been well and truly hooked, because at this point Seneca drops the pretence that philosophy is a relaxing activity. On the contrary, he says, it turns out to be what *real* work is: *Letter* 27, then, is about the *difficulty* of virtue (2: *dimitte istas voluptates turbidas!* 4: *multum restat operis* etc.). It is no coincidence that it is very shortly thereafter (from the beginning of Book 4) that references to Epicurus start to dry up. And it is not just Epicureanism that falls away, but the ‘easy’ way of doing philosophy that was tacitly associated with it. In particular, Seneca now drops the use of maxims altogether: as he explains in *Letter* 33, it is time for Lucilius to engage seriously with serious philosophy.<sup>13</sup>

This now leads to the appearance of a new motif that resonates through future letters: the idea that some forms of philosophical activity are less useful (that is, less serious) than others. In particular, at this stage, Seneca is very concerned that Lucilius should not spend too much time on dialectic. *Letter* 45 is the first extended warning against sophistical niceties. In a rhetorical question which will come to have to have some significance for us, Seneca asks what point there is in making verbal distinctions, when all they do is to help one avoid the traps of dialecticians one does not need to be talking to in the first place. In real life, he says, ‘it is things that mislead: draw your distinctions between them’: *res fallunt: illas discerne* (45.6).

Lucilius clearly does not get the point straight away. The very next letter finds Seneca full of praise for a book Lucilius has written. But on closer inspection, this praise turns out to be rather back-handed. It is Lucilius’ *style* that Seneca praises – precisely his *verbal* facility: the book, he says, might have been written by Epicurus himself (!) (46.1). As to content: we never learn so much as its general topic. When Seneca says that the beauty of the work unsettled his judgement so that he has to defer serious comment to another occasion (46.3), we are surely meant to hear in this an echo of Socrates’ reaction to the speech of Lysias in the *Phaedrus* (234d–235a).<sup>14</sup> Lucilius, it seems, has indeed become hooked on philosophy, but with the tyro’s sense of it

<sup>13</sup> I disagree, then, with Henderson 2004: 30 that Epicurus echoes beyond this point in any constructive sense: he is, I think, definitively *left behind*.

<sup>14</sup> If this is right, then Seneca’s remark at 46.3 (*tamquam audierim illa, non legerim*) would be rather arch: Socrates, of course, literally *heard* (but did not read) Lysias’ speech.

as something linked to brilliant verbal facility. Seneca pointedly shoots off some more letters to him against sophistry (*Letters* 48, 49), and, in the final letter of Book 5, against using philosophy as a way of showing off (52). And all of this, it seems to me, is crucial background to *Letter* 58 in the Book that follows: for *Letter* 58 is a striking foray into just the sort of dialectical niceties Seneca has been warning us about.

### ‘LETTER’ 58

*Letter* 58 is, by all traditional accounts, a real headache, and no one has ever really given a satisfactory account of the contradictions and unclarities it contains. A description of its contents is enough to show the problem.

The discussion which takes up most of the letter was inspired, Seneca claims, by someone’s comment that Plato recognized ‘six ways in which being is said’ (*sex modis hoc [sc. quod est] a Platone dici*: 58.8), but the letter begins with a lengthy reflection on the Latin language. Seneca deplores its ‘poverty’ (*paupertas*: 1), a poverty exacerbated by the fact that more words keep falling out of use (a few are listed at 2–5). With this in mind, he craves his readers’ indulgence for adopting new expressions: in particular, the Ciceronian coinage *essentia* as a translation of the Greek οὐσία (‘essence’: 6),<sup>15</sup> and the phrase *quod est* to render τὸ ὄν (‘being’: 7–8). It is at this point that Plato’s claim about the senses of ‘being’ is introduced; but as a preliminary to its discussion, Seneca explains what it means to classify the contents of the world into ‘genera’ and ‘species’ – apparently relying on the Stoic definition of those terms (8–15; cf. D.L. 7.61). At 58.16, he finally ‘returns’ (*revertor*) to Plato, setting out the six ‘ways’ (sc. of being) into which things can be divided. These are: universals (16); god (17); *ideae* (sc. ἰδέαι) (18–19); *idos* (sc. εἶδος) (20); individuals (‘such as men, cattle, things,’ as he says) (22); and ‘quasi-beings’ (*quae quasi sunt*: exemplified by void and time) (22). The letter ends with the claim that, after all, none of this fine-grained work (*subtilitas*) is of much

<sup>15</sup> At least, Seneca claims it is Ciceronian (58.6): Quintilian ascribes it to a ‘Plautus’ (*Inst. Or.* 2.14.2; 3.6.23) or to Verginius Flavius (8.3.33).

profit; but we can use it as the occasion to reflect on the transient nature of corporeal entities, including, of course, ourselves (22–37).

The exegetical problems here are legion; but perhaps nothing is more problematic than the very aspect of the letter which leads readers to see in it an attempt at bringing Stoicism and Platonism closer together – namely the juxtaposition of a more or less Stoic classification of *beings*, according to genus and species (8–15) with a more or less Platonic analysis of *being* (modes of existence) in 16–22. Not to dwell on problems internal to each (well exposed in existing literature on this letter),<sup>16</sup> it is unclear that combination or convergence between them ought to be possible *at all*. For the two activities ('Stoic' classification and 'Platonic' analysis) belong to different intellectual spheres: one (the classification of things) comes under the terms of ancient dialectic; the other, in dealing with the nature of being as such, is properly metaphysics.<sup>17</sup>

Inwood (2007a: 123) is on the whole very forgiving here: Seneca, he says, is merely 'insensitive to the philosophical possibilities in a careful distinction between an account of how we talk about the world and an account of how the world is'. That might be more surprising than it sounds, however, for this distinction had become a very hot topic in the philosophical circles of Seneca's day, where a lively debate was under way over just which of these two sorts of account was to be found in Aristotle's *Categories*. (The Stoic Cornutus, who might well have been personally known to Seneca, and was certainly in his philosophical ambit, was one of the contributors to this debate.)<sup>18</sup> And in any case, it makes it, if anything, even harder to understand what is going on in this letter if we are to suppose that Seneca was not observing this distinction. For it is no minor or peripheral issue that is at stake: the topic of the letter itself hangs on the question. If Seneca was unclear what sort of account he was giving, then the topic of the letter is unclear. In that case, anyone who thought that they

<sup>16</sup> See n. 2 above.

<sup>17</sup> The confusion arises not only in the juxtaposition: it also exists *within* the 'Platonic' analysis, where a classificatory term ('universal') is listed alongside types of entity (god, forms, men and time).

<sup>18</sup> Cornutus was on the side of those who saw the work as a work of linguistic classification. See Moraux 1984: 592–601 (and cf. Sedley 2005: 139), with Porphyry, *On the Categories* iv.1, 58.30–59.14; 86.20–4 Busse; Simplicius, *On the Categories* viii. 18.26–19.1; 62.24–30 Kalbfleisch.

understood what the letter was about would in fact be labouring under a delusion: they would be as confused as Seneca himself appears to be.

But then maybe, after all, that is that is precisely the point. Could Seneca's 'insensitivity' be deliberate? Could he have set us a trap? At second glance, there are some strong indications that not all is as it seems with this letter.

Consider the introduction. As my summary above indicates, it is set up to deal (and at some length) with the difficulties of translating technical Greek vocabulary into Latin. The pretext for it all is to justify Seneca's use of *essentia* for the Greek οὐσία. But here is a remarkable thing: for all this preliminary agonizing, Seneca *doesn't go on to use the word at all*.<sup>19</sup> Again, Seneca worries about translating τὸ ὄν as *quod est*. The problem this time (he says) is that he'll be using a verb (*verbum*) for a noun (*vocabulum*). But why is this a problem? Seneca never tells us, and I am yet to find the commentator who can do it for him. Add to the mix the curious preamble on the archaic words for 'gad-fly', 'decide' and 'order' (2–5, all exemplified from Virgil), and it is difficult to resist the conclusion that Seneca is engaged here in precisely the sort of distracting and ultimately pointless linguistic speculation he elsewhere castigates: the obsession with *verba prisca aut ficta ... et translationes inprobas* of *Ep.* 108.35, for example.<sup>20</sup>

Why would Seneca do this? Precisely, perhaps, to try to avoid the impression that the confusion of logic and metaphysics at the heart of the letter is merely 'muddled' (compare Inwood 2007a: 120, on the division in 58.13–15) or 'insensitive'. It is much worse than that: it is, and it is meant to be, a hopeless mess; but it is a mess with a very particular aetiology. It is the sort of mess which is generated when one spends too long worrying about distinctions of *meaning* and not enough time on differences between *things*. And this is a moral that

<sup>19</sup> This is not simply an oversight, for at 58.6–7 he says that he might not: that to be allowed to do so is all that he wants (*fortasse contentus ero mihi licere*).

<sup>20</sup> Another (complementary) way of reading this introduction is as a skit on conventional apologies for Latin philosophical writing, with their acknowledgement of the supposed 'poverty' of the language, and regret for the coinages into which their authors will be driven. (Lucretius 1.136–9 is a famous example; cf. Cicero *Fin.* 1.1–12; discussion in Fögen 2000.) Seneca's Latin is not only impoverished but *getting poorer* as more words are lost.

is all the clearer since the mess itself involves confusing distinctions of meanings (the Platonic analysis of 'being') with distinctions of things (Stoic classification). *Letter 58*, in other words, is an object-lesson for someone who has not yet fully appreciated the message of *Letter 45*: *res fallunt: illas discerne*.

If this is right, then Plato is severely implicated. It was a Platonic linguistic reflection – that 'being is said in six ways' – that started everything off; and it is in the division that Seneca ascribes to Plato that the confusion has its root. For the division ascribed to Plato at 58.16 is precisely not a linguistic division (about how being is 'said') but a metaphysical one, concerning the types of being there are. If one further reflects that we should expect Seneca, as a Stoic materialist, to be out of sympathy with the existence of at least three of the items on Plato's list of beings, namely, forms, whether transcendent (*ideai*) or immanent (*eidê*), and god (at least on the transcendent, 'Platonic' notion of god presumably intended here), then there is an obvious conclusion to draw from this: that Plato's inflated ontology is the unfortunate result of his dialectical preoccupations. The suggestion would be that Plato got so carried away by his work on logical division, in particular in distinguishing senses of 'being', that he ended up confusedly supposing that some of those senses corresponded to real types of entity. Platonic metaphysics on this view turns out to be a monstrous hypostasization of what the Stoics correctly recognized to be merely classificatory categories.

This way of reading *Letter 58* has some uncomfortable consequences. Most importantly, it suggests that the letter is far from being the reliable witness to the classificatory theory of the Hellenistic Stoa that it has sometimes been taken to be.<sup>21</sup> If I am right, it would, on the contrary, be at best a highly refracted version of that theory – distorted to the extent that it presumably has little of independent value to offer in our reconstruction of the theory. But whatever the extrinsic fall-out, it is a reading which yields, I believe, not only a more interesting and relevant conclusion for the letter itself, but also a substantially more comprehensive explanation of its peculiarities than any that tries to make Seneca's engagement with Plato more straightforward. If it is objected that it succeeds in this only by

<sup>21</sup> E.g. Brunschwig 1994; Mansfeld 1992: 78–109; Caston 1999.

making the letter excessively devious, the answer is that it is no more devious than Seneca's standard pedagogical approach demands: it is 'devious' just as the praise of Lucilius' book in *Letter* 46 is devious; as devious as the early appropriation of Epicurus, or the suggestion then that philosophy is a restful alternative to work. Lucilius by *Letter* 58 is well past his Epicurean phase: his philosophical childhood, so to speak. But we know that he is now, in his philosophical adolescence, attracted to (or, rather, distracted by) the dangers of sophistical show. This, I am proposing, is represented for Seneca by Plato. And just as Seneca was careful not to be overtly dismissive or explicitly critical of Epicurus at the beginning – on the contrary, he exploits convergence with the Stoics – so he treads carefully in *Letter* 58 with Plato. The letter offers Lucilius a logico-metaphysical feast with no overt disapproval. The lesson will come when he finds of his own accord, after a bit of chewing, that nothing in this will nourish or satisfy.<sup>22</sup> It is by these means that Seneca initially helps Lucilius through his 'Platonic' phase. But just as Seneca put Epicurus decisively behind him in Book 4 of the *Letters*, so, I suggest, the critical stance of *Letter* 65 marks the end of Seneca's patience with Platonism.

#### 'LETTER' 65

*Letter* 65 is concerned with the issue of causality, and contrasts the Stoic view with views Seneca ascribes to Aristotle and Plato. It is presented as an exposition of the three positions, between which Lucilius is invited to judge, although Seneca obviously thinks the Stoics are right to admit just one cause, namely god. Aristotle by contrast is said to recognize three causes (65.4) – or perhaps four (65.5), or even five (65.14). Plato for his part recognizes five (65.7) – or should that be six (65.14)? The number of causes keeps growing because the point is that the sort of *multiplicatio causarum* in which Aristotle and Plato are engaged has no non-arbitrary limit.<sup>23</sup> But the

<sup>22</sup> Seneca is able to use the material as the *occasion* for useful reflection, namely on the transience of the corporeal (58.25–end). But in doing so, he is explicitly turning away from the substance of the letter up to this point as mere 'amusements' (*oblectamenta*: 25). For the discussions of change in Marcus Aurelius see pp. 158–60 in Thomas Bénatouil's [Chapter 7](#).

<sup>23</sup> I see a joke here, comparable with the ever-growing number of rogues supposed to have attacked Falstaff at *Henry IV Part 1* (II.iv). Inwood suggests that there is an artful 'casualness',

extra ‘causes’ they name are not properly causes at all – they are *conditions*: ‘that in whose absence nothing can be effected’ (65.11). Having made his point, Seneca ends once again by raising the question of whether this kind of speculation has any value (65.15). What it does, however, is to give the philosopher occasion to consider the intellect as something unfettered by the body. As such, it helps him to set the values of body and soul into proportion.

The traditional view of 65 is that it represents an interest on Seneca’s part in the *Timaetus*, or some imagined Platonist commentary or handbook that dealt with the *Timaetus*. This view is largely based on the fact that Seneca, in the course of his discussion, quotes from the *Timaetus* (65.10, translating 29d–e), which must in fact have been the principal focus of contemporary interest in Plato. In recent work, though, Brad Inwood (2007a and 2007b) has pointed out that there is much more going on in this letter. In particular, he has drawn attention to the important role played by the *Phaedo*. The letter ends, for example – and, as Inwood points out (2007b, 152), the ‘ending’ in this case is some 40 per cent of the whole – with a reflection on psychology and ethics whose dualistic language clearly recalls the *Phaedo*. The *Phaedo* also contributes to its themes of causality and cosmology; and it provides the ultimate reference-point for the crucial distinction invoked by Seneca between the ‘causes’ of something and the ‘conditions’ for their operation. This distinction, between causes and conditions, is precisely the distinction that Plato had invoked in the *Phaedo* to demolish Anaxagoras’ attempt to explain the cosmos (99b).

So far, so good; but I diverge from Inwood in his conclusion that *Letter 65* shows a kind of looseness and variety in its sources and topics that is meant to recreate the loose but learned style of live conversation (2007b: 165–6). It seems to me, on the contrary, that the *Phaedo* has a privileged relationship with 65 as the source of its very architecture – and, if so, then as the key to its real, polemical purpose. In the

meant to recreate the atmosphere of conversation (2007b: 158; though at 2007a: 144 and 2007b: 162 he sees satire in the introduction of the sixth cause); but I note that the ‘casualness’ is all in one direction – towards *more* causes, never fewer, even though this involves Seneca discussing Aristotle first so that he can talk about Plato ‘adding’ extra causes (65.7). Other discussions of the issue address themselves mainly to the initial attribution of three (rather than four) causes to Aristotle: see variously Donini (1979: 297–8); Timpanaro (1979); Guida (1981).

Appendix to this chapter, I tabulate the structural and thematic parallels between *Letter* 65 and the *Phaedo* that make this case. The following are the main points:

- (i) *Letter* 65 begins with Seneca saying that he had the previous day been *ill* and incapable of doing anything else in the morning; then he attempted a little reading, then he wrote a bit; then received a visit from some friends, with whom he turned to conversation. Illness is a framing theme of the *Phaedo* too: it is one of the distractions from intellectual activity that Socrates identifies (66b–d: it ‘leaves us no leisure for philosophy’), and Socrates may be representing himself as at least *metaphorically* ill in his deathbed vow of a cock to Asclepius.<sup>24</sup> In any case, Socrates certainly resembles Seneca in finding himself *trapped indoors* at the beginning of the dialogue. And what has he been doing? Not something we hear of him doing very much: he has been *writing* (61b: versifications of Aesop). But now he is *receiving a visit from friends, with whom he turns to conversation* (58d, 63d).
- (ii) The transition to the main discussion in Seneca is made with the comment: *te arbitrum addiximus* (65.2). Meanwhile Socrates, in the *Phaedo*, represents the discussion he is about to have as a *defence* of his lack of fear in the face of death, in front of an audience who will, for the duration of the argument, be his *jurors* (*Phd.* 63e).
- (iii) The bulk of Seneca’s letter discusses the matter of causality, and defends against Plato and Aristotle the Stoic hypothesis that the cosmos (as such) has a *single* cause. The *Phaedo* for its part proceeds with three, related, discussions. The immortality of the soul (which has no direct parallel in Seneca) is only one: a second (95–105) is the nature of causality and the need for forms in particular, while cosmology makes a third (107–15). These last two correspond to Seneca’s interest in applying the issue of causality to an explanation of the cosmos.
- (iv) Lucilius’ judgement is demanded by Seneca on the matter of causes (65.10, 15), just where Socrates’ audience is reminded by him that they are his jury on the matter of the soul (69e). Note by

<sup>24</sup> Not to mention the fact that the *Phaedo* starts with the illness (and absence) of its own author: 59b.



the way how Seneca asks for Lucilius to judge which position seems *most likely*.<sup>25</sup> In this curious modesty (curious because Seneca seems quite clear what the right answer is, and in fact has not even attempted to set out the other side of his question) there is a parallel that can be drawn with the *Phaedo*. For Socrates concludes from his account of the cosmos in the *Phaedo* that, while he could not be sure, he thinks he has given *something like* the right account (namely, about souls and their dwellings: 114d).

- (v) Finally, while Socrates takes a bath, drinks the hemlock, and dies, Seneca ends his letter with a discussion of the metaphorical way in which philosophy frees the soul from the body – and in doing so annihilates the fear of death.

If I am right that all this amounts to a case for seeing the *Phaedo* as programmatic for Letter 65, the importance of the observation lies in the fact that it tends to make the existence of *forms as causes* the real point of the letter, not just one topic among others. We might be inclined to miss this because we tend to think of the *Phaedo* as a work that is most importantly about the immortality of the soul. But ancient readers also recognized the *Phaedo* as a *locus classicus* for the discussion of forms as causes.<sup>26</sup> In this sense, Seneca can quite legitimately take Plato's criticism of Anaxagoras to be the real and focal point of the whole exercise. The *Phaedo* motivates a theory of forms (namely, as causes) on the back of Plato's attack on Anaxagoras for appealing to 'air and aether and water and many other extraordinary things' as cosmological causes (98c) – a move which, Plato says, shows us that Anaxagoras could not distinguish between a 'cause' and 'that without which the cause would not be a cause' (ἄλλο μὲν τί ἐστὶ τὸ αἴτιον τῷ ὄντι, ἄλλο δὲ ἐκείνο ἄνευ οὗ τὸ αἴτιον οὐκ ἂν ποτ' εἴη αἴτιον: 99b). What Letter 65

<sup>25</sup> Reading *verisimillimum* with the majority of MSS. The parallel is weakened, but does not entirely disappear, if one reads the alternative *verissimum* ('most true'), since Seneca is here in any case drawing an explicit contrast between what merely *seems* most true or likely, and the truth itself – which is, he says, beyond us.

<sup>26</sup> According to Damascius, for example, 'Plato has nowhere shown the answer to the question of participation [sc. in forms] so clearly' (*In Phd.* 1.418 Westerink, *ad* 100d). It is in the *Phaedo*, after all, that Socrates talks of having wanted to learn 'the causes of each thing: why each comes to be and passes away, and why it is' (96a). He is interested specifically in the nature of the highest cause, and it is, as Proclus too knows, in the *Phaedo* that we can find an argument for this, or at least an argued rejection of alternatives, not just a description of it (*In Tim.* 1.2.11–15, 204.3–8 Diehl).

does is to reverse the criticism, to say that the Platonic and Aristotelian theories of causality owe their unduly and unrestrictedly expansive nature to their confusion of ‘that in whose absence nothing can be effected’ with a real cause (65.11). The forms which Plato introduced as the solution in his attack on Anaxagoras become here the principal object of Seneca’s attack on Plato.

Is it likely that Seneca would have gone to this much trouble over Plato’s metaphysics? Nothing more likely, in my view. Not only does it round off the series of warnings to Lucilius about the dangers of sophistry by exposing (explicitly, this time) the metaphysical absurdities to which it gives rise in Plato, thereby signally the end of Seneca’s tolerance for Lucilius’ flirtation with this sort of thing, it also tackles directly what must from the beginning have been the Platonist line against the Stoics. Platonists argued that the Stoics were in effect deficient heirs of philosophy as Plato left it, in particular insofar as they fail to recognize the metaphysical principles which exist prior to the material cosmos. For this (so they said) limits the explanatory power of Stoicism, no explanation being complete without reference to the divine mind and the pre-existing paradigms for creation which are its thoughts; and it limits the credibility of its epistemology too, for knowledge is likewise impossible if it is not grounded on ideal, normative principles which lie beyond and before the empirical world.<sup>27</sup> The Stoics had better have had a response to this – and the response they needed is exactly the sort of thing I have ascribed here to Seneca. Forms are fantasies: the ontological epigones of sophistical dialectic.

#### CONCLUSION

Seneca, I have argued, manifests an unqualified opposition to Platonic metaphysics in *Letters* 58 and 65, and it is a stance that defines his response to the Platonist movement which, emerging in his day, differentiated itself from Stoicism principally by its commitment to this metaphysics. (The attack is, in this sense, a total attack on Platonism as a movement, not a quibble over details.) But, as I noted in the Introduction, Seneca also allows it to determine his philosophical

<sup>27</sup> For case studies which argue these points, see Boys-Stones 2005 (epistemology) and 2007b (physics).

opposition to Plato. His argument might have been that Platonists were wrong, that they misunderstood what Plato actually meant. But it was not. As far as Seneca is concerned, the Platonists were quite right about Plato – and so much the worse for Plato. And in this retreat from the pro-Plato tendencies of the late Hellenistic Stoa,<sup>28</sup> Seneca is consistent with all our evidence for post-Hellenistic Stoicism.<sup>29</sup>

As I said in the Introduction, part of the reason for this hardening in attitude towards Plato may lie in the fact that the new Platonist movement forced Stoics in search of a response to revisit the arguments of their school fathers, and in doing so to rediscover the anti-Platonic strain of the early Stoa.<sup>30</sup> Some further observations relevant to the context of philosophical debate in the first century AD might lend additional plausibility to the suggestion. The first is the fact that Stoics at this time had an independent motive for becoming interested in the founders of their school all over again, in the collapse of the formal institution at Athens. There is some evidence that texts of the early Stoics became objects of fresh study from the late first century BC, presumably as the obvious reference point for the identity of the school in diaspora.<sup>31</sup>

The other observation concerns an aspect of the polemical historiography developed by the new Platonists themselves. According to them, the Stoics (and indeed all other post-Classical schools) fell into error because of innovations they dared to make with respect to the

<sup>28</sup> I have in mind, most obviously, Panaetius and Posidonius; but cf. also Antipater (*SVF* 3 (Antipater).56).

<sup>29</sup> Boys-Stones 2009 is another case study of the phenomenon (dealing with Cornutus). A possible exception is the mysterious Trypho, ‘Stoic and Platonist’, mentioned at Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 17.3.

<sup>30</sup> It is possible to exaggerate the heat of this antipathy, but there is plenty of evidence for it. Early Stoics writing against Plato include: Zeno (*SVF* 1.260); Persaeus (*SVF* 1.435); Chrysippus (*SVF* 2.763; 3.157, 226, 288, 313, 455). Note that it is Xenophon (not Plato) whose Socratic writings convert Zeno to philosophy (D.L. 7.2). For discussion see ‘Zeno contra Plato’ and ‘Subsequent polemic’ in Alex Long, Chapter 5.

<sup>31</sup> Sedley 1997: 114 says that ‘no commentary can be shown to have been written on a Stoic text before the sixth century AD’. But, as Frede notes (2005b: 785 with references to Epictetus *D* 1.17.16–18, and *Suda* α 3917, ‘Aristocles of Lampsacus’), we know that there were new editions of the classic texts of Stoicism in the late first century BC, and there is suggestive evidence for commentaries written in the first century AD too. It is telling that Persius possessed ‘around 700 of Chrysippus’ books’ (something like a complete set), which he left to Cornutus; equally so that Cornutus accepted them, though giving away the money that Persius bequeathed to him in addition (*vita Persii* 36–41 Clausen).

perfect system developed by Plato.<sup>32</sup> But in these circumstances, it would naturally suit the Stoics well to shift the emphasis of their own foundation narrative back to the ultimate roots they claimed in Socrates. An argument based on claims of innovation would sound weaker against a school that could claim that the essentials of their system were in place before Plato was born – and with Plato's revered teacher to boot. In any case, Seneca's mature preference for Socrates over Plato is clear. It is striking that, in the early *Letters*, Socrates' appearances were, as often as not, made alongside Plato.<sup>33</sup> After *Letter* 65, Plato is mentioned only twice more as a figure in his own right (at 94.38 and 108.38) – with respect, to be sure, but not as an authority for anything significant. Socrates, on the other hand, is invoked as someone who 'summoned philosophy as whole back to ethics', giving the crown of wisdom to the ability to distinguish good from bad, rather than to the verbal games played by philosophers (71.6–7). As such, he is mentioned in six further letters – and very much, on each occasion, as someone who set the example for a true philosophical life.<sup>34</sup>

#### APPENDIX: SENECA, *LETTER* 65 AND THE *PHAEDO*

The purpose of this Appendix is to support my suggestion that *Letter* 65 is a Stoic response to the *Phaedo* in particular, by tabulating parallels in structure and thought between them. Note that I do not wish, in arguing this case, to deny that there are important secondary references to other dialogues – the *Timaeus* prominent among them.<sup>35</sup> (Seneca actually quotes from the *Timaeus* at 65.10, after all.) But these references, I suggest, can all be considered precisely to be *secondary*, that is, to be framed by the primary relationship of the text with the *Phaedo*. (The quotation from the *Timaeus*, for example, would be explained by the fact, recognized in all the later commentaries, that

<sup>32</sup> See Boys-Stones 2001: ch. 7.

<sup>33</sup> See 6.6; 44.3–4; and especially 64.10. There are three early letters in which Socrates is mentioned but not Plato: see 7.6, 13.14, 28.2. Somewhere between these two groups might be considered *Letter* 24, where Plato is mentioned (at 6), but merely as the author of the *Phaedo*, on which, together with the *Crito*, the reference to Socrates at 24.4 already relies.

<sup>34</sup> See *Ep.* 67.7; 70.9; 71.7, 16–17; 79.14; 98.12; 104.7, 21, 27–8. For a study of references to Plato (and other philosophers) in Seneca's corpus at large, see Tieleman 2007b.

<sup>35</sup> And cf. Inwood 2007b: 152 for other possible dialogues in play.

there is a permeability between the discussions of cosmology and causes in the *Phaedo* and the *Timaeus*, so that a discussion of one typically calls for a cross-reference to the other.)<sup>36</sup> As some sort of check on the plausibility of the claim that the *Phaedo* has a particularly strong relationship with Letter 65, I have added a column to the table listing parallels with the *Timaeus* as well. Square brackets and italics are used throughout to indicate merely suggestive similarities with Seneca (for example in theme) rather than closer parallels in thought: it will be noted that they predominate in the *Timaeus* column.

Seneca, Letter 65	Plato, <i>Phaedo</i>	Plato, <i>Timaeus</i>
<i>Opening scene</i>		
– Seneca ill and at first incapable;	– [illness of Plato: 59b / for illness preventing philosophy: 66c–d]	– [illness and absence of one would-be participant: 17a]
– then attempted reading;		
– then wrote a bit (1);	– Socrates had been writing (61b)	
– then received and conversed with friends (2)	– then received & conversed with friends (58d, 63d)	– [discussion with friends: 17a–b]
<i>Introduction to the main discussion</i>		
‘Conversation took the place of writing, and I am going to set out for you the contentious part of it. I appoint you judge’ (2)	‘With you as my jurors, I wish to give my defence for thinking that a man who has really devoted his life to philosophy might reasonably be cheerful in the face of death . . .’ (63e)	‘If we provide likelihoods no worse than any others, we should be happy, remembering that I, who am speaking, and you who are my judges, are only human’ (29c–d)
<i>Main discussion(s)</i>		
	immortality of the soul (64a–95a)	On cosmology (including causation, and creation of immortal soul) (27d–61c)

<sup>36</sup> So, e.g., Proclus appeals to the *Phaedo* discussion of causality and cosmology in his commentary on the *Timaeus*. (For causality, see 1.2, 204; 3.137 Diehl; for cosmology 1.180, 190, 204; 3.141 Diehl.) Damascius conversely appeals to the cosmology of the *Timaeus* in his commentary on the *Phaedo* (1.503–11 Westerink). In *On providence* book 4 Chrysippus both refers to the *Phaedo* and echoes the *Timaeus*; see Jenny Bryan’s [Chapter 3](#).

- On causality . . . on causality (95e–105c)  
immortality of the soul  
(105c–107b)
- . . . and its application to cosmology (2–14) (Plato *ait*: ‘*quae deo faciendi mundum fuit causa? bonus est; bono nulla cuiusquam boni invidia est. fecit itaque quam optimum potuit*: 10) cosmology (107c–115a) (Λέγωμεν δὴ δι’ ἥντινα αἰτίαν γένεσιν καὶ τὸ πᾶν τόδε ὁ συνιστάς συνέστησεν. ἀγαθὸς ἦν, ἀγαθῷ δὲ οὐδείς περὶ οὐδενὸς οὐδέποτε ἐγγίγνεται φθόνος: 29d–e)
- ‘If Plato and Aristotle judge, as a cause of something’s being made, that in whose absence nothing can be effected (*si, quocumque remoto quid effici non potest, id causam iudicant esse faciendi*), the causes they list are too few’ (11). ‘It is one thing to be a cause of being, another to be that without which the cause would never have been a cause’ (ἄλλο μὲν τί ἐστι τὸ αἴτιον τῷ ὄντι, ἄλλο δὲ ἐκείνο ἀνευ οὗ τὸ αἴτιον οὐκ ἂν ποτ’ εἴη αἴτιον) (99b) [cf. συναίτια at 46c–d; συμμεταίτια at 46e – both ‘*accompanying*’ causes embraced by Plato]
- Closing observation*
- ‘So bring your sentence as judge, and pronounce who you think has the most likely position – not who speaks most truly, for that is as far above us as the truth itself’ (10). ‘It would not befit an intelligent man to insist that things are as I have related them; but for someone who think that this, or something like it, is true of souls and their dwellings, given that souls are clearly immortal, the position is reasonable and worth venturing . . .’ (114d) [compare again 29d, as above, for the sentiment]
- Coda
- Philosophy wins the *metaphorical* freedom of the soul from the body, and freedom from fear of death. (15–end) Socrates dies . . . calm in death (115b–end)

# Theôria and scholê in *Epictetus* and *Marcus Aurelius*: Platonic, Stoic or Socratic?

*Thomas Bénatouïl*

The debate about the Platonist leanings of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius is quite old and has focused on their psychology and, to a lesser extent, on their theology.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I would like to redirect it to a new topic: contemplation and the philosophical life. This appears promising for two reasons. First, this subject, while different from the two traditional topics just mentioned, is not unrelated to them: its treatment might hence shed new light upon them. Second, in Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius' discussions of contemplation, we find not only positions which sometimes seem akin to Platonism, but also references to Plato's texts. Thus, whether we interpret Epictetus and Marcus' positions as Platonic or not, we have to try to account for their allusions to Plato about these matters.

Two caveats are, however, in order. First there are numerous testimonies and texts which prove that, before Epictetus and Marcus, the Stoic and the Platonic views about contemplation and the philosophical life had been contrasted or combined in various ways.<sup>2</sup> Although I will mention elements of this rich background in due course, I intend to focus on Epictetus and Marcus' views about contemplation and their specific uses of Plato, which have rarely been studied in detail. This does not imply that I deem them to be entirely original. On the contrary, I will show that Epictetus and

I thank Gretchen Reydam-Schils for her remarks and Alex Long for his revision of my English and his comments.

<sup>1</sup> I come back to the first topic below. For Epictetus' theology and Plato, see Jagu 1946: 112–33; Long 2002a: 156–79; and Algra 2007.

<sup>2</sup> For relevant discussion of Stoics, from Zeno to Seneca, of Academics and of Platonists, see Bénatouïl 2007 and 2009a; Brown 2008; and Bénatouïl and Bonazzi 2012.

Marcus share the Stoics' main views about θεωρία (contemplation) and the philosophical life rather than Plato's, but I will not inquire into the many possible sources of, influences on or parallels to Epictetus' and Marcus' views which could be found in previous authors, from the first Stoics to Cicero or Seneca. Second, this chapter deals with Epictetus *and* Marcus Aurelius because they both refer to Plato's discussions of contemplation, a fact which can hardly be a coincidence. This does not imply that their positions on contemplation and uses of Plato are identical. Although I am bound to focus on what is common to them, I hope not to overlook relevant differences.

I start by introducing Epictetus' and Marcus' implicit or explicit references to Plato on the subject of the philosophical life, and sketch a possible interpretation of these texts as exhibiting a position which is more Platonic than Stoic. I shall then adduce other relevant passages about the objects of contemplation, its practical effects and conditions, which show Epictetus and Marcus to use Plato's ideas only inasmuch as they fit their own Stoic views. Finally, I shall suggest that Epictetus' and Marcus' references to Plato, and in particular their references to the *Theaetetus*, are chiefly concerned with Socrates' notion and practice of the philosophical life.

#### EPICTETUS' ALLUSIONS TO PLATO

In one of the chapters titled *On providence* by Arrian, Epictetus presents contemplation as the end of man:

And so, of animals, one is constituted [by god] to be eaten, another to serve in farming, another to produce cheese, another for some other, related use; for these [uses], what's the use of understanding one's impressions and of being able to differentiate between them? But [god] has brought man into the world to be a spectator (θεατήν) of himself and of his works, and not merely a spectator, but an interpreter (ἐξηγητήν) too. Therefore it is disgraceful for man to begin and end where animals do. He should begin where they do, but end where nature has ended in the case of us. Now she ended with contemplation and understanding, and a manner of life in conformity with nature (θεωρίαν καὶ παρακολούθησιν καὶ σύμφωνον διεξαγωγὴν τῇ



φύσει). See to it then, that you do not die having never been a spectator of these things (ἀθέατοι).<sup>3</sup>

Hellenistic Stoicism already held that θεωρία was one of man's natural activities, on a par with πράξις or activity.<sup>4</sup> At first sight, Epictetus puts more emphasis on θεωρία, which defines the specific function and end of man in nature. The term ἐξηγητής is probably added to show that contemplating nature involves reaching a precise philosophical explanation of it, since Chrysippus is offered elsewhere by Epictetus as an 'interpreter of nature' useful for someone trying to 'understand' what nature wants and as a good object of study for this purpose (*D* 1.17.15–16).

Although the idea of man as a 'spectator' of nature is further explained by more precise terms, it is important, because it alludes to the origin of the idea of θεωρία: a private or civic pilgrimage to a sanctuary or a religious festival, where various rites were performed and witnessed by the θεωρός, who then came back to his home town to recount what he saw. Plato adopted and adapted various aspects of this cultural practice in his own notion of 'contemplation',<sup>5</sup> and the fact that Epictetus also often alludes to them is a first hint of the former's influence on the latter as far as contemplation is concerned.

Just after the passage quoted above from the chapter *On providence*, Epictetus refers to the practice of 'travel[ling] to Olympia to behold the work of Pheidias', because one 'regard[s] it as a misfortune to die without seeing such sights' and thus accepts various discomforts, like heat, crowds or rain, because of 'the value of the spectacle'. Epictetus blames his students for not acting in the same way with nature, which does not require us to travel, since Zeus is present everywhere in it: instead of trying to 'contemplate and understand' it as long as they can, they complain about the 'unpleasant and difficult things' in their

<sup>3</sup> *Discourses* (hereafter *D*) 1.6.18–22. When I quote book 1 of the *Discourses*, I use R. Dobbin's translation in the *Clarendon Later Ancient Philosophers* Series (1998), sometimes with a few changes. For Books 2 to 4, I use W.A. Oldfather's translation for the Loeb Classical Library (1925 and 1928) with some modifications.

<sup>4</sup> *D.L.* 7.130 with Bénatouil 2009a.

<sup>5</sup> Nightingale 2004: 40–138. Here as elsewhere, Epictetus mentions a θεατής and not a θεωρός, the latter being someone who *travels abroad* to a sanctuary or a festival. I come back to Epictetus' specific use of the festival analogy below, p. 165, but it does not mean that the journey metaphor is absent from his texts: see the next paragraph and *D* 3.24.12.

lives (*D* 1.6.23–27).<sup>6</sup> This analogy between a visual ‘spectacle’ and philosophical contemplation is further developed in another chapter:

Our position is like that of those who attend a festival (ὥς ἐν πανηγύρει). Cattle and oxen are brought there to be sold, and most men engage in buying and selling, while there are only a few who go merely to see the festival, how it is conducted, and why, and who are promoting it, and for what purpose. So it is also in this festival [of the world where we live]; some persons, like cattle, are interested in nothing but their fodder; for to all of you that concern yourselves with property and lands and slaves and one office or another, all this is nothing but fodder! And few in number are the men who attend the fair because they are fond of the spectacles (φιλοθεάμονες). ‘What then, is the universe’, they ask, ‘and who governs it?’<sup>7</sup>

This passage is clearly inspired by an analogy attributed to Pythagoras, who ‘compared life to a festival (τὸν βίον εἰκέναι πανηγύρει), where some went to compete for the prize and others went with wares to sell, but the best as spectators (θεαταί); for similarly, in life, some grow up with servile natures, greedy for fame and gain, but the philosopher seeks for truth’ (*D.L.* 8.8, trans. R. D. Hicks). This analogy gained approval and was probably reworked in the Academy, as is suggested by its transmission and use by two disciples of Plato, Heraclides of Pontus and Aristotle.<sup>8</sup> Epictetus thus seems to adopt the Academic idea that philosophers have a life entirely different from other men, since they are said to resemble people who, at a festival, want *only* to spectate.<sup>9</sup>

The Platonist flavour of Epictetus’ thinking about contemplation in this chapter<sup>10</sup> is confirmed by two other passages. A couple of pages before he quotes the Pythagorean or Academic analogy, Epictetus shows that, in order to perform the ‘task’ (ἔργον) of the philosopher, we have to learn something, like every apprentice of every art:

We seek then what it is. Now the philosophers say that the first thing we must learn is this: that there is a God, and that He provides for the universe,

<sup>6</sup> See also *D* 4.1.103–6. <sup>7</sup> *D* 2.14.23–5. Cf. *D* 1.11.39, quoted below.

<sup>8</sup> See Cicero *TD* 5.8–9 and Aristotle, *Protr.*, fr. 44 Düring.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *D* 1.16.15–21: the ‘task’ (ἔργον) of rational beings is ‘singing and praising god and rehearsing his benefits’, but most men ‘are blind’ and Epictetus has to ‘fulfil this office’ and ‘invites’ others to follow his lead. Thus, philosophers consciously and entirely devote themselves to a mission which is proper to all men.

<sup>10</sup> At 2.14.14–16, Epictetus claims that the starting point of philosophical education is the understanding of words, a point he attributes to Plato in *D* 2.17.5–7.

and that it is impossible for a man to conceal from Him, not merely his actions, but even his purposes and his thoughts. Next we must learn what the gods are like; for whatever their character is discovered to be, the man who is going to please and obey them must endeavour to resemble them as much as possible (πειρᾶσθαι κατὰ δύναμιν ἑξομοιοῦσθαι ἐκείνοις). (D 2.14.10–12)

When Epictetus mentions ‘the philosophers’, he is usually referring to the Stoics, and indeed he summarizes here a few basic tenets of Stoic theology and could be alluding to Chrysippus’ doctrine that ethics depends on physics and theology.<sup>11</sup> But his definition of what man should do is reminiscent of the famous phrase of *Theaetetus* 176b1, ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν, which was taken to encapsulate Plato’s definition of the *telos* from the first century BC onwards. The previous sentences could therefore also allude to Plato, especially *Laws* 10, 885b *sqq.*, particularly 887b–c, where proving the existence, providence and knowledge of the Gods is said to be the best prologue to the whole body of laws and its supervision of human conduct.

Moreover, the phrase of the *Theaetetus* is part of a so-called digression, in which Socrates contrasts the lives of politicians and the contemplative life of the philosopher. Socrates stresses that the philosopher has a life of constant ‘leisure’ (172d4: σχολή) and is laughed at by the crowds (175b4–5: ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν καταγελᾶται), because he ignores common practices and values. As noted by Jagu (1946: 130), Epictetus gives a similar description of the philosopher at the end of his chapter, when he comments on the analogy of the festival:

That is the way these few are affected; and thereafter they have leisure (σχολάζουσι) for this one thing only – to study the festival before they leave it. What happens, then? They are laughed at by the crowd (καταγελῶνται ὑπο τῶν πολλῶν), quite as the spectators are laughed at by the merchants. Yes, and if the cattle themselves had any awareness of it, they too would laugh at those who admire anything but their fodder.<sup>12</sup>

Epictetus’ description of man’s task as ὑμνεῖν τὸν θεόν<sup>13</sup> can also be traced back to the digression of the *Theaetetus*, where ordinary men are said to be unable, unlike the philosopher, to ‘sing correctly the praise (ὀρθῶς ὑμνῆσαι) of the life of the gods and of happy men’ (*Tht.*

<sup>11</sup> Plutarch *Stoic. rep.* 1035a–f. <sup>12</sup> D 2.14.28–29. Cf. D 1.11.39, quoted below.

<sup>13</sup> See D 1.16, 3.26.30 and 4.1.108.

175e7–176a1). In several texts, then, Epictetus grants contemplation a crucial role in human nature and the philosophical life, in ways reminiscent of Platonic doctrines. This is borne out by the fact that similar but more explicit references to Plato, again on the subject of contemplation, can be found in Marcus Aurelius.

#### MARCUS AURELIUS' QUOTATIONS

Marcus does not make contemplation the crucial or sole human function, as Epictetus apparently does, but he nevertheless lists it among man's specific activities:

A human being finds his delight in doing what is proper (τὰ ἴδια) to a human being; and what is proper to him is to show goodwill to his own kind, to scorn the movements of the senses, to distinguish reliable impressions, and to contemplate universal nature and all that happens according to her (ἐπιθεώρησις τῆς τῶν ὅλων φύσεως καὶ τῶν κατ' αὐτὴν γινομένων).<sup>14</sup>

Marcus' focus in his *Meditations* is rather on the content and impact of actual contemplation, suitable descriptions of which he seems to have found in Platonic or Pythagorean texts:

‘– Do you suppose that human life can seem a great matter to an elevated mind who has contemplated the whole of time and the whole of reality? – Quite impossible, he replied. – So to such a person, not even death will seem anything terrible? – Not in the least.’ (*M* 7.35)

Well said by Plato:<sup>15</sup> one who would converse on human kind should look on all things earthly as though from some point far above, upon herds, armies and agriculture, marriages and separations, birth and death, the clamour of the law courts, deserted wastes, alien peoples of every kind, feasts, lamentations and traffickings, this intermixture of everything and order conjured from opposites. (*M* 7.48)

The Pythagoreans said that, first thing in the morning, we should look up at the sky, to remind ourselves of beings who forever accomplish their work in

<sup>14</sup> *Meditations* (hereafter *M*) 8.26. For Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, I always quote Robin Hard's translation (Wordsworth Classics, 1997), often with a few changes.

<sup>15</sup> Many editors suppress, bracket or even correct these first words, which are present in A, the main manuscript, and in Xylander's 1559 edition based on another very good manuscript (now lost). Note, however, that, in *M* 7.35, 7.36 or 7.44–6, the words Πλατωνικόν, Ἀντισθενικόν or Πλατωνικά are indicated *before* each chapter as a lemma and only in Xylander's edition. This suggests that they were added to identify Marcus' implicit quotations, whereas the notation Καλὸν τοῦ Πλάτωνος in 7.48 is more probably Marcus'.

the same manner and in the same fashion, and of their orderliness, purity, and nakedness, for nothing veils a star. (*M* 11.27)

Marcus frequently reminds himself in the *Meditations* that contemplating human life from a detached and global perspective (*M* 9.30: ἄνωθεν ἐπιθεωρεῖν) is essential to assess the value of things and events. This cluster of ideas is often referred to as the ‘view from above’ and has been much studied.<sup>16</sup> What these passages show, and what we do not seem to have with other important and supposedly Platonic topics in the *Meditations*, is that Marcus read Platonic (and Pythagorean) texts about the view from above, and deemed them worthy to remember and meditate.<sup>17</sup> The first passage (*M* 7.35) is an accurate quotation of *Republic* 486a–b, where Socrates describes the philosophical nature. The second is not to be found in Plato, but can be taken as a condensed echo of *Theaetetus* 173d and 174d–175b, where Socrates describes the philosopher’s distant and contemptuous view of human affairs and values. Farquharson compares *M* 7.48 to *Sophist* 216c, but that itself looks like an allusion to the digression of the *Theaetetus*. What point to the *Theaetetus* in particular are, first, the fact that the view from above is required by Marcus for someone περὶ ἀνθρώπων τοὺς λόγους ποιοῦμενος (cf. *Tht.* 172d5 and 175c5–8), and, secondly, several of Marcus’ examples: agriculture (cf. *Tht.* 174e2–3), law courts (174c), alien peoples (175a4–5) and feasts (173d5).<sup>18</sup> Moreover, this section of the *Theaetetus* is explicitly quoted by Marcus at *M* 10.23 and echoed at *M* 2.13, two passages I shall analyse presently.

#### AN ACQUIRED TASTE FOR PLATONIC CONTEMPLATION?

The famous digression of the *Theaetetus* describing the philosopher as contemplating freely the whole world and human history from above and having ‘only his body remaining in the city’ (173e) thus seems to have made a similarly strong impression on Marcus and Epictetus.

<sup>16</sup> Rutherford 1989: 155–60; Hadot 1997: 155–98; Engberg-Pedersen 1998; Sellars 2003: 150–65.

<sup>17</sup> Gill 2007: 191. Overlooking the *Theaetetus* and Marcus’ references to it, Hadot 1997: 190–2 associates the contemplation of men from above with Cynicism.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *M* 9.30, a chapter very similar in topic and tone to 7.48, but without these specific echoes of the digression of the *Theaetetus*.

What are we to make of this? The obvious interpretation is that Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius shared Plato's view of the importance and role of contemplation in philosophy.

This line of interpretation could be pursued and strengthened by connecting the various passages just quoted to two other groups of texts, which have attracted far more attention. First, there are the passages which have been thought to contain views on the soul more akin to Platonism than to Stoicism, because of the strong contrast they draw between the soul and the body or between the mind and lower parts of the soul tied to the body.<sup>19</sup> These views could be easily linked to those listed above, since there is a well-known and tight connection, in Plato, between the advocacy of contemplation and the existence of an intellectual part of our soul, the cultivation of which requires the silencing of bodily desires. A similar connection would exist in Epictetus' and Marcus Aurelius' Platonized Stoicism:

As what did [God] bring you into the world? Was it not as a mortal being? Was it not as one destined to live upon earth with a little portion of paltry flesh, and for a little while to be a spectator of his governance (μετὰ ὀλίγου σαρκιδίου ζήσονται ἐπὶ γῆς καὶ θεασόμενον τὴν διοίκησιν αὐτοῦ) and to join with him in his pageant and holiday? (*D* 4.1.104)

Secondly, Epictetus' and Marcus' interest in contemplation could be referred to the body of evidence according to which many Stoics from the imperial age gave pride of place to a retired and contemplative life and not, as in the early Stoa, to a social, active and political life, perhaps because of the emperors' mistrust of philosophers. Seneca's *De otio* is probably a good example of this attitude,<sup>20</sup> and G. Rocca-Serra (1987) offered several passages of other Stoics from the time of Nero, like Cornutus and Chairemon, which seem to praise a retired life.<sup>21</sup> One could add to these texts a few remarks by Epictetus or

<sup>19</sup> Jagu 1946: 87–100; Rist 1969: 268–70; Rutherford 1989: 135; Asmis 1989: 2228–30, 2239–44 (with references to earlier literature); and Alesse 2001.

<sup>20</sup> Reydam-Schils 2005: 102–7.

<sup>21</sup> See Chairemon's description of the contemplative life of the Egyptian priests in Porphyry's *De abst.* 4.6–8; see also Cornutus, *Theol. Comp.* 14, 17.16–20 and 16, 24.3–5 (Lang), where it is stated that learning requires isolation. For our purpose, we could add *Theol. Comp.* 16, 23.6–11, according to which the birth of Hermes from Zeus and Maia means that 'logos is a product of contemplation and research', and the women who help deliver babies are called μᾶται because of the resemblance between childbirth and intellectual generation. This allegory could be an echo of the passage about Socratic midwifery in the *Theaetetus*.

Marcus which seem to endorse the *Theaetetus*' stark opposition between the philosophical life and any social or political activity. Epictetus sometimes advocates retiring from society to his disciples:

You see, then, that it is necessary for you to become a frequenter of the schools, that animal at which all men laugh, if you really want to make an examination of your own beliefs. (*D* 1.11.39)

Although a scholastic life was obviously not an option for Marcus, he could nevertheless enjoy at least some leisure: the *otium* of emperors was praised and codified as a deserved relief from their political and military activities and as a moment to cultivate and enjoy the arts. Jean-Marie André (1971) showed that Fronto commended such an *otium* to Marcus in a letter from 162, *De Feriis Alsiansibus*, because he knew that his pupil, after giving in to the joys of *otium* in his youth, was devoting all his days and even parts of his nights to his imperial duties, especially justice. Marcus nevertheless acknowledges that he yearns to retire in the countryside (*M* 4.3) or to read books (*M* 2.3, 3.14, 8.8), and, although he castigates himself for this desire for leisure, he often looks down upon human activities as a kind of ever-repeating senseless agitation (*M* 6.46, 10.27) and paints a bleak, or contemptuous, picture of his imperial life (*M* 2.1, 6.13, 9.36, 10.31):

Always be clear about this, that the countryside there is no different from any other, and that all things here are just as they would be on the summit of a hill, or by the seashore, or wherever you choose. For you will find that Plato's words are wholly to the point: 'penned in a sheepfold on the mountain and milking his bleating folks'. (*M* 10.23)

At the end of this passage, Marcus aggregates several words used by Socrates in *Theaetetus* 174d–e to describe how the philosopher sees 'a tyrant or a king showered with praise' as a type of shepherd or cattle-keeper, trapped in the mountains and so busy with looking after his untamed herd that he is necessarily rude and uneducated. Thus, Marcus seems to be looking at his own life as a king from the severe point of view of the Platonic philosopher and quotes Plato to remind himself that there is no escaping his situation by travelling around, since its real boundaries lie in its ἀσχολία.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> So Cortassa 1989: 135–6.

Besides the association of philosophy with contemplation and leisure, Epictetus and Marcus thus borrow from Platonism several other doctrines connected to this association, namely, the opposition of the mind to the body, the latter being held contemptible, and the importance of keeping away from politics and ordinary society. But against this we have to set the many objections that have been raised against the interpretation of Imperial Stoics as leaning towards Platonism. Concerning the temptation of solitary retreat in Imperial Stoicism, G. Boys-Stones (2007a: 81) has rightly argued, against G. Rocca-Serra (1987), that Cornutus' acknowledgement that learning requires solitude does not preclude him from holding that philosophical education is aimed at politics. Concerning psychology, it can be shown that Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius retain the central orthodox Stoic views about the soul,<sup>23</sup> which are incompatible with Platonism, and that the dualistic language they use is generally tied to the protreptic nature of their discourse: they wish to help their audience to memorize, appropriate and put into practice Stoic doctrines, and thus, when offering pictures of our life and soul, their aim is not to settle the nature of soul so much as to cure us of our false opinions about life, especially our irrational fears and desires.<sup>24</sup> As we shall see presently, similar objections can be raised against a Platonizing interpretation of Epictetus' and Marcus' notion of contemplation. However, some obvious discrepancies between their positions and Plato's will appear to be less crucial than they seem, and their references to Plato need nonetheless to be accounted for.

#### FROM HEAVENS TO EARTH: THE OBJECTS OF CONTEMPLATION IN STOICISM

The first obvious objection to a Platonizing interpretation is related to the objects and ensuing epistemology of contemplation. As noted by John Sellars, 'the "point of view of the cosmos" is very different from a

<sup>23</sup> To give but one example, Marcus warns himself that 'if one should live longer, it is by no means clear that one's mind will remain unchanged and still be adequate for the understanding of affairs and for the contemplation (θεωρίας) that strive after the experience of things divine and human' (*M* 3.1). Our mind is aging with our body, and contemplation is thus not our way to immortality.

<sup>24</sup> Jagu 1946: 101–3, 154; Rist 1969: 270–1; Gill 2007; Reydam-Schils 2010.



transcendent perspective’ and ‘can be contrasted with the theme of a “view from above” that appears throughout ancient philosophy and literature, and is particularly associated with Platonism’.<sup>25</sup> Epictetus and Marcus do not direct contemplation at intelligible and eternal Forms but at the world, its causes, its structure and its evolution as laid down in Stoic physics:

[the rational soul] goes on a journey around the whole world and the void which encircles it, and surveys its form, and reaches out into the endlessness of infinite time, and comprehends and reflects upon the periodical rebirth of the whole, and contemplates that those who come after us will see nothing new and that those who came before us saw nothing more. (*M* 11.1)

It might thus come as a surprise that Marcus quotes *Republic* 6.486a–b at *M* 7.35, for in its context in the *Republic*, θεωρία παντὸς μὲν χρόνου, πάσης δὲ οὐσίας (‘contemplation of the whole of time and the whole of reality’) has clearly a metaphysical and thus a distinctively Platonic meaning.<sup>26</sup> Yet, taken out of its context, the Platonic passage appears vague enough to be read as referring to sensible reality as a whole and to all its past and future changes.<sup>27</sup> The importance of this complete view of reality as far as space *and* time are concerned is often underlined by Marcus,<sup>28</sup> who probably chose the Platonic passage because it captures this comprehensive perspective well and connects the comprehensive perspective to another crucial topic for Marcus, namely getting rid of the fear of death.<sup>29</sup> The language and ethical effect of Platonic contemplation are thus preserved, but its scope is implicitly restricted to the limits of the Stoic universe. This use of Plato is probably very similar to the one invented by late Hellenistic Stoics such as Panaetius and Posidonius.<sup>30</sup> Plato’s texts are read as anticipating Zeno, in order to appropriate explicitly Plato’s words and concepts within the Stoic system.

<sup>25</sup> Sellars 2003: 165. See also Rutherford 1989: 157–8 and Engberg-Pedersen 1998: 311.

<sup>26</sup> At *Rep.* 479c7 or 485b2, the word οὐσία (‘being’ or ‘reality’) is clearly used to refer to what is eternal and unchanging. Marcus could have found the passage already excerpted in an anthology, as was suggested to me by Laura Gemelli Marciano (cf. Cortassa 1989: 175), and be unaware of its context.

<sup>27</sup> In Stoicism, οὐσία refers chiefly to matter (D.L. 7.134). Marcus often uses the term of the matter of one particular being (6.49) or of sensible reality as a whole (see n. 28 below).

<sup>28</sup> See *M* 5.10, 5.23, 5.24, 5.32, 6.1, 10.9 or 10.17. <sup>29</sup> Cortassa 1989: 129–30.

<sup>30</sup> See Reydam-Schils 1999: 85–116 and Tielemann 2003: 198–288.

Plato's doctrines are, however, not always as opposed to the Stoic ones at it might seem. He does not always, as in *Republic* 5–7 or the *Phaedrus*, conceive of contemplation as directed at transcendent objects like the Forms. In the *Theaetetus* and the *Timaeus*, the philosopher distances himself from our everyday world and needs by practising geometry and astronomy (*Tht.* 173e5–6), by looking 'at the whole earth' or at 'the whole' (174e5, 175a1–2), or by 'observing in the sky the revolutions of the intellect . . . studying them and partaking in the correctness of reasonings in accord with nature' (*Tim.* 47b–c). Hellenistic Stoics also retained the heavens as important objects of contemplation.<sup>31</sup>

Still, Epictetus<sup>32</sup> and Marcus scarcely single out the heavens as privileged objects of contemplation. Marcus indeed mentions the beauty and regularity of heavenly beings in his Pythagorean quotation at *M* 11.27 (quoted above at pp. 152–3), in *M* 12.24 and perhaps in *M* 7.47,<sup>33</sup> where he advises himself to 'watch the stars as though you were accompanying them on their way and reflect upon the continuous transformation of the elements into one another'. He then mentions the 'purification of the defilement of our earthly existence' (7.47), but it is not clear whether this purification is based on 'the representation' of the (implicit) stability and perfection of the stars (as opposed to the elements),<sup>34</sup> or on the direct vision of the changing elements as such. The verb ἀποκαθαίρω, 'purify', and the fact that this text is immediately followed by a condensed echo of the digression of the *Theaetetus* (see 7.48, quoted above at p. 152), suggest that Marcus had the Platonic or Pythagorean perspective in mind when he wrote this passage.

However, in the *Meditations* as a whole, the second perspective, in which attention is directed towards the changing elements, is much more frequent:

Contemplate (θεῶρει) constantly all things coming into being through change and accustom yourself to the thought that universal nature loves nothing so much as to change the things that are and create new ones in their place. (*M* 4.36, cf. 7.25)

<sup>31</sup> Cicero *ND* 2.15, 17, 54–6, 102–15, 153.

<sup>32</sup> See the vague allusion at *D* 2.17.29 to 'looking up at the sky as a friend of God'.

<sup>33</sup> On these passages, see Cortassa 1989: 125–8.

<sup>34</sup> In Stoicism and for Marcus, the heavens are divine (see *M* 12.28) but participate actively in the transformations of the elements into one another (see *M* 9.9).

Call to mind, say, the time of Vespasian, and you will see the same old things . . . Consider (ἐπιθεώρει) likewise the annals of other ages and of entire nations, and contemplate how many people, after their brief exertions, soon fell prey to death and were resolved into their elements. (*M* 4.32)

Cast your eye on the past (τὰ προγεγονότα ἀναθεωρεῖν): so many shifts in the pattern of rule. (*M* 7.49)

The constant change of the world around us is the main object of contemplation for Marcus, whereas, for Plato, θεωρία should be directed only at eternal realities, either unchanging or exhibiting regularity in their movements.<sup>35</sup> Still, Marcus focuses on natural things and human history mostly in order to show their evanescence, so much so that this un-Platonic ‘method to contemplate how all things are transformed from one to another’ (*M* 10.11, quoted below at p. 161) yields a Heraclitean picture of the world as an unstable and everchanging ‘stream’ (*M* 4.43, 7.10, 7.19); this itself looks surprisingly Platonic and has fuelled speculations about Marcus’ pessimism.<sup>36</sup> This method and outlook must, however, be understood in their context.<sup>37</sup> Marcus does not strive to draw himself away from the sensible world and into a loftier reality:

Is one afraid of change? Why, what can take place without change? And what is dearer and nearer to universal nature?<sup>38</sup>

There is no imperfection in change. Marcus’ Heracliteanism is Stoic rather than Platonic: change is rational in itself and allows the world to keep its beauty and order. As a consequence, the Stoics broadened the scope of contemplation to include the whole of nature, with its many and varied useful or beautiful aspects we owe to divine rationality.<sup>39</sup> These are mentioned by Epictetus in his sketches of the hymn we ought to be constantly singing to God.<sup>40</sup> Although Marcus rarely praises Nature’s gifts and emphasizes their precariousness, he is also very clear that every natural thing, however small and base it might

<sup>35</sup> Rutherford 1989: 157–8. <sup>36</sup> Rist 1969: 283–6.

<sup>37</sup> See Hadot 1997: 180–95; Engberg-Pedersen 1998: 313–16; and Giavatto 2008: 186–95.

<sup>38</sup> *M* 7.18. Cf. *M* 4.42, 4.45, 4.46 (where Heraclitus is quoted), 7.23, 7.25, 9.35. For discussions of Heraclitus in Marcus, see Asmis 1989: 2246–9 and Cortassa 1989: 41–54.

<sup>39</sup> See *ND* 2. 98–102, 120–52.

<sup>40</sup> See e.g. *D* 1.14.1–5, 2.14.26 and above all 1.16.16–17: ‘Great is god, that he has given us these instruments with which we will work the earth.’ Timaeus, on the contrary, states that philosophy is God’s greatest gift and that he does not need to celebrate the lesser ones (*Tim.* 47b).

seem, is a necessary product of universal reason and can, as such, be admired:

So if a person is endowed with sensibility and has a deep enough insight into the workings of the universe, he will find scarcely anything which fails to please in some way by its presence, even among those which arise as secondary effects (κατ' ἐπακολούθησιν). Such a person will view the gaping jaws of wild beasts in their physical reality with no less pleasure than the portrayals of them displayed by painters and sculptors, and he will be able to see in an old woman or an old man a special kind of mature beauty.<sup>41</sup>

Marcus does not characterize this perspective on nature as a θεωρία, but it is clear that the correct outlook on nature includes for him not only the observation of the matter and passing away of every natural being, but also the understanding of their necessity, utility and beauty from the point of view of the whole world and its rational divine source.<sup>42</sup>

#### FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: THE PURPOSE OF CONTEMPLATION

There is, however, no doubt that Marcus emphasizes the frailty and sometimes squalor of external things. To understand why, we have to take into account the ethical purpose of contemplation:

Always living the finest of lives – the power to do so lies in one's soul, if one is indifferent to things indifferent. And a person will be indifferent if he observes (θεωρεῖ) each of them as a whole and in its separate parts. (*M* 11.16)

Observing things from a physical point of view allows us to see them as they are in themselves (*M* 9.15), to strip them of the value we usually but incorrectly attach to them because of our opinions, desires or fears:<sup>43</sup> 'So in this torrent, in which one can find no stay, which of the things that go rushing past should one value at any great price?' (*M* 6.15). Marcus does not look down on nature or history from the point of view of eternity, but strives to persuade himself that external

<sup>41</sup> *M* 3.2. In *D* 1.16.9–14, God must be praised not only for its ἔργα but also for its πάρεργα.

<sup>42</sup> See *M* 4.40, 6.15, 6.36, 8.50 or 10.26.

<sup>43</sup> Hadot 1997: 181–4, 192–5; Bénatouïl 2009b: 115–22.

things cannot contribute to his happiness. The purpose of contemplation is both ethical and practical:

Acquire a method to contemplate (θεωρητικὴν μέθοδον) how all things are transformed from one to another, and direct your attention constantly to this area of study, and exercise yourself in it, for nothing is more conducive to elevation of mind (μεγαλοφροσύνης). (*M* 10.11)

Knowledge of nature is not an end in itself, and Marcus thanks several of his masters, in the first book of the *Meditations*, for having kept him away from purely theoretical inquiry into logic or nature.<sup>44</sup> Does this mean that Marcus ultimately opposes Plato's picture of the contemplative philosopher in the digression of the *Theaetetus*? One passage might suggest this interpretation:

There is nothing more wretched than one who goes around everything in a circle and, as the poet says, searches into what lies beneath the earth (τὰ νέρθεν γᾶς) and tries to read the secrets of his neighbour's soul, yet fails to perceive that it is enough to hold fast on to the guardian-spirit within him and take care of it single-mindedly; and this care is to keep it pure from passion and irresponsibility and discontent with anything that comes from god or man. (*M* 2.13)

The verse of Pindar quoted here (fr. 292 Snell) is also used in the *Theaetetus* to describe the philosopher's mind 'flying everywhere, as Pindar says, in the depths of the earth (τᾶς τε γᾶς ὑπένερθε), geometrizing its surface, and above the heaven, doing astronomy' (173e4–6). Is Marcus criticizing Plato's description of the philosopher?<sup>45</sup> I doubt it very much, for several reasons. First, if τοῦ πάντα κύκλῳ ἐκπεριερχομένου ('that one who goes around everything in a circle') referred to contemplation of the heavens or the universe, it would apply to Marcus himself, who, as observed previously, often writes about seeing the world as a whole and even about following the stars. I thus surmise that his quotation of Pindar here alludes to some kind of πολυπραγμοσύνη or curiosity. This is borne out by the fact that Marcus leaves out the second part of Pindar's verse about the heavens and replaces it with a reference to inquiry into the intentions of others, which he often criticizes.<sup>46</sup> His target here is thus useless curiosity

<sup>44</sup> See *M* 1.7, 1.8 and above all 1.17.8 (or, using the divisions in the Teubner edition, 1.17.22).

<sup>45</sup> As suggested by Cortassa 1989: 61. <sup>46</sup> Bénatouil 2009b: 67–9.

about nature or society. Moreover, what it should be replaced by, namely ‘taking care of the guardian-spirit’ within us, is an echo of the end of *Timaeus* 90c and thus confirms further that the passage is not anti-Platonic.

As a matter of fact, in this very passage of the *Timaeus*, Plato emphasizes the ethical effects of contemplation: knowing the regular movements of the heavenly bodies rids our soul from the chaotic movements produced through the body and allows the philosopher to recover the natural and regular movements of the immortal and divine part of his soul. In Plato as in the Stoics, theory and practice go hand in hand, and this is why the latter have appropriated important aspects of the ‘cosmological ethics’ of the *Timaeus*.<sup>47</sup> In Posidonius’ definition of the end in particular, ‘contemplating the truth and arrangement of the whole’ is completed by ‘helping to promote it as much as possible’.<sup>48</sup>

Similarly, when he mentions contemplation or singing a hymn to God as our function, Epictetus nearly always supplements it with an ethical and practical dimension. In *D* 1.6.19–22, quoted previously at pp. 148–9. Epictetus adds ἐξηγητής (‘interpreter’) to θεατής (‘spectator’) and παρακολούθησις καὶ σύμφωνος διεξαγωγή τῇ φύσει (‘understanding, and a manner of life in conformity with nature’) to θεωρία (‘contemplation’) when he describes man’s function. While ἐξηγητής can refer to knowledge of nature, Epictetus also says that God sent us laws or edicts to be ‘interpreted’ and obeyed (*D* 4.3.12): being an ‘interpreter’ thus extends to ethics. As for the term παρακολούθησις (‘understanding’), it derives from a verb meaning ‘following closely’, which can have a physical, a logical, as well as an ethical meaning in Epictetus. The term thus refers both to understanding something (the nature of a thing, the meaning of a word) and to acting accordingly, and this is probably why Epictetus uses it several times to define man’s specific function.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Reydam-Schils 1999: 60–83 and 111–14; and Betegh 2003. A good example is precisely Plato’s definition of our mind as a daemon, which was used from Chrysippus (*D.L.* 7.88) and Posidonius (Galen *PHP* 5.469 = Posidonius fr. 187) down to Epictetus and Marcus (*D* 1.14.11–15, *M* 2.17, 3.6, 5.27).

<sup>48</sup> Clement *Strom.* 2.21.129.1–5 = fr. 186. I leave aside the clause ‘without being led in any way by the irrational part of the soul’, on which see Tieleman 2003: 211–31.

<sup>49</sup> See *D* 1.6.13–17, 1.16.18 and 2.8.6–8 and Bénatouïl 2009b: 127–34.

As for *D* 2.14, the other contemplative and seemingly Platonic chapter in the *Discourses*, ‘resembling the gods as much as possible’ is introduced as ‘necessary’ in order to ‘please and obey them’ (12–13), and the examples given imply moral virtues: ‘if the deity is faithful, [the man who wants to please and obey the deity] also must be faithful; if free, he also must be free; if beneficent, he also must be beneficent; if high-minded, he also must be high-minded, and so forth’.<sup>50</sup> These examples give a practical dimension to the ideal of godlikeness, but Epictetus’ perspective is similar to Plato’s. In the digression of the *Theaetetus*, Socrates famously defines ‘becoming like god so far as is possible’ as ‘becoming just and pious, with wisdom’ (176b1–2). The emphasis of the digression on the effects of contemplation on the ethical outlook and practical attitude of the philosopher is probably what attracted Epictetus and Marcus to this text in the first place.

However, the practical effects of contemplation in the *Timaean* or *Theaetetus* have to do with recovering our connection with god through the care of the immortal and divine part of our soul. Although Epictetus and Marcus retain aspects of this analysis, they emphasize a very different purpose of contemplation, namely our acceptance of the world as it is.<sup>51</sup> To give but one example, in *D* 4.1.104–5, part of which is quoted above at p. 154, Epictetus does not advise any retreat to a purely intellectual life, despite his description of our body as ‘a little portion of paltry flesh’ and despite his advocacy of contemplation; he emphasizes that we have been given everything that we need to live on earth (light, companions, senses, reason), and should thus celebrate the world, as it is ruled by God, as long as we can, and, when asked to leave, thank God ‘for what we heard and saw’.<sup>52</sup> Clearly, Imperial Stoics ‘use Plato as a kind of propaedeutic device to underscore an essentially Stoic scale of values’.<sup>53</sup> Contemplating the divine organization of the world goes

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *M* 10.8, where Marcus says that ‘all rational beings should strive to resemble [the gods]’, i.e. ‘to do the work of a human being’.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. the discussion of Posidonius in Reydam-Schils 1999: 114.

<sup>52</sup> See also *D* 3.5.10, 3.26.29–30 and *M* 12.35. Not fearing death is the purpose behind many ‘Platonic’ passages of Epictetus and Marcus, but death is never to them the threshold to another world, because our soul is not immortal (*D* 3.13.14–15 and *M* 12.15). See Erler 2007 and Gill 2007.

<sup>53</sup> Reydam-Schils 2010: 201.

hand in hand with participating in it, which means accepting one's lot without any complaint (*D* 4.1.108), in contrast with Plato's exhortation to 'escape from here to there as fast as possible' (*Tht.* 176a).

#### CONTEMPLATION WITHOUT LEISURE: DOUBTS ABOUT THE SCHOLASTIC LIFE

An important consequence is that Epictetus and Marcus do not favour any form of contemplative life for philosophers. Chrysippus criticized Plato and Aristotle's definition of the best or philosophical life as σχολαστικός ('scholastic' or 'leisurely').<sup>54</sup> In this debate, which side do Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius take? A few passages quoted above might suggest they side with Plato, but this is not the case, because leisure is something which does not depend on us and, as such, something which philosophers should not need or desire:

Remember that it is not merely desire for office and wealth which makes men abject and subservient to others, but desire also for tranquillity, and leisure, and travel, and scholarship (ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡσυχίας καὶ σχολῆς καὶ ἀποδημίας καὶ φιλολογίας). For it makes no difference what the external object be, the value you set upon it makes you subservient to another. (*D* 4.4.1)

These are the first lines of a chapter which emphasizes that reading, writing and learning should not be ends in themselves, and thus causes for us of trouble whenever we cannot devote ourselves to our books, but instead means to be able, 'in our actions, to use according to nature representations which come to us' (*D* 4.4.14). He is not a philosopher who fears or scorns ἀσχολία, the lack of leisure:<sup>55</sup>

'Am I now therefore to pass my life in turmoil (ἐν τῷ θορύβῳ)?' What do you mean by 'turmoil'? Among many people? And what is there hard about that? Imagine that you are in Olympia, regard the turmoil as a festival. There, too, one man shouts this and another that . . . And yet who of us does not take delight in the Olympic festival and leave it with sorrow? Do not become peevish or fastidious towards events. 'The vinegar is rotten, for it is sour' . . . In the same fashion, you say, 'I don't like leisure, it is solitude.' 'I don't like a

<sup>54</sup> See Plutarch *Stoic. rep.* 1033c, analysed in detail in Bénatouïl 2007.

<sup>55</sup> See also *D* 3.26.7 and 23, where Epictetus blames someone who cannot imagine working to earn his living and gives as an example Cleanthes, 'who combined going to school and pumping water'.



crowd, it is turmoil.' Say not so, but if circumstances bring you to spend your life alone or in the company of a few, call it peace and make use of this situation for its proper end: converse with yourself, exercise your sense impressions, develop your preconceptions. If, however, you fall in with a crowd, call it games, a festival, a holiday, try to keep holiday with the people. For what is pleasanter to a man who loves his fellow-men than the sight of large numbers of them? We are glad to see herds of horses or cattle; when we see many ships we are delighted; is a person annoyed at the sight of many human beings? (*D* 4.4.24–7)

The festival analogy is here turned against its strictly contemplative interpretation in Plato's Academy (see p. 150 above). Philosophers are like spectators at a festival, but this does not isolate them from the other participants. The philosopher does not share their outlook and purpose, but, as a human being, he remains deeply connected to them and can thus enjoy the festival as a whole, including the human company, unlike the philosopher of the *Theaetetus*, who hardly knows whether his neighbours are human (174b). Just as Marcus observes nature in order to understand the necessity and objective value of all its aspects, down to the smallest and lowest, Epictetus offers us the society and customs of men, down to noisy crowds, as a natural phenomenon worthy of contemplation, participation and celebration.<sup>56</sup>

Moreover, this passage shows us the real purpose of σχολή (leisure) according to Epictetus, namely to work and exercise one's mind. Philosophy can use and even needs leisure and isolation, because it requires correcting one's opinions and habits, which is possible only if one is at a distance from the occupations, obligations and persons which usually pressure us into abiding by common norms and values.<sup>57</sup> When Epictetus asks his disciples to become σχολαστικός and be laughed at, exactly like the philosopher in the *Theaetetus*, he is not contradicting Chrysippus, because he specifies that this is necessary in order 'to make an examination of [one's] own beliefs' (*D* 1.11.39). Epictetus takes σχολή to refer not to a permanent

<sup>56</sup> See also *D* 4.1.108–9. Quoting *D* 1.6.19, Rutherford 1989: 232 notes the difference between Epictetus' embrace of the 'communal life' and Marcus' 'more isolated' perspective. Still, as shown by Engberg-Pedersen 1998: 326–30, the view from above produces in Marcus an enlightened but genuine love and care for others.

<sup>57</sup> See *D* 3.16.10–11. Musonius already notes that exile can be an occasion to learn virtue, since it offers us leisure and frees us from many obligations (*Discourses* 9, 43.8–15 Hense).

condition of the philosophical life, but only to the first steps of philosophical education, and can thus retain an important aspect of Plato's portrait of the philosopher in the *Theaetetus* by changing the significance of its key term, just as Marcus can use the portrait of the *Republic* by taking οὐσία in a Stoic and very un-Platonic sense.

The final aim of the philosopher is to go out in the open when he is ready, and live his life among other men. This is why, as far as the Olympic games are concerned, Epictetus compares the philosopher much more often to an athlete participating in the games than to a spectator watching them:<sup>58</sup> the philosophical school is like a training camp, and the good disciple is the one who knows what he has to do to succeed, takes up all the exercises and, once his training is completed, is eager to go out to face the toughest adversaries and defeat them. If he succeeds, his life becomes a spectacle to admire for other men, including his master and school-fellows.<sup>59</sup>

One could, however, object that, in the chapter where Epictetus uses the Pythagorean and Academic analogy of the festival, he clearly states that the few people who participate in the festival because they love the spectacle 'devote themselves to one thing only, inquiring about the festival before leaving it'.<sup>60</sup> There seems to be a small category of professional philosophers who stick with the scholastic contemplation of nature. It is true that Epictetus sometimes acknowledges the existence of an elite of 'divine' men, who go beyond the prescriptions he assigns to his pupils (*Manual* 15). In chapter 3.21, he notes that teaching philosophy is a very serious and solemn matter, which requires specific qualities and training, and, above all, a divine calling, similar to the one Socrates, Diogenes and Zeno each received for their respective missions (*D* 3.21.19). In the festival analogy of *D* 2.14, Epictetus could be referring to the professional philosophers who, like Zeno, 'teach and set out doctrines' (*D* 3.21.19) or to the 'interpreters of nature', such as Chrysippus (*D* 1.17.13–16). Epictetus is, however, very clear in both passages that this teaching activity is neither an end in itself (*D* 1.17.18) nor the right criterion by which to

<sup>58</sup> See *D* 1.2.25–6, 1.24.1–2, 1.29.34–6, 3.15.1–5, 3.22.51–2, 3.24.52, 3.25.2–4, 4.4.30–1.

<sup>59</sup> See *D* 1.29.34–6 or 3.22.58.

<sup>60</sup> *D* 2.14.28, already quoted at p. 151 above: καὶ λοιπὸν τοῦτῳ μόνῳ σχολάζουσι τῷ τὴν πανήγυριν ἱστορήσαντας ἀπελθεῖν.

judge if someone is a philosopher (*D* 3.21.23): what we should learn from nature through Chrysippus, and what we should achieve by studying philosophy, is the ability to live free from passions and troubles in any situation, especially among other men (*D* 1.17.20–29, 3.21.5–6, 8–9).

Epictetus thus acknowledges that the scholastic life has a specific and exclusive preoccupation, though he does not define the philosopher by the adoption of such a life, but by an ability to make good use of any situation, be it leisure or not (*D* 4.4.29–31).<sup>61</sup> This is how and why ‘singing the hymn of praise to god’ does not require any leisure but can be done all the time, even ‘as we dig and plough and eat’ (*D* 1.16.16).<sup>62</sup>

Marcus’ position is very similar, with the difference that his aim is not to prepare pupils for their future active life, but to guide himself through his life as an emperor. He follows Epictetus’ lesson about σχολή and reading as means to be used to transform our opinions, to withdraw into ourselves but not from society (*M* 4.3).<sup>63</sup> At *M* 2.7, σχολή is recommended as a pause allowing one to stop acting randomly under the spell of circumstances, but this very movement of retreat is also to be guarded against, for fear of becoming ‘weary of life’ and ‘having no aim’. Although he still conceives of philosophy as a retreat and as the best endeavour, it is a retreat into himself, which does not require finding leisure away from the city (*M* 4.3). At *M* 6.12, he compares his ‘obligations’ to the court and to philosophy to those he would have to a stepmother and to a mother and concludes: ‘So return to philosophy as often as you can, and take your rest in her, for it is through her that life at court seems bearable to you, and you bearable to your court.’ This could be taken as a scholastic leaning, if only Marcus was not clearly acknowledging that he has obligations to the court and that philosophy helps him not simply to put up with them, but to fulfil his duties correctly from the point of view of the court itself.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *M* 8.3 quoted below, and D.L. 7.130, analysed in Bénatouïl 2007 and 2009a.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Musonius *Discourses* 11, 58.6–59.9, where he recommends earning one’s living as a peasant or shepherd, because doing so provides some leisure and protects one from the laziness typical of ‘sophists’ living in the city.

<sup>63</sup> Tasinato 1990: 33–5 and Reydams-Schils 2005: 108–11.

Contemplation has a crucial role to play in this philosophical regulation:

Mime, fight, excitement, numbness, submission. Day by day, these will erase as many of your holy principles as you keep in mind without knowing nature and [thus] renounce. You must perceive and do everything in such a way that at the same time the circumstances [you are in] are completely dealt with and the theoretical part [of your soul] is exercised, and that the self-confidence which comes from the science of each thing is preserved, unknown to others but not concealed.<sup>64</sup>

Marcus acknowledges that his daily weaknesses will defeat his philosophical outlook and attitude, unless he consciously connects with its physical justification each of the principles according to which he claims to live. Note, however, that his failures are not specifically related to his activities as the emperor – a scholar or a farmer can just as much give in to these general attitudes – and this is why the cure is not for Marcus to find leisure to study physics again, but to be able to keep his knowledge of nature in mind at all times so as to strengthen his everyday behaviour. When Marcus quotes the philosopher's view of kings as busy and uneducated pastors in the digression of the *Theaetetus* (*M* 10.23), he thus does not look down on his life, but uses Plato, once again, to assess correctly the value and limits of his position, which can easily be forgotten at the court. This does not make the court a place to scorn and flee: 'Let no one, from this time on, hear you disparaging life at the court; and may you not even hear yourself' (*M* 8.9).

#### THE 'THEAETETUS' READ AS A SOCRATIC DIALOGUE

The previous arguments show clearly, I hope, that Epictetus and Marcus are far from adopting Plato's or Platonic views on contemplation and the philosophical life, and hold to the central Stoic positions on these matters. This makes the question of why Epictetus and Marcus resort to Plato's texts all the more pressing. We have already seen that they are often 'exploring genuine affinities [between Plato and their views], yet giving them a Stoic turn of thought', to borrow

<sup>64</sup> I here translate myself only the first part of *M* 10.9. In the second part, Marcus describes the content of the knowledge of things.

again a phrase from Gretchen Reydam-Schils (2010: 214).<sup>65</sup> However, she applies it only to Seneca and contrasts his 'Platonic colouring' with Epictetus': 'Plato is more important for Seneca than Socrates, whereas the reverse is true in Epictetus' case, as revealed in the citations and echoes.'

It is indeed well known that Socrates is Epictetus' central philosophical model, and that his quotations or clear allusions to Plato's dialogues are nearly all invocations of Socrates' views or behaviour.<sup>66</sup> This is why the *Apology*, the *Gorgias*, the *Phaedo* and the *Protagoras* are the dialogues he quotes or alludes to most often, whereas those we categorize as Plato's middle and later dialogues and which showcase his distinctive metaphysical, political, epistemological or psychological views are hardly mentioned by Epictetus.<sup>67</sup> With Epictetus' references to Plato about the philosophical life, have we found an exception to this pattern and a topic on which Epictetus and Seneca are using Plato in a similar fashion?

The *Theaetetus* is usually regarded as a middle or late middle dialogue and its digression is replete with echoes from *Republic* 6–7.<sup>68</sup> Marcus refers to the digression as what 'Plato said' (*M* 7.48, 10.23) and quotes *Republic* 6.486a–b on a similar point at *M* 7.35. As for Epictetus, we have seen that he very probably draws from the digression the following tenets about the philosopher: he must (1) isolate himself into a 'school' and risk alienating his contemporaries so as to be able to correct his opinions; (2) put human life into perspective by reflecting upon nature as a whole and how it is governed by god; (3) hymn god

<sup>65</sup> See also Gill 2007: 192 and 197.

<sup>66</sup> See Jagu 1946: 47–86; Gourinat 2001; Long 2002a: 67–97; Erler 2007.

<sup>67</sup> See Jagu 1946: 136–42. There are only a few passages where Epictetus refers to what 'Plato said': at *D* 2.18.20 about purifying oneself when faced with specific thoughts (*Laws* 9.854b6), or at *D* 4.1.172 about training for death (*Phd.* 64a or *Rep.* 2.361e). These two passages seem only to appropriate Plato's language, but others invoke a doctrine. *D* 1.28.5, 2.22.36 and *M* 7.63 refer to Plato's tenet that 'every soul is robbed unwillingly of the truth', which is not found in the dialogues in so many words, but could refer to various passages (for example *Prot.* 345e, *Rep.* 412e and 413a or *Soph.* 228c). *D* 2.17.5–11 refers to the orator Theopompus' mistaken criticism of Plato for 'wishing to define every word' (see e.g. *Phdr.* 237b–c). Note that, although fairly Socratic, all these passages, with the exception of the *Protagoras*, are rather found in middle or late dialogues, which could explain why Epictetus attributes them explicitly to Plato, whereas he never mentions Plato's name when he is using Plato's dialogues as testimonies about Socrates' conduct or views.

<sup>68</sup> See Sedley 2004: 65–86.

and strive to imitate god by being virtuous. The third tenet can easily be taken as Socratic on the basis of the *Apology*, where Socrates does not speak of imitating god but presents all his actions and inquiries as parts of a mission assigned to him by Apollo. The second tenet might seem more of a stretch, because of Socrates' rejection of natural philosophy in Plato and Xenophon, but the latter also attributes to Socrates the position that the gods are the intelligent causes of the world's arrangement and take care of men's lives.<sup>69</sup> Epictetus held these positions to be Socratic: when he lists the five available doctrines about the gods, he attributes the fifth, which he then defends, to Odysseus and Socrates, who held that god takes care of everything in the world (*D* 1.12.3).

As for the first tenet, I do not see how Epictetus could have found any objection to attributing it to Socrates, whom he quotes several times as holding an unexamined life to be unworthy of a man.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, this would explain why and how Epictetus, in his allusions to the digression of the *Theaetetus*, restricted σχολή to isolated periods of self-education, as explained above (p. 165), and characterized the philosopher chiefly by his using leisure only to transform his attitude before going out of the school to exhibit and test his principles in real life. Taking aim at the impatience of his students who want to be recognized as 'philosophers', Epictetus often attacks those who believe that philosophy amounts to a scholarly discipline, the knowledge of logic or of books written by past philosophers.<sup>71</sup> In a few passages, Socrates' attitude and words are explicitly invoked against this misconception:

But what does Socrates say? 'As one man rejoices', he says, 'in improving his own farm, and another his own horse, so I rejoice day by day in following the course of my own improvement.' In what respect? In nice philosophic phrases? – Man, hold your tongue. – In nice philosophical theories, then? – What are you saying? – Well, I don't see anything else that the philosophers spend their time on. – Is it nothing in your eyes never to bring accusation against anyone, be it God or man? Never to blame anyone? Always to wear the same expression on one's face, whether one is coming out or going in? These are the things which Socrates knew, and yet he

<sup>69</sup> See Xen. *Mem.* 1.4.5–18 and 4.3.2–18 with Sedley 2007: 75–92.

<sup>70</sup> *D* 1.26.18, quoting *Apol.* 38a. <sup>71</sup> See Bénatouïl 2009b: 137–45.

never said that he either knew or taught anything. But if someone called for little philosophic phrases or theories, he used to take him over to Protagoras or Hippias. It was just as though someone had come to him for fresh vegetables, and he would have taken him over to the market gardener. (*D* 3.5.14–17)

The end of this passage is a clear allusion to the beginning of the *Protagoras*, in which Socrates introduces the young Hippocrates to Protagoras, and also to a famous passage of the *Theaetetus*, in which Socrates explains that, like midwives who are unable to have children but are good match-makers (149b–d), he helps souls deliver their ideas, does not teach anything (or at least does not teach anything ‘wise’) and has no knowledge himself (150c–d), but can find suitable teachers, such as Prodicus, for empty souls (151b). Epictetus uses Socrates’ disavowal of knowledge as support for his prescription that would-be philosophers should never claim this title or desire to be acknowledged as such, but focus instead on transforming their judgments and behaviour.<sup>72</sup>

Marcus also lists Socrates as a model of the theoretically grounded practical attitude that is philosophy:

What are Alexander, Caesar and Pompey when compared to Diogenes, Heraclitus and Socrates? For these latter knew things, their causes as much as their matter, and their governing faculties were self-determined. As to the others, consider how many cares they had, and of how much they were the slaves? (*M* 8.3)

While he first seems to be opposing the power of politicians or men of action to the knowledge of contemplative philosophers, Marcus offers surprising examples of the latter: the men who knew ‘the matter and cause’ of things are not Thales, Democritus, Plato, Aristotle or Chrysippus, but Socrates and Diogenes, who famously shun technical knowledge about natural phenomena, and Heraclitus, who was less interested in their causal explanations than in gaining a global wisdom about god, the world and life.

<sup>72</sup> See also three other similar passages: *D* 3.23.22 and 4.8.22–3, mentioned by Jagu 1946: 139 as referring to the beginning of the *Protagoras* and *Tht.* 151b, and *Manual* 46. Jagu also notes that, at *D* 1.22.17, Epictetus characterizes the true philosopher as being in labour, using a verb (ὠδίνειν) already used by Socrates at *Tht.* 151a about his young followers (cf. *D* 1.29.36).

Philosophers are not defined by their scholastic life or scientific achievements, but by a disposition, which has both a contemplative and a practical component.<sup>73</sup>

Similarly, Epictetus seems to have been interested in the *Theaetetus*, including its digression, as a Socratic dialogue. In this dialogue Epictetus finds a Socrates who does not voice Plato's metaphysical or psychological views (which are incompatible with Stoicism) but who offers detailed insights about his philosophical practice,<sup>74</sup> in line with other Socratic dialogues,<sup>75</sup> and gives a portrait of the philosopher, insisting on philosophy's peculiar assessment of human affairs, which alienates most people, and on its contemplative and theological foundations, both of which allow the philosopher to spend his whole life, scholastic or otherwise, hymning or obeying god. Hence the special appeal of the *Theaetetus*:

Another man is afraid that he will not have an office; you are afraid that you will. Do not so, man! But just as you laugh at the man who is afraid he will not have an office, so also laugh at yourself. For it makes no difference whether a person is thirsty with fever, or is afraid of water like a man with the rabies. Or how can you any longer say with Socrates, 'if so it pleases God, so be it'?<sup>76</sup> Do you suppose that, if Socrates had yearned to spend his leisure in the Lyceum or the Academy, and to converse daily with the

<sup>73</sup> Marcus' references to Plato's dialogues mostly concern Socrates' words or deeds and are thus similar to Epictetus': see Asmis 1989: 2237–40, *M* 7.44–6, which are explicit quotations of *Apol.* 28b and d and *Gorg.* 512d, and *M* 1.16.9, 3.6.2, 7.66, 11.23. It is thus possible that Marcus, like Epictetus, takes his quotations of the *Republic* or the *Theaetetus* to record Socrates' views as well. He nevertheless explicitly values Plato's compelling phrasing of them, even if he sometimes rephrases them to suit his style and purpose, namely self-persuasion: see Cortassa 1989: 172–4.

<sup>74</sup> Long 2002a: 70 gives a similar rationale for Epictetus' frequent use of the *Gorgias*.

<sup>75</sup> What might come as a surprise is that these very features of the *Theaetetus*, which made it suitable to Epictetus' Stoic agenda, also explain why this dialogue became a central point of reference for the New Academy. This would be only an ironical coincidence if the sceptical use of the *Theaetetus* were not thriving at the time, especially in Plutarch, and if Epictetus were not attacking him as an Academic in *D* 2.20, as has been shown by Jan Opsomer (1998). I think and hope to prove in a future paper that Epictetus' Socratic use of the *Theaetetus* and his criticism of scholastic philosophy are in part directed against the Academics of his time, namely Plutarch and Favorinus.

<sup>76</sup> Epictetus quotes and slightly rewords *Crito* 43d. The passage can be taken as an implicit criticism of Plato, Aristotle (and their followers) for having defended a scholastic conception of philosophy, locking it up in the Academy and the Lyceum, and thus betraying Socrates. Needless to say, this position is perfectly in line with Chrysippus', as already noted at p. 164 above.



young men (ἐν Λυκείῳ ἢ ἐν Ἀκαδημαίᾳ σχολάζειν καὶ διαλέγεσθαι καθ' ἡμέραν τοῖς νέοις), he would have gone forth cheerfully on all the military expeditions in which he served? Would he not have wailed and groaned, 'Wretched man that I am! Here I am now in misery and misfortune, when I might be sunning myself in the Lyceum'? (*D* 4.4.19–22)

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An edited collection has been given its own entry if there is a reference in the text to the collection itself and not only to its chapters. Otherwise, for ease of reference we have put information about edited collections in the entries for their chapters.

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